


What Do You Want in a Marriage? Examining Marriage Ideals in Taiwan and the United States

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Abstract

Four studies investigated ideal standards for one's marital partner and relationship held by Taiwan Chinese and European Americans. We first generated a list of attributes that tapped lay representations of marriage ideals based on free responses from Chinese and European Americans, and we uncovered attributes describing extended family that were overlooked in Western research (Study 1). We found similar ideal knowledge structures across the two cultural groups; importantly, Chinese prioritized ideals denoting financial resources and extended family to a greater extent than did European Americans (Study 2). These cultural differences were explained by interdependent self-construal (Study 3). Finally, the agreement between ideals and perceptions of current partner/relationship was related to positive relationship outcomes in both cultural groups (Study 4). Our research highlights both cultural similarities and differences in the content, structure, endorsement, and evaluative functions of ideals in Chinese and Western cultural contexts.

Keywords

culture, Chinese, ideal, romantic relationship, marriage

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Do you want your marriage to be one that is full of passion, or one that integrates well with your extended family? Is your ideal future spouse someone who is open-minded and independent, or someone who treats your parents well? The question of the characteristics people look for in their romantic partner and relationship has triggered tremendous research in the close relationships and evolutionary psychology literature. Integrating the social cognitive and evolutionary perspectives, the ideal standards model (ISM) has been introduced to understand how people organize their ideals and use these ideals for evaluative and regulatory purposes in romantic relationship contexts (Fletcher, Simpson, Thomas, & Giles, 1999; Simpson, Fletcher, & Campbell, 2001). The ISM has provided valuable information about how partner and relationship ideals relate to relationship quality, but it has been developed with primarily Western samples. The question of whether ideals for one's partner and relationship have the same content, structure, and functions outside Western cultural contexts remains unanswered.

Recently, there has been a call to examine psychological phenomena across ethnicities and cultures, because the current psychology literature relies heavily on Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) samples, and these samples are not representative of human

populations across the globe (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010; see also Johnson, 2012; Karney & Bradbury, 2005). In fact, cross-cultural studies have shown that established phenomena in the relationships literature may vary across cultural contexts. Take the similarity-attraction effect as an example: perceived personality similarity (i.e., the link between participants' self-ratings and their ratings of their friends) more strongly predicts liking among European Americans than among Japanese (Heine & Renshaw, 2002). In a related vein, ethnicity and socioeconomic status also play a critical role predicting marital quality or moderating the associations between risk factors and relationship well-being (e.g., Broman, 2005; Maisel & Karney, 2012). Results from these diverse lines of research call for examination of relationship models across cultural contexts. Because people

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with different cultural backgrounds have different assumptions about and expectations for their relationships, cross-cultural research, as well as research involving different ethnic groups and social classes, provides important insights into how well a model generalizes across cultural contexts.

In four studies, we aim to compare the content, structure, endorsement, and functions of partner and relationship ideals among Taiwan Chinese and European Americans, who differ in social norms and practices in close relationships. We present evidence of both cultural similarities and differences in Chinese's and European Americans' lay representations, organization, and prioritization of ideals, as well as the association of ideals with relationship evaluation.

ISM

Ideal standards about a partner or relationship play a prominent role in romantic relationships (Fletcher et al., 1999; Simpson et al., 2001). These ideal standards operate as chronically accessible knowledge structures with three inter-related components focused on the self, the ideal partner, and the ideal relationship. In their early attempt to examine the structure and content of the ideals, Fletcher et al. (1999) found people utilized three dimensions to describe an ideal partner—warmth/trustworthiness, attractiveness/vitality, and status/resources—and two dimensions for describing an ideal relationship—intimacy/loyalty and passion. The researchers argued that these dimensions could be predicted from an evolutionary approach to mate selection highlighting different strategies that lead to reproductive success. In particular, successful reproduction involves finding a warm and loyal partner with whom a committed parenting relationship can be formed, identifying a partner who is healthy and fertile (evidenced by attractiveness), and looking for a partner with status and resources to protect and provide for the offspring. In addition, the ideals for one's partner and relationship overlap with each other in a meaningful pattern, indicating that the cognitive representations of the two types of ideals are interdependent (Fletcher et al., 1999).

The ISM also specifies the evaluative and regulatory functions of ideal standards for an ongoing romantic relationship. First, people compare their perceptions of their current partners/relationships against their ideal standards, and they use the information to evaluate their relationships. A close fit between ideal standards and perceptions of one's current partner/relationship, termed *ideal-perception consistency*, predicts better relationship quality and higher stability in early dating relationships (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000). A recent review concludes that ideal-perception consistency positively predicts relationship evaluation, especially in established relationships (Eastwick, Luchies, Finkel, & Hunt, 2014). Second, because people strive for agreement between their ideals and perceptions, low ideal-perception consistency motivates people to regulate their relationships, such as by attempting to change aspects of their partners

(Overall, Fletcher, & Simpson, 2006). As a result, these regulatory attempts influence the agreement between ideals and perceptions of one's partner/relationship as well as relationship quality over time (Overall et al., 2006).

Taken together, the ISM has extended our understanding of the content and structure of ideal partner preferences based on both social cognitive and evolutionary perspectives. This model has guided the way ideal partner preferences are measured in the literature; indeed, this was the first research to create standardized measures of ideal partner preferences from people's lay perceptions rather than from researchers' intuitions (Eastwick et al., 2014). The researchers have also proposed from an evolutionary perspective that the ideal structure they observed should exist in all human cultures, because evolution has shaped the human mind for greater reproductive successes (Fletcher et al., 1999). Moreover, this model has provided insightful predictions regarding the functions of ideal standards in relationship development and maintenance.

Questions remain unanswered, however, about whether the three ideal dimensions identified based on responses from Western samples hold across cultural groups and whether additional unique dimensions of ideal partner and relationship can be discovered. In addition, the model's other predictions have seldom been tested across cultural contexts. Given that people from varying cultural backgrounds have different conceptions about marriage and committed relationships, they may emphasize ideal partner preferences differently. These differences are apparent when we compare Western and East Asian societies, which are described next.

Cross-Cultural Examination of Mate Preferences

Marriage in Western contexts is often viewed as one of the most important relationships in one's life, and Westerners tend to think that the couple is the most central and sacred unit of a family (Shweder, Balle-Jensen, & Goldstein, 2003). Moreover, Western married individuals are expected to develop firm boundaries from their families of origin (Bryant, Conger, & Meehan, 2001). In contrast, marriage in East Asian contexts traditionally focuses more on the joining of two extended families than on the bride and groom alone, and the marital relationship is embedded within an extensive network of family relationships. For Chinese, the parent-child relationship typically remains the closest even after one marries, which reflects the traditional value of *Xiao* (filial piety)—to obey and take care of one's parents (Ho, 1996; Wu, Cross, Wu, Cho, & Tey, 2016; Yeh, 2003). Hence, parents and extended family play a more important role in East Asian romantic relationships than in Western ones. For instance, family approval is found to be an important predictor of relationship quality and intention to marry among East Asian but not Western dating individuals (Zhang & Kline, 2009). Taken together, in Western societies that emphasize

personal choice and autonomous pursuit of personal goals (i.e., individualistic cultures), romantic love and fulfillment of personal needs are considered more important than family concerns for dating and marital relationships (Dion & Dion, 1993). In contrast, in East Asian societies, where maintaining relationships with ingroup members (e.g., family) and striving for group harmony and solidarity are highly valued (i.e., collectivistic cultures), personal concerns in marriage decisions are balanced by family-related concerns (Hsu, 1981).

Therefore, preferences for mate characteristics vary across cultures. For instance, Toro-Morn and Sprecher (2003) found that Chinese rated the attribute *good housekeeper* as more important relative to other attributes, whereas Americans showed the opposite pattern (see also Buss et al., 1990). Subsequent studies further elaborated these cultural differences in family-related attributes, based on cultural theories of norms and values. Chinese were more likely to select partners who were high in social status and filial piety (e.g., *take care of parents when old*) than were European Americans (Kline & Zhang, 2009). Moreover, a qualitative study revealed that a focus on family and home was frequently mentioned by East Asians when describing their ideal spouse and marriage, whereas no cultural difference was found for themes related to love and care (Kline et al., 2012).

Although previous cross-cultural research has documented meaningful cultural similarities and differences in people's mate preference characteristics, these studies are limited in three ways. First, many cross-cultural mate preferences studies rely on a list of attributes previously developed from a Western perspective (e.g., Buss et al., 1990; Toro-Morn & Sprecher, 2003). This limits the discovery of ideal attributes that are salient and important in other cultures. Second, some cross-cultural studies treated each attribute independently and conducted multiple tests of cultural differences without examining the underlying structure of these attributes (e.g., Toro-Morn & Sprecher, 2003; but see Kline & Zhang, 2009, for an exception). As a result, it is difficult to draw conclusions about cultural differences based on these scattered results. Third and finally, although some cross-cultural studies have extended the list of attributes based on cultural theories, they did not measure cultural concepts (such as individualism/collectivism by Hofstede, 1980) that could potentially explain the observed cultural differences (e.g., Kline & Zhang, 2009).

Integration of ISM and Cross-Cultural Mate Preferences Research

Research that integrates the ISM and cross-cultural research on mate preferences may make important theoretical contributions to the literature on ideal partner preferences. First, the ISM mainly relies on responses from Western samples to derive their ideal partner/relationship attributes, and hence, the cultural perspective helps elaborate these ideal attributes

or even discover additional ones that are underrepresented in a particular cultural group. Second, the ISM predicts and examines the underlying structure of partner/relationship ideals, which is often overlooked in cross-cultural mate preferences research. Similarities and differences in the structure of these ideals across cultures may point to universal or culturally specific nature of how people organize their ideal preferences. Third, the ISM recognizes individual differences in ideal partner/relationship preferences, but it does not specify how these preferences may vary across cultures. The cultural perspective makes specific predictions for how people from different cultures prioritize these ideals based on cultural theories. Often, relevant cultural concepts have been assumed to distinguish members of cultural groups, but these concepts are not assessed directly to explain cultural differences in mate preferences. Measuring these assumed cultural concepts among cultural group members provides empirical tests for the explanation of cultural differences in mate preferences. Fourth, the ISM predicts the functions of ideals in relationship evaluation and maintenance; the cultural perspective examines these predictions among different cultural groups to help build a model of ideal partner preferences that generalizes across cultural contexts.

Overview of Studies

To address the above four issues, in a series of studies we examine the content, structure, endorsement, and functions of partner and relationship ideals in Chinese and European American cultures. In Study 1, we asked individuals from Taiwan and the United States to describe their ideal spouse and ideal marriage. From their responses, we derived our list of ideal partner/relationship attributes and investigated the content of these ideals across cultures. In Study 2, we examined the factor structure underlying these marital partner/relationship ideals across the two cultural groups and validated our measure of ideals by correlating it with other relationship constructs. We also examined cultural and sex differences in how people prioritize these ideals. In Study 3, we measured the relevant cultural concept (self-construals) to explain cultural differences in ideal preferences. Finally, in Study 4, we examined the evaluative functions of ideal standards in ongoing romantic relationships across cultures. We used different approaches to conceptualize and compute ideal-perception consistency (Eastwick & Neff, 2012; Furr, 2008), because previous research on ideal standards and mate preferences that simultaneously takes into account these different approaches is sparse.¹ Hence, our current research provides interesting comparisons of results using these different approaches.

Study 1

In Study 1, we aimed to compile a more culturally representative list of attributes based on free responses by Chinese

and European Americans who described their ideal spouse and marriage. By including a Chinese sample, we expected to uncover attributes denoting relationships with parents, family members, and extended family (Kline & Zhang, 2009; Kline et al., 2012), whereas these attributes are not present in the existing measures of ideal standards (Fletcher et al., 1999). We hypothesized that Chinese will generate more attributes tapping these family-related concerns when describing their ideal spouse/marriage as compared with European Americans (Hypothesis 1).

We focused on marital relationships in particular rather than all types of romantic relationships (e.g., dating) because family-related attributes are thought to be more important and salient in a marriage. Moreover, although people's views of an ideal partner and an ideal relationship are predicted to overlap (Fletcher et al., 1999), people may value aspects of their ideal spouse and ideal marriage differently. For instance, one may look for a partner who is physically attractive, but it is not necessary that the person wants a relationship that is full of passion. Therefore, it was useful to separately collect responses on how people describe their ideal spouse and ideal marriage and to examine the extent to which these two sets of ideals overlap (in Studies 2 and 4).

We followed the procedure outlined in previous prototype research (e.g., Cross et al., 2014; Fehr, 1988) to compile the list of attributes. Trained judges were instructed to combine conceptually similar descriptions to generate a relatively short and meaningful list for each cultural group. Subsequently the judges integrated the two lists into a set that captures attributes that represented responses from the two cultural groups. We then examined the extent of overlap in the attributes mentioned by Chinese and European Americans using the index of interprototype similarity (Cantor, Mischel, & Schwartz, 1982)—a ratio of shared to unique attributes mentioned in two lists. Finally, we compared the frequency of attributes related to family concerns across cultures.

Method

Participants. Taiwan Chinese ($n = 157$; 99 females; $M_{age} = 21.03$, $SD = 1.82$) and European American university students ($n = 110$; 58 females; $M_{age} = 20.61$, $SD = 2.99$) were recruited to participate in the current study.

Procedure. About half of the participants were asked to list characteristics related to their ideal spouse ($n_{TW} = 68$; $n_{US} = 54$), and the other half listed characteristics tapping their ideal marriage ($n_{TW} = 89$; $n_{US} = 56$). The instruction was "Please use words or phrases to describe the characteristics of what your ideal and perfect partner for a marriage [ideal and perfect marriage] would be like." The materials were translated and back-translated by competent bilinguals into Chinese for use among Chinese participants. There was no time limit for the task.

Results and Discussion

Chinese generated fewer descriptions than did European Americans. Specifically, Chinese provided on average 8.00 ($SD = 3.12$) descriptions of an ideal spouse and 5.61 ($SD = 2.59$) descriptions of an ideal marriage, whereas their U.S. counterparts provided on average 10.63 ($SD = 4.35$) descriptions of an ideal spouse and 8.13 ($SD = 3.53$) descriptions of an ideal marriage, $t_{ideal\ spouse}^{(120)} = 3.89$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.71$, confidence interval (CI) = [0.34, 1.07], and $t_{ideal\ marriage}^{(143)} = 4.95$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.83$, CIs = [0.49, 1.19] (all CIs are 95% in this article). European Americans may elaborate their ideals more than Chinese due to the importance of knowing what one wants and prefers in the American culture (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

In the first stage of compiling the attribute list, two judges from each culture checked whether the ideal spouse descriptions correctly described aspects of a spouse and not a marriage (and the reverse for ideal marriage descriptions). Descriptions that did not fit the corresponding conditions were discarded. Moreover, gender-biased descriptions were also discarded (e.g., *respects women*). To create a unique and shorter list of attributes, the judges sorted the open-ended responses into meaningful categories. Descriptions that were synonymous (e.g., *empathetic* and *compassionate*) were grouped together, descriptions with qualifiers and adjectives that were very similar in meaning (e.g., *supportive* and *supportive to each other*) were combined, and descriptions that belong to the same monolexemic category (e.g., *trust* and *trusting*) were integrated into one category. We counted the number of times these categories were mentioned by the participants and selected those that were mentioned at least three times or more, following previous practice (Fletcher et al., 1999). This resulted in 130 Chinese and 130 U.S. ideal spouse categories, and 77 Chinese and 117 U.S. ideal marriage categories, respectively.

In the next stage, categories generated by the Chinese were translated into English by two competent English-Chinese bilinguals. Judges then combined the set of Chinese categories with the set of U.S. categories by dropping those that overlapped in meaning. We found that 28% of the ideal spouse categories and 41% of the ideal marriage categories were mentioned in both cultural groups. We computed the interprototype similarity index (Cantor et al., 1982) to examine the extent of overlap in the attributes from the two cultural groups. In the Cantor et al. (1982) study of everyday situations, the index ranged from 0 to 1.30. In the current study, the index was 0.39 for ideal spouse and 0.69 for ideal marriage. These results suggest that there is a moderate level of overlap in the lists of attributes mentioned by people from the two cultures. The attributes are listed in Appendices A and B in supplementary materials, together with information regarding the percentage mentioned by people from each culture.

Our list of attributes contained a number of characteristics describing a positive family orientation both in the nuclear

family (e.g., *share household chores*) and the extended family network (e.g., *look after each other's parents*). One American research assistant and one Chinese research assistant independently coded the characteristics into three groups: nuclear family oriented, extended family oriented, and not related to family orientation. Their coding showed acceptable interrater reliability ($\kappa = 0.83$); disagreement was resolved by discussion with the first author. These attributes are marked in Online Appendices A and B. Supporting our prediction (Hypothesis 1), the attributes relevant to extended family were mentioned more frequently by Chinese than by European Americans, $\chi^2_{ideal\ spouse}(2) = 6.20, p = .01, CI = [0.02, 0.20]$; $\chi^2_{ideal\ marriage}(2) = 5.30, p = .02, CI = [0.01, 0.18]$, whereas there was no significant cultural difference for attributes relevant to the nuclear family, $\chi^2_{ideal\ spouse}(2) = 0.07, p = .80$; $\chi^2_{ideal\ marriage}(2) = 0.62, p = .43$.

The final list of categories of ideals, combined from both cultural groups, consisted of 75 ideal spouse and 59 ideal marriage attributes. In sum, using an inductive approach, this study resulted in a list of attributes describing ideal spouse and marriage that captured the viewpoints of both Chinese and European Americans.

Study 2

In Study 2, we asked respondents to rate the importance of the attributes identified in Study 1, and we examined the factor structure underlying the spouse and marriage ideals among Chinese and European Americans. First, we separately explored the factor structure of spouse and marriage ideals, and then we investigated the overlap of these spouse and marriage ideal factors. We expected to find the three ideal dimensions proposed by the ISM, namely, warmth/intimacy, attractiveness/passion, and status/resources, among our samples of Chinese and European Americans (Hypothesis 2). We looked for additional dimensions that were not included in the ISM based on our extended list of ideal attributes.

Second, we tested for convergent validity of the ideal factors by correlating them with existing measures of relationship beliefs and values. We predicted that marital partner/relationship ideals will be modestly associated with general relationship beliefs, attitudes toward parents, and family values. Previous research showed that general relationship theories, such as beliefs about the causes of relationship success, were associated with the ideal standards people held about their partner and relationship (Fletcher et al., 1999). Thus, we hypothesized that a belief in the importance of intimacy will be related to the warmth and intimacy ideals, a belief in the importance of passion will be related to the attractiveness and passion ideals, and a belief in the importance of external factors will be related to the status-resources ideals (Hypothesis 3a).

We included two other constructs focused on family relationships: filial piety and family values. Two distinct

dimensions of filial piety have been identified in the dual filial piety model (Yeh, 2003; Yeh & Bedford, 2003). Reciprocal filial piety involves paying attention to one's parents out of gratitude for providing care and education in the early years, whereas authoritarian filial piety denotes the suppression of one's own wishes and compliance with parents' wishes (Yeh & Bedford, 2003). We hypothesized that the two types of filial piety will link to the ideals differently (Hypothesis 3b). Because intimate and affectionate interaction is the major focus of reciprocal filial piety, we predicted that reciprocal filial piety will be positively related to the warmth and intimacy ideals; due to the hierarchy and submissive concern prominent in authoritarian filial piety, we predicted that authoritarian filial piety will be positively related to the status and resources ideals. We also administered a measure of family values (Faver, 1982) and hypothesized that this measure will be positively associated with family-oriented ideals (Hypothesis 3c).

Third, we examined cultural differences in how people prioritize their ideal marital partner/relationship preferences. We hypothesized that spouse ideals related to warmth and honesty as well as marriage ideals that denoted intimacy and trust will be rated as the most important across cultures (Hypothesis 4a), because they are considered vital for forming a stable and successful relationship (Buss et al., 1990; Kline & Zhang, 2009). Moreover, we expected that Chinese, as compared with European Americans, will rate the status/resources and family ideals to be more important than other ideals (but less important than the warmth/intimacy ideals; Hypothesis 4b), given that previous studies consistently found that East Asians rated these attributes as more important than did Westerners (e.g., Kline & Zhang, 2009).

Finally, we examined sex differences in ratings of ideals in each cultural group, with predictions based on men's and women's different survival and reproductive considerations (Buss & Schmitt, 1993).² Because women need to invest more time and effort in raising their offspring than do men, women tend to prefer long-term mates with resources and commitment to support their offspring. In contrast, compared with women, men prefer long-term mates who are physically attractive, such that they can identify reproductive mates to pass on their genes. We therefore expected that women, as compared with men, will rate ideals along the status-resources dimensions to be more important and ideals along the physical attractiveness dimension to be less important (Hypothesis 5).

Method

Participants and procedure. We recruited 458 Taiwan Chinese (273 females; $M_{age} = 24.73, SD = 1.96$) and 427 European American students (258 females; $M_{age} = 23.92, SD = 1.49$) for the current study. They completed the pen-and-paper packet of questionnaires in groups. The scales for validation were translated and back-translated by competent bilinguals into Chinese; participants completed them in their native

Table 1. Descriptives, Reliabilities, and Bivariate Correlations for Ideals in Study 2.

Variable	Taiwan (n = 458)		United States (n = 427)		Cultural difference									
	M (SD)	α	M (SD)	α	t	d	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Ideal spouse														
1. Warmth–trustworthiness	5.97 (0.60)	.87	6.20 (0.57)	.89	-5.89***	-0.40	—	.38	.66	.62	.85	.56	.43	.48
2. Attractiveness–vitality	4.94 (0.87)	.85	5.00 (0.91)	.87	-1.07	-0.07	.46	—	.57	.44	.32	.55	.47	.31
3. Resources–family orientation	5.64 (0.73)	.85	5.37 (0.80)	.84	5.23***	0.35	.64	.33	—	.57	.62	.45	.74	.56
4. Openness–independence	5.21 (0.79)	.84	5.55 (0.67)	.79	-6.78***	-0.46	.62	.51	.59	—	.56	.46	.38	.42
Ideal marriage														
5. Mutuality–intimacy–loyalty	6.08 (0.56)	.84	6.23 (0.56)	.82	-4.00***	-0.27	.77	.25	.60	.46	—	.58	.53	.54
6. Passion	5.42 (0.83)	.78	6.02 (0.74)	.79	-11.24***	-0.76	.57	.61	.40	.55	.55	—	.44	.35
7. Financial stability–family network	5.42 (0.82)	.81	5.19 (1.02)	.87	3.66***	0.25	.41	.31	.69	.39	.56	.41	—	.47
8. Similarity	5.07 (0.88)	.72	5.01 (0.97)	.72	0.81	0.05	.49	.34	.52	.49	.54	.49	.50	—

Note. Correlation matrix for Taiwan is in the lower panel, whereas that for United States is in the upper panel. All correlations are significant at $\alpha = .05$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

languages. In the Chinese sample, 29.26% were currently in a romantic relationship; in the U.S. sample, 44.26% were currently romantically involved.

Measures. Descriptives and reliability for the measure of ideals are reported in Table 1 (which will be described in detail later) and those for the validity measures are summarized in Table 2.

Spouse and marriage ideals. Participants rated the importance of 75 partner attributes generated in Study 1 for their ideal spouse. Similarly, participants rated the importance of 59 relationship attributes for their ideal marriage. Both sets of attributes were rated using 7-point scales (1 = *not important* to 7 = *very important*). The order of the two measures was counter-balanced across participants.

Relationship beliefs. The Relationship Beliefs Scale (Fletcher & Kininmonth, 1992) was adapted to assess people's beliefs about factors that contribute to the success of long-term close relationships. Four higher-order belief factors were identified in previous research, namely, *intimacy* (e.g., "In successful relationships partners constantly show how much they love one another"), *passion* (e.g., "The best relationships are built on strong sexual attraction"), *external factors* (e.g., "Not getting on with each other's families wrecks relationships"), and *individuality* (e.g., "Each partner has a right to absolute personal privacy"). Respondents rated these belief statements on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = *do not hold this belief at all* to 6 = *very strongly hold this belief*).

Filial piety. The Dual Filial Piety Scale (Yeh & Bedford, 2003) measures participants' views of the proper way for children to treat their parents. We used a short version with 12 items measuring the two dimensions of filial piety, *reciprocity* (e.g., "Be concerned about my parents, as well as understand them") and *authoritarianism* (e.g., "Do whatever my parents ask right away"); items were rated on a 6-point

Likert-type scale (1 = *extremely unimportant* to 6 = *extremely important*).

Family values. The Family Values Scale (Faver, 1982) measures the importance of having a family and children (e.g., "The rewards and satisfactions of raising a family are more important to me than anything else"). The scale consisted of seven items rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *disagree* to 5 = *agree*). Higher scores indicate stronger endorsement of family values.

Results and Discussion

Preliminary analysis. We first checked the distribution of the items of the ideal measures. One item from the ideal spouse measure (*in love with me*) and one item from the ideal marriage measure (*not physically violent*) were not included in the factor analysis due to very low variance in responses in both cultural groups. More than 80% of the participants thought the two attributes were *extremely important*.

Factor structure of ideal spouse and ideal marriage attributes. We conducted principal components analysis (PCA) with oblique rotation to examine the factor structure underlying the ideal spouse and ideal marriage attributes. Following the meta-analytic factor analysis procedure (Becker, 1996; Leung et al., 2002), we conducted PCA using the pooled correlation matrices generated from the two samples because this procedure weighs each cultural group equally and prevents mean differences of items across cultures to influence the factor structure obtained. In specific, a correlation matrix for the ideal items was computed for each cultural group and transformed into Fischer z scores. The two transformed matrices were then averaged into a single matrix and transformed back into correlations. The pooled correlation matrix was used as input to the factor analysis.

For the ideal spouse measure, 21 factors had eigenvalues higher than 1.0. Although the scree test suggested a

Table 2. Descriptives, Reliabilities, and Partial Correlations Among Ideals and Validation Measures in Study 2.

Variable	Taiwan (n = 458)		United States (n = 427)		Ideal spouse				Ideal marriage			
	M (SD)	α	M (SD)	α	Warmth– trustworthiness	Attractiveness– vitality	Resources–family orientation	Openness– independence	Mutuality– intimacy– loyalty	Passion	Family stability–family network	Similarity
Relationship beliefs												
Intimacy	4.20 (0.69)	.86	4.72 (0.64)	.85	.32***/.38***	.01/.07	.04/.09	-.01/-.08	.37***/.36***	.09*/.19***	-.00/.13*	.08/.06
Passion	4.07 (0.78)	.78	3.62 (0.82)	.72	.09/-.03	.30***/.38***	-.03/.04	.11/.06	-.12**/-.21***	.52***/.51***	.15**/.18***	.01/-.01
External factors	3.55 (0.79)	.80	3.01 (0.80)	.80	-.09/-.16**	.18***/.23***	.37***/.33***	-.05/.01	-.08/-.19***	.07/.11*	.47***/.48***	-.00/.12*
Individuality	4.51 (0.80)	.67	4.28 (0.75)	.78	.17***/.01	-.15***/-.11*	-.01/.13*	.23***/.27***	.22***/.14**	-.08/.04	-.07/.04	.03/.02
Filial piety	5.24 (0.54)	.84	4.90 (0.64)	.80	.33***/.26***	-.13***/-.10*	.32***/.21***	-.10*/-.01	.45***/.25***	-.11*/.07	.17***/.12*	-.10*/.04
Reciprocity	3.16 (0.70)	.79	3.28 (0.79)	.73	-.12*/.00	.04/.05	.37***/.32***	-.04/-.14**	-.04/-.04	-.12***/-.05	.36***/.35***	.10*/.16**
Authority	3.10 (0.83)	.86	3.85 (0.81)	.86	.00/.23***	.11*/.04	.24***/.22***	-.21***/-.21***	.13***/.19***	.02/.05	.25***/.20***	-.12*/.05

Note. Hypothesized correlations are in bold. For Taiwan, correlations are before slashes; for United States, correlations are after slashes. Partial correlations were computed between the ideal measure factor scores and the validity measures by controlling for the other factors in the same ideal measure.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

four-factor structure, we explored two to four factors given that a three-factor structure was previously observed (Fletcher et al., 1999) and searched for a solution that maximized interpretability. We concluded with a four-factor structure that showed a clearly interpretable solution and factor loadings, which explained 44.27 of the total variance. The four factors were Warmth–Trustworthiness (e.g., *kind*), Attractiveness–Vitality (e.g., *beautiful/handsome*), Resources–Family Orientation (e.g., *financially stable, look after each other's parents*), and Openness–Independence (e.g., *open-minded*). Factor loadings for the spouse ideals are summarized in Online Appendix A.

We performed procrustes rotation to ensure that the results based on the pooled matrix adequately represented each cultural group (van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). The factor structure found in each culture was target-rotated to the factor structure based on the pooled matrix. Congruence coefficients were computed to indicate the factorial agreement attained; Tucker's phi (Tucker, 1951) with a value of .90 suggests good factorial agreement (van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). The Tucker's phis for the four ideal spouse factors were .96, .95, .96, and .92 for Warmth–Trustworthiness, Attractiveness–Vitality, Resources–Family Orientation, and Openness–Independence, respectively, in the Chinese sample, and .97, .94, .89, and .93 in the European American sample. These phis indicated that the factor structure obtained from the pooled matrix approximately represented the structure of each cultural group.

We used the same procedure to conduct PCA for the ideal marriage measure. Twenty-seven factors were observed with eigenvalues higher than 1.0, although the scree test suggested two to five factors, which were explored subsequently. We concluded that the five-factor solution had interpretable factor loadings, which explained 47.12% of the total variance. The five factors were Mutuality–Intimacy–Loyalty (e.g., *mutual respect*), Financial Stability–Family Network (e.g., *own our home, parents in both families get along*), Individuality–Freedom (e.g., *enough individual space*), Passion (e.g., *passionate*), and Similarity (e.g., *share common interests and hobbies*). The Individuality–Freedom factor only consisted of two items, and hence, this factor is not included in subsequent analyses. Factor loadings for the marriage ideals are summarized in Online Appendix B.

Again, procrustes rotation revealed factorial similarity for the ideal marriage measure. Tucker's phis were .98, .97, .94, and .89 for Mutuality–Intimacy–Loyalty, Financial Stability–Family Network, Passion, and Similarity factors, respectively, in the Chinese sample, and .98, .97, .93, and .94 in the European American sample, suggesting acceptable factorial agreement of the individual cultural group structure and the factor structure based on the pooled matrix.

Overall, our results revealed that the underlying structure of ideals is basically consistent with the ISM (Hypothesis 2). We found three of the ideal spouse factors (Warmth–Trustworthiness, Attractiveness–Vitality, and Resources–Family Orientation)

that resembled those obtained in Fletcher et al. (1999), although our Resources–Family Orientation factor also included items denoting a positive extended family orientation (e.g., *look after parents*). Two of the ideal marriage factors, Mutuality–Intimacy–Loyalty and Passion, corresponded to the two relationship ideals found in Fletcher et al. (1999). The Financial Stability–Family Network factor was observed in our ideal marriage measure because of the inclusion of extended family related items generated by the Chinese participants (e.g., *parents in both families get along*). Furthermore, we identified an additional ideal spouse factor of Openness–Independence, and an additional ideal marriage factor of Similarity, which are not covered by the ISM.

Second-order structure of ideal factors. Descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and correlations for the ideal factors are summarized in Table 1. In general, the ideal scales demonstrated adequate internal consistency, all alphas $>.70$.

The four ideal spouse factors correlated moderately to highly with each other, with r s ranging from .33 to .64 in the Chinese sample and from .38 to .66 in the U.S. sample. The four ideal marriage factors also correlated moderately to highly with one another, with r s ranging from .41 to .56 in the Chinese sample and from .35 to .58 in the U.S. sample. The ideal factors were also correlated with their conceptually similar constructs in the counterpart measure, with r s $>.55$ (see Table 3). For example, the spouse Warmth–Trustworthiness ideal was related to the marriage Mutuality–Intimacy–Loyalty ideal, $r_{TW} = .77$ and $r_{US} = .85$.

To explore the second-order structure underlying these ideal factors, we conducted exploratory factor analysis based on these factor scores. Only a one-factor solution was obtained, likely due to double-loaded items among these ideal factors. We attempted to test the second-order factor structure again in Study 4 using a shorter and perhaps cleaner version of the ideal measure.

Convergent validity. We examined convergent validity of the ideal factors by correlating them with the relationship beliefs and values measures.³ To take into account the substantial intercorrelations among the ideal scale factors, partial correlations were computed between the ideal measure factor scores and the validity measures by controlling for the other factors in the same ideal measure (i.e., controlling for the other three ideal spouse factors while examining the correlations of the spouse Warmth–Trustworthiness ideal).

The partial correlation results supported our predictions regarding the link between relationship beliefs and values and ideals (Hypotheses 3a-3c; see Table 2 for correlations and supplementary materials for confidence intervals). These correlation coefficients were all statistically significant with sizable but not identical overlap. People who rated *intimacy* as highly important in developing successful relationships gave higher ratings to both spouse Warmth–Trustworthiness and marriage Mutuality–Intimacy–Loyalty ideals. People

Table 3. Summary of Sex Differences in Ideals in Study 2.

Variable	Taiwan				United States			
	Woman M (SD); n = 273	Man M (SD); n = 184	t	d	Woman M (SD); n = 258	Man M (SD); n = 161	t	d
Warmth–trustworthiness	6.05 (0.59)	5.86 (0.61)	3.36***	0.32	6.32 (0.52)	6.01 (0.60)	5.60***	0.55
Attractiveness–vitality	4.83 (0.90)	5.09 (0.81)	-3.09**	-0.29	4.87 (0.91)	5.23 (0.83)	-4.14***	-0.41
Resources–family orientation	5.95 (0.58)	5.19 (0.70)	12.55***	1.18	5.57 (0.76)	5.05 (0.77)	6.82***	0.67
Openness–independence	5.41 (0.75)	4.91 (0.77)	6.92***	0.65	5.64 (0.64)	5.41 (0.69)	3.44***	0.34
Mutuality–intimacy–loyalty	6.17 (0.51)	5.94 (0.61)	4.40***	0.42	6.34 (0.50)	6.04 (0.60)	5.57***	0.55
Passion	5.42 (0.86)	5.42 (0.79)	0.003	0.00	6.06 (0.75)	5.95 (0.71)	1.46	0.14
Financial stability–family network	5.58 (0.74)	5.16 (0.87)	5.52***	0.52	5.34 (1.00)	4.95 (1.01)	3.82***	0.37
Similarity	5.25 (0.82)	4.78 (0.90)	5.72***	0.54	5.13 (0.90)	4.81 (1.03)	3.41***	0.33

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

who held stronger beliefs that *passion* is important for a successful relationship rated spouse Attractiveness–Vitality and marriage Passion ideals as highly important. Ratings of *external factors* were correlated with spouse Resources–Family Orientation and marriage Financial Stability–Family Network ideals.

Regarding the relations between filial piety and ideals, people who strongly valued the *reciprocal* aspect of filial piety were more likely to endorse the spouse Warmth–Trustworthiness and marriage Mutuality–Intimacy–Loyalty dimensions. The *authoritarian* aspect of filial piety was associated with the spouse Resources–Family Orientation and marriage Financial Stability–Family Network dimensions. Also as predicted, people who endorsed higher levels of *family values* gave higher ratings to the spouse Resources–Family Orientation and marriage Financial Stability–Family Network dimensions.

We compared the size of these partial correlations across the two cultural groups. The size of the associations did not differ across cultures, except for the association between reciprocal filial piety and the Mutuality–Intimacy–Loyalty marriage ideal which was stronger in the Chinese sample than in the European American sample (CI of difference in $r = [0.08, 0.32]$, $z = 3.40$, $p < .001$).

Prioritization of ideals within culture. We conducted mixed ANOVAs to test for within-culture differences in the prioritization of these ideal factors.⁴ We predicted that people from different cultural groups prioritized attributes they considered important for a spouse and marriage differently. We treated the four ideal spouse dimensions as a within-subject factor and culture as a between-subject factor, and we looked for patterns of mean differences in the importance of the spouse ideals within each culture. For people from both cultural groups, the Warmth–Trustworthiness ideal was endorsed the most compared with other ideal spouse dimensions, $ps < .001$, whereas the Attractiveness–Vitality ideal was endorsed the least compared with other ideal spouse

dimensions, $ps < .001$. The pattern of endorsement differed across cultures as indicated by a significant Culture \times Ideal interaction, $F(3, 2649) = 55.56$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$ (see Figure 1). Chinese valued the Resources–Family Orientation dimension more than the Openness–Independence dimension, $t(457) = 13.51$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.63$, $CI = [0.54, 0.72]$, whereas European Americans showed the reverse pattern, $t(426) = -5.12$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.25$, $CI = [0.15, 0.34]$.

A parallel mixed ANOVA was conducted for the ideal marriage factors. For people from both cultural groups, the Mutuality–Intimacy–Loyalty ideal was endorsed the most strongly, $ps < .001$, whereas the Similarity ideal was endorsed the least, $ps < .001$. A significant Culture \times Ideal interaction was observed, $F(3, 2649) = 78.70$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .18$ (see Figure 2). People from the United States valued attributes along the Passion dimension more than those along the Financial Stability–Family Network dimension, $t(426) = 17.83$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.89$, $CI = [0.77, 0.99]$, whereas Chinese rated the two dimensions as equally important, $t(457) = 0.21$, $p = .83$, $d = 0.01$.

Taken together, we observed cultural similarities and differences in emphasis on these attributes. In particular, attributes related to warmth and intimacy are the most important ideals for people from both cultures (Hypothesis 4a). Chinese consider family- and resources-related attributes to be more (or equally) important than attributes that tap openness–independence and passion (Hypothesis 4b). In contrast, among European Americans, attributes related to openness–independence and passion are more highly valued than attributes related to family and resources.

Sex differences in ideals within culture. Finally, we examined sex differences in ideals within each culture (results are summarized in Table 3). Compared with men, women were more likely to prefer partners who are warm and loyal, have resources and are family oriented, and are open-minded and independent. Men were more likely than women to prefer partners who are physically attractive. In addition, compared

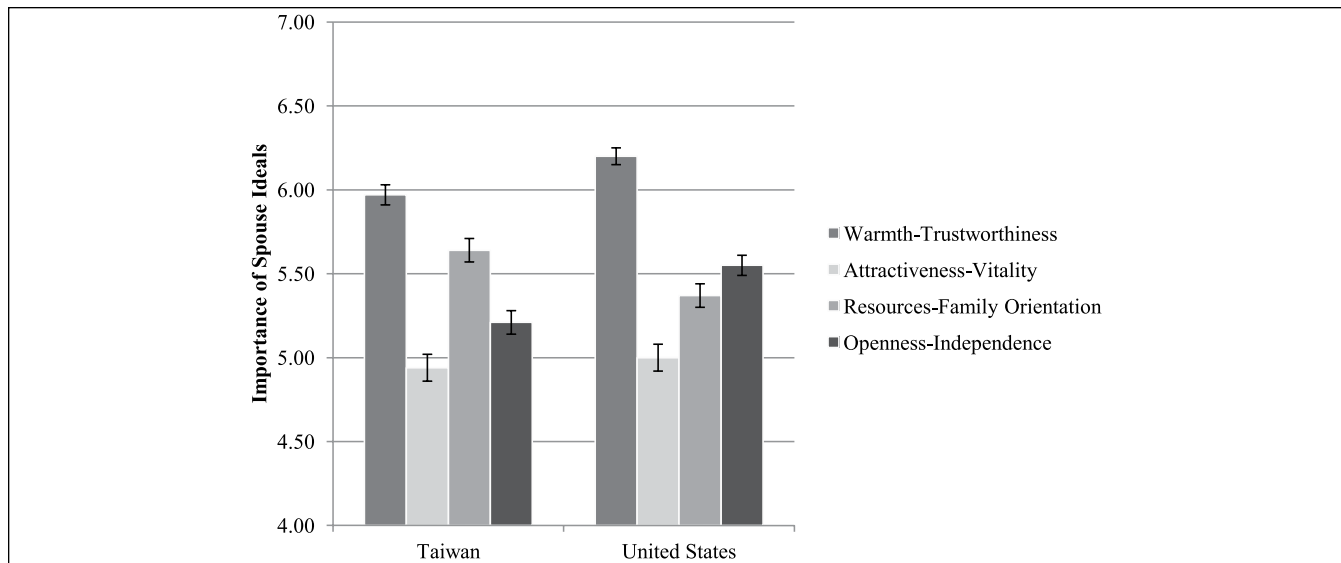


Figure 1. Importance of spouse ideals across cultures in Study 2.
Note. 95% confidence interval bars are presented.

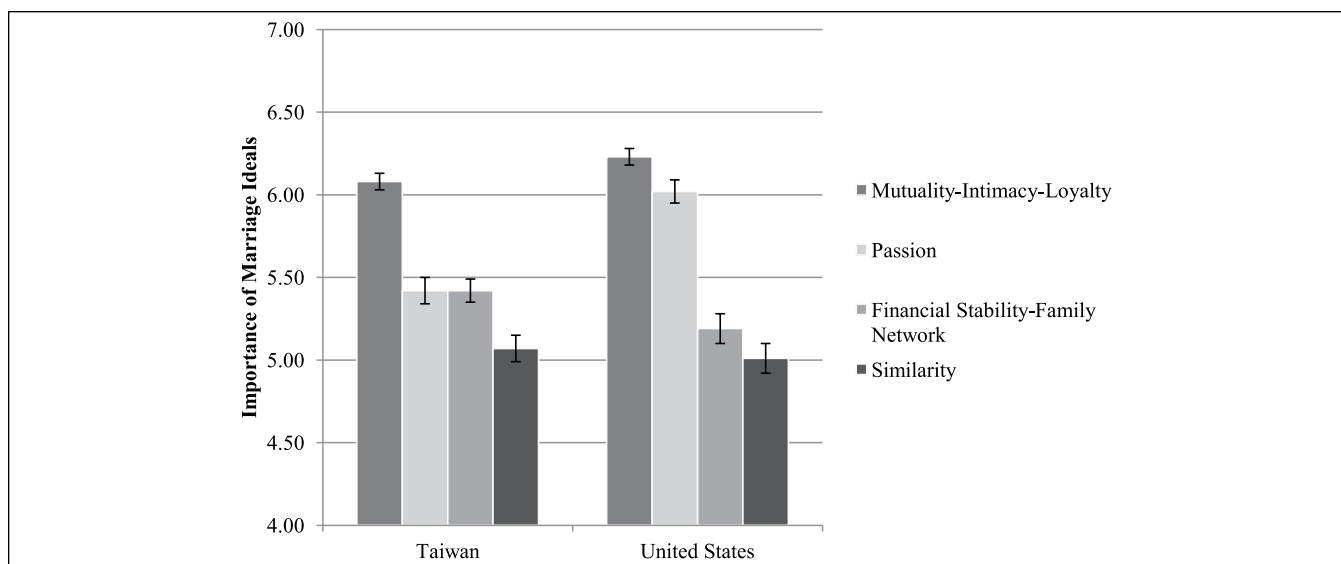


Figure 2. Importance of marriage ideals across cultures in Study 2.
Note. 95% confidence interval bars are presented.

with men, women more strongly preferred a marriage that is high in mutuality and intimacy, financial stability and strong family network, and similarity. No sex difference was observed for the marriage ideal of passion.

Thus our findings on sex differences in attributes related to physical attractiveness and status-resources largely fit with previous findings based on the evolutionary perspective (e.g., Buss, 1989; Buss et al., 1990): Women value status/resources more than do men, whereas men value physical attractiveness more than do women (Hypothesis 5). Intriguingly, Fletcher et al. (1999) observed that women were less likely than men to prefer partners who are warm and trustworthy and relationships that are intimate and

committed. The authors speculated that women lower their ideal standards on warmth and intimacy to match men's lower levels of expression of warmth and intimacy. However, we found the opposite patterns among both Chinese and European Americans: Women were more likely than men to prefer a warm spouse and an intimate marriage (see also Hiew, Halford, van der Vijver, & Liu, 2015).

Study 3

In Study 3, we first sought to confirm the factor structure of ideals observed in Study 2 among people in a stable romantic relationship. Then we compared people's endorsement of the

Table 4. Descriptives, Reliabilities, and Bivariate Correlations for Variables in Study 3 (Ideal Spouse Version).

Variable	Ideal spouse											
	Taiwan (<i>n</i> = 128)		United States (<i>n</i> = 158)		Cultural difference							
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	α	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	α	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Warmth–trustworthiness	6.17 (0.56)	.80	6.13 (0.70)	.80	0.58	0.07	—	.38***	.56***	.55***	.21**	.19*
2. Attractiveness–vitality	4.53 (0.99)	.86	4.43 (1.05)	.86	0.79	0.09	.24**	—	.40***	.45***	.23**	.04
3. Resources–family orientation	5.97 (0.75)	.80	5.28 (1.01)	.84	6.49***	0.77	.57***	.27**	—	.51***	.36***	.19*
4. Openness–independence	4.95 (0.77)	.76	5.01 (0.83)	.78	−0.63	−0.07	.39***	.45***	.52***	—	.20*	.38***
5. Interdependent self-construal	5.12 (0.67)	.64	4.87 (0.59)	.69	3.25**	0.39	.39***	.17	.41***	.17	—	.13
6. Independent self-construal	5.25 (0.73)	.53	5.21 (0.71)	.64	0.45	0.05	.23*	.13	.03	.32***	.02	—

Note. Correlation matrix for Taiwan is in the lower panel, whereas that for United States is in the upper panel.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

extended family- and resources-related ideals across cultures and explained the cultural differences using self-construals. Markus and Kitayama (1991) proposed that individuals high in interdependent self-construal define themselves in relation to important close others and ingroup members; individuals high in independent self-construal characterize themselves primarily in terms of their internal attributes. People from collectivistic, East Asian cultures tend to be higher in interdependent self-construal than people from individualistic, Western cultures, and these differences account for some cultural variations in thought and behavior (see Cross, Hardin, & Gercek-Swing, 2011, for a review). Accordingly, we hypothesized that Chinese will ideally want a mate with attributes higher in family orientation and status–resources than European Americans will, because Chinese consider their family to be an important part of themselves (Hypothesis 6). In other words, we expected interdependent self-construal to explain (unpack) cultural differences in endorsement of family and status/resources ideals.

Method

Participants and procedure. In the current study, 259 Taiwan Chinese (182 females; $M_{age} = 21.14$, $SD = 2.75$) and 331 European American students (230 females; $M_{age} = 19.30$, $SD = 1.89$) completed an online questionnaire. Only participants who were currently in a heterosexual relationship were included in this study.

Chinese participants were in the relationship for an average of 9 to 12 months (1 = 1–3 months to 6 = over 2 years); 10 of the participants (3.86%) reported either being engaged, cohabitating, or married. U.S. participants were in the relationship for about 9 to 12 months; 41 participants (12.39%) were either engaged, cohabitating, or married. The two cultural groups did not significantly differ on length of romantic relationship, $p > .05$.

Participants either completed the ideal spouse measure ($n_{TW} = 128$; $n_{US} = 158$) or the ideal marriage measure ($n_{TW} =$

131; $n_{US} = 173$). All of the participants completed the measure of self-construals.

Measures. Descriptives, reliabilities, and correlations for the main variables in the present study are summarized in Tables 4 and 5.

Spouse and marriage ideals. We selected items with loadings higher than .40 from the factor analysis in Study 2 to form a short measure of each ideal dimension, but we only included the nine highest loading items for the dimensions of spouse Warmth–Trustworthiness, spouse Resources–Family Orientation, and marriage Mutuality–Intimacy–Loyalty because many items had loadings over .40. Participants rated the list of attributes on a 7-point scale (1 = not important to 7 = very important).

Interdependent self-construal. Interdependent self-construal was measured with items adapted from Singelis's (1994) Self-Construal Scale.⁵ Ten items tapped an interdependent view of the self (e.g., "I should take into consideration my parents' advice when making education/career plans"), all rated on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

Results and Discussion

Testing measurement equivalence of ideals. First, we tested for measurement equivalence of the short ideal measures across cultures. We conducted separate multiple-group confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for the four-factor ideal spouse and four-factor ideal marriage models. Model fit was evaluated with the comparative fit index (CFI) and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR): CFI higher than .95 and SRMR lower than .08 are indicators of good fit of a model (Hu & Bentler, 1998). We first examined the factor structure across the two groups, and then we constrained factor loadings to be equal across groups and tested for metric

Table 5. Descriptives, Reliabilities, and Bivariate Correlations for Variables in Study 3 (Ideal Marriage Version).

Variable	Ideal marriage											
	Taiwan (n = 131)		United States (n = 173)		Cultural difference							
	M (SD)	α	M (SD)	α	t	d	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Mutuality–intimacy–loyalty	6.41 (0.55)	.84	6.15 (0.74)	.87	3.42**	0.39	—	.46***	.51***	.64***	.25***	.37***
2. Passion	5.27 (0.93)	.78	5.85 (0.86)	.79	-5.66***	-0.65	.43***	—	.43***	.47***	.13***	.37***
3. Financial stability–family network	5.41 (0.76)	.75	4.85 (1.12)	.85	4.90***	0.56	.43***	.41***	—	.62***	.38***	.12
4. Similarity	4.78 (0.91)	.72	4.45 (1.11)	.76	2.80**	0.32	.56***	.51***	.52***	—	.31***	.30***
5. Interdependent self-construal	5.15 (0.58)	.64	4.90 (0.63)	.67	3.46***	0.40	.22*	.01	.21*	.15	—	-.11
6. Independent self-construal	5.32 (0.60)	.53	5.34 (0.65)	.62	-0.24	-0.03	.27**	.27**	.25**	.23**	.11	—

Note. Correlation matrix for Taiwan is in the lower panel, whereas that for United States is in the upper panel.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 6. Model Fit Summary.

	df	χ^2	CFI	SRMR
Ideal spouse model				
Structural invariance	96	188.12	0.95	0.05
Metric invariance	104	196.47	0.95	0.07
Scalar invariance	112	294.82	0.90	0.08
Partial scalar invariance	108	202.46	0.95	0.07
Ideal marriage model				
Structural invariance	96	174.47	0.95	0.05
Metric invariance	104	180.48	0.95	0.07
Scalar invariance	112	311.22	0.88	0.08
Partial scalar invariance	108	185.60	0.95	0.07

Note. All model chi-squares are significant at $p < .001$. CFI = comparative fit index; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual.

invariance using the chi-square difference test and the cutoff of CFI change lower than .01 (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). Subsequently, we tested for scalar invariance by constraining the intercepts to be equal across groups. To reduce the complexity of the model, three item parcels were formed for each latent factor of ideals by randomly grouping items (Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002).

Information on model fit is summarized in Table 6. For the four-factor ideal spouse model, the model fit was satisfactory. After constraining factor loadings across cultures, the model fit was acceptable. The constrained and unconstrained models did not differ significantly, $\Delta\chi^2(8) = 8.35$, $p = .40$, $\Delta\text{CFI} < 0.001$. Full scalar invariance could not be established. Partial scalar invariance was demonstrated by relaxing four constraints on the intercepts, and the model showed an acceptable fit. The metric invariance and partial scalar invariance models did not significantly differ in model fit, $\Delta\chi^2(4) = 5.99$, $p = .20$, $\Delta\text{CFI} = 0.001$.

For the four-factor ideal marriage model, the model fit was satisfactory. After constraining factor loadings across

cultures, the model fit was still good. The constrained and unconstrained models did not differ significantly, $\Delta\chi^2(8) = 8.01$, $p = .43$, $\Delta\text{CFI} < 0.001$. Full scalar invariance was not achieved, however. Partial scalar invariance was established after relaxing four constraints on the intercepts. Model fit did not significantly differ across the metric invariance and partial scalar invariance models, $\Delta\chi^2(4) = 5.12$, $p = .28$, $\Delta\text{CFI} = 0.001$. Taken together, we have confirmed the factor structure of the ideal measures identified and have demonstrated cross-cultural equivalence of the ideal measures. These results indicated that correlations and means of the ideal measures could be compared meaningfully across cultures.

Explaining cultural differences in resources and family ideals. We conducted independent t tests to compare the importance of ideals across cultures (see Tables 4 & 5 for means and SDs). In particular, we found that Chinese rated the spouse ideal of Resources–Family Orientation to be more important than did European Americans, $t(284) = 6.49$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.77$, $\text{CI} = [0.52, 1.00]$, and that Chinese more strongly endorsed the marriage ideal of Financial Stability–Family Network than did European Americans, $t(302) = 4.90$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.56$, $\text{CI} = [0.33, 0.80]$.

We proposed that interdependent self-construal would explain these cultural differences in ratings of the extended family- and resources-related ideals. First, among participants who completed the ideal spouse measure, Chinese reported higher levels of interdependent self-construal than did European Americans, $t(283) = 3.25$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.39$, $\text{CI} = [0.16, 0.63]$. Second, interdependent self-construal was positively and significantly correlated with the spouse ideal of Resources–Family Orientation (see Table 4 for correlations in each cultural group). Finally, we tested for mediation by interdependent self-construal using the bootstrapping procedure (Preacher & Hayes, 2004), controlling for age, sex, and length of relationship. We conducted mediation analysis

with 5,000 bootstrap samples that revealed a significant indirect effect (estimate = 0.15, bias-corrected CI = [0.06, 0.25]) as well as a significant direct effect of culture (dummy coded with 1 = *Taiwan*, 0 = *United States*; estimate = 0.61, CI = [0.40, 0.81]). These results suggested that interdependent self-construal partially explained why Chinese valued the spouse Resources–Family Orientation ideal more than did European Americans.

In a similar vein, among participants who completed the ideal marriage measure, Chinese were higher in interdependent self-construal than were European Americans, $t(302) = 3.46, p < .001, d = 0.40, CI = [0.17, 0.63]$. Moreover, interdependent self-construal was positively and significantly correlated with the marriage ideal of Financial Stability–Family Network (see Table 5). Mediation analysis showed that the indirect effect of interdependent self-construal (estimate = 0.10, bias-corrected CI = [0.04, 0.21]) and direct effect of culture were significant (estimate = 0.49, CI = [0.26, 0.72]). In other words, interdependent self-construal partially explained cultural difference in the ratings of the marriage Financial Stability–Family Network ideal.

In sum, Chinese put more emphasis on resources and extended family in their ideals compared with European Americans, partly due to their higher levels of interdependent self-construal (Hypothesis 6).

Study 4

In this final study, we first explored the second-order structure underlying our eight ideal factors. Our first attempt to explore the second-order structure of these ideals in Study 2 was not successful, and the design of Study 3 did not allow us to test the overlap of spouse/marriage ideals. Using shorter and perhaps cleaner measures of ideals, we searched for the three higher-order ideal dimensions identified in earlier research (Fletcher et al., 1999), namely, warmth/intimacy, attractiveness/passion, and status/resources.

One major objective of this study was to compare the extent of agreement between ideals and perceptions of current partner/relationship across cultures. According to the ISM, higher agreement between one's ideals and perceptions of one's current partner/relationship (i.e., ideal-perception consistency) is associated with more positive relationship evaluation (Fletcher et al., 1999; Simpson et al., 2001). However, discrepancies between ideals and perceptions may function differently in East Asian compared with Western cultures. East Asians, as compared with Westerners, are less disturbed by inconsistency between what they prefer and what they have, at least for individual preferences (Hoshino-Browne et al., 2005). East Asians also evaluate themselves to be more distant from their ideals than do Westerners, resulting in larger discrepancies between their actual and ideal selves (Heine & Lehman, 1999). Moreover, promotion concerns (e.g., nurturance, growth) and ideals are more prevalent in Western than in East Asian cultures (e.g., Lee, Aaker,

& Gardner, 2000). We proposed that individuals from Western cultures are motivated to achieve what they ideally want in the relationship and strive to maintain ideal-perception consistency, whereas people from East Asian cultures tend to tolerate the discrepancy between their ideals and perceptions. Accordingly, we predicted that Chinese, as compared with European Americans, will show lower levels of agreement between their ideals and perceptions of their partner/relationship (Hypothesis 7).

Another objective was to test whether ideal-perception consistency predicted relationship outcomes. We predicted that, for both Chinese and European Americans, ideal-perception consistency will be associated with positive relationship outcomes, namely, relationship satisfaction, relationship commitment, and intention to marry (Hypothesis 8a). However, we reasoned that because ideals and preferences are less important in informing relationship evaluation in East Asian than in Western cultural contexts, these associations will be weaker among Chinese than among European Americans (Hypothesis 8b).

In the present study, we computed ideal-perception consistency in two ways, namely, the pattern metric and the level metric (Eastwick & Neff, 2012). The pattern metric is specified by the match between patterns of responses on ideals and current partner/relationship perceptions within an individual. For instance, if an individual values warmth more than attractiveness for an ideal partner, then there is a match in pattern if his or her partner is higher in warmth relative to attractiveness. To examine the pattern metric, within-person correlations are computed between profile scores of ideals and those of current perceptions across all ideal dimensions. Predictive validity of ideal-perception consistency is supported if these within-person correlations are positively associated with relationship outcomes.

The level metric is defined as the match between level of ideal preferences and level of current partner/relationship perceptions across individuals. For instance, if a person highly values warmth for an ideal partner as compared with other individuals, then there is a match in level if his or her partner is high in warmth as compared with other individuals. To examine the level metric, a test of the interaction between ideal and current perception for each ideal dimension is conducted. The predictive validity of ideal-perception consistency is supported if an interaction is significant, and if people experience positive relationship outcomes if their ideals and current perceptions match in levels (high in both ideals and perceptions, or low in both ideals and perceptions) whereas they experience negative outcomes if there is a mismatch (high–low or low–high).

In addition, we examined two forms of the pattern metric based on Furr's (2008) distinction between two types of profile similarity: overall and distinctive similarity (or consistency) estimates. An overall index of ideal-perception consistency taps the match between profile scores of ideals and perceptions of partner/relationship, without any correction. This type of

Table 7. Descriptives, Reliabilities, and Bivariate Correlations for Variables in Study 4.

Variable	Taiwan (<i>n</i> = 297)		United States (<i>n</i> = 175)		Cultural difference		1	2	3	4	5
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	α	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	α	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>					
1. Overall ideal–perception consistency ^a	0.46 (0.46)	—	0.49 (0.43)	—	-1.04	-0.10	—	.36***	.20**	.19*	.19*
2. Distinctive ideal–perception consistency ^a	0.33 (0.47)	—	0.30 (0.50)	—	0.55	0.05	.51***	—	.05	.06	.10
3. Relationship satisfaction	5.32 (1.21)	.95	5.98 (1.04)	.95	-6.09***	-0.56	.22***	.28***	—	.81***	.72***
4. Relationship commitment	5.72 (1.11)	.93	5.76 (1.21)	.91	-0.42	-0.04	.12*	.20**	.73***	—	.77***
5. Marriage intention	5.00 (1.50)	.88	4.83 (1.82)	.88	1.13	0.10	.07	.20**	.61***	.76***	—

Note. Correlation matrix for Taiwan is in the lower panel, whereas that for United States is in the upper panel.

^aFischer *z* transformed scores were used in the analysis.

p* < .05. *p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

index has been widely used in previous research, although it overlooks the methodological issue of normativeness (Furr, 2008). For instance, a person's high value of warmth in a partner (e.g., a score of 7 along a 7-point scale) indeed reflects his or her normative preference of a warm ideal partner just like most people (e.g., people's average score is 6), as well as his or her distinctive preference of warmth for an ideal partner relative to other people (so, a difference score of 7 – 6 = 1). As a result, the overall ideal-perception consistency index captures individuals' normative responses, along with their distinctive preferences. Given that many ideal characteristics are desirable in a relationship for most people, it is not surprising that high overall ideal-perception consistency is often related to positive relationship outcomes (Wood & Furr, 2015).

Contrastingly, a distinctive index removes normativeness (i.e., people's average responses) and taps one's preferences for characteristics that are distinct from others'. A distinctive index is often smaller compared with an overall index, and it sometimes does not predict positive outcomes as strongly as an overall index because of the removal of the normative-desirability confound (Wood & Furr, 2015). Consequently, for the pattern metric, we computed both the overall and distinctive indices to take into account normativeness in ratings of ideals and perceptions of partner/relationship.

Method

Participants and procedure. We recruited 297 Taiwan Chinese (197 females; $M_{age} = 21.14$, $SD = 2.74$) and 175 European American students (110 females; $M_{age} = 19.58$, $SD = 2.80$) for participation in an online survey. Only participants who were in a current heterosexual romantic relationship of 3 months duration or longer were recruited.

The Chinese participants' romantic relationships averaged 24.99 months duration ($SD = 21.86$); five participants (1.68%) reported their relationship status as either being engaged or married. The U.S. participants' romantic relationships averaged 21.23 months duration ($SD = 27.10$); 11 participants (6.29%) reported being either engaged or married. The two cultural groups did not differ significantly on length of relationship, $p > .05$.

Measures. Descriptives and reliabilities of the major variables are summarized in Table 7.

Ideals and perceptions. We used the short measures of ideals as in Study 3. Participants completed the list twice: once for their ideal spouse/marriage, and once for whether each attribute describes their *current* partner/relationship on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all accurate* to 7 = *extremely accurate*). Participants always completed the ideal measures before they reported on perceptions of their current partners/relationships.

Overall index of ideal-perception consistency. We followed the procedure outlined in Fletcher et al. (2000) to compute an overall index of ideal-perception consistency for each participant. First, ratings of the eight ideal factors and the eight perception factors were computed. Second, within-subject correlations were computed between the ideal ratings and the corresponding perception ratings. The correlation for each individual represented ideal-perception consistency, with higher correlations indicating higher agreement between a person's ideals and his or her perceptions of the current partner/relationship. Finally, the correlations were converted to Fischer *z* scores for more normal distribution in the analysis (these *z* scores were converted back to correlation coefficients when reporting means and standard deviations).

Distinctive index of ideal-perception consistency. To calculate a distinctive index of ideal-perception consistency, we first computed means for the eight ideal and eight perception factors across sex and culture and used these means as normative scores for the corresponding groups of individuals. Then we subtracted these normative scores from each corresponding ideal and perception variable (i.e., we mean-centered the ideal and perception variables according to sex and culture). Subsequently, we computed within-subject correlations between the mean-centered ideal variables and mean-centered perception variables. Finally, we Fischer *z* transformed these correlations for analysis.

Relationship quality. The relationship satisfaction and commitment measures were adapted from the Investment Model

Table 8. Factor Loadings for Second-Order Exploratory Factor Analysis of Ideals in Study 4.

Ideals	Taiwan		United States		
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Warmth–trustworthiness	.86	.03	.89	.05	.02
Attractiveness–vitality	–.17	.96	–.31	.92	.09
Resources–family orientation	.73	.17	.16	.20	.64
Openness–independence	.17	.71	.46	.67	–.11
Mutuality–intimacy–loyalty	.97	–.18	.84	–.14	.21
Passion	.17	.71	.27	.55	.21
Financial stability–family network	.57	.31	–.10	–.03	.93
Similarity	.41	.42	.09	–.03	.73

Note. Factor loadings of .40 or higher are in bold.

Scale (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998), but we added eight negatively worded items from another relationship quality measure (Marigold, Holmes, & Ross, 2007). Ten items measured respondents' general satisfaction with their current relationship (e.g., "I feel satisfied with our relationship"), and 10 items measured their level of commitment (e.g., "I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner") on 7-point Likert-type scales (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*).

Marriage intention. We measured participants' intention to marry their current partners with two items (Kline & Zhang, 2009), using 7-point scales. We averaged the two items to assess marriage intention: "How likely is it that you are going to marry your current partner?" (1 = *very unlikely* to 7 = *very likely*) and "To what extent do you intend to marry your current partner?" (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *extremely*).

Results and Discussion

Second-order factor structure of ideals. We first conducted exploratory factor analysis to examine whether there is any underlying structure that can potentially explain the covariations among the ideal factors (see Table 8). We found cultural differences in the underlying structure of the ideal factors. A three-factor solution was observed in the U.S. sample (explaining 73.22% of total variance). One of the second-order dimensions included spouse Warmth–Trustworthiness and marriage Mutuality–Intimacy–Loyalty, the second dimension included spouse Attractiveness–Vitality and marriage Passion, and the last dimension included spouse Resources–Family Orientation, marriage Financial Stability–Family Network, and marriage Similarity. In contrast, a two-factor solution characterized the second-order structure of ideals in the Chinese sample (explaining 68.40% of total variance). The first dimension incorporated spouse Warmth–Trustworthiness, marriage Mutuality–Intimacy–Loyalty, spouse Resources–Family Orientation, and marriage Financial Stability–Family Network. The second dimension

consisted of spouse Attractiveness–Vitality, spouse Openness–Independence, and marriage Passion.

Thus, among U.S. participants, the three-factor structure is consistent with the structure proposed in the ISM. However, Chinese participants tended to group attributes that tap warmth and intimacy with attributes that tap resources and extended family.

Cultural differences in ideal-perception consistency.⁶ Contrary to our prediction, the two cultural groups did not differ significantly in ideal-perception consistency: For the overall index, $t(469) = -1.04, p = .31, d = -0.10, CI = [-0.29, 0.09]$; for the distinctive index, $t(470) = 0.55, p = .58, d = 0.05, CI = [-0.13, 0.24]$. The overall ideal-perception consistency index was moderate for both Chinese (0.46) and European Americans (0.49). After removing normativeness, the size of ideal-perception consistency for both Chinese (0.33) and European Americans (0.30) was reduced.

As a result, we did not find any support for cultural differences in ideal-perception consistency when comparing Chinese and European Americans (Hypothesis 7). Across the two cultures, people tend to show moderate agreement between their spouse/marriage ideals and their perceptions of current partners/relationships.

Ideal-perception consistency and relationship outcomes

Pattern metric. We conducted hierarchical regression analyses to examine the relation of ideal-perception consistency to relationship satisfaction, commitment, and marriage intention, using the pattern metric.⁷ In the regression models, participants' age, sex, and length of relationship were controlled, and interactions with culture were examined. Table 9 compares the results using overall and distinctive indices to examine the predictive validity of ideal-perception consistency.

Overall index. Agreement between spouse/marriage ideals and perceptions of one's current partner/relationship, as indicated by the overall index of ideal-perception consistency, positively predicted relationship satisfaction, $b = 0.52, CI = [0.30, 0.73], \beta = 0.21, t(465) = 4.70, p < .001$; commitment, $b = 0.35, CI = [0.14, 0.56], \beta = 0.15, t(465) = 3.22, p = .001$; and marriage intention, $b = 0.37, CI = [0.07, 0.68], \beta = 0.11, t(459) = 2.41, p < .05$. Culture did not moderate the effects of ideal-perception consistency on relationship satisfaction and commitment; there was only a marginally significant interaction between culture and ideal-perception consistency predicting marriage intention, $b = -0.54, CI = [-1.18, 0.10], \beta = -0.15, t(457) = -1.67, p = .096$.

Distinctive index. A similar set of regression analyses was conducted to examine the associations between distinctive ideal-perception consistency and relationship outcomes. Agreement between distinctive endorsement of ideals and perceptions of current partner/relationship positively predicted relationship satisfaction ($b = 0.42, CI = [0.22, 0.62]$,

Table 9. Prediction of Relationship Outcomes by Ideal-Perception Consistency in Study 4.

Outcome	Pattern metric												Level metric
	Overall index				Distinctive index				United States				
	Total		Taiwan		Total		Taiwan		United States		United States		
b [95% CI]	β	b [95% CI]	β	b [95% CI]	β	b [95% CI]	β	b [95% CI]	β	b [95% CI]	β	Average β	
Relationship satisfaction	0.52*** [0.30, 0.73]	.21	0.53*** [0.25, 0.81]	.21	0.45*** [0.12, 0.78]	.20	0.42*** [0.22, 0.62]	.19	0.67*** [0.40, 0.93]	.28	0.06 [-0.22, 0.35]	.03	.06
Relationship commitment	0.35*** [0.14, 0.56]	.15	0.27* [0.01, 0.52]	.12	0.50*** [0.13, 0.88]	.19	0.29*** [0.09, 0.48]	.13	0.42*** [0.18, 0.67]	.19	0.08 [-0.25, 0.41]	.04	.05
Marriage intention	0.37* [0.07, 0.68]	.11	0.20 [-0.16, 0.55]	.06	0.71* [0.15, 1.28]	.18	0.46*** [0.18, 0.74]	.15	0.58*** [0.25, 0.92]	.20	0.27 [-0.22, 0.76]	.08	.03

Note. These analyses controlled for age, sex, and length of relationship. For the pattern metric, we computed within-subject correlations between ideals and perceptions of partner/relationship and used these correlation coefficients for each individual to predict the outcomes. Results for the whole sample, Chinese sample, and European American sample are shown. Distinctive index of ideal-perception consistency removes normativeness from the overall index by mean-centering each ideal and perception variable before computing within-subject correlations. For the level metric, we conducted interaction tests between each corresponding ideal and perception variable. Average beta weights of the interaction effects for each outcome variable are presented. CI = confidence interval.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

$\beta = 0.19$, $t(466) = 4.17$, $p < .001$; commitment, $b = 0.29$, $CI = [0.09, 0.48]$, $\beta = 0.13$, $t(466) = 2.88$, $p < .01$; and marriage intention, $b = 0.46$, $CI = [0.18, 0.74]$, $\beta = 0.15$, $t(460) = 3.26$, $p < .01$. Culture significantly moderated the association between distinctive ideal-perception consistency and relationship satisfaction, $b = 0.59$, $CI = [0.20, 0.98]$, $\beta = 0.22$, $t(464) = 2.97$, $p < .01$. Contrary to our prediction, distinctive ideal-perception consistency significantly predicted relationship satisfaction among Chinese, $b = 0.67$, $CI = [0.40, 0.93]$, $\beta = 0.28$, $t(291) = 4.99$, $p < .001$, but not among European Americans, $b = 0.06$, $CI = [-0.22, 0.35]$, $\beta = 0.03$, $t(170) = 0.45$, $p = .66$.

Level metric. Alternatively, we examined the predictive validity of ideal-perception consistency using the level metric. In particular, we conducted interaction tests between each ideal variable and each perception variable to predict relationship outcomes. Among the 24 interaction effects that we tested, only six were statistically significant. The interaction effects were small for the prediction of relationship satisfaction (average standardized effects = 0.06), relationship commitment (average standardized effects = 0.05), and marriage intention (average standardized effects = 0.03).

Generally speaking, when people's perceptions of their current partners/relationships are consistent with their ideals, they report better relationship quality and are more motivated to marry their current partners (*Hypothesis 8a*). Results are consistent with our prediction especially when we conceptualize ideal-perception consistency as a pattern metric (see Table 9). When we conceptualize ideal-perception consistency as a level metric, the findings only weakly support its predictive validity.

We obtained mixed findings regarding whether culture moderates the associations between ideal-perception consistency and relationship outcomes (*Hypothesis 8b*). When the overall index of ideal-perception consistency was used, ideal-perception consistency predicted relationship outcomes among both Chinese and European Americans. Contrary to our prediction, when the distinctive index was used, ideal-perception consistency more strongly predicted relationship satisfaction among Chinese than among European Americans.

General Discussion

Across four studies, we examined the content, structure, endorsement, and evaluative functions of ideal standards regarding marital partner and relationship in Chinese and Western cultural contexts. We attempted to integrate the ISM and the cultural perspective in understanding ideal partner preferences; our research pinpoints four major findings that achieve this goal. First, based on open-ended responses from Taiwan Chinese and European Americans, we created a list of ideal attributes that extends the one previously used in the ideal standards research. In particular, we found that

attributes tapping extended family, but not nuclear family, are more accessible in Chinese ideal knowledge as compared with European Americans (*Hypothesis 1*). Our factor analysis results in Study 2 showed that people grouped the family attributes and the status-resources attributes under the same dimension. The overlap of the additional content on family and the status-resources attributes may suggest that both status-resources and extended family serve similar functions to provide resources for raising offspring and maintaining one's nuclear family. Our present research thus contributes to the literature by offering an extended list of ideal attributes for future ideal partner preferences research in diverse cultural and relationship contexts.

Second, whereas prior cross-cultural mate preferences studies often overlooked the underlying structure of ideal attributes or did not make precise predictions about the structure, the ISM specifies the structure of ideals. In both Chinese and European American samples, we observed dimensions of spouse/marriage ideals that are consistent with the ISM, namely, warmth/intimacy, attractiveness/passion, and status/resources (*Hypothesis 2*). Importantly, we found cross-cultural equivalence for the structure underlying these ideals. Our new culturally sensitive ideal measures and other relationship-related constructs (i.e., relationship beliefs, filial piety, and family values) are associated in meaningful ways, supporting our predictions (*Hypothesis 3a-3c*). These results point to the universal nature of ideals, at least across Chinese and Western cultural contexts. However, in Study 4, we found that Chinese grouped the resources- and family-related attributes with attributes tapping warmth and loyalty in the second-order factor analysis of ideal factors. Indeed, in the Chinese context, the family-related attributes (e.g., *treating parents and family members well*) can be indicative of a partner's warmth and loyalty or of whether the person is caring and respectful toward others (Yeh & Bedford, 2003). Furthermore, we found additional dimensions of spouse ideals, Openness-Independence, and marriage ideals, Similarity. The Openness-Independence dimension is composed of items such as *open-minded*, *independent*, *intelligent*, and *competent*. The Similarity dimension taps the importance of similarity in values, interests, and so on for an ideal marriage. These two additional dimensions consist of attributes that have been used in previous mate selection studies, but they are not covered by the ISM. Further research is needed to cross-validate the dimensions we have identified.

Third, we observed cultural similarities and differences in how Chinese and European Americans prioritize attributes tapping whom to marry and what an ideal marriage looks like. Across cultures, people highly valued the warmth/intimacy ideals as compared with other ideals (*Hypothesis 4a*). Our results in Studies 2 and 3 revealed that ideals involving resources and extended family are more strongly held by Chinese than by European Americans (*Hypothesis 4b*). These cultural differences were partly explained by interdependent self-construal (*Hypothesis 6*). Chinese put more

emphasis on resources and extended family in their spouse/marriage ideals than do European Americans because they tend to incorporate important close others and ingroups to define themselves. Unpacking these cultural differences is critical because previous cross-cultural studies on mate preferences explained their findings using cultural constructs but seldom actually measured them (e.g., Kline & Zhang, 2009; Toro-Morn & Sprecher, 2003). In addition to cultural differences, we observed sex differences in mate preferences that are in line with the evolutionary perspective (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). In both cultural groups, women preferred a mate with status/resources more than did men, whereas men preferred a mate who is physically attractive more than did women (Hypothesis 5).

Fourth and finally, our results in Study 4 generally supported the evaluative functions of ideals based on the ISM. For both Chinese and European Americans, higher agreement between ideals and perceptions of their current partner/relationship predicted better relationship outcomes (Hypothesis 8a). We examined the predictive validity of ideal-perception consistency in established relationships using both the pattern and level metrics. There are only a handful of studies that use different approaches to conceptualize and compute ideal-perception consistency. Hence, our research provides a more comprehensive test of our prediction of ideal-perception consistency. In general, the use of the pattern metric has received better empirical support in the prediction of relationship outcomes than the level metric, and the pattern metric is commonly used in studies that support the ISM (Eastwick et al., 2014). Our current results are consistent with this conclusion. One possible explanation for better support of the pattern metric is that people rate an ideal as important or not relative to other ideals, but they do not consider whether what they desire is more or less important than what other people desire (Eastwick et al., 2014).

We expected that East Asians would be less motivated than Westerners to fulfill their ideals and wishes in their relationships, and hence, Chinese would show lower ideal-perception consistency than European Americans (Hypothesis 7). However, our hypothesis was not supported. Both Chinese and European Americans tended to show a moderate degree of ideal-perception consistency. There are two possible explanations. First, our prediction, generated from cross-cultural research on actual-ideal self-discrepancies (Heine & Lehman, 1999), may not apply to how people view their partners and relationships. Second, people from both cultural groups may maintain a certain degree of ideal-perception consistency in established relationships. It is important for future research to examine cultural difference in ideal-perception consistency in other relationship contexts (e.g., in the attraction phrase).

We also expected that ideal-perception consistency would predict relationship outcomes more strongly among European Americans than among Chinese (Hypothesis 8b). We did not find any significant cultural difference in the association

between the overall ideal-perception consistency index and relationship outcomes. Contrary to our prediction, the distinctive ideal-perception consistency index predicted relationship satisfaction among Chinese but not among European Americans. After removing the normative-desirability influence in ratings of partner and relationship, ideal-perception consistency of distinctive profiles no longer informed judgments of relationship satisfaction among European Americans. Indeed, Eastwick and colleagues (2014) speculated that East Asians, compared with Westerners, are more likely to deliberately consider their ideals than consult their gut-level romantic feelings in mate selection. For example, people from collectivistic, Eastern cultures are more willing than those from individualistic, Western cultures to marry someone with all the qualities they want except love (Levine, Sato, Hashimoto, & Verma, 1995). Future research using different paradigms (e.g., trade-offs of attributes) in addition to self-report ratings may help disentangle these mixed findings obtained from the two ideal-perception consistency indices.

Limitations and Implications

Our research is limited in three primary ways. First, our samples are all university students in young adulthood. Mate preferences differ across age groups, although age differences are much smaller than sex differences (e.g., Buunk, Dijkstra, Fetchenhauer, & Kenrick, 2002). Likewise, we have only sampled and compared Chinese and European American-educated college students. Future research should sample more widely across various age groups, social classes, and cultures. Second, the cross-sectional nature of the data does not allow us to draw causal interpretations. Future research could explore how ideal-perception consistency changes over time when a relationship develops. Finally, we focused on the evaluative functions of ideal standards in the present research, but people also use their ideal standards to predict their relationship trajectory, explain relationship events, and regulate their behaviors (Simpson et al., 2001). Future research could examine these various functions of ideal standards, and more importantly, hypothesize and test for cultural similarities and differences in these relationship processes.

In sum, our research tested some of the predictions based on the ISM across cultural contexts. Our research has provided initial evidence that supports the functional universal of the ISM, at least among Chinese and European Americans (Norenzayan & Heine, 2005). That is, these ideal dimensions exist across cultures, and people use these ideal standards to guide their relationship evaluation. However, among cultural groups that differ in their expectations of and assumptions about romantic relationships, some attributes are more salient in everyday use and some ideal dimensions are emphasized to a greater extent when people consider what is important for a marriage and a spouse.

So, what do you want in a marriage? Our research suggests that it depends on where you are from, with Chinese

people being more likely to desire a partner who is family oriented and who has resources than are European Americans; at the same time, people from both cultural groups similarly want a marriage with warmth, intimacy, and loyalty.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Notes

1. We would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.
2. We note that sex differences in mate selection strategies are more complicated than outlined here. Findings are sometimes mixed and sex differences in mate preferences can vary across research and relationship contexts (e.g., Eastwick, Luchies, Finkel, & Hunt, 2014; Meltzer, McNulty, Jackson, & Karney, 2014).
3. Before examining cultural differences in means and associations, we tested and established measurement equivalence for the measures using multiple-group confirmatory factor analysis (details of the procedure is outlined in Study 3). Partial scalar invariance was observed for measures used in our studies.
4. We did not directly compare means of the ideal measures across cultures in Study 2; measurement equivalence of the ideal measures was examined in Study 3 before we compared means across cultures.
5. Although independent self-construal was not used in the current analysis, we included its results in Tables 4 and 5 for comprehensiveness.
6. We have measured relationship regulatory focus in the current study. Results involving relationship regulatory focus are reported in supplementary materials.
7. We excluded participants who were married ($n = 6$) when the outcome variable was marriage intention.

Supplemental Material

The online supplemental material is available at <http://pspb.sagepub.com/supplemental>.

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