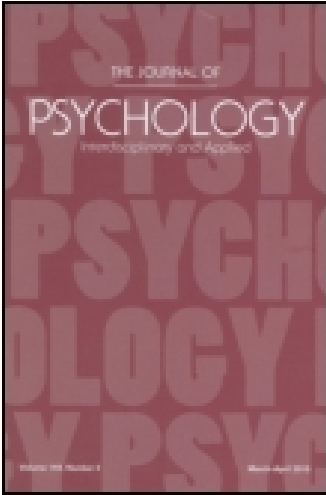


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SEXUAL ATTITUDES AMONG BRITISH AND JAPANESE STUDENTS*¹

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SABURO IWAWAKI AND H. J. EYSENCK

SUMMARY

A comparison is reported between 463 Japanese students and 802 British students of both sexes and similar ages with respect to their answers to a questionnaire on sexual attitudes, habits, and practices. The data indicate that the Japanese students were much less permissive and advanced in their attitudes, showing an almost Victorian reticence. Sex differences in attitudes were preserved across cultures, and culture differences were manifested across the two sexes. More detailed comparisons were made across the various factors that emerged from the original analysis of the questionnaire, and these aid in the discussion of the finer structure of the cultural comparisons.

A. INTRODUCTION

One of the disadvantages of social research is that many of the conclusions of individual studies are inevitably culture-bound; quite different results might be obtained in other countries, other cultures, or with other races. Eysenck (1) has recently published a series of studies of sexual attitudes and behavior patterns as they appeared in England at the present time; there is no way of knowing whether similar attitude patterns or correlations with sex and age would become apparent in other cultures, or indeed whether similar findings would have been emerged in England in the Victorian era. We have chosen to make one such comparison, contrasting results from British students in England with results obtained with Japanese students of similar age. England is a rather permissive country, while Japan is said to be still very Victorian (nonpermissive) in its outlook on sex (5): this provides one area of difference. Personality differences also

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exist; the Japanese were found to be higher on neuroticism and lower on extraversion than the English (3, 4). In Eysenck's (1) study it was found that introversion is related to sexual inhibition, and that neuroticism could have a similar effect, particularly in conjunction with introversion. This would agree with observations of Japanese conditions and suggests specific hypotheses to investigate. The revolution in sexual habits, so characteristic of the Western world, has passed Japan by to some extent, and altogether the Japanese have been found to be less revolutionary than their Western counterparts (2).

B. METHOD

The Ss of this study were 463 unmarried Japanese students (229 male, 234 female), ranging in age from 18 to 22 years of age, with a mean age of 21 years. The English sample with whose attitudes those of the Japanese students are being compared consisted of 423 male and 379 female students of similar age distribution; details concerning this group are given in Eysenck (1). The questionnaire used in the original study was translated into Japanese, and three pretests were carried out to ensure that the wording would be comprehensible to both the male and female students. Four questions to which hardly any Ss replied in the affirmative were omitted from the original version, which included 98 questions; these items all involved statements about experience of sexual intercourse. One further item was omitted; that had appeared in duplicate (at different points of the inventory) in order to check consistency of responding. As most of the Japanese Ss in the pretest noted the duplication, the item was omitted, making a total of 93 items.

Groups of 20 to 30 male students were administered the Japanese version of the inventory by two male psychology students, and groups of 20 to 30 female students were tested similarly by two female psychology students, as part of the students' research project. Ss were not asked to give their names.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. *General Differences*

Great differences were found in endorsements of "Yes" answers between male and female students and between British and Japanese students.² For

² A table listing the 93 items in the questionnaire given to Japanese Ss, together with comparisons of percentages of "Yes" answers given by both British and Japanese students, is available from either author at the addresses shown at the end of this article.

TABLE 1
MEAN DIFFERENCES OF PERCENTAGE OF "YES" ANSWERS FOR 92 ITEMS

Comparison	Mean	SD
Male: British-Japanese	14.82%	13.51
Female: British-Japanese	17.23%	15.49
British: Male-female	15.36%	13.10
Japanese: Male-female	18.75%	14.17

each item, difference scores were computed for both males and females, and sex differences for British and Japanese students. Mean differences in percentages of "Yes" answers for 92 items are shown in Table 1.³ Females tended to show greater culture differences between British and Japanese students than did males. On the other hand, Japanese students tended to show greater sex differences than did the British, though this was not significant.

The correlation of difference scores for British and Japanese males *vs.* British and Japanese females ($r = .44, p < .01$) indicates that cultural differences for male students were similar in nature to those shown by the female students. In a similar manner, the correlation between the difference scores for British males and females *vs.* Japanese males and females ($r = .62, p < .01$) indicates that sex differences in one country corresponded pretty well with those found in the other.

The greatest differences between responses of British and Japanese students were shown in item 59 ("I enjoy petting") for both males and females. Petting is very common behavior in the United Kingdom, but not in Japan. The next greatest differences were shown in items 41 ("I think about sex almost every day") and 15 ("I am sexually rather unattractive"). Thinking about sex is more common in British students than in Japanese students. This is supported by responses to item 6 ("I think only rarely about sex"). Self-images about sexual unattractiveness were stronger in Japanese students than in British students. It is unclear what causes are at work on this point. The Japanese students did not have many friends of the opposite sex, felt more comfortable when they were with the same sex, and did not have many dates. Such a tendency in Japan does not mean that Japanese students tended to be homosexual, because they did not think that homosexuality is normal. From a consideration of sexual activities in

³ Since item 76 was modified in the Japanese translation as follows, "I have been involved with more than one romantic affair at the same time" ("love affair" in the original version), this item was omitted in the comparison of responses of British Ss with those of their Japanese counterparts.

Japanese students, it would rather seem that they (especially the females) were sexually immature or sexually depressed. Items 47 and 80 (sexual curiosity) produced the greatest sex differences in both British (53% and 53%) and Japanese (50% and 56%) *Ss*. More males liked to look at pictures of nudes and sexy pictures than did females. More males would agree to see a "blue film" and read a highly pornographic book than would females. Seeing a person nude did not interest as many females, and more males had more pleasant sexual feelings from touching their sexual parts. These findings mean that more males manifested intense curiosity both in the West and the East than did females.

2. *Differences by Factors*

It is possible to compare the attitudes to sex of British and Japanese students on the basis of 13 factors which Eysenck (1) has extracted from the matrix of item intercorrelations. Table 2 shows mean differences of "Yes" answers for each factor between British and Japanese students (absolute values) for different sexes and between males and females for different cultures. For males, the factor "sexual experience" (SEXP) showed the greatest difference between British and Japanese students. However, this factor consists of only 3 items. For females, the factor "sexual nervousness" (SNER) showed the greatest difference (about 30%) between British and Japanese students. This factor showed the greatest culture difference (about 20%) for males also. More Japanese students felt nervous with the opposite sex, felt at ease with people of the same sex, and had fewer friends of the opposite sex. Usually, most Japanese female students made it a rule to take their seats in a group of the same sex when attending lectures and seminars at coeducational colleges and universities. These facts suggest that Japanese female students (about 20 years of age) were not yet mature psychosexually rather than that they were sexually neurotic.

The mean difference of "Yes" responses between Japanese males and females amounted to about 20% in the "sexual satisfaction" (SSAT) factor. Sexual satisfaction is a derivative of active sexual life. If *Ss* have no sexual experience (including masturbation, petting, sexual intercourse, and so on), they would have difficulties in responding to questions concerning sexual satisfaction (SSAT). Japanese female students showed lower endorsement of "Yes" answers in both negative and positive questions of this factor; instead they gave a higher percentage of "?" responses, as we shall see later. This would mean that Japanese female students had not yet experienced enough sex to respond to this kind of question. For example, both

TABLE 2
 MEDIANS AND CORRELATIONS (RHO) OF DIFFERENCES ACROSS CULTURES AND
 ACROSS SEXES FOR EACH FACTOR

Factor	British-Japanese differences (%)			Male-female differences (%)			Correlation (rho)	
	1. Male	2. Female	3. British	4. Japanese	1 vs. 2	3 vs. 4		
Sexual satisfaction [SSAT (N = 9)]	18	9	11	16	.73*	.73*		
Sexual excitement [SEXC (N = 12)]	10	18	16	29	.40	.57*		
Sexual nervousness [SNER (N = 7)]	25	30	8	13	.92**	.15		
Sexual curiosity [SCUR (N = 9)]	8	8	32	38	.65*	.81**		
Premarital sex [PREM (N = 10)]	15	11	12	20	.75**	.86**		
Repression [REPR (N = 10)]	8	9	10	6	.82**	.68*		
Prudery [PRUD (N = 11)]	10	9	5	8	.63*	.32		
Sexual experience [SEXP (N = 3)]	28	17	11	34	—	—		
Homosexuality [HOMO (N = 9)]	10	11	4	11	.93**	.61*		
Censorship [CENS (N = 10)]	11	18	12	17	.68*	.75**		
Promiscuity [PROM (N = 7)]	3	8	37	32	.14	.76*		
Sexual hostility [SHOS (N = 9)]	16	19	7	10	.56	.26		
Guilt [GUIL (N = 15)]	6	10	5	15	.27	.23		

* $p < .05$.
 ** $p < .01$.

British and Japanese females showed that 8% of them had been deprived sexually, but this figure does not seem to be quantitatively identical for both groups. Sixty percent of the British female students were satisfied with their sex life, while only 19% of Japanese female students were. In the British sample male students felt more unsatisfied than did female students (items 4 and 20). There was about 15% mean difference between sexual satisfaction of the British and Japanese male students. This means that Japanese male students had fewer sexual outlets than their British counterparts. The fact that more unmarried males—both British and Japanese—felt unsatisfied than did unmarried females may show that males have stronger sexual desires and that there are few opportunities to satisfy these strong desires of males. Differences between percentage of “Yes” answers from British and Japanese male students were significantly correlated with those between percentages from British and Japanese female students ($\rho = .73$). Sex differences in the British sample for these SSAT items were significantly correlated with those in the Japanese sample as well.

In the case of sexual excitement (SEXC), there were marked differences across sexes, especially between Japanese males and females (mean difference of endorsement was about 25%), and across cultures, especially between Japanese females and British females (mean difference of endorsement was about 25%). British female students claimed to “think about sex almost every day” (52%), while only 1% of Japanese female students did so. On the contrary 53% of Japanese female students said they “think only rarely about sex,” while 13% of their British counterparts did so. Endorsements of SEXC items of the Japanese male students were rather similar to those of British female students. In any case, British students had far more overt sexual desires than the Japanese students.

Eighty percent of British female students “have many friends of the opposite sex” and “feel at ease with people of the opposite sex,” while 35% of Japanese female students “have many friends of the opposite sex” and 17% of them “feel at ease with people of the opposite sex.” Only 9% of British male students and 8% of British female students “are embarrassed to talk about sex,” while in the case of Japanese students 25% of males and 38% of females “feel embarrassed to talk about sex.” This suggests that Japanese students are psychosexually underdeveloped and immature at the age of 20. For Japanese students this factor (SNER) may mean sex immaturity rather than sex nervousness. This factor showed that there were marked differences of “Yes” responses across cultures, 22% for males and 31% for females. These figures were much higher than those of sex differences within the same culture.

However, this does not mean that Japanese students manifested only very weak sexual curiosity. British students manifested more intense curiosity than Japanese students, but the differences were relatively small, 8% for males and 10% for females. Japanese females were not so much interested in "seeing a blue film" (15%) and "reading a highly pornographic book" (21%). In the case of the sexual curiosity (SCUR) factor cluster, there were remarkable differences across sexes rather than across cultures, 36% for British students and 38% for Japanese. Sex differences in sexual curiosity in British students were very similar to those in Japanese students ($\rho = .81$).

Although Japanese students tended to accept premarital sex (items 42 and 45); 72% of males and 66% of females "never had many dates." They did not expect virginity in their partner for marriage (items 5 and 26). Japanese students' notion of sex seems inconsistent with their performance. British students tended to accept premarital sex (PREM) much more (about 15%) than did Japanese students. Males tended to accept premarital sex much more than did females, for both British (16%) and Japanese students (18%). Generally speaking, thus, Japanese students showed lower levels of sexual activities than British students. Such findings suggest that Japanese students have stronger repression of sexual activity.

In fact, mean differences of repression item cluster (REPR) between British and Japanese students were 14% for males and 17% for females, but such differences were mainly produced as a result of two items (6 and 41) which were related to thinking about sex. If these items were eliminated from the REPR item cluster, there would not be a great difference between the two cultures. The repression factor showed 10% mean sex difference of "Yes" responses for the two groups with higher females' repression. Petting seems very common and acceptable among British students (92% for males and 78% for females), but not at all common in Japan (16% for males and only 5% for females). British students accepted "necking" in public, which is not traditional behavior in Japan, though Japanese students may watch "necking" on TV and film. Japanese students were more prudish than their British counterparts, at least from a point of view based on the British life style.

In the case of homosexuality (HOMO) factor, British students demonstrated that they accepted homosexuals much more than did Japanese students (items 40 and 77). No Japanese female students "had conflicts about their sex feelings towards a person of their own sex" (0%). Japanese students were found to "be more embarrassed to talk about sex" (25% for

males and 38% for females) than were British students (9% for males, 8% for females). Attitude to homosexuality was not so different between British male and female students (mean difference of endorsement 6%) in comparison with Japanese students (mean difference 12%). Many personality inventories made in the U. S.A. and other countries contain scales to detect homosexuality. This means that homosexuals seem to be numerous in the Western countries. There was a highly consistent tendency between males and females in relation to response patterns of British and Japanese students' attitudes to homosexuality ($\rho = .92$).

Sex shops are open at the main street of London, newsagents in England are flooded with magazines that carry nude pictures, and outdoor advertising using nudes appears in the London underground. Such a situation gives Japanese visitors the impression that censorship on sexual affairs is much less strict in England than in Japan. British students, however, have shown a more intense tendency to protest against the censorship on sex than Japanese students. Mean difference across cultures of "Yes" answers to censorship (CENS) was 14% for males and 17% for females. Positive attitudes to CENS were stronger in females than in males, for both British students (mean difference = 14%) and Japanese students (mean difference = 20%). Japanese students who felt that "there are too many immoral plays on TV" were much more (19% higher) for both sexes than their British counterparts, while British students gave many more "Yes" answers to item 61 [i.e., "The Pill should be universally available" (28% higher for males and 33% higher for females)] and item 71 [i.e., "Young people should be allowed out at night without being too closely checked" (33% higher for both sexes)] than did Japanese students. Although British students showed sexual satisfaction much more than did Japanese students, the former gave "Yes" answers to item 84 on prostitution much more frequently than did Japanese students (14% higher for males and 25% higher for females). In both cultures males tended to protest against censorship on sex—e.g., the Pill, going out at night, pornography, prostitution, plays and films—more intensely than did females. Culture differences of males' attitudes to censorship were quite similar to those of females ($\rho = .68$), and sex differences of British attitude to censorship were very similar to those of Japanese ($\rho = .75$) as well.

There were appreciable cultural differences between "Yes" answers to sexual hostility of British students and those of Japanese students. Mean differences in the sexual hostility factor (SHOS) were 16% for males and 17% for females. The sexual hostility item cluster contains questions to be

responded to on the basis of sex experiences. Since only a few Japanese students have had sex affairs, it was difficult for them to answer these items. Many “?” answers to SHOS were produced; e.g., 37% of Japanese male students and 56% of Japanese female students gave “?” answers to item 79. It is somewhat difficult to interpret the figures of Japanese students’ “Yes” answers to SHOS because of the many “?” answers, by comparison with those of British students. Generally speaking, most of the Japanese students, particularly female students, did not have enough sex experience to feel hostile to their sex partners.

Since Japanese female students had only few sex experiences, most of them did feel guilt about sex experiences. Many of them (42%) felt it difficult to give “Yes” or “No” answers to such an item as “I have felt guilty about sex experiences” (item 25). British female students gave positive response to the guilty item cluster (GUIL) much more frequently than did Japanese female students or British male students. This does not mean that Japanese female students had few guilty feelings, but that they had not enough experience to feel guilt about sex. On the contrary Japanese male students tended to give positive responses to GUIL items more than did their British counterparts and Japanese female students. That is, Japanese males had more sex worries than Japanese females, while British female students had more sex worries than British males. It is not certain why sex differences were inverted between British and Japanese students.

3. *Undecided Answers*

As mentioned above, Japanese female students gave many “?” answers to some of 92 items, and means and standard deviations of the percentage of “?” answers given to 92 items by each of the groups are shown in Table 3. Mean percentage of “?” answers for Japanese females was twice as large as that of British females ($t = 8.44, p < .001$). There was also a significant difference between the mean percentages of “?” answers for British males

TABLE 3
MEANS AND SDs OF PERCENTAGE OF “?” ANSWERS FOR 92 ITEMS

Group	Mean	SD
Male		
British	10.53	6.44
Japanese	16.08	7.69
Female		
British	11.86	8.31
Japanese	27.03	15.94

and Japanese males ($t = 5.14, p < .001$). The sex difference of “?” answers was significant between Japanese males and females ($t = 6.05, p < .001$), but not British students. The range of percentages of “?” answers was 1% to 65% for Japanese females, 3% to 45% for Japanese males, 1% to 38% for both British males and British females. Japanese females’ “?” answers were focussed on a particular kind of question. More than 50% of Japanese female students gave “?” answers to such questions as items 4, 20, 21, 22, 33, 75, 79, all of which needed experiences of sexual activities with the opposite sex and were included in the factors SSAT, SEXC, SHOS. These items showed differences in “?” answer percentages of more than 40% between British females and Japanese females, and more than 30% between Japanese males and Japanese females (except items 22 and 79 in this case).

The pattern of Japanese females’ “?” answers over the whole of the 92 items was very similar to that of Japanese males’ “?” answers ($r = .747, p < .01$). Product-moment correlation for the British group was .752 ($p < .01$), which was comparable to figures from Japanese students. Questions on attitudes to sex seemed to produce similar “?” response styles across sexes for both British and Japanese students irrespective of level. Correlations of “?” answers across cultures were significant but lower than those across sexes within the same culture [.49 ($p < .01$) for females and .33 ($p < .01$) for males].

Japanese female students gave many “?” answers to censorship items as well. This means that they had no decided attitudes to censorship on pornography, plays, and films, Pill, and so on. Since 53% of Japanese female students “think only rarely about sex,” it is no wonder that they showed indecisive attitudes to sex problems.

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