

D12 Hong / China / Business Information Technology

Interaction partner(s): German students
Moment of enquiry: WS 08/09
Experience of difference: Contact rituals and proxemics

Hong, a female student from China, has only been in Germany for a few weeks. But she has established some first contacts with fellow students, including German student Sascha. When she runs into him at the university, they decide to have lunch together. On the way to the cafeteria they run into Sascha's girlfriend. Both greet each other warmly, and holding hands, they walk with Hong towards the cafeteria. Hong does not know which way to look, as the sight of the love birds makes her very uncomfortable. She tries to ignore the two by staring in a different direction. When they arrive at the cafeteria, Sascha's girlfriend bids them good-bye, as she has a course and cannot join them for lunch. Sascha says good-bye to his girlfriend and gives her a long kiss. Hong is in total shock. She quickly turns and walks away by herself. When Sascha calls to wait for him, she does not stop.

1. What bothers the Chinese girl about the German couple's behaviour? What cultural conventions cause her to turn away and walk?
2. What would explain the German student's behaviour?