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Content

Abstract

In this study, a content analysis investigating the relationship goals and self-presentational strategies on online daters' personal advertisements from both North America (n = 300) and Hong Kong China (n = 300) was conducted. Significant differences between the two cultures were found by adopting a socio-ecological approach. Great cross-cultural differences were found. Compared with Chinese, the North American were more likely to seek for an open and casual relationship, namely sexual interests and friendship, self-improvement and showing own uniqueness. In contrast, Chinese were more likely to initiate a committed relationship such as soulmate and romantic activities, express loneliness and resistant to fake accounts more frequent than the North American were. The North American adopted a self-enhancement strategy where the Chinese use a more holistic strategy to describe themselves. Besides, drawing from an evolutionary perspective, traditional gender differences and other differences in relationship goals and self-presentational strategies were found. The implications and limitations of considering the explanation power of relational mobility on behaviors are discussed.

Introduction

Nowadays, more channels for people to meet strangers are provided by advanced technology. Online dating service, which is originated from the US, have been

introduced to Chinese societies in recent decades. Although the services have similar functions, the expectations of users on relationship goal-seeking may be different if they come from different culture backgrounds. However, to my best knowledge, there is no research on Chinese online dating goals, thus this research can fill in the gap in the academic field.

With the convenience of internet surfing, users can enjoy several advantages provided by the unique cyber dating setting like convenience and simplicity, abundant people that can meet, the fearlessness of rejection (Ali & Wibowo, 2011) and relatively anonymity (Gunter, 2008). Research done in online setting also becomes easier to conduct. However, online dating sites are merely platforms to initiate relationships, in the latter stage of the dating process, conventional offline communication is also a crucial step to maintain the relationship (Finkel, Eastwick, Karney, Reis, & Sprecher, 2012). Therefore, there is an integral link with offline social worlds and the usage of online dating websites.

Although much research about online dating usage was done, the sampled participants are mainly from the western countries and no research was done on Chinese online daters' relationship goals. Nonetheless, it is suspected that cultural differences between Chinese and North American in relationship formation in online

dating exist. Ye (2014) suggested the mate preference of Chinese and North American users shown on online dating websites demonstrated different romantic beliefs. Hence, in order to bridge the knowledge between the west and the east, a cross-cultural comparison was adopted. Majority research on cross-cultural study focused on traditional paradigms such as individualistic-collectivistic (Hofstede, 1984, 2003) and cultural self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). But this may be a tautology that which is "explained" is very similar to that which is "doing the explaining" (Sato & Yuki, 2014). Instead, in this research, a recent socio-ecological approach to personal relationship, relational mobility, referring to the number of opportunities people have to select new relationship partners in a given society or social context (Yuki et al., 2007; Yuki & Schug, 2012), was adopted to have a deeper look on relationship initiation stage on online dating context. But some research results developed based on the concepts of individualistic-collectivistic perspective would be taken as reference.

Literature Review

Theoretical perspectives on relational mobility

A socio-ecological approach is to understand how the natural and social habitats shape individual's mind and behavior, and in return, the mind and behavior shape the social habitats (Oishi & Graham, 2010). In other words, human behaviors would be affected by their surrounding physical and social environment. By reviewing the research on

human history, mindsets and shared beliefs, which influence greatly on people's

cognition, affection and behavior in different countries, have been vastly uncovered

(Thomson, 2016). These mindsets and shared beliefs construct the style of life and

living environment such an objective social and physical ecologies outside of human's

mind (Oishi & Graham, 2010). The researchers argued that realities outside people's

minds might directly influence human's internal mental process, which referred as

"mental shortcut" in different situations (Yamagishi, 2011a, 2011b).

Throughout the socio-ecological approach, relationship mobility is the key concept to

explain interpersonal relationship in different cultures (Thomson, 2016). Relational

mobility refers to a general degree on one have more opportunities to form new

relationship and terminate old relationship (Yuki et al., 2007). In high relational mobility

society (e.g. North America), more opportunities for individuals to form a new

relationship, find new acquaintances, and to leave the groups or relationships that they

find no benefits in them (Yuki & Schug, 2011). In such society or social environment,

opportunity and freedom of selecting friendships based on personal preference (Li et

al., 2015; Schug, Yuki, Horikawa, & Takemura, 2009). In contrast, individuals in a low

relational mobility society (e.g. Japan, Hong Kong) have fewer opportunities to form a

new relationship. The relationship in such a society is a product of environment and

social constraints (Yuki & Schug, 2012). In this situation, people have a stronger

tendency to stay in long-standing relationships and groups, and they have less freedom and opportunity for them to change the relationships (Thomson, 2016).

Research has already investigated the relationship between relational mobility and both human psychology and behavior. The concept can explain various cultural differences, including similarity between friends (Schug et al., 2009), levels of self-disclosure (Schug, Yuki, & Maddux, 2010), shame (Sznycer et al., 2012), general trust on others (Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994; Yuki et al., 2007), engagement in close relationship (Kito, Yuki, & Thomson, 2017), sensitivity to social rejection (Sato, Yuki, & Norasakkunkit, 2014) and self-enhancement (Falk, Heine, Yuki, & Takemura, 2009).

These phenomena occur because adaptive tasks and behavioral strategies of individuals are different in particular levels of relational mobility (Thomson, 2016). For low relational mobility society, maintaining harmony within individual's existing relationship is important because disharmony means that the individuals will either face two unpleasant consequences, which are eternally stuck in an embarrassing disharmonious relationship, or reject the relationship and face the difficulty of forming new relationships in a society where relationship alternatives are scarce. In order to maintain harmonious relationship, they would be more likely to adopt strategies of avoiding offense, and the emotion of shame (Thomson, 2016). Empirical experiment

on pen choice supports the avoiding offence strategies adopted by Japanese to avoid

disharmony (Yamagishi, Hashimoto, & Schug, 2008). As for the high relational mobility

social context, the opportunity cost of being rejected in a social circle is lower because

there are many opportunities to initiate relationships in the society.

Moreover, individuals in low relational mobility societies would be more prone to shame

because low relational mobility means a compensatory relationship of social support

is less likely to occur (Sznycer et al., 2012). In other words, the opportunity cost of

damaging or losing one's existing relationship is high. The function of shame is to act

as an "alarm bell" so that the individuals who feel shame can immediately adjust their

behaviors to avoid being thought of offending the others in the same groups (Thomson,

2016). Comparatively speaking, shame is less common in high relational mobility

societies (Sznycer et al., 2012). If the individuals can get social support again easily,

they would not spend the time to feel shame easily, and instead, they would utilize the

time to initiate a new relationship to get social support again.

In high relational mobility societies, the adaptive tasks are acquisition and retention of

beneficial relationships (Oishi, Schug, Yuki, & Axt, 2014; Yuki & Schug, 2012;

Thomson, 2016). Since initiating a relationship is easy, people in these societies may

concentrate on the following two adaptive tasks, which are keeping an eye on

potentially new and better relationship options, and ensuring one's secret crush does not leave you for the other (Thomson, 2016). In order to attain the adaptive tasks, strategies such as self-enhance, having higher general trust to others, and having more self-disclosure would be taken up (Thomson, 2016).

According to a world relationship study, after the measurement of relational mobility scale, Hong Kong has a relatively low relational mobility whereas the USA has a relatively high relational mobility (Thomson & Yuki, 2015). Therefore, in the current research, the participants from the US represented they were from a higher relational mobility society while participants from Hong Kong indicated they were from a lower relational mobility society.

Theoretical perspectives on relationship goals

There are different relationship goals in initiating relationships. A goal is an internal representation of a desired outcome, event, or process (Austin & Vancouver, 1996), and it is guided by motivations, such as approach motivation and avoidance motivation. The motivations and expressed goals can reveal people's value. In both biological and environmental point of views, many personal goals such as maintaining health and psychological well-being, satisfying personal needs and individual goals, responding

to relationships and norms and innate social response that direct human behavior to initiate and maintain a close relationship (Reis, Collins &, Berscheid, 2000). Investigating relationship goals can help us understand people's attitudes and values within online dating context.

A large range of relationship goal and methodology from the Western research on this topic was used for reference. Across most major love theories, these usually include themes of warm friendship-based love and more sexual, passionate love (Menkin, Robles, & Wiley, 2015). By revising past research on relationship goals, online daters expressed relationship goals such as seeking romantic activities, mentioning sexual interests, expressing loneliness and seeking soulmate (Alterovitz & Mendelsohn, 2013). In a Canadian online dating research, the online daters mentioned they have experience with at least one met in online dating sites to develop long-term friendship (60%), have sexual relationship (63%), engage in romantic relationship (27%) and become soulmate (3%) (Brym & Lenton, 2001). Owing to the absence of research on relationship goal in online dating of Chinese, the four goals used in Alterovitz and Mendelsohn's study (2013), concepts of different relationships mentioned in Brym and Lenton's research (2001) and other possible themes could be drawn from the socio-ecological approach were adopted in the current study.

Relational mobility and relationship goals

Based on the above discussion on relational mobility, the adaptive tasks and strategies

can be related to the particular relationship goals.

Since people from low relational mobility societies have fewer opportunities to start a

relationship with others (Yuki & Schug, 2012) and they have lower general trust on

others (Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994), they would like to stay within a stable

relationship to get the social support, gain the intimate feeling, build interpersonal trust

in a relatively small social circle, and eventually get benefited. Even, they may find

more worth in a small and intimate social circle (Yuki et al., 2011). For them, the

absence of interaction with family is a strong predictor of loneliness (Lykes &

Kemmelmeier, 2014). Therefore, they are more eager to find a soulmate so that they

can build higher level of trust and pursue a long-term relationship.

As for the people from high relational mobility, there are many opportunities to initiate

a relationship (Yuki & Schug, 2011) and a higher general trust on others (Yamagishi &

Yamagishi, 1994) resulting that they can easily form trustful relationships between

different people. The trustful relationships are not limited to close friends and relatives.

In this case, they can easily seek social support from friends. Moreover, the cost of

finding a friend is much less than that of finding a soulmate, which requires a highly compatibility with the special one, and the probability to meet the one is much lower than that to find a friend. As their choice of relationship is more likely to base on personal preference (Li et al., 2015; Schug et al., 2009), they would have a higher chance to find a friend. By meeting more friends, they tend to find friends with higher similarities with them (Schug et al., 2009). Research also shows the interaction with friends and confidant rather than that with family was more important for them (Lykes & Kemmelmeier, 2014) and they can find more benefits from a large social circle (Yuki et al., 2011).

Overall, it is hypothesized that in order to seek social support, the Chinese online dating users would adopt a mean to develop long-term relationship and to find the one person "out there" who is specially destined, whereas the North American online dating users would find friends to chat or to engage in different activities.

Hypothesis 1: The Chinese online daters are more likely to look for soulmate than the North American online daters are.

Hypothesis 2: The North American online daters state more on finding friends than the Chinese online daters do.

Moreover, for Chinese, expressing sexual interests publicly is considered as a taboo, which is socially unacceptable (Chin, 1999) and it is probably considered as an offense or harassment (Tinkler, 2008). Therefore, talking about sex publicly may violate the social norm. Individuals in low relational mobility societies would almost stay in a small social circle (Yuki et al., 2011), in this case, if the subject expresses sexual interests to others, the subject's reputation would be damaged and the group relationship would not be harmonious anymore. In order to avoid an inharmonious relationship, they would avoid expressing sexual needs to others. Moreover, the characteristics of easy to feel shame in low relational mobility societies (Sznycer et al., 2012) would hinder the behaviour of expressing sexual interests online publicly.

As for the people in high relational mobility, their major goal is to find a relationship that can benefit themselves (Yuki et al., 2011). Expressing sexual needs to others can fulfill their sexual needs. Also, they do not afraid damaging their reputation within a social circle because they can easily initiate relationship elsewhere. In other words, the cost of being rejected for people from high relational mobility societies is smaller than that from low relational mobility societies. Summing up these factors, expressing sexual interests is a more habitual behaviour for North American online dating users than for the Chinese users.

Hypothesis 3: The North American online daters mention sexual interests more frequent than the Chinese online daters do.

Relational mobility also affects the perception of relationship and group's coherence. In high relational mobility society, the interpersonal market is competitive (Yuki et al., 2013). In order to reach the major tasks of acquiescence and retention of relationship, keeping oneself as attractive is one of the important strategies. Therefore, they would tend to pursue self-benefiting goals such as self-improvement, to get advantages in this circumstance. On the contrary, low relational mobility society has lower chances to form a new relationship, so they are better at maintaining the harmony and coherence of a group than terminating the relationship. The value of improving them is not very high. The stress on self-promotion perhaps even result in the unwanted competition with others, which can eventually cause disharmonious relationship. Therefore, it is hypothesized that North American users would have stronger tendency to express self-improvement in both physically and psychologically.

Hypothesis 4: North American online daters would seek for self-improvement more frequent than the Chinese online daters do.

The relationships of relational mobility and direct relationship goals have been reviewed and discussed. Now, the following discussion would be about the more indirect goals and themes the individuals desire to convey.

Since low relational mobility society has fewer opportunities to initiate a new relationship and they tend to focus on maintaining the group harmony (Yuki & Schug, 2012). They may mainly focus on building trustful relationship within a small social circle. As they mainly invest a high cost within a social circle to build trust and harmonious relationship, when there is inharmonious or unhappy experience within the circle, it would be greatly affect the individual's emotion. Previous research has shown that low relational mobility is related with shame feeling (Sznycer et al., 2012). And feeling shame means the individuals may not be welcomed by the group members, in other words, they would lose the social support from the surroundings, and hence they would feel lonely (Mereish & Poteat, 2015).

People in high relational mobility societies can have more friends and they can express their feeling freely due to a higher general trust on others (Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). In other words, they have a diverse time investment in various relationships. Even if they have inharmonious or unhappy experience in a relationship, the individuals

can still get social support from the other relationships. As a result, they can engage

more actively in close and supportive relationships than the people from low relational

mobility societies do (Kito, Yuki & Thomson, 2017). Research by Dykstra (2009) also

supported that people from the higher individualistic area do not feel lonelier than the

lower individualistic area.

Also, due to the general low trust to others in low relational mobility societies

(Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994), expressing loneliness implies that the online daters

disclose their real feelings to use online dating sites. The expression of loneliness may

be a method to make others trust him and start connecting with the users. Therefore,

it is hypothesized that people from low relational mobility societies may report feeling

lonely more frequent than the users from high relational mobility do.

Hypothesis 5: Chinese online daters have higher tendency to express loneliness than

the North American online daters do.

As for the characteristics of high relational mobility society, there are many

opportunities to form a new relationship (Yuki et al., 2011) so that they would not afraid

of the bad rumor occurred in a small social circle. Also, in their point of view,

relationship goals are to fulfill the personal needs and attain individual benefits from a

relationship (Yuki et al., 2011). In such a high relational mobility society, they can have more opportunities to meet new people and form relationships. It is a quick and direct communication method to meet the suitable person. They would tend to mention more about their own uniqueness, which is weird and is not accepted by the mainstream of value. Transvestism and transgender are examples. By meeting more people, the chance of meeting the one with the same characteristics, namely weirdness, can be higher (Schug, 2009). For the reason that the individuals from low relational mobility need to maintain harmonious relationship within a group (Thomson, 2016), they would avoid doing something that is not accepted by the others. Therefore, they may rarely publicly mention their uniqueness, which may bring negative consequences towards the individual's social life.

Moreover, people would prefer to interact with similar others (McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook, 2001). In order to achieve this goal and self-benefit themselves in a relationship, the North American users may state more on their own uniqueness or other special requirements on others. The special requirements can ensure that others in the online dating sites embrace an opposing stand against the individual would not connect with the individual. The special requirement can be a resistance to a particular political figure. If someone cannot meet the individual's requirements, it entails the one

is not the suitable target that the individual want to develop relationship with. Since the

individuals would less likely to start the relationship with no self-benefits (Oishi et al.,

2014), they would not spend time to adjust and develop the relationship. Rather, they

choose to initiate another relationship quickly that is beneficial to them (Oishi et al.,

2014). Therefore, they would mention more special requests to attract people who are

more similar with themselves (Schug et al., 2009).

Apart from that, discussing and debating political issues among individuals and other

people in low relational mobility may easily to cause disputes. It would eventually harm

their adaptive tasks, to maintain ingroup harmonious. Therefore, they are less likely to

discuss political issues.

Hypothesis 6: North American online daters would mention their own uniqueness more

frequent than the Chinese online daters do.

Hypothesis 7: North American online daters would state resistance to political figures

supporters more frequent than the Chinese online daters do.

Low relational mobility causes general a low trust to strangers (Thomson, Yuki, & Ito,

2015), and hence it may be related to the different degree of resistance to fake

accounts. In Chinese value, people may hold a stronger destiny belief, such as *yuan*.

Lou & Li (2017) found that destiny beliefs, but not growth beliefs, predict rejection sensitivity. This destiny belief holders would have a stronger anxiously expect social rejection than the growth belief holders, which is usually held by people from high relational mobility society. In particular, Thomson et al. (2015) suggested that in low relational mobility society, internet users would have lower general trust. The low general trust would be associated with higher privacy concern (Thomson et al., 2015), and it may lead to their stronger attitude to resistance to fake accounts in Chinese online dating users than the North American users do. In contrast, people from high relational mobility society can have more general trust towards people (Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994), and thus they may not suspect the others are liars or they do not hold the sense that the online accounts are fake. Hence, Chinese users may have higher frequency to resistant to fake accounts than the North American users.

Hypothesis 8: Chinese online daters resist fake accounts more frequent than the North American online daters do.

Relational mobility and self-presentational strategies

As for the self-presentational strategies, these are mainly divided into self-enhancement and self-effacement (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997; Suzuki & Yamagishi, 2004; Yamagishi et al., 2012). Self-enhancement refers to

people showing a general sensitivity to positive self-relevant information (Kitayama et

al., 1997). In contrast, self-effacement means the people have a higher sensitivity to

negative self-relevant information is not an indication of low self-esteem or something

to be avoided or overcome (Kitayama et al., 1997). Both strategies are aimed to have

positive social and psychological consequences within their cultural system (Kitayama

et al., 1997).

Research on self-enhancement/effacement has been done using various

methodologies in face-to-face setting (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999;

Heine & Hamamura, 2007; Suzuki & Yamagishi, 2004; Yamagishi et al., 2012), social

network setting (Lee-Won, Shim, Joo, & Park, 2014; Mazur & Li, 2016) and relatively

anonymous online dating sites setting (Gebauer, Wagner, Sedikides, & Neberich,

2013), consistent findings were found that the westerners are more likely to perform

self-enhancement whereas the East Asians were more likely to perform self-

effacement.

Self-effacement is common in societies with low relational mobility (Yik, Bond, &

Paulhus, 1998; Suzuki & Yamagishi, 2004) because individuals from low relational

mobility societies need to adapt the strategies of avoiding offending others to avoid

interpersonal conflicts, which may lead to a long-lasting disharmonious relationship.

By avoiding overt self-promotion, individuals can avoid the risk of costly status

competition (Merten, 1997; Urban, 2011). On the other side, as discussed before, one

of the strategies to achieve relationship acquaintance of people in high relational

mobility is to have a high level of positive self-regard (Falk et al., 2009), so that they

can promote themselves to attract others well in such a competitive interpersonal

market.

Hypothesis 9: Chinese online daters describe their inferiority more frequent than the

North American online daters do.

Hypothesis 10: North American online daters describe their superiority more frequent

than the Chinese online daters do.

Gender, relationship goals, and self-presentational strategies

Based on the evolutionary psychology point of view, parental investment theory

suggested that, due to the different resources of parents to invest in their offspring,

gender would have different expectations on mate seeking criteria preference (Trivers,

1972). In mammalian fertilization, females had high parental investments, which at

least included a nine-month gestation period, as well as the lactation after birth to feed

offspring (Buss, 1989). In comparison, male investment on fertilization is relatively

small (Buss, 1989). As a trade-off to decrease the investment disparities between

males and females, males can transfer status, power, or resources to aid their offspring

in forming reciprocal alliances (Buss, 1989). In this sense, females would like to seek

the male partners who have the ability and willingness to provide parental-investment-

related resources including food, shelter, territory, and protection (Buss, 1989).

Therefore, women would prefer a man who indicates a desire for long-term investment

on resources on them whereas men would desire women who indicate their willingness

to involve in short-term, easy and sexual relationships (Thornhill, 1989). Additionally,

because of the high cost of being pregnant, female would be more cautious to have

casual sex with males. Thus, it is hypothesized that female would have more

resistance to hooking up.

Hypothesis 11: Female users seek soulmates more frequent than the male users.

Hypothesis 12: Female users state to resist hooking up more frequent than the male

users.

According to Trivers (1972), the sex investing more in offspring (usually the female)

will be selected to exert stronger preferences of mating partners. In other words,

females would have greater choosiness on mate criteria than males. Previous

research also supported females contacted and replied to others more selective than

men and females stated more restrictive preferences for their ideal mate in online

dating context (Fiore, Taylor, Zhong, Mendelsohn & Cheshire, 2010). Since people

prefer to interact with similar others (McPherson et al., 2001), female users may state

more own uniqueness, which is weird and different from the mainstream values, than

the males to attract the similar opposite sex.

Furthermore, due to the fact that women were more selective than men and sought

status more than men across age groups (Alterovitz & Mandelsohn, 2009). In response

to it, men also offered more status-related information on online dating sites (Alterovitz

& Mandelsohn, 2009). It is surmised that disclosing more information that the potential

mates may value that information is a strategy to attract the opposite sex. As females

valued male's willingness to give resources (Buss, 1989), males may mention more

romantic activities to attract potential mates believe the males have a willingness to

provide resources to the females.

Hypothesis 13: Female users mention their uniqueness more frequent than male users.

Hypothesis 14: Male users seek more romantic activities than female users do.

Purpose of the Study

Past research mainly focused on the using habits of online dating services in the US

culture (Alterovitz & Mendelsohn, 2013; Menkin, Robles, Wiley & Gonzaga, 2015).

Only rare research examined the cross-cultural aspect of Western and Chinese online dating users (Ye, 2014) but still, not much research focused on the relationship goals and the differences of relationship goal in different levels of relational mobility and gender. Cyber dating has been a popular dating method in the Western, but there are still lots of myth of the using habits of the Chinese online dating users. The proposed research aims to fill in the gap in this research field. Then, we can understand the gender and cultural differences in Chinese and North American online dater's relationship goals and self-presentational strategies.

Methodology

Sampling

The method of content analysis was adopted because it is a naturalistic observation that maintains a high external validity and this method could easily get touch with different aged people. A two-by-two factorial design was used in the proposed study. The two independent variables were culture background and gender whereas the dependent variables were the purpose of using online dating services and self-presentational strategies.

A total of six-hundred personal advertisements was downloaded from online dating websites, which were two dating websites developed in the United States (https://badoo.com/ and https://www.okcupid.com/) and the other two dating websites developed in Hong Kong (http://www.hongkongcupid.com/ and http://www.ecfriend.com/). These websites had similar formats that users can fill in the required sections and a free-express section to describe themselves and their ideal partner freely. The required sections include ad writer's demographic information such as gender, age, religion, race, education level, relationship history, and the other one is the self-described relationship goal. They can also search and match others through searching age, location, profile and other characteristics on the websites. Moreover, these online dating websites are free of charge and these are popular.

A total of 600 personal advertisements in the websites were sampled by stratified random sampling. In the first place, the researcher searched 50 heterosexual males and 50 heterosexual females in each three age groups (19-35 years old, 36-55 years old, 55 years old or above) from North American online dating websites and hence replicate the searching in Chinese online dating websites. The samples were randomly extracted after searching the targets within the age range.

Demographic information of the participants is presented as percentages in Table 1 (Appendix B), which shows the age, gender, education level, relationship status and having (a) child(ren) or not information across North American and Chinese culture online dating users.

Besides, in the process of sampling the advertisements, guidelines were developed to enhance the validity of the proposed study. First, advertisers from countries other than Hong Kong and America have not been counted because culture is an important variable in the proposed study. Second, only users whose self-pictures were available for visitors to view would be collected. As a result, the comparison can be more equivalent and it is a mean avoiding sampling faked account. Thirdly, only users who have written words with at least 20 characters for English and 20 characters for Chinese in the free-express section would be counted in order to avoid sampling fake account as far as possible. Finally, the sampled description word length of the Chinese online dating users ranged from 20 to 1305 words ($M = 120.13$, $SD = 133.79$). As for the description word length of North American users, it is ranged from 20 to 1723 words ($M = 190.04$, $SD = 258.04$).

The contents of participants' profiles were divided into two parts, one was demographic information such as gender, age, religion, race, education level, relationship history, and the other one is the self-described relationship goal computed by the subjects. The coders were only given the self-description information to decide which category of relationship goal the subjects aimed to pursue so that coders' decisions would not be affected by other irrelevant information. A reference code was given to each pair of demographic information and personal advertisement contents for the purpose of checking and referencing which items have been rated with a large discrepancy.

Coding Scheme

Content analysis on the written portions of the advertisements for being consistent with the qualitative method of previous research on relationship goals (Alterovitz & Mendelsohn, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and other research about online daters (Ye, 2014). The method can directly observe the behaviors and attitudes expressed by the online dating users. Personal advertisements were analyzed and were identified into different themes categorized by the code sheet (refer to Appendix A). Two-category coding was used to detect whether the themes are present or absent in the self-description. The frequency of the themes presented was recorded and then was analyzed. The themes in the code sheet are described based on previous research to

guide the coders. Cohen's Kappa, which is a preferred method for calculating the

extent of agreement between raters or observers (Cohen, 1960) was used to measure

inter-rater reliability. If the Kappa coefficient lies between 0.6 and 1, which is

considered acceptable, it shows the coding method has a stable reliability.

To be more precise, seeking for *romantic activities* (Kappa: .72) means that people

would look for a romantic partner, snuggling, hand-holding such romantic activities,

watching a sunset, holding hands, watching a movie, going to a bar (Alterovitz&

Mendelsohn, 2013; Berscheid, Snyder & Omoto, 1989); Mentioning *sexual interests*

(Kappa: .85) means forming sexual relationship and describing the desire match as

sexy, passionate or sensuous (Alterovitz & Mendelsohn, 2013); Seeking *soulmate*

(Kappa: .74) means to form long-term relationship, find the one person "out there" who

is specially destined, require high levels of romantic compatibility and find someone

who is perfectly compatible (Alterovitz & Mendelsohn, 2013; Houran & Lange, 2004),

which is close to the concept of commitment in Sternberg (1986)'s triangular theory of

love. Finding *friends* (Kappa: .67) is that the individuals stated that they want to find

friends with same interests or different interests and they want to meet new friends or

just chat with someone. *Self-improvement* (Kappa: .62) means that the persons want

to have some self-enhancement in their growth either physically or psychologically,

such as exercising, eager to know new things, having some explorations aiming to

benefit themselves and taking up a hobby. *Uniqueness* (Kappa: .74) means that the individuals reveal some information that is not easily accepted by the mainstream values, including transvestism and other special hobbies; Expressing *loneliness* (Kappa: .64) indicates as feeling alone, lacking companionship, feeling isolated from others, feeling no one knows me well (Alterovitz & Mendelsohn, 2013; Hughes, Waite, Hawkley, & Cacioppo, 2004).

There are three themes of the relationship goal that the user stated to resist. *Resistance to fake accounts* (Kappa: .70) means that the individuals directly stated that they do not want to receive the spam messages or receive messages from liar that is not in true heart to form a relationship. *Resistance to hooking up* (Kappa: .77) means that the individuals clearly stated that they resist the invitation of having one-night-stand or just showing sex interests. *Resistance to politics figures supporters* (Kappa: .91) refers to the individuals stated that they reject to form a relationship with a particular person regarding the political sides.

In terms of self-presentational strategies, the frequency of the users described their superiority characteristics and inferiority characteristics were measured to understand the concept of self-enhancement and self-effacement. For superiority (Kappa: .67), it

is a self-enhancing strategy meaning that the persons describe one's positive image, strength, and uniqueness while inferiority (Kappa: .72) is a self-effacement strategy that the persons stating one's negative image, weaknesses and they thought themselves as ordinary.

Two coders fluent in both English and Chinese were trained to code North American and Chinese personal advertisements. After reading the code sheet, the coders independently analyzed the contents of advertisements. The coder only looked at the self-description of the personal advertisement without seeing any other personal information such as gender, profile picture and demographic information to ensure the information would not act as a confound that affects the judgments of the coders. The coders only focused on the manifest content of the personal advertisement and the self-description were assigned in a random order. If there is a discrepancy between the two coders, items would be solved by discussion between the coders.

After the coders analyzed the relationship goals and self-presentational strategies of the participants, the results would then be organized and pairing up according to their belonged age groups and culture groups using the reference code marked before.

Data analysis

A series of chi-square tests were used to test the hypotheses. Also, exploratory

analysis to detect if there is a significant relationship pattern between the independent

variables (culture and gender) and dependent variables (relationship goals and self-

presentational strategies) would be done by a series of chi-square tests. The significant

level for all statistical tests is set at $p<.05$ to protect against the risk of type one error.

If a dependent variable was significantly related to two or more independent variables,

chi-square tests would be run to compare the different conditions of the two or more

independent variables to detect the interaction effect under different conditions.

Moreover, due to the overlapped codding on the dependent variables of a personal

advertisement, t-tests were run to test if there is significant difference of the number of

mentioned themes of users with different culture background and gender.

Results

The effects of culture on both relationship goals and self-presentational strategies are

presented in Fig. 1 (Appendix C) and Fig. 2 (Appendix D) respectively. Also, in Fig. 3

(Appendix E) and Fig. 4 (Appendix F), the graphs represent the relationship between

gender and relationship goals, and the relationship between gender and self-

presentational strategies respectively. Overall speaking, the results supported most of the hypotheses.

The first and second hypotheses were about the relationship goals pattern of seeking a soulmate and finding friends in Chinese and North American users. For *H1*, the chi-square tests showed Chinese users (74%) wanted to seek soulmate more frequent than the North American users (39.3%) did significantly, $X^2(1, N = 600) = 73.41$, p <.001. As for testing *H2*, it also revealed significant statistics that there is a higher reporting goals of finding friends among the North American users (67%) than the Chinese users (50%), $X^2(1, N = 600) = 17.86$, $p < .001$. Consistent with *H3*, more North American users (22.3%) than Chinese users (1%) showed sexual interests, $X^2(1, N = 600) = 66.24$, $p < .001$. *H4* was also supported that more North American users (11%) than Chinese users (2.7%) reported to seek self-improvement, $X^2(1, N = 600) = 18.99$, $p < .001$. For the testing on *H5*, it also provided significant results that more Chinese users (22%) expressed loneliness than the North American users (10%), $X^2(1, N = 600) = 16.07$, $p < .001$.

The statistics results also support *H6* and *H7*. The North American users (4.3%) mentioned uniqueness more frequent than the Chinese users (0.7%), $X^2(1, N = 600)$

= 8.27, p =.004. Also, the frequency of stating resistance to political figures supporters of North American users (4%) was higher than that of the Chinese users (0%), X^2(1, N = 600) = 12.25, p <.001. For *H8*, the results statistics is significant to suggest that more Chinese users (10%) resisted to fake accounts than the North American users (4.3%) did, X^2(1, N = 600) = 7.24, p =.007.

In terms of the relationship between culture and self-presentational strategies, such as describing their inferiority (*H9*). Chinese users (21.3%) employed this presentational strategy more frequent than the North American users (8.3%) did significantly, X^2(1, N = 600) = 20.07, p <.001. However, contrary to *H10*, the North American users (42.3%) did not show significant higher frequency on describing superiority than the Chinese users (44.7%) did, X^2(1, N = 600) =, p =.56. Users from both cultures demonstrated high rates of describing their superiority.

As for the analysis part for the gender, a contrary finding to *H11* was found that the female users (54.7%) did not report a higher frequency on seeking a soulmate than the male users (58.7%) did, X^2(1, N = 600) =, p =.32. However, as for the *H12*, it is supported by the statistics that the tendency to resist hooking up is stronger among the female users (16.7%) than the male users (4%), X^2(1, N = 600) = 25.97, p <.001.

Besides, consistent with *H13*, female users (4%) would also mention own uniqueness more frequent than the male users (1%) did, $X^2(1, N = 600) = 5.54$, $p = .019$. Last but not least, *H14* was also supported that male users (76%) were more likely to mention romantic activities than the female users (64.7%) were, $X^2(1, N = 600) = 9.23$, $p = .002$.

Apart from the hypothesis testing, exploratory analysis was done and unexpected findings were also found. First, the reporting frequency of Chinese users (57.3%) sought for romantic activities was higher than that of the North American users (42.7%), $X^2(1, N = 600) = 30.71$, $p < .001$. Second, male users (18.3%) had a stronger tendency to describe themselves as inferior than female users (11.3%) did, $X^2(1, N = 600) = 5.82$, $p = .016$). The explanations of the unexpected results would be presented in the discussion part.

Since romantic activities, inferiority and uniqueness were shown to be significantly influenced by both cultures and genders, chi-square tests had been run to test on the 4 different experimental conditions to see either culture or gender has the strongest effect on the dependent variables. For romantic activities, 79.3% of Chinese male users, 82% of Chinese female users, 72.7% of North American male users and 47.3% of North American female users sought romantic activities and the difference is

significant, X^2(1, N = 600) = 54.03, p <.001. The results indicated gender plays an important role especially in North American culture. For inferiority, 27.3% of Chinese male users, 15.3% of Chinese female users, 9.3% of North American male users, and 7.3% of North American female users presented themselves as inferior, X^2(1, N = 600) = 28.85, p <.001. It shows this phenomenon was significant in Chinese culture, especially for males. As for uniqueness, 0.7% of Chinese males and females respectively, 1.3% of North American males, and 7.3% of North American females mentioning uniqueness, showing the goal was reported significantly by the North American females, X^2(1, N = 600) = 19.35, p <.001.

The t-tests comparing the numbers of themes mentioned by the users result showed there was a close to significant results for the North American users (M = 2.34, SD = 1.26) and the Chinese users (M = 2.5, SD = .99), t (598) = 1.73, p = .084. Yet, no Chinese user mentioned resistance to political figure supporters. In this sense, the item may be an extreme value for the Chinese users. Therefore, t-tests comparing the numbers of themes excluding the extreme variable were run. The results indicate a significant difference on the North American users (M = 2.34, SD = 1.23) and the Chinese users (M = 2.5, SD = .99), t (598) = 2.2, p = .03. As for males (M = 2.45, SD = 1.11) and female users (M = 2.39, SD = 1.16), there was no significant differences on their number of mentioned themes, t (598) = .65, p = .52.

Discussion

In the current study, the different relationship goals and self-presentational strategies of the North American users and Chinese users were investigated theoretically and empirically. The content analysis on the self-description extracted from online dating sites showed many consistent findings with the hypotheses. Considering the unexpected findings in the exploratory analysis, I think it provides a more complete picture in the preferred relationship goals of Chinese and North American users. Chinese users would state directly that they want to get into a stable relationship, therefore they would state romantic activities as a stepping stone towards a long-term relationship. In contrast, the North American users may not directly say that they want to seek for a romantic partner, but they would merely mention their hobbies and superiorities and then wait for others with the same interests to approach them.

In terms of the direct relationship goals, Chinese users have a significant higher reporting rates on the more committed relationship such as soulmate and romantic activities, which include the meaning of finding a romantic partner. As for the North American users, they may prefer a more open and casual relationship such as friends and mentioning sexual interests. Although it is arguable that verbally sought for a friendship may be a stepping stone towards a more intimate relationship, Agnew, Van

Lange, Rusbult, and Langston (1998) research suggested that cognitive interdependence, meaning that verbally expression of the relationship is associated with commitment to a close relationship. Therefore, the relationship described as finding a friend may imply less commitment relationship with finding a romantic partner. The results suggested that individuals from low relational mobility societies were more willing to seek for relationships with high commitment level, namely romantic relationship and marital relationship. On the contrary, individuals from high relational mobility societies prefer a more open and casual relationships such as sexual relationship and friendship.

Moreover, the North American users would focus more on self-improvement, and the goals focusing on finding a high similarity friend/partner, namely mentioning own uniqueness and resistance to political figure supporters. It echoes the need to promote themselves and the methods to promote themselves in order to be attractive in the interpersonal market (Yuki et al., 2013).

In particular, although the Chinese users described their inferiority more frequent than the North American users did, they still have a high rate of reporting their superiority. It suggests that the Chinese users may adopt a more holistic self-presentational

strategy to promote themselves although previous research suggest that they would have a higher self-effacement that they may have higher self-criticism and lower positive self-regard (Suzuki & Yamagishi, 2004). it is possibly because of the nature of online dating websites. In online dating sites, profile pictures and self-description are major tools to promote themselves. Therefore, they need to promote themselves anyway to say something good. As for the North American users, their frequency on describing inferiority is much lower than the frequency on describing superiority. It supported the view that North American users adopted self-enhancement to promote themselves.

Among the three types of resistances, only resistance to hooking up did not show significant differences between the two countries. The possible explanations may also be different. As discussed before, the North American would be more eager to find others with stating requirements to find the users that fit their expectations. Thus, they would report to resist hooking up (11.7%). For the Chinese, from the research result, it indicates that they would be more likely to prefer a committed relationship rather than open and casual relationship. Therefore, they would also report to resist hooking up (9%).

In terms of gender, the research findings were consistent with the hypothesis that females would be more likely than males to resist hooking up and mentioning uniqueness while males stated more on romantic activities. Unexpected results of males describing their inferiority more frequent than the females. A possible reason was that the females were too choosy and they usually focused on status-related resources (Alterovitz & Mandelsohn, 2009), if the males did not attain enough resources (money, status and shelter etc.), they would feel they did not have enough competence to seek a partner. Especially in Hong Kong, the property price was the highest in the world (Demographia, 2017), the male's affordability on housing was low. In this sense, the males would feel inferior to the females.

In order to explain the interaction effects on romantic activities, uniqueness, and inferiority, these suggest that the cultural self-effacement effect is stronger among the males due to the higher choosiness on male status-related resources of female. Nonetheless, females would show their higher choosiness power in mate preference criteria (Trivers, 1972), especially for those live in a high relational mobility society stressing on individual's unique characteristics for promoting themselves and finding a partner fitting their characteristics.

Implications

This study provides several theoretical implications on both cross-cultural research and computer-mediated communication, as well as practical implications for online dating companies.

This research indicates the different roles of culture and gender in online dater's relationship goals and self-presentational strategies. Different inferences on effecting the relationship goals and self-presentational strategies based on the literature review of relational mobility, which is a relatively novel idea in cross-cultural research. Various hypotheses are developed using the socio-ecological approach, and eventually, consistent findings provide supportive evidence to the concept. It supports the strong explanation and parsimony power for theorizing cultural differences by using the socio-ecological approach, which stresses on objective societal differences in structural incentives and related behaviors evoked by the incentives (Schug et al., 2009, 2010; Yuki et al., 2013; Thomson, 2016).

The findings also provide some implications on computer-mediated communication. The results indicate the users' offline social context on finding a partner is related to their relationship goals expressed online. However, the integral link is strong may due to the nature of online dating sites. The site is only a start of a potential relationship

(Finkel et al., 2012), the more important part of dating is still developed in the offline context. But for the people who do not want to develop relationship in offline context, they may not be bordered by this offline reality constraints. Additionally, the relative anonymity of online dating sites can also elicit the reveal on particular themes despite the social stereotype (Cooper, 1998; Young, Pistner, O'MARA & Buchanan, 1999). Therefore, through investigating online dating context, some genuine desires of people can be discovered because they do not need to deal with social pressure and they can express those desires freely.

Speaking about the practical implication, as online dating industry rapidly rose in past years. In 2015, 15% of American adults have used online dating sites or mobile dating apps, up from 13% in 2013 (Cesar, 2016). It is a big market that approximately $2 billion revenue was generated by the industry each year (Cesar, 2016). Some companies also create online dating sites targeting users from different countries. Considering the results of this study, the online dating company may provide some courtship tips to the online daters so that they can understand the relationship goals and self-presentational strategies of other online daters. Therefore, the misunderstanding of the presented information can be minimized. In addition, the users can use different strategies such to attract the opposite sex in other countries and they can get along with each other smoothly.

Limitations

First of all, the sampling participants are self-selected. Online dating websites were oriented from the western and the setting is similar to the analogy of high relational mobility society, which was an interpersonal market (Yuki et al., 2013). The sampled Chinese online daters may be more westernized, open-minded, having advanced skills to use technology and thus the results may be biased. Therefore, the generalizability to the whole population of Chinese culture may be limited. As consequence, the results may indicate less cultural differences.

Furthermore, the current research adopted content analysis on online dater's personal advertisements. In this sense, only latent and reported themes can be collected. Even though the participants may pursue other goals, but said in a subtler way, especially for the high context culture. The themes communicated in subtler way may not be collected. Also, only specific themes stated in the code sheets are collected and hence other themes would be excluded in the study. Moreover, for the measurement of self-presentational strategies, by merely recognizing the subjects have or have not presented the strategies may not be very useful to reflect their attitudes toward self-enhancement or self-effacement. Rather, the quantity of the description vocabularies may also be an important factor. However, this was not included in the current study.

Future Research

Further research can be done on not only sampling the participants in the online dating

site users, but it can also sample the general public within the cultures. Hence, it can

increase the generalizability to the public with the cultures, but not only showing the

participants who have already chosen to engage in online dating.

Since the themes of the code sheet are developed and checked before and during the

data collection process, some unique themes pattern has been captured. But still,

some important features such as a clearer differentiation of inferiority and disclosing

nothing special may provide a more precise picture of self-presentational strategies.

Therefore, a more systematically designed of code sheet on self-presentational

strategies can be refined in the future.

Conclusion

With the advanced technology, the human behaviors of seeking partners are changing

from offline to online. As explained by the socio-ecological approach, parental

investment theory and the natures of online dating sites, users with different cultural

backgrounds and genders have various relationship goals and self-presentational

approaches. For the individuals from low relational mobility societies, they were more

likely to engage in committed relationships and adopt a more holistic description of themselves. They have a higher resistance to fake accounts and higher rate of loneliness expression when compared to the individuals from high relational mobility societies. As for the individuals from the high relational mobility societies, they were more likely to engage in open and casual relationship and they have a higher tendency to have self-enhancement. Also, they reported more ego-focused relationship goals, such as self-improvement, mentioning their uniqueness and resistance to political figures supporters. In the comparison of gender, the male users focused more on romantic activates and described their inferiorities, whereas the females resisted hooking up and mentioned uniqueness features to a greater extent to males. It highlights the explanation power of the theories and the interaction of human behaviors and internet use.

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Appendix A

Code Sheet

Relationship goals	Descriptions of relationship goal
Seeking romantic activities	watching a sunset, holding hands, watching a movie, going to a bar, finding a romantic partner, having a romantic dinner, going for a walk/drive, visiting family/friend
Mentioning sexual interests	describe themselves and others as sexy and passionate, desire to engage in sexual relationship, requiring someone who is sexually compatible and sensuous
Expressing loneliness	feeling alone, lacking companionship, feeling isolated from others, feeling no one knows me well, feeling left out, feeling people are around me but not with me
Finding a soulmate	finding the one person "out there" who is specially destined, requiring high levels of romantic compatibility and finding someone who is perfectly compatible, looking for long-term relationship
Seeking for friends	Finding a person/people who can chat with, finding a person/people who has/have a bond of mutual affection (helpful, supportive, friendly, companion), finding a person/people who can participate activities with the subjects without stating romantic element
Looking for Self-improvement	Seeking self-improvement in two different areas: physical and psychological Physical: Exercising, quitting smoke, eating and drinking moderately Psychological: knowing more friends, having some self-enhancement in their growth, being eager to know new things, having explorations aiming to benefit themselves, taking up a hobby, learning a new language
Mentioning own uniqueness	Mentioning their special hobby that is not accepted by the mainstream of vale. They are more difficult to find people of the same taste. Examples include transvestism (易服癖) and transgender.

| Resistance to fake account	Mentioning they not looking for someone who make up fake information to approach the subjects solely for self-benefits, such as promoting products or liars.
Resistance to hooking up	Mentioning they are not looking for one night stand, not looking for sex only, not for casual sex
Resistance to political figure supporters	Mentioning they are not welcome the specific kinds of political figure

Self-presentational strategies	Descriptions of self-presentational strategy
Superiority	Being self-enhancement about themselves. Having a positive self-regard. Describing one's positive image, strength and uniqueness. E.g. "I'm compassionate, determined, adaptable and self-aware, all wrapped up with a bow of good humor and light sarcasm."
Inferiority	Being self-critical about themselves. Describing one's negative image, weakness and ordinary characteristics.

Appendix B

Table 1

Demographics by cultures of sampled online dating advertisement writers.

		Chinese culture (n=300)	American culture (n=300)
Age group	Young (19-35)	33.3%	33.3%
	Middle-age(36-55)	33.3%	33.3%
	Old (56 or above)	33.3%	33.3%
Gender	Male	50%	50%
	Female	50%	50%
Education level	Middle school	6.3%	0%
	High school	31.7%	9.7%
	Two-year college	16%	6%
	University	26.7%	27.7%
	Post graduate	12%	0.7%
	Not answer	7.3%	49.3%
Relationship status	Single	59.7%	85%
	Married	3%	5%
	Separated	3.3%	0%
	Divorced	23.7%	0.3%
	Widowed	4.3%	0%
	Complicated	1.3%	1.3%
	Not answer	4.7%	8.3%
Have children?	Yes	25.3%	32%
	No	74.7%	68%
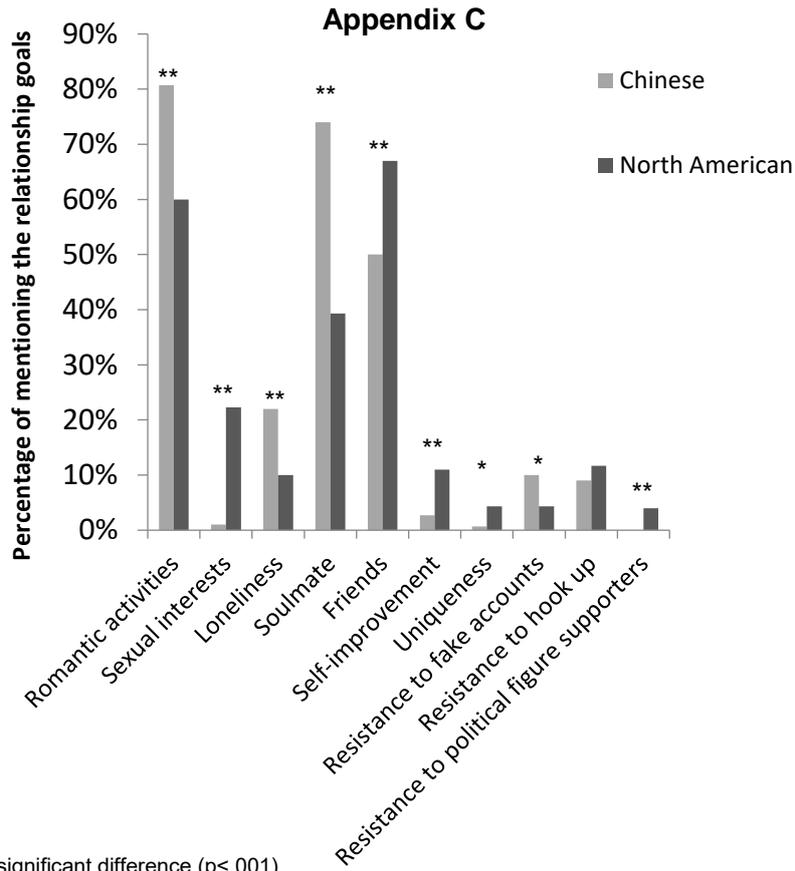
**denotes a significant difference (p<.001).

*denotes a significant difference (p<.05).

Fig.1 Percentage of participants mentioning the relationship goals.
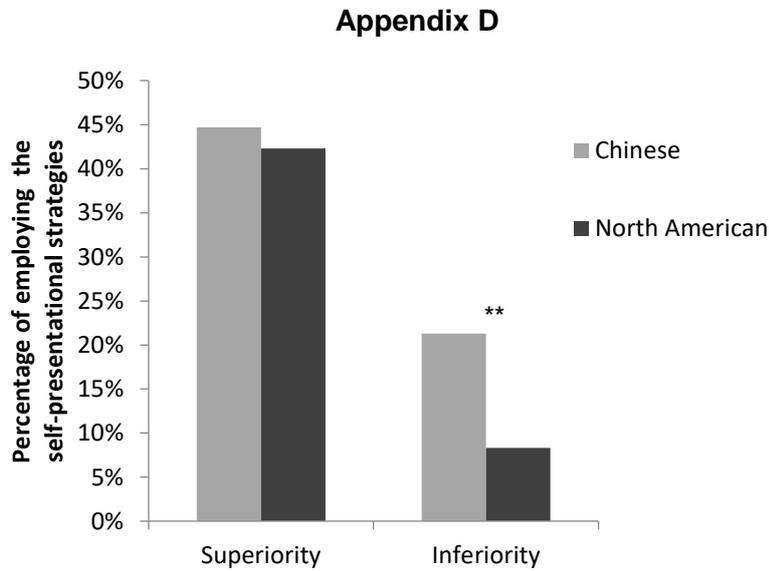
**denotes a significant difference (p<.001).

*denotes a significant difference (p<.05).

Fig.2 Percentage of participants mentioning the self-presentational strategies.

Appendix E
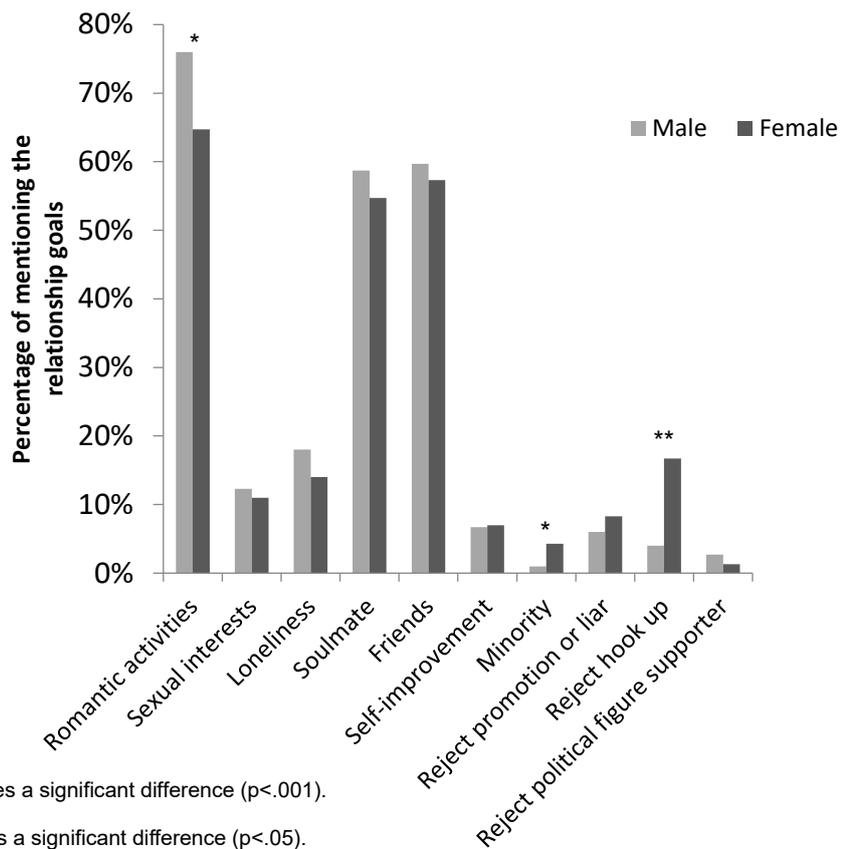

**denotes a significant difference (p<.001).

*denotes a significant difference (p<.05).

Fig.3 Percentage of participants mentioning the relationship goals.

Appendix F

**denotes a significant difference (p<.001).
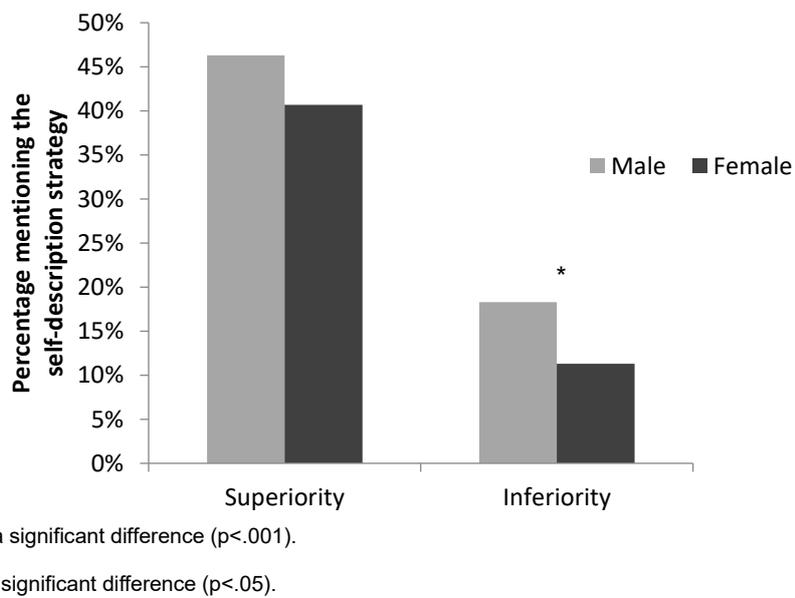
*denotes a significant difference (p<.05).

Fig.4 Percentage of participants mentioning the self-presentational strategies.