Effects of Sex, Culture, and Support Type on Perceptions of Spousal Social Support
An Assessment of the "Support Gap" Hypothesis in Early Marriage

YAN XU
University of Southern California
BRANT R. BURLESON
Purdue University

Several writers have suggested that a "support gap" characterizes modern marriages, with women receiving less support from their spouses than men receive from theirs. Although this support gap hypothesis (SGH) is used increasingly to explain marital interaction and satisfaction, there have been few rigorous evaluations of this hypothesis. In particular, existing research on the support gap has not systematically considered (a) different types of social support; (b) differences in provided vs. received support; (c) differences in reported levels of support desire, experience, and satisfaction; or (d) differences in distinct cultural groups with respect to social support in marriage. The present study provided a multidimensional assessment of desired and experienced spousal social support. Participants were recently married men and women (100 Americans and 102 Chinese) who completed questionnaires providing assessments of desired and experienced levels of spousal support for each of 5 support types. Men and women did not differ systematically with respect to the levels of support they experienced from their spouses; however, women reported desiring significantly higher levels of support from their spouses than did men for all 5 types of support. Evaluation of support satisfaction indicated that both American and Chinese women experience gaps with respect to emotional and esteem support; Chinese women additionally experience a gap in network support. These results specify the nature of marital support gaps much more precisely than previous work and suggest several issues to be addressed in future work.

Do men and women want the same or different things from their spouses? Do they get different things from their spouses? Does what they want—and get—from their spouses vary across cultures? The present study addresses these questions with regard to social support—the assistance that people provide to others when helping them cope with life challenges and situational demands.

Yan Xu (M.S., Purdue University, 2000) is a doctoral student in the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089; email: yanx@usc.edu. *Brant R. Burleson* (Ph.D., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1982) is a professor in the Department of Communication, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907; email: brantb@purdue.edu. This paper is based on masters thesis research conducted by the first author under the direction of the second author. A version of this paper was presented at the 2001 International Communication Association conference, Washington, DC.

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Researchers concur that social support is one of the most important provisions of the marital relationship (Acitelli, 1996; Gottlieb, 1994). Spouses expect partners to "be there" for them, helping overcome problems that can be solved, as well as providing consolation and comfort when problems lack solution. Although both husbands and wives do turn to others in their social networks for various types of support, spouses remain a vital source of support (Beach, Martin, Blum, & Roman, 1993; Walen & Lachman, 2000). Indeed, several studies suggest that the availability of social support from sources outside the marriage does not provide adequate psychological compensation for the lack of spousal support (Coyne & DeLongis, 1986; Lieberman, 1982). Consistent with this, a growing number of studies have found positive associations between satisfaction with spousal support and overall marital satisfaction (e.g., Acitelli & Antonucci, 1994; Julien & Markman, 1991; Pasch & Bradbury, 1998).

Discussions of social support in marriage are increasingly informed by what Belle (1982) termed the "support gap hypothesis" (SGH), the notion that women receive less support from their spouses than men receive from their spouses. In other words, the support gap hypothesis holds that men are overbenefited, and women underbenefited, with respect to the exchange of social support in close relationships such as marriage. Proponents of this hypothesis differ with respect to what they see as the source of the support gap, with some focusing on "natural" predilections of women to be more supportive (see Fausto-Sterling, 1985), others emphasizing social role expectations for women to be providers of nurturance and support (Barbee et al., 1993), and still others focusing on how certain cultural and relational dynamics lead women to be more supportive (Wood, 1994). Regardless of the source of the sex difference, the support gap hypothesis maintains that men are advantaged in marriage with respect to the receipt of support, with this support gap contributing substantially to marriage being a more beneficial relationship for men than women (Antonucci & Akiyama, 1987; Gove, Hughes, & Style, 1983).

Although Belle first proposed the SGH nearly 20 years ago, it appears that social changes in sex-role relations in the last 2 decades have not diminished what many perceive to be a sex difference in support receipt. Indeed, a recent review represented the support gap as one of the "unchanging asymmetries" that characterize marriage (Steil, 2000). The notion of a support gap has not only provided a foundation for interpreting research findings on social support in marriage (Acitelli, 1996; Pasch, Bradbury, & Davila, 1997), it also is used increasingly as a basis for theorizing about complex matters such as gender equity (e.g., Steil, 2000), and has informed the design of interventions developed to enhance marital satisfaction (Cutrona, 1996).

Given the uses to which the SGH is being put, the accuracy of its claims takes on considerable import. Although some research findings are consistent with the SGH (see Cutrona, 1996), the existing evidence is limited in at least four important ways, including (a) little consideration of "gaps" in different types of social support; (b) the failure to distinguish adequately between provided support and received support; (c) the failure to distinguish adequately among experienced support, desired support, and support satisfaction; and (d) the absence of cross-cultural examinations of support gaps. The current study was designed to address each of these limitations.

Gaps in Different Types of Support

Most research consistent with the SGH has focused on only one type of support—*emotional support*. Emotional support, usually defined as expressions of love, empathy, and concern (Cutrona, 1996, p. 4), is clearly an important form of support, especially in marriage. The receipt of sensitive emotional support from caring others has been linked to a variety of desirable psychological, relational, and health outcomes (see reviews by Cunningham & Barbee, 2000; Sarason, Sarason, & Gurung, 1997). However, emotional support is only one kind of support, and is the kind most likely to be consistent with the SGH (Vaux, 1985). Considerable research indicates that men are less comfortable and less skilled in discussing others' distressed emotional states than are women (Burda & Vaux, 1987; Saurer & Eisler, 1990; Trobst, Collins, & Embree, 1994), resulting in women being sought out by members of both sexes for emotional support more than men (Flaherty & Richman, 1989; Kunkel & Burleson, 1998). Consistent with the SGH, there is reliable evidence that men, on the average, receive more emotional support from their spouses than women do from theirs (e.g., Antonucci & Akiyama, 1987; Huston-Hoburg & Strange, 1986; see the discussion by Cutrona, 1996, pp. 21–22).

But what of other types of social support? Does the SGH apply to these as well? Researchers have identified several types of social support other than emotional (Cutrona & Suhr, 1992; House, 1981; Vaux, 1988). *Esteem support* refers to expressions of respect, validation, and confidence that bolster another's self-concept; *network support* involves generating feelings of social connection through expressions that create a sense of belonging; *tangible support* refers to the provision of material assistance (goods, services, or similar resources); and *informational support* refers to expressions that provide facts, advice, and appraisals regarding situations of concern.

There is only limited evidence that the SGH applies to types of support other than emotional support. One study (Vanfossen, 1981) suggests that husbands receive more esteem support from their wives than wives

receive from their husbands. One study of older couples in which the wife was diagnosed with breast cancer found that both husbands and wives perceived wives as providing more of all types of support than husbands (Vinokur & Vinokur-Kaplan, 1990). However, husbands continue to control more tangible support resources in marriage than do wives (see Steil, 2000), which suggests that they have a greater capacity to provide tangible support. Consistent with this, some research shows that men provide more tangible support to romantic partners than do women (Yankeelov, Barbee, Cunningham, & Druen, cited in Derlega, Barbee, & Winstead, 1994), and may be preferred sources of tangible and informational support (Barbee, Gulley, & Cunningham, 1990). Other studies have found few differences in types of support provided by men and women (Goldsmith & Dun, 1997; Pasch et al., 1997), and still other studies suggest that gender differences in support receipt depend on situational variables such as the type of problem, the controllability of the outcome, the state of the target, and the type of behavior used by the target to signal the need for support (Barbee et al., 1993; Matthews, Stansfeld, & Power, 1999). Of particular interest, Cutrona and Suhr (1994) recorded problem discussions among married couples and coded these interactions for five types of support expressed; no significant differences between husbands and wives were observed for the number of support behaviors provided in any of the five categories. Utilizing similar procedures, Cutrona, Hessling, and Suhr (1997) coded the problem discussions of 93 couples and found only one significant sex difference: Women provided more emotional support to their husbands than husbands provided to their wives. In sum, although extant research findings are consistent with the SGH for emotional support, they are more ambiguous for other types of social support. Clearly, the SGH needs to be evaluated systematically with respect to multiple types of support.

Distinguishing Between Support Provision and Support Receipt

A second reason for skepticism regarding the SGH is methodological. Proponents of this hypothesis have not always distinguished sharply between reports of *support provision* and *support receipt*. Yet, numerous studies (e.g., Antonucci & Israel, 1986; Mickelson, Helgeson, & Weiner, 1995) make it quite clear that these two constructs are not interchangeable. For a variety of reasons, the support that one person reports providing may not equal the support reportedly received by the target (for summaries of relevant findings and explanations as to why this is so, see Beach, Fincham, Katz, & Bradbury, 1996; Dunkel-Schetter & Bennett, 1990; Pasch et al., 1997). Indeed, recent research (Bolger, Zuckerman, & Kessler, 2000) suggests that support can be both "invisible" (not perceived when provided) and "illusory" (perceived even when not provided).

Considerable research indicates that received support (i.e., reports of perceived or experienced support) is a stronger predictor of varied outcomes than are specific behaviors produced by relational partners (see Cunningham & Barbee, 2000; Sarason et al., 1997). This suggests that evaluation of the SGH should be in terms of received (or perceived) support (i.e., do husbands perceive receiving more support from their wives than wives perceive receiving from their husbands?). But this has not been consistently the case in extant research. For example, one common practice has been to compare an individual's self-report of support provided to the spouse with a self-report from the same individual of support received from the spouse (e.g., Kessler, McLeod, & Wethington, 1985); such studies assume (unwarrantedly) that support reportedly provided to a spouse will be received (and experienced as supportive) by that spouse. More rigorous evaluations of the SGH should focus on reports of received support.

Distinguishing Among Experienced Support, Desired Support, and Satisfaction With Support

Emphasizing that evaluations of the SGH should focus on received support makes salient another critical set of distinctions: among experienced support, desired support, and satisfaction with support. *Experienced support* refers to the level or degree of support an individual feels he or she actually receives from a particular other, such as a spouse, whereas *desired support* refers to the level of support that one would like to receive from a particular other. *Support satisfaction* has been construed in a variety of ways (see Vaux, 1992); however, we find it useful to conceptualize "satisfaction with support" as the discrepancy between desired and experienced levels of support. Accordingly, satisfied persons would be those whose reports of experienced support match or exceed their desired support levels whereas dissatisfied persons would be those whose desires exceed what they experience. (Although all three of these constructs can be applied to particular interactions, in the present paper they all refer to judgments of aggregate levels of support from a spouse.)

Whether particular findings support the SGH depends on exactly what this hypothesis is construed as positing. Most formulations of the SGH express the notion that women receive less support from their marital partners than do men. Given this formulation, a conservative evaluation of the SGH would focus exclusively on results for experienced levels of support. That is, a strict interpretation of the SGH would require that men report experiencing more support from their spouses than women report experiencing from theirs. However, less stringent interpretations of the SGH are also possible, including those that focus on sex differences in desired levels of support, or even sex differences in discrepan-

cies between desired and experienced levels of support. That is, perceptions of inadequate support may not stem directly from what one actually receives, but rather from the discrepancy between what one wants and what one sees oneself getting. Some research (e.g., Edwards, Nazroo, & Brown, 1998) has found that married women express a greater subjective desire for all forms of support than do their male partners, a result suggesting that the so-called "support gap" could stem more from differences in desire than actual experiences.

Cutrona (1996) found that the discrepancy between the support married persons desired and that which they saw their spouses as providing was a significant predictor of interaction satisfaction. This is one of the few studies to distinguish between experience and desire and to focus on the discrepancy between these. Because this distinction hasn't been made more frequently in research, we currently do not know whether husbands and wives differ chiefly with respect to the amount of support they report experiencing, the amount of support they desire, or the discrepancy between these (i.e., their satisfaction levels). Clearly, research needs to assess "received support" in ways that allow for the careful evaluation of experienced support, desired support, and support satisfaction. The present study developed one approach for assessing these distinct aspects of received support.

Generalizing About the Support Gap Across Cultures

A fourth reason for caution with regard to the SGH is that thus far, virtually all data bearing on this hypothesis have been collected from U.S. samples. The vast majority of studies relevant to the SGH has been conducted with samples of Euro Americans, although there is also some limited evidence supporting the SGH for African Americans (Brown & Gary, 1985). To date, however, it appears that this hypothesis has yet to be evaluated with non-U.S. or non-Western samples.

Assessing the SGH with a non-Western population is important for several reasons. Clearly, given the implicit assumption that the SGH applies to all marriages, research needs to be conducted with diverse populations to assess the generality of support for this hypothesis. Conceptions of the marital relationship vary across cultures, as do expectations about the kinds of behaviors in which spouses should engage with respect to one another (Dion & Dion, 1993). Such obvious generalities aside, we currently know very little about social support processes in the marriages of non-Western peoples (Goodwin & Plaza, 2000).

One recent study (Mortenson, 1999) provides a cross-cultural comparison of social support processes in the friendships of Americans versus those of Chinese. Americans are generally regarded as belonging to an "individualist" culture (Hofstede, 1980) that emphasizes individual

goals, accomplishments, and recognition over those of the social groups with which individuals affiliate. In contrast, Chinese are generally regarded as members of a "collectivist" culture in which the aspirations, projects, and desires of the individual are more deeply interwoven with those of others in defined in-groups. Mortenson (1999) found that members of the American, individualist culture viewed the seeking of social support as a more appropriate means of coping with problems than did members of the Chinese, collectivist culture. American individualists also rated the provision of emotional support to a distressed friend as a more appropriate form of assistance than did Chinese collectivists. In addition, when asked to identify their interaction goals when providing support to troubled friends, Chinese respondents saw avoidance of communication about the troubling situation as more appropriate than did Americans.

If the cultural differences that Mortenson detected in the context of friendship extend to the marital relationship, then support gaps in marriage may be an exclusively Western phenomenon. That is, the premium that Americans, especially American women, place on emotional support may not exist for Chinese and, hence, Chinese women may not see themselves as underbenefited with respect to the receipt of such support. More broadly, members of collectivist cultures may be less inclined to seek varied forms of social support from relationship partners; in such cultures, seeking support may be viewed as unduly self-focused and disruptive of collective harmony (see Markus & Kitayama, 1994; Matsumoto, 1991). These considerations underscore the importance of conducting multicultural evaluations of the SGH.

Summary

Despite its broad acceptance and increasing application, the evidence relevant to the SGH remains limited. This hypothesis has not been investigated sufficiently with regard to different types of social support. Moreover, when evaluating this hypothesis, researchers have not distinguished adequately between provided and received support, or among experienced support, desired support, and support satisfaction. Finally, the SGH appears to have not been evaluated outside the American, individualist culture. Reflection on these theoretical and measurement concerns led to our posing the following research questions:

RQ1: Do men and women differ with regard to the amount of support they reportedly (a) experience and (b) desire from their spouses?

RQ2: Are there discrepancies in the levels of desired and experienced spousal support reported by men and women?

RQ3: Are men's and women's reports of the support experienced and desired from spouses (and differences between these) moderated by support type?
RQ4: Are men's and women's reports of the support experienced and desired from spouses (and differences between these) moderated by culture (i.e., nationality)?
RQ5: Do the factors of sex, culture, and support type interact with respect to reports of the support experienced and desired from spouses?

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 100 native-born Americans (50 men and 50 women) and 102 native-born Chinese (50 men and 52 women). The American sample consisted of 96 Caucasians and 4 Hispanics. The Chinese sample consisted of 99 persons from mainland China and 3 from Taiwan. At the time of the study, all participants were residing in the United States; however, to be considered for inclusion, Chinese could have resided in the U.S. no more than 5 years. In this study, the unit of analysis was the married individual, not the married couple; however, a criterion for inclusion in the study was cultural homogeneity within the marriage (i.e., to be included, Americans had to be married to Americans, and Chinese to Chinese). With respect to age, 10.4% of the participants were 18–21, 29.7% were 22–25, 45% were 26–29, 13.4% were 30–33, and 1.5% were over 33 years old.

All participants were recently married individuals, defined here as those married at least 1 year, but not more than 5 years. Actual mean length of marriage for the sample was 2.14 years (SD = 1.19 years). The study focused on recently married individuals for several reasons. First, comparatively little research on social support in marriage has employed a young married sample (see Acitelli, 1996). Our current understanding of social support in marriage is largely based on research conducted with midlife adults and older groups. Second, more than one third of marriages end within the first 5 years (Cherlin, 1992), and dissatisfaction with spousal support appears to be an important contributing factor to marital dissolution (see the review by Kelly, Fincham, & Beach, in press). Thus, it would seem important to examine features of the social support process during the early years of marriage as behavioral patterns and enduring satisfactions (and dissatisfactions) become established.

Instrumentation

This study sought to assess desired and experienced levels of spousal support for each of five types of social support (emotional, esteem, net-

TABLE 1
Reliabilities for Reported Levels of Desired and Experienced Spousal Support

	Desired level			*Experienced level*		
Support type	*Combined*	*Americans*	*Chinese*	*Combined*	*Americans*	*Chinese*
Emotional support	.74	.78	.70	.78	.72	.81
Esteem support	.81	.84	.77	.84	.85	.83
Network support	.86	.87	.83	.81	.84	.79
Tangible support	.77	.78	.76	.72	.65	.77
Informational support	.87	.83	.88	.83	.76	.87

work, informational, and tangible). No extant instrument assessing social support provided this exact information, so items from several existing measures were reviewed, combined, and rewritten for use in the present study. Specifically, items were pooled from the Inventory of Socially Supportive Behaviors (ISSB, Stokes & Wilson, 1984), the Supportive Actions Scale (SAS; Trobst et al., 1994), and the Social Support Behavior Scale (SS-B, Vaux, Riedel, & Stewart, 1987). The content validity of these items was examined and seven items for each of the five types of support were retained. The items were then rewritten so as to reflect a consistent format and scales were developed to tap both experienced and desired levels of support. Two pilot studies were conducted to test the validity and reliability of this new instrument (Xu, 2000); these studies provided valuable information about the form and content of the items and the instrument as a whole.

The final version of the instrument used in the main study consisted of 35 items, 7 items for each of five types of support, with each item describing a support behavior that might occur in marriage. For each of these 35 items, participants were first asked to indicate on a five-point Likert-type scale how much support their spouses displayed to them when they needed it. This provided a measure of experienced support. Then participants were asked to go through the same items again and indicate how much support they desired from their spouses. The instructions, scales, and items used in this questionnaire are presented in the Appendix.

To assess the reliability of these measures, internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) were computed for the experienced and desired support assessments for each of the five types of support (see Table 1). The high reliabilities obtained (ranging from .72 to .87 and averaging .80) suggest that the items provided reliable assessments of the constructs of interest. One concern was whether responses to the support scales by Americans and Chinese were equally reliable. Boyacigiller and Adler (1991) argue that "researchers usually select methods that are most ac-

ceptable according to American norms, thereby rendering results that are culturally conditioned" (p. 272). Stohl (2001) indicates that there is a need to "establish the equivalency of constructs and measures prior to interpreting differences on self report variables between culturally diverse groups" (p. 363). The data file, therefore, was split by nationality and reliability analyses were performed for Americans and Chinese separately. Cronbach's alphas for the American sample and the Chinese sample are also reported in Table 1. As the reliability coefficients in Table 1 indicate, the reliabilities for Americans and Chinese were not identical, but the variations were clearly within an acceptable range and exhibited no systematic differences.

Participants also responded to several demographic questions that provided information about their age, sex, race, national origin, length of time they had resided in the U.S. (if non-native), length of time they had known their spouses, and length of time they had been married. Finally, participants completed two additional questionnaires that are not germane to the present study.

Procedure

Two procedures were employed in recruiting participants and collecting data. One method relied on direct mail. A survey packet including a cover letter, an informed consent statement, a survey booklet, a response sheet, and a self-addressed return envelope was sent to potential participants, who were identified from university directories and informants. Each potential participant was expected to read the cover letter and the consent form first and then decide whether to participate. Those who were willing to participate retained the informed consent form and filled out the response sheet. The participants were asked to keep the consent form for future reference, but return the response sheet to the researcher in the provided self-addressed envelope. No identifying information was required on the response sheet. Those who wished to receive a debriefing statement about the research were invited to email a request to the first author, who then sent such a statement upon receipt of the request. Overall, 37 males and 40 females responded to the direct mail solicitation, among whom were 21 Americans and 56 Chinese.

Because the direct mail method was expensive and failed to generate the desired number of participants, a second recruitment and collection procedure was developed that made use of a telephone survey. A complete list of American and Chinese married individuals residing in married student housing at a large Midwestern university was obtained from the university administration. A bilingual research assistant telephoned potential participants, introduced herself and the project, made sure that

the answering party was qualified as a participant, and then asked the potential participant whether he or she would like to participate in the survey. Once the researcher obtained the consent, she conducted a telephone interview that lasted approximately twenty minutes. Altogether, 63 males and 62 females responded to the telephone survey, among whom were 79 Americans and 46 Chinese.

Preliminary analyses were conducted to determine if responses to any of the constructs assessed by the questionnaire varied as a function of data collection modality (direct mail vs. telephone). No such differences were observed. Consequently, data obtained through the two methods were pooled in all subsequent analyses.

RESULTS

Initial Analyses

The research questions of the study were addressed initially through a 2 x 2 x 5 x 2 mixed-model analysis of variance (ANOVA) with repeated measures on the last two factors. The between-groups factors were nationality (American vs. Chinese) and sex (male vs. female). The within-subjects factors were type of support (emotional, esteem, network, tangible, and informational) and type of rating (experienced support vs. desired support). The dependent variable was mean level of reported support.

Cell means and standard deviations associated with the ANOVA are reported in Table 2. The ANOVA detected a variety of significant effects. Significant main effects were detected for the between-groups factor of sex, $F(1, 198) = 5.43$, $p < .02$, $eta^2 = .027$, and the within-subjects factor of support type, $F(4, 792) = 166.60$, $p < .001$, $eta^2 = .457$. Four significant two-way interactions were detected: between sex and support type, $F(4, 792) = 2.59$, $p < .04$, $eta^2 = .013$; between nationality and support type, $F(4, 792) = 23.10$, $p < .001$, $eta^2 = .104$; between sex and rating type, $F(1, 198) = 8.15$, $p < .001$, $eta^2 = .067$; and between support type and rating type, $F(4, 792) = 5.90$, $p < .001$, $eta^2 = .029$. All of the two-way interactions were qualified by two significant three-way interactions: between sex, support type, and rating type, $F(4, 792) = 3.45$, $p < .008$, $eta^2 = .017$, and between nationality, support type, and rating type, $F(4, 792) = 2.85$, $p < .03$, $eta^2 = .014$. Finally, the existence of a significant four-way interaction among all of the factors qualified the two significant three-way interactions, $F(4, 792) = 3.08$, $p < .02$, $eta^2 = .015$.

The research focus of the study guided the manner in which this complex set of interactions was decomposed. A chief concern was with sex

TABLE 2
Cell Means and Standard Deviations

	Cell means								
	American participants				Chinese participants				
	Desired support		Experienced support		Desired support		Experienced support		
Support type	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Marginal mean
Emotional	4.10	4.39	4.26	4.22	4.03	4.22	4.12	4.00	4.17
Tangible	3.81	4.19	4.07	4.01	3.88	4.16	4.17	4.12	4.05
Esteem	3.70	4.06	3.88	4.06	3.85	4.08	4.06	3.87	3.94
Informational	3.27	3.53	3.49	3.71	3.60	3.95	3.80	3.98	3.67
Network	3.29	3.49	3.35	3.63	3.63	3.86	3.70	3.55	3.56
	Cell standard deviations								
Emotional	0.56	0.49	0.46	0.50	0.50	0.49	0.62	0.65	0.57
Tangible	0.63	0.65	0.57	0.54	0.67	0.42	0.65	0.60	0.59
Esteem	0.59	0.63	0.67	0.57	0.62	0.44	0.61	0.69	0.59
Informational	0.62	0.65	0.56	0.58	0.69	0.59	0.71	0.69	0.68
Network	0.66	0.70	0.67	0.65	0.69	0.52	0.70	0.62	0.67

differences in reports of desired and experienced support for each of the five types of support. We were also interested in determining the cross-cultural applicability of the SGH, and so focused on the extent to which any observed sex differences were moderated by participant nationality. Because the omnibus *F*-tests (reported above) indicated that the factor of support type qualified the main and interactive effects of the other three factors, subsequent analyses were carried out separately for each type of social support. Thus, for each of the five types of social support, we asked whether there was a sex difference in (a) the reported desired level of support, (b) the reported experienced level of support, and (c) the discrepancy between the reported desired and experienced levels of support (i.e., a sex x rating type interaction). We also conducted analyses that evaluated the moderating effects of nationality for each of these questions.

Emotional Support

Desired emotional support. A 2 (nationality) x 2 (sex) ANOVA on the desired emotional support rating detected only a significant main effect for sex, $F(1, 198) = 11.32$, $p < .001$, $eta^2 = .054$. Women ($M = 4.31$) reported a greater desire for emotional support from their spouses than did men ($M = 4.07$).

Experienced emotional support. A 2 x 2 ANOVA on the experienced emotional support rating detected only a significant main effect for nationality, $F(1, 198) = 5.36$, $p < .03$, $eta^2 = .026$. Americans ($M = 4.24$) reported experiencing more emotional support from their spouses than did Chinese ($M = 4.06$).

Discrepancy between desired and experienced emotional support. A 2 x 2 x 2 mixed-model ANOVA was conducted to assess the effects of nationality and sex on the discrepancy between reported levels of desired and experienced emotional support. The between-factors were nationality and sex while the within-subjects factor was rating type. The ANOVA detected only a significant interaction between sex and rating type, $F(1, 198) = 19.44$, $p < .001$, $eta^2 = .089$. This interaction is depicted graphically in Figure 1. Decomposition of this interaction indicated that men's ratings of desired and experienced emotional support differed weakly, but significantly, $t(99) = -2.25$, $p < .03$, with men reporting higher levels of experienced than desired emotional support (Ms = 4.19 and 4.07 for experience and desire, respectively). In contrast, women reported desiring significantly more emotional support from their spouses ($M = 4.31$) than they reported experiencing ($M = 4.11$), $t(101) = 4.12$, $p < .001$.

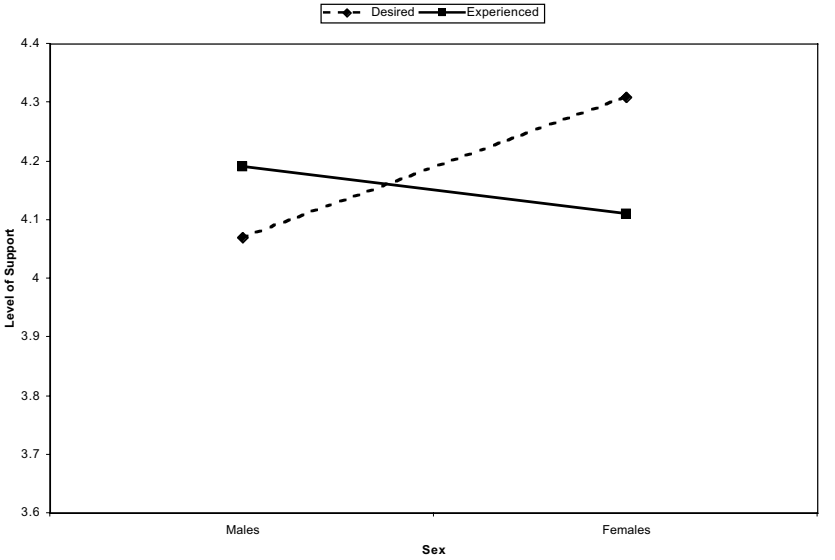

Figure 1. Sex x Rating Type Interaction for Emotional Support

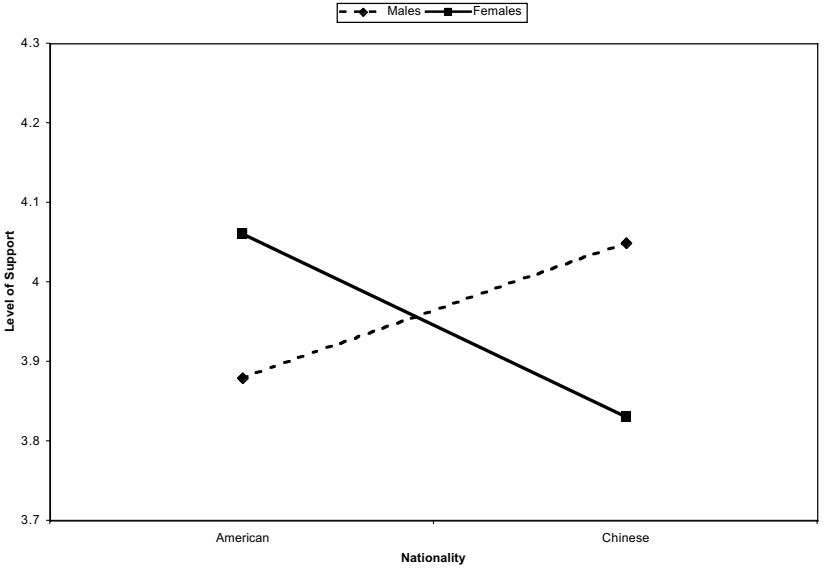

Figure 2. Nationality x Sex Interaction for Experienced Esteem Support

Esteem Support

Desired esteem support. A nationality x sex ANOVA on the desired esteem support rating detected only a significant main effect for sex, $F(1, 198) = 13.42$, $p < .001$, $eta^2 = .063$. Women ($M = 4.07$) reported a greater desire for esteem support from their spouses than did men ($M = 3.77$).

Experienced esteem support. The 2 x 2 ANOVA on the experienced esteem support rating obtained only a significant interaction between nationality and sex, $F(1, 198) = 5.23$, $p < .03$, $eta^2 = .026$. The disordinal character of this interaction is depicted in Figure 2. American men reported experiencing somewhat lower levels of esteem support from their spouses than did American women (*M*s = 3.88 and 4.06, respectively), though this difference was not statistically significant. In contrast, Chinese men reported experiencing higher levels of esteem support from their spouses than did Chinese women (*M*s = 4.06 and 3.83, respectively), though again, this difference was not statistically significant. Although the results for neither nationality directly corroborate the SGH, these results do point to important cultural differences in gender-related patterns of experienced esteem support.

Discrepancy between desired and experienced esteem support. The 2 x 2 x 2 mixed-model ANOVA assessing the effects of nationality, sex, and rating type on esteem support ratings detected only a significant interaction between sex and rating type, $F(1, 198) = 12.70$, $p < .001$, $eta^2 = .061$. This interaction is depicted graphically in Figure 3. Decomposition of this interaction indicated that men reported getting significantly more esteem support from their spouses than they anticipated (*M*s = 3.97 and 3.77 for experienced and desired esteem support, respectively), $t(99) = -3.20$, $p < .002$. In contrast, the difference between women's reported levels of experienced esteem support ($M = 3.94$) and desired esteem support ($M = 4.07$) only approached significance, $t(101) = 1.92$, $p < .06$.

Network Support

Desired network support. The 2 x 2 ANOVA for the desired network support rating detected significant main effects for both nationality, $F(1, 198) = 14.84$, $p < .001$, $eta^2 = .070$, and sex, $F(1, 198) = 5.52$, $p < .02$, $eta^2 = .027$. Chinese participants ($M = 3.75$) indicated a significantly greater desire for spousal network support than did American participants ($M = 3.40$). Women ($M = 3.68$) indicated they desired more network support from their spouses than did men ($M = 3.46$).

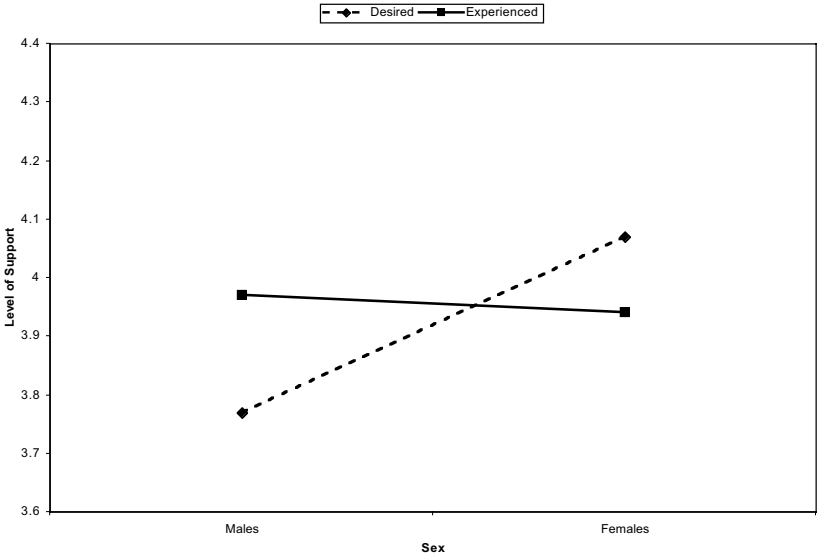

Figure 3. Sex x Rating Type Interaction for Esteem Support

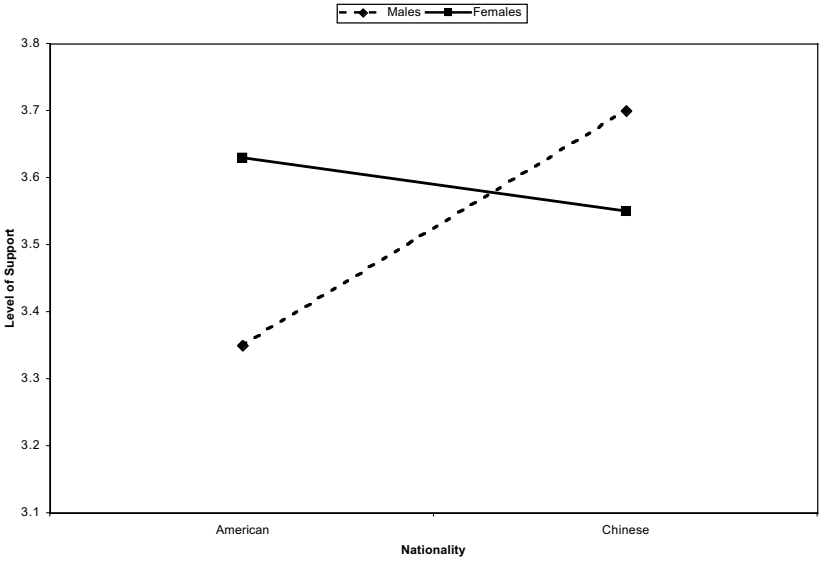

Figure 4. Nationality x Sex Interaction for Experienced Network Support

Experienced network support. The 2 x 2 ANOVA for experienced network support detected only a significant interaction between nationality and sex, $F(1, 198) = 5.44$, $p < .03$, $eta^2 = .027$. This disordinal interaction is displayed in Figure 4. American women ($M = 3.63$) reported experiencing significantly more network support from their spouses than did American men ($M = 3.34$), $t(98) = -2.15$, $p < .04$. In contrast, Chinese men ($M = 3.70$) reported getting more network support from their spouses than did Chinese women ($M = 3.55$), though the difference here was not statistically significant.

Discrepancy between desired and experienced network support. A 2 x 2 x 2 mixed-model ANOVA for network support detected a significant two-way interaction between nationality and rating type, $F(1, 198) = 4.65$, $p < .04$, $eta^2 = .023$, as well as a significant three-way interaction among nationality, sex, and rating type, $F(1, 198) = 5.15$, $p < .03$, $eta^2 = .025$. The three-way interaction was decomposed by assessing the simple effects of the two-way interaction between sex and rating type for each nationality. This two-way interaction was not significant for Americans, indicating no sex difference in the discrepancy between desired and experienced network support. In contrast, for Chinese participants, the sex x rating type interaction was significant, $F(1, 100) = 5.83$, $p < .02$, $eta^2 = .055$. As the plot in Figure 5 indicates, ratings for desired and experienced support differed little for Chinese males. However, Chinese females indicated that they desired substantially more network support than they reported experiencing, $t(51) = 2.80$, $p < .007$.

Tangible Support

Desired tangible support. The nationality x sex ANOVA on desired tangible support ratings detected only a significant main effect for sex, $F(1, 198) = 14.71$, $p < .001$, $eta^2 = .069$. Women reported desiring more tangible support from their spouses than did men (*M*s = 4.17 and 3.85 for women and men, respectively).

Experienced tangible support. The nationality x sex ANOVA on the experienced tangible support ratings detected no significant differences for any of the factors.

Discrepancy between desired and experienced tangible support. The nationality x sex x rating type ANOVA for tangible support detected only a highly significant interaction between sex and rating type, $F(1, 198) = 15.77$, $p < .001$, $eta^2 = 074$. This interaction is displayed in Figure 6. Ratings of desired and experienced tangible support differed little for women. In contrast men's ratings for experienced tangible support were

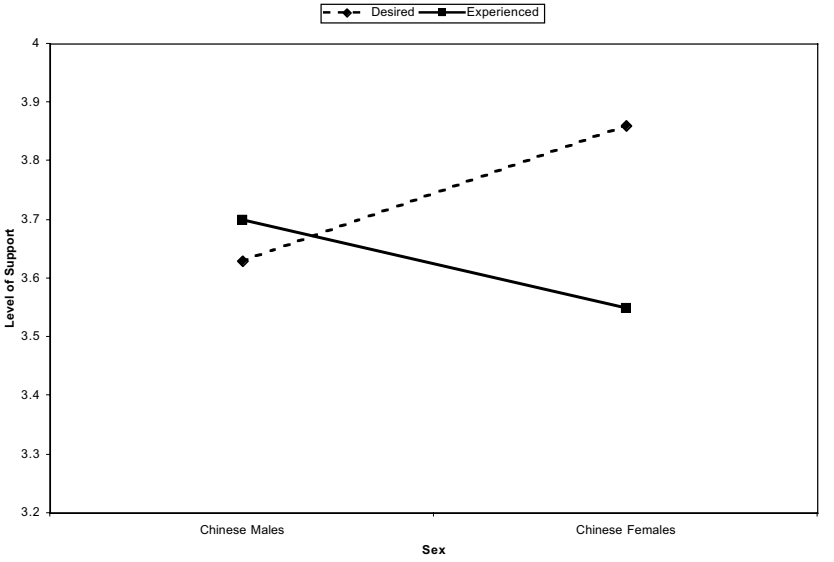

Figure 5. Sex x Rating Type Interaction for Network Support (Chinese Participants)

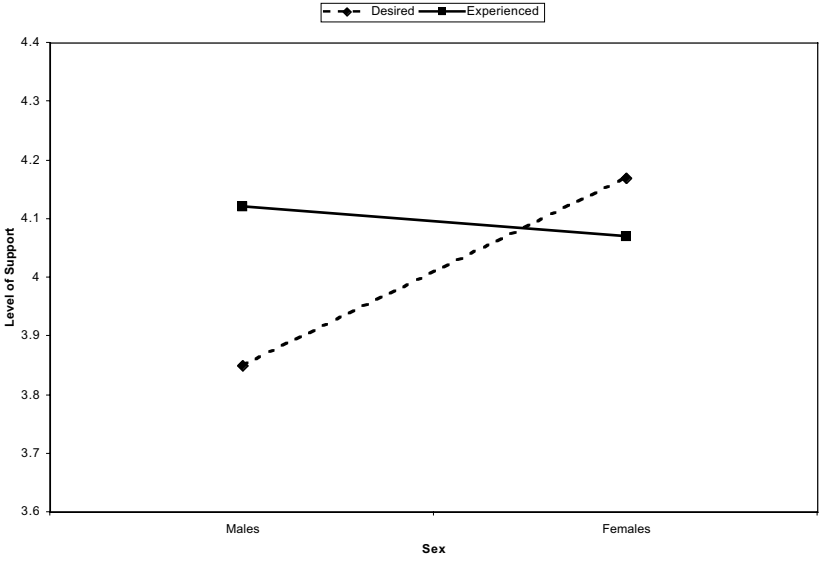

Figure 6. Sex x Rating Type Interaction for Tangible Support

significantly greater than their ratings for desired tangible support, $t(99) = -4.23$, $p < .001$.

Informational Support

Desired informational support. The nationality x sex ANOVA on the desired informational support ratings detected significant main effects for both nationality, $F(1, 198) = 17.72$, $p < .001$, $eta^2 = .082$, and sex, $F(1, 198) = 11.67$, $p < .001$, $eta^2 = .056$. Americans ($M = 3.40$) indicated that they desired less informational support from their spouses than did Chinese ($M = 3.78$). And men ($M = 3.44$) indicated that they desired less informational support from their spouses than did women ($M = 3.75$).

Experienced informational support. A 2 x 2 ANOVA on the experienced informational support ratings detected significant main effects for both nationality, $F(1, 198) = 10.16$, $p < .002$, $eta^2 = .049$, and sex, $F(1, 198) = 5.01$, $p < .03$, $eta^2 = .025$. Americans ($M = 3.60$) indicated they experienced lower levels of informational support from their spouses than did Chinese ($M = 3.89$). Men ($M = 3.65$) indicated they experienced lower levels of informational support from their spouses than did women ($M = 3.85$).

Discrepancy between desired and experienced informational support. Finally, a nationality x sex x rating type mixed-model ANOVA on the informational support ratings detected only a significant main effect for rating type, $F(1, 198) = 14.36$, $p < .001$, $eta^2 = .068$. Participants reported that they experienced higher levels of informational support ($M = 3.75$) than they desired ($M = 3.59$). However, discrepancies between desired and experienced informational support did not vary significantly as a function of either nationality or sex (i.e., there were no nationality x rating type or sex x rating type interactions).

DISCUSSION

Status of the Support Gap Hypothesis

How much corroboration the current results provide for the SGH depends, to a large extent, on what this hypothesis is construed as positing. As noted at the outset of this paper, the SGH can be viewed as applying to sex differences in experienced support, desired support, or the discrepancy between these (i.e., support satisfaction).

Sex differences in experienced levels of social support. The current results provide little evidence consistent with a strict interpretation of the SGH, which predicts sex differences in experienced support. No sex differences were detected for either experienced emotional support or experienced

tangible support. A significant sex difference was obtained for experienced informational support, but the direction of the difference was opposite to that predicted by the SGH: Women reported receiving significantly more informational support from their spouses than men reported receiving from their spouses. Sex differences for experienced levels of both esteem support and network support were strongly moderated by nationality. For both of these support types, sex differences for Americans were in the direction opposite to that predicted by the SGH (i.e., women reported experiencing somewhat higher levels of esteem and network support from their spouses than did men). In contrast, for Chinese participants, the sex differences in experienced esteem and network support were in the direction predicted by the SGH: Chinese men reported getting more esteem and network support from their spouses than Chinese women reported getting from theirs.

In sum, the only data consistent with a strict interpretation of the SGH came from Chinese participants for two forms of support, esteem and network. In all other cases, sex differences in reported levels of experienced support were either not significant, or in a direction different from that predicted by the SGH. Thus, in answer to RQ1a, the SGH is not supported by the data for experienced social support.

Sex differences in desired levels of support. A second, more liberal formulation of the SGH is that women desire higher levels of support from their spouses than men desire from theirs. The data from the current study are strongly consistent with this more liberal view of the SGH. Significant sex differences were observed in desired levels of support for all five types of social support and, consonant with the findings of Edwards et al. (1998), women expressed a greater desire for all five types of spousal support than did men. Moreover, none of these sex differences in desired support were qualified by nationality; hence, this version of the SGH received strong and consistent support from both American and Chinese samples. In answer to RQ1b then, women clearly want more of all kinds of social support from their spouses than men do from theirs.

Sex differences in discrepancies between desired and experienced support. A third version of the SGH locates the hypothesized support gap in the discrepancy between desired and experienced levels of support (RQ2). This formulation of the SGH maintains that men are more satisfied with the levels of support they receive from their spouses than are women because the spousal support men experience more nearly matches (or even exceeds) their expectations than does the spousal support experienced by women. On this account, the discrepancy between desired and experienced levels of support should be greater for women than men,

with desired support exceeding experienced support levels.

The data from the current investigation provides mixed support for this third version of the SGH, with results qualified by both type of social support (RQ3) and participant nationality (RQ4) . The data for two types of support—emotional and esteem—were broadly consistent with this version of the SGH. For both of these types, women's desired levels of spousal support exceeded their experienced levels, whereas men's experienced levels of spousal support exceeded their reported desired levels. For tangible support, men's experienced levels of spousal support exceeded their reported desired levels, whereas women's desired levels of spousal support only slightly (and nonsignificantly) exceeded their experienced levels. Results for network support were qualified by an interaction with nationality: Consistent with the SGH, Chinese women's desired levels of spousal network support clearly exceeded their experienced levels of support, whereas for Chinese men levels of desired and experienced network support were virtually equivalent. There were no sex differences for American participants in discrepancies between desired and experienced network support. Finally, there were no sex differences in discrepancies between desired and experienced informational support for either Chinese or American participants.

It is worth noting that where sex differences in discrepancies between desired and experienced reports of support were observed, they were consistently due to sex differences in desired support levels. That is, as reported previously, men and women did not differ in reported levels of experienced support. Thus, when sex differences in discrepancies occurred, they were due to women's desired support levels being greater than their experienced support levels (network support for Chinese women), men's desired levels being lower than their experienced levels (tangible support), or both of these (emotional and esteem support). In sum, and in answer to RQ5, the discrepancy (or satisfaction) approach provides corroborating evidence across nationality for the SGH for only two forms of support, emotional and esteem; for network support, results support the SGH only for Chinese participants.

Implications for the support gap hypothesis. If a strict interpretation of the SGH is used—one focusing exclusively on the levels of spousal support men and women report experiencing—the results of this study provide little corroboration for the SGH. But if more liberal interpretations of the SGH are employed—ones focusing on levels of support desire or satisfaction (where the latter is understood as the discrepancy between desire and experience)—then the results of this study are more consistent with the SGH.

We think it would be a considerable stretch to interpret the SGH as exclusively claiming that men and women differ chiefly in their desired

levels of spousal support. Although there hasn't been great precision in how the SGH has been formulated and discussed in the literature, it seems clear that most discussions of it present women as getting less support from their spouses than men get from theirs (e.g., Acitelli, 1996; Belle, 1982; Cutrona, 1996; Steil, 2000). The emphasis in these discussions thus is most consistent with reported levels of support experience, or perhaps with levels of satisfaction. At most, then, it appears warranted to conclude that American and Chinese women face a support gap with respect to emotional and esteem support; Chinese women face an additional gap with respect to network support. There is little evidence of a support gap with respect to tangible and informational support.

The current results thus specify the nature of marital support gaps much more precisely than previous work. Moreover, these results provide some cross-cultural corroboration for the existence of certain support gaps. Gaps occur with respect to emotional and esteem support for both American and Chinese wives, and additionally with network support for Chinese wives. In all these cases, the observed gaps result from women desiring more of these types of support from their spouses than do men in the context of men and women experiencing similar levels of these forms of support from their spouses.

Why does this particular pattern of sex differences exist? In particular, why do men and women exhibit such a contrast in their desired and experienced levels of spousal emotional and esteem support? Beach et al. (1996) proposed that seekers or recipients of support will be viewed as weaker than providers, a position that many men find threatening to their self-concepts. Thus, men may not actually need lower levels of support than women, but don't wish to be seen as having such needs so as to avoid the appearance of weakness. Acitelli (1996) offers a somewhat different explanation, suggesting that men may get more support from sources outside marriage than within marriage. Women, in contrast, may want more support and affirmation from their husbands because of their comparatively high levels of engagement with the family. A third explanation for the support gap faced by women is grounded in equity theory principles (see Cutrona, 1996, pp. 68–70). Wives see themselves as providing more emotional and esteem support than they see their husbands providing (e.g., Antonucci & Akiyama, 1987; Vanfossen, 1981), so perhaps they desire higher levels of these forms of support from their husbands as a way of restoring balance to an inequitable situation. Research needs to evaluate the comparative merits of these explanations.

In addition to gaps in emotional and esteem support experienced by both American and Chinese wives, Chinese women also suffer from an additional gap in network support. This particular support gap may result from the sojourner status of the Chinese sample, most of whom had been in the U.S. less than 3 years. Most of the Chinese men were in the

U.S. pursuing undergraduate or graduate degrees. Although some of the Chinese women were also students, many were dependents of their husbands and remained at home tending to housework and children. Thousands of miles from their established social networks, these Chinese wives were largely reliant on their husbands for social contacts outside the home, and it appears that their husbands were not doing a particularly good job of fulfilling this need. In contrast, Chinese men may have developed more extensive networks through their involvement in school or work, becoming less reliant on their wives for network support. One implication of this result is that the American institutions of higher education that host increasing numbers of sojourning international students may need to expand programs directed at building networks and a sense of community among isolated family members, especially wives. They may also need to provide increased levels of services (counseling, etc.) to sojourning families experiencing distress.

Whatever the sources of support gaps, these gaps exist for several specific forms of support and they may have significant impact on the welfare of the marital relationship and its members. In particular, the existence for women of support gaps with respect to emotional and esteem support is nontrivial. Emotional and esteem support are important predictors of psychological and physical health (Argyle, 1992; Coyne & Downey, 1991), as well as marital satisfaction (Acitelli, 1996). Moreover, some research indicates that perceptions of spousal support tend to be more strongly related to the physical and psychological well being of wives than husbands (Acitelli & Antonucci, 1994; Julien & Markman, 1991), making the support gaps experienced by women all the more serious. If the specific support gaps detected by the present study constitute meaningful deficiencies, this suggests that women are at increased risk for psychological and health problems.

What can be done to moderate the increased risks women face due to deficiencies in spousal support? Simply encouraging women to be more aggressive in seeking support outside the marriage doesn't appear to be sufficient. Although support provided by other network members may be helpful, such extramarital support does not fully compensate for inadequate spousal support (Coyne & DeLongis, 1986; Lieberman, 1982). Moreover, encouraging women to be more aggressive in seeking support from their husbands may be counterproductive, resulting in greater negativity instead of greater support (e.g., Pasch et al., 1997). An important theoretical and practical question posed by the present results thus concerns how to improve the levels of emotional and esteem support husbands provide to their wives. Answering this question will require identifying reasons for inadequate levels of emotional and esteem support by husbands; this research should examine whether inadequate support stems from skill deficiencies, motivational issues, a lack of aware-

ness of the wife's needs, or some other problem.

Future examinations of the SGH, as well as other research on social support in close relationships, may benefit from the multidimensional approach utilized to assess support in the present study. Results of this study underscore the importance of differentiating among different types of support, as well as distinguishing between self-reports of experienced and desired levels of support. As we have noted, different versions of the SGH were supported to varying extents by distinct measures of reported support, resulting in a much more detailed picture of support processes in marriage. The measurement approach utilized in the current study, and the results obtained with this approach, thus emphasize the importance of increasing conceptual clarity and methodological precision as we continue to examine social support processes in marriage.

Cultural Differences in Social Support

There were comparatively few differences due to nationality in participants' reports of experienced and desired spousal support. Americans reported experiencing higher levels of emotional support from their spouses than did Chinese. Chinese reported desiring more network and informational support from their spouses than did Americans; Chinese also reported experiencing more informational support from their spouses than did Americans. These differences could result from a cultural factor such as individualism-collectivism; some research suggests that American individualists view intimate relationships more in terms of personal affect exchange whereas Chinese collectivists orient to such relationships more in terms of connection with a community (see Markus & Kitayama, 1994). However, it is also quite possible that the nationality differences observed in this study could have resulted from the sojourner status of the Chinese participants. It seems likely that the Chinese participants, who were thousands of miles from their native land, had more constricted social networks than the American participants, and thus might have been more dependent on their spouses than Americans for information and social connection.

The small number of differences due to nationality is interesting in light of work (e.g., Yum, 1988) that has emphasized the distinctiveness of intimate relationships in the east and west. China has undergone a revolutionary transformation affecting multiple facets of social life since instituting its open-door policy some 20 years ago. With increasing globalization—and westernization—there is evidence that the collectivist Chinese culture is changing in the direction of greater individualism. Dion and Dion (1993) reasoned that with a shift from collectivism toward greater individualism, there would be an increase in the importance of psychological intimacy in marriage for members of the formerly

collectivist culture. Some research supports this speculation; for example, Xiaohe and White (1990) found that young adults in modern China put greater value on love as a basis for marriage, and on the emotional quality of the marital relationship, than older generations. Thus, it makes sense that the present study found that both Americans and Chinese put similar, and comparatively high, value on the more affective aspects of their spousal relationships.

Nationality moderated gender differences in an interesting way for two types of experienced support. For both esteem support and network support, American men reported experiencing lower levels of spousal support than did American women, whereas Chinese men reported experiencing higher levels of spousal esteem and network support than did Chinese women. These differences suggest a cultural divergence in the extent to which the marriages of young Americans and Chinese reflect traditional versus contemporary values. In traditional value systems, wives have an obligation to support the egos and social connections of their husbands; husbands have lesser responsibility to provide such support for their wives. More contemporary, egalitarian values make salient to men the importance of supporting the egos, aspirations, and social connections of their wives (see Steil, 2000). Although we have suggested that the character of the marital relationship for Chinese has undergone rapid change, especially in the last 20 years, it seems likely that marriage remains more influenced by traditional values among recently married Chinese than Americans (Dion & Dion, 1993). These value differences, then, may help explain the culturally moderated gender differences observed with respect to experienced esteem and network support.

Social Support Processes in Marriage

Beyond their bearing on the SGH and cultural patterns, the present results contain some important insights about social support processes in marriage. First, our results may explain why men appear to get more out of marriage than do women. Both men and women experience roughly the same amount of varied support types from their spouses. But this equivalent quantity of received support exceeds what most men expect or desire, while failing to fulfill the expectations of most women. This pattern highlights the critical role of expectations, and expectations in comparison to experiences, in the context of marriage (Sager, 1976). Importantly, some research (e.g., Baxter, 1986) indicates that failed support expectations are a source of conflict in many intimate relationships.

The present results may also help explain some surprising findings unearthed in a recent observational study of spousal support interactions. Pasch et al. (1997) observed 60 recently married couples engaged in two supportive interactions; these researchers coded the amount of

instrumental (i.e., informational and tangible) support and emotional support spouses provided to each other, as well as coding the types of strategies spouses used when seeking support from their partners. Contrary to their predictions, Pasch et al. found that husbands and wives did not differ in the amount of instrumental and emotional support they provided to their spouses in the course of problem discussions. They also found (contrary to predictions) that wives displayed more negative support-seeking behavior than did husbands (e.g., made demands for help, criticized or accused the helper, whined or complained about the lack of help received—"You're not even trying to help me, you're just turning it around to what you want to do, you never even asked me what I want."). The present results suggest an explanation for Pasch et al.'s surprising finding regarding sex differences in support seeking. Because wives are less satisfied with the emotional support they receive from their spouses, they may exhibit more negative seeker behaviors as a result of unfulfilled or frustrated expectations. Thus, even though wives get as much emotional support from their husbands as they give, they remain unsatisfied because of their greater desire for support; this dissatisfied state leads, perhaps, to negative seeker behavior (i.e., more demands, complaints, etc.).

We would be remiss if we did not underscore some of the very strong similarities detected by the current study in support experiences and expectations. Indeed, in many ways the most noteworthy finding of the current study is the high degree of similarity in the support experiences and expectations of both men and women and both Americans and Chinese. By far, the strongest effect in the current study was for type of support. The main effect for support type was massive ($F = 166.60$, $p < .00001$) and accounted for a very large segment of the within-subjects variance ($eta^2 = .457$). Although the effect of support type was qualified by interactions with the other three factors included in the study, these interactions accounted for fairly small amounts of variance, especially in comparison to the large proportion of variance explained by the main effect for support type. The character of this main effect is made clear when examining the cell and marginal means in Table 2. These means show that across all but one combination of gender and culture, people both desire and experience emotional support from their spouses to a greater extent than any other form of support. Tangible support was the next most desired and experienced type of support, and was closely followed by esteem support. Informational and network support are clearly viewed by both men and women, and both Americans and Chinese, as less central in marriage than the other three forms of support. These results suggest a very important convergence in how members of both sexes and both cultures view the marital relationship—what they want from that relationship and what they tend to get from it. Obviously, there are some

important sex- and culture-based differences in support experiences and expectations, as our other results document. But these differences exist against a backdrop of substantial similarities. The present results thus contribute to current efforts directed at appreciating both differences and similarities among the sexes and various cultures (e.g., Canary & Dindia, 1998).

Limitations

There are several limitations in the study's sample and design that constrain its conclusions. First, the sample consisted entirely of young marrieds (those married 1–5 years), so our conclusions cannot be fairly generalized beyond this particular group. Clearly, it would be desirable to replicate the study with a broader range of marital duration. Still, recent evidence (e.g., Karney & Bradbury, 2000) indicates that the early years of marriage are particularly important in establishing patterns of cognition and behavior that influence satisfaction levels over extended time periods.

Second, participants in the present study were married individuals, not married couples. Although this particular feature didn't interfere with addressing the specific questions focused upon in this study, it did mean that we were unable to pursue several interesting questions that require data from both members of a married couple. For example, is there a gap between the support wives give and that they receive? In what ways do couples in which a substantial support gap is present differ from couples in which there is little or no support gap? Future work should seek to address these and related questions.

Third, all participants in the current study had some affiliation (direct or indirect) with an institution of higher education. Most were students themselves, had recently graduated, or were married to students or recent graduates. Clearly, then, our sample differed from the population at large in terms of educational level. It remains unclear how this feature of the sample may have influenced the study's results, so caution should be exercised in generalizing our results to populations of different educational attainments.

Finally, the Chinese sample consisted of sojourners to the U.S. rather than natives residing in China. Sojourners, especially those traveling outside their native lands in pursuit of higher or graduate education, differ in important (if unknown) ways from nonsojourning residents. Clearly, it would be desirable to replicate the current study with a sample of resident Chinese. Still, as the pace of globalization continues and ever greater numbers of people travel abroad for business and educational purposes, it becomes increasingly important to understand sojourners and how their travels influence properties of their close relationships.

APPENDIX

Instructions, Items, and Scales Used to Assess Experienced and Desired Levels of Spousal Support

Experienced Support Instructions
Directions: In the context of *marriage*, your spouse may do all kinds of different things for you when you need support, but they probably do so to a greater or lesser extent. Here, we are interested in *how much of each behavior you actually receive* from your spouse. Obviously there are no right or wrong answers. We just want to know how much you experience each supportive behavior your spouse may enact with respect to you. For each of the numbered items below, please indicate on the supplied answer sheet *how much of each behavior you actually receive* from your spouse. Please use the following scale in responding to each item:

Experienced Support Scale
A. Don't Receive at All
B. Receive Rarely
C. Receive Occasionally
D. Receive Regularly
E. Receive a Great Deal

Desired Support Instructions
Directions: We are also interested in learning what you *desire* from your spouse. We want to know what is important and what kind of things you desire from your spouse. For each of the numbered items below, please indicate on the supplied answer sheet *how much of each behavior you desire* from your spouse. Please use the following scale in responding to each item:

Desired Support Scale
A. Don't Desire at All
B. Desire Rarely
C. Desire Occasionally
D. Desire Regularly
E. Desire a Great Deal

Emotional Support Items
1. Telling you that he/she loves you and feels close to you
2. Expressing understanding of a situation that is bothering you, or disclosing a similar situation that he/she experienced before
3. Comforting you when you are upset by showing some physical affection (including hugs, hand-holding, shoulder patting, etc.)
4. Promising to keep problems you discuss in confidence
5. Providing you with hope or confidence
6. Expressing sorrow or regret for your situation or distress
7. Offering attentive comments when you speak

Esteem Support Items
1. Expressing esteem or respect for a competency or personal quality of yours
2. Telling you that you are still a good person even when you have a problem
3. Trying to reduce your feelings of guilt about a problem situation
4. Asserting that you will have a better future than most people will

5. Expressing agreement with your perspective on various situations
6. Telling you that a lot of people enjoy being with you
7. Assuring you that you are a worthwhile person

Network Support Items
1. Offering to provide you with access to new companions
2. Offering to do things with you and have a good time together
3. Connecting you with people whom you may turn to for help
4. Connecting you with people whom you can confide in
5. Reminding you of the availability of companions who share similar interests or experiences with you
6. Offering to spend time with you to get your mind off something (chatting, having dinner together, going to a concert, etc.)
7. Helping you find the people who can assist you with things

Informational Support Items
1. Giving you advice about what to do
2. Analyzing a situation with you and telling you about available choices and options
3. Helping you understand why you did not do something well
4. Telling you whom to talk to for help
5. Giving you reasons why you should or should not do something
6. Teaching you how to do something that you don't know how to do
7. Providing detailed information about the situation or about skills needed to deal with the situation

Tangible Support Items
1. Offering to lend you something (including money)
2. Taking you to see a doctor when you don't feel well
3. Taking care of your domestic chores when you are feeling ill due to a cold
4. Doing laundry or cooking for you while you are preparing for an important task
5. Joining you in some activity in order to alleviate stress
6. Expressing willingness to help you when you are in need of help
7. Offering to help you do something that needs to be done

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