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Comparison of Textile Making Behaviors in the US and Sweden

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Sweden has a long history of textile making and is home to one of the most diverse weaving traditions in the 21st century (“Swedish Rugs The,” 2014). The Swedish textile culture is still strong and enhanced with support from the Society of Swedish Homecraft and other government-sponsored organizations, that provide freelance weavers and artists a world-class education in the arts (“Swedish Rugs The,” 2014). We believe that due to the longer and steady textile making culture in Sweden, cross cultural analysis between Sweden and the US will offer fruitful findings regarding the effects of culture on textile-making in contemporary society. Previous research has noted that self-construals are capable of predicting a variety of social behaviors between Western cultures such as European vs American (Croucher et al., 2010). Therefore, Singelis’s (1994) self-construal model was used in this study to explore cultural differences between the US and Swedish countries. Two general constructs of self-construal are the independent (more motivated by their own preferences, needs and rights) and interdependent selves (motivated by norms and duties imposed by the “in-group”). The purpose of this study was to investigate the differences in reasons for making textiles and construals between US and Swedish women, as well as how those differences were related to what women made and perceptions and behaviors of using the Internet for textile making.

The convenience sampling methods was used to collect data. The link to the online survey was distributed to textile crafters through 136 sewing guilds in 42 states in the US and 86 regional textile craft organizations in Sweden. One of the authors, who speaks both English and Swedish, translated the instruments from English into Swedish. A total of 281 participants completed the surveys; 174 from the Sweden and 107 from the US. Questionnaires assessing textile-making patterns and reasons for textile-making were based on the work of Collier (2011); attitude and behavior of using textile-making related websites were based on the perceived interactivity scale (Bouhlel et al., 2010); the self-construal measure was based on the work of Singelis (1994).

First, one-way ANOVA was used to find differences between the Swedish and US samples. Second, subscales were created for Independent and Interdependent construal by summing response values to the 23 statements of self-construal (11 statements for independent and 12 statements for interdependent self-concepts). The Cronbach’s alpha reliability estimate for Interdependence in the Swedish sample was $\alpha = .845$ and $\alpha = .802$ in the US sample; Independence in the Swedish sample was $\alpha = .727$ and $\alpha = .736$ for the US sample. Third,
Pearson correlations were conducted on items that were significantly different between the US and Swedish sample in textile-making patterns, reasons for textile making, self-construals, age, attitude and behavior of using online websites related to textile making.

We found that Swedish textile crafters made more non-functional items (Swedish $M = 15.92$, $SD = 18.80$; US $M = 10.16$, $SD = 12.193$; $F = 8.762$, $p = .003$) than functional items (Swedish $M = 70.04$, $SD = 33.164$; US $M = 78.63$, $SD = 30.375$; $F = 5.260$, $p = .002$) compared to the US participants. It was also found that Swedish textile makers were more likely to use online textile making websites for gathering information (Swedish $M = 3.96$, $SD = .852$; US $M = 3.73$, $SD = .915$; $F = 4.221$, $p = .041$) and connecting with other people compared to the US (Swedish $M = 4.11$, $SD = .914$; US $M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.005$; $F = 22.167$, $p < .001$). Meanwhile, the US were more likely to use online textile making websites for keeping up to date with trends in textile handcrafts (Swedish $M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.032$; US $M = 4.13$, $SD = .817$; $F = 8.337$, $p = .004$), compared to Swedish participants. The US textile crafters also made textiles more for social satisfaction (Swedish $M = 3.60$, $SD = 1.103$; US $M = 4.19$, $SD = .873$; $F = 20.470$, $p < .001$) and to make things for others (Swedish $M = 4.04$, $SD = .924$; US $M = 4.43$, $SD = .742$; $F = 12.750$, $p < .001$), compared to Swedish textile crafters. Regardless of cultural group, we found that interdependence and younger age were highly correlated with using online textile making websites for gathering information (Interdependence $^1 r = .213^{**}$; Age $^2 r = -.133*$) and keeping up to date with trends in textile handcrafts (Interdependence $^1 r = .284^{**}$; Age $^1 r = -.205^{**}$). This is consistent with previous findings done by Collier, Hahn, Muehlenkamp (Submitted), where younger women in contemporary US society appeared to be more interdependent, possibly due to the use of social media. Our results offer a cross-cultural perspective in textile-making patterns and reasons between US and Swedish women, providing a unique contribution to the understanding of the reasons of textile making in this contemporary global society.