

Cultural Differences in How to Make Someone Love You.

Nick Hamilton, Ka Ip, Dr. Fiona Lee, Lauren DeVincent, Denise Baran and Min Hyoung Kim
Department of Psychology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Background: Sharing good news with others has shown to enhance well-being, above and beyond the impact of the good news itself (Gable et al., 2004). Previous studies have indicated four types of responses to good news disclosure: Active-constructive (“enthusiastic praising”), passive-constructive (“quiet supporting”), active-destructive (“criticizing”) and passive-destructive (“ignoring”) responses. Studies on Western dating couples found that only active-constructive (but not the other three types) responses were related to positive relationship well-being (Gable et al., 2004). On the other hand, cross-cultural research suggested that non-Western/interdependence cultures prefer indirect communication (Kapoor et al., 2003), and benefited from implicit social support (Taylor et al., 2007), suggesting that there may exist cross-cultural differences in the preference of good news disclosure and how that is related to relationship well-being. However, this hypothesis hasn’t been explored. To address this gap, this study examined Western (Caucasian), and non-Western (Indian) cultures’ responses to good news sharing, and its relation to relationship well-being. Method: Participants were asked to share their good news and how their partners reacted and responded to their good news disclosure in an anonymous survey. They also completed questionnaires assessing their relationship intimacy and satisfaction. Survey responses were coded based on four types of responses. Results: In both Western and non-Western cultures, active-constructive responses were associated with higher relationship intimacy and satisfaction, whereas passive-destructive responses were negatively associated with these outcomes. Conclusion: Results are discussed in terms of the importance to look at the universal and cross-cultural differences in interpersonal communication styles to understand psychological well-being.



Cultural Differences in How to Make Someone Love You

Nick Hamilton, Fiona Lee Ph.D., Lauren DeVincent, Denise Baran, Min Hyoung Kim, Ka I Ip*



Background

- Sharing good news with others has shown to enhance well-being, above and beyond the impact of the good news itself (Gable et al., 2004).
- Previous studies have indicated four types of responses to good news disclosure:
 - Active-constructive (“enthusiastic praising”)
 - Passive-constructive (“quiet supporting”)
 - Active-destructive (“criticizing”)
 - Passive-destructive (“ignoring”)
- There may exist cross-cultural differences in the preference of good news disclosure and how that is related to relationship well-being.
- However, this hypothesis hasn’t been explored. To address this gap, this study examined Western (Caucasian), and non-Western (South Asian) cultures’ responses to good news sharing, and its relation to relationship well-being.

Methods

In this study 319 participants, 121 Caucasians (44=male, 77= female; Mean age = 34.5, SD = 11.5) and 198 South Asians (128=male, 70=female; Mean age = 30.0, SD =7.3) who are currently in romantic relationships were recruited through Amazon’s MTurk.

Think about a recent time when you shared some good news with Peter.

In the space below please describe the good news.

When you shared the good news with Peter, please describe how Peter reacted or responded. In particular, what did Peter say to you?

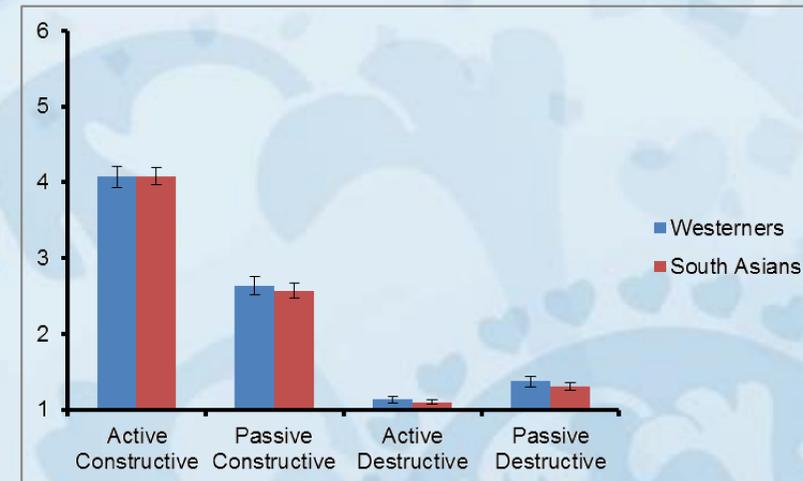
Respond to each question based on your relationship with Peter right now.

	Does not describe me/my relationship at all (1)	2	3	4	Describes me/my relationship well (5)
Peter listens to me when I need someone to talk to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can state my feelings without Peter getting defensive.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often feel distant from Peter.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Peter can really understand my hurts and joys.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

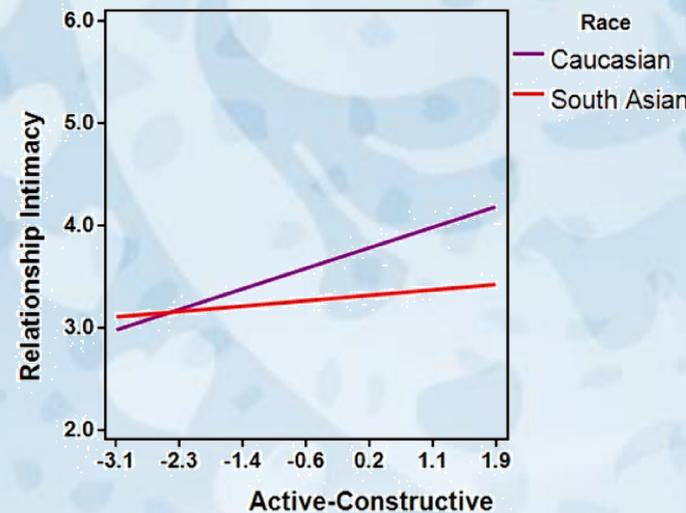
Survey responses were coded on a 1-6 scale based on the four types of responses:

Praiser ($\alpha = .82$)	Supporter ($\alpha = .80$)	Criticizer ($\alpha = .71$)	Ignorer ($\alpha = .78$)
“she was jumped and screamed, she hugged me and she said she is so happy for this news”	“He was happy and smile.”	“Good Job, but you should work harder!”	“Congrats, Does that mean our Starbucks budget just increased?”

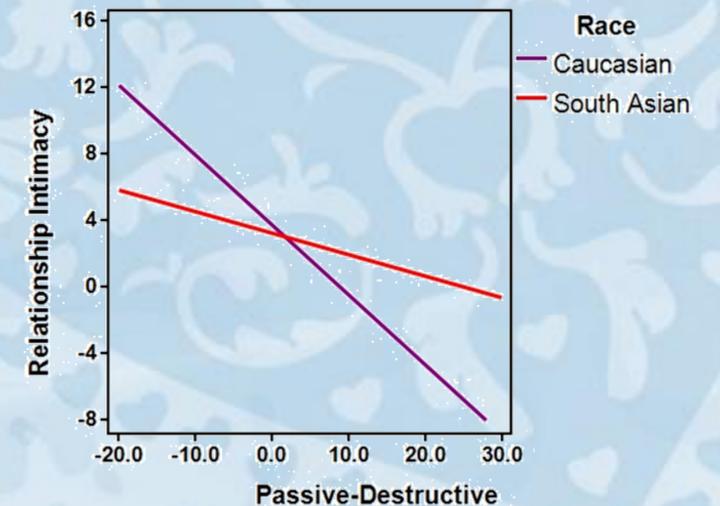
Results



Results shows that most couples preferred to use active constructive and passive constructive responses, compared to active destructive and passive destructive responses, $F(3, 358) = 14.82, p < .001$, regardless of cultures.



Caucasians reported higher level of relationship intimacy when their partner used Active-Constructive responses. However, no effect was found for participants in South Asian cultures.



Caucasians reported lower level of relationship intimacy when their partner used Passive-Destructive responses. However, no effect was found for participants in South Asian cultures.

Discussion

- Our findings indicate that couples tend to use active-constructive responses to positive event disclosure universally across cultures. Consistent with previous studies, active-constructive responses have a positive impact on relationship intimacy in Caucasians, while passive-destructive responses have a negative effect on relationship intimacy. However, both of these response types have no significant effect on South Asians.
- Prior studies have suggested that people from non-Western cultures tend to be more interdependent (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), prefer indirect communication (Kapoor et al., 2003) and implicit social support (Taylor et al., 2007). These suggest that active and enthusiastic responses may not be the “optimal” communication style for their relationship well-beings. This may in fact explain the non-significant relationship between active-constructive responses and intimacy. Further research should look at potential mediators to explain our results. Nevertheless, our findings highlight the importance to look at the universal and cross-cultural differences in interpersonal communication styles to understand psychological well-being.

References

Gable, S et al. (2004). *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 87(2), 228
 Kapoor et al., (2003). *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 27(6), 684-700
 Markus & Kitayama (1991). *Psychological Review*, 98 (2), 224
 Taylor et al., (2007) *Psychological Science* 18(9), 831-837



*corresponding author: kaip@umich.edu