ABSTRACT
Asian Sexuality Or Singapore Exceptionalism?

In Singapore, there is an official discourse of sexuality that essentializes West versus East (Asian), and this discourse has long served as the rationale or alibi for repressive sexual policies. Moving from the particular (Singapore) to the broader perspective, this paper raises the question of whether there is such a thing as “Asian sexuality”.

Is there such a thing as “Asian sexuality”? Do Asians approach sex in particular ways that are uniquely cultural? Some “Eastern” sex manuals published in English cover the “t'ao” and tantric philosophies of sex, highlighting the pleasures of Asian styles. Yet, any discourse on “Asian sexuality” must be an orientalist one that pits the West versus the East (Asian), and this discourse has long served as the rationale or alibi for repressive sexual policies. In particular, these official constructions make “Asians” as sexually conservative. This essay deconstructs the meaning of “Asian sexuality” as used in the Singapore context and shows the contradictions inherent in official policies that adopt Western colonial laws to proscribe certain sexual practices -- albeit in the name of “Asian values”.

BIOGRAPHY
LAURENCE LEONG teaches Sociology at the National University of Singapore. His research focuses on sexuality, human rights and mass media.