

YOUTH SEXUALITY AND THE MODERN JAPANESE FAMILY

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to discuss modern Japanese family and gender norms which form the basis of the Japanese social system. After World War II, instead of professing equality of the genders, Japanese society held fast to a division of labor between genders. Most established studies tackle the task from the point of view of labor. While standpoint of sexuality or intimacy, it makes the issue that intimate relationship between the sexes, which is the first part of the formation of modern family, becomes a waterway. On the other hand, after the forming of family sexual elements between the couples fade out in early stage, and the function of family is specialized about reproduction of labor force and childcare. So on this assumption, Japanese social system has kept of modern family. However the extent of the terms of adolescence and the liberation of sexes makes a result that it is necessary to make time which sweep away the consciousness of equality in school education and sift to male priority. It is connected to the unmarried or late marriage phenomenon, and consequently Japanese social system is shook now.

I. Background

The image of a “typical” Japanese family is that of a “nuclear family consisting of a husband, wife, and unmarried child”; the men are the main bread winners while housework and childrearing are considered women’s work. Additionally, familial ties can be seen in different ways; that is, there are special “emotional ties” and “legal ties” (Tsuchiya 2003). These characteristics of the family form have been noted by sociologists and are part of what is generally termed the ‘modern family’, a concept that has been established in relation to modernism and the rise of capitalism. However, recently in advanced nations there have been trends following post-industrialization that show a transformation to a new family model

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different from that of the modern family, examples of these alternative family structures can be seen in the French PACS and the Swedish SAMBO. In addition, reports from the Pew Research Center in the USA indicate that the number of “full-time househusbands” or “stay at home dads” has doubled from 1989 to 2012, reaching two million.

With changes in gender and sexual norms, romantic relationship in couples, and an increase in the divorce rate, transformations in family structure have expanded around the world; however, the notion of family has not changed greatly in Japan. The opposition to the evaluation to gender norm of “husband must be breadwinner and the wife has to do housework and childrearing” is centered on younger people; 60% of these people (20~29 age) object to this idea (Cabinet Office 2014). This distortion in the division of labor in regards to gender has been studied as an economic or labor issue. In brief, from this perspective the role women fulfill in non-traditional employment acts as a regulating valve for the economy, as women undertake housework and child rearing free of charge. This is seen as highly efficient economically, therefore many are reluctant to change the system. In this paper, based on the background outlined above, we analyze the relations between gender norms and sexual activity of adolescents and the possible implications of this for the future of Japan. In the next section, we describe the typical structure of the family in postwar Japan.

II. Gender division of labor and labor economics

Civil society represented by a market economy based on public activity includes a level of predictability and rationality. However human life is not always rational, and in cases such as caring for children and raising a family we cannot count on support from the rationality of a market system. In fact the modern family was created under an irrational system (Giddings 1985). A stable society needs to encompass both rationality and irrationality as well as both public and private life. In Japan, this characteristic is still addressed through a system of socialized financial care consisting of the private (unpaid) contribution of full-time housewives.

In the areas of politics and economics, we can see the legal and socioeconomic status of women in Japan from the gender gap index of WEF ranked 105 out of 136 countries listed. The reasons for this gender gap began after 1970 when the social welfare budget was reduced on the premise that wives

would stay home to take care of children and the household. In this way, labor division by gender maintains an imbalance between genders. However this imbalance is not always apparent. The percentage of working women in Japan is not low compared to other developed countries; in fact, the percent of women from ages 25 to 54 who work is higher than average of OECD countries (OECD 2012). This statistic indicates that a mere increase in the rate of working women cannot be seen as progress in gender equality. First of all, the rate of women who quit work after childbirth has not decreased. The 14th survey of births in Japan, from 1980 to 2009, showed less than 30% of women maintained their careers after childbirth, while 60% of women resigned from their previous employment. This pattern of employment for Japanese women is called the *M pattern* based on its rising and falling figure.



<Figure1> Employment rate by age group

*Source: Compiled using data from "Labor Force Survey" (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, average of 2014)

The *M pattern* results from the re-employment of women who had left work, but subsequently began to work part-time. According to a survey of labor by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, the rate of women who work part-time is 40% in the 25~34 age range, but it is greater than 50% for women 35~45, and for those over 45 it is 60%. In comparison the part-time employment rate for men shows a large difference: It is 15.3% in the 25~35 age range and 8.5% for ages 35~44.

Against maintaining the simultaneous recruiting of new graduates there has been a collapse in the traditional Japanese system of life-time employment and seniority. Thus, part-time employment has been promoted as a substitute for life-time employment for women in the labor force. These part-time jobs are seen by women as convenient and often fall within their occupational areas of expertise.

Moreover, this part-time employment is often selected by the women themselves. The rate of women citing they chose this type of work is very high. Research on actual employment situations by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare in 2010 shows that the rate of women working part-time rise to 70%. There are various reasons for women selecting part-time work (people could give more than one reason). About half of women, 50.2% cited time flexibility (“I can select the time I want to work”) for choosing this type of job. The next most popular reasons were related to money, (“I can help with the household budget” or “I want to earn money so I can study”); and these types of answers accounted for 39.6% of respondents. “I can find work that is compatible with what I do at home” (for example, housework, childrearing or nursing) was cited 39.6% of respondents. All of the above reasons were cited more commonly than “I can’t find a full-time job”, which was cited by only 18.6% of the women. Specifically the reason for M shaped employment pattern is this gender division of labor. The support rate for the norm of “men should be the bread winner and women should do household work and child rearing” has decreased consistently. However, in reality the time Japanese men spend doing housework is 67 minutes and on child rearing only 39 minutes per day. This figure is extremely low compared to other OECD countries; for example, in the United States men spend 3 hours on housework and 65 minutes on childrearing. Other developed countries show similar times (MIC 2008) (BLS 2006).

It needs to be pointed out that the background to the situation for women in the private area (family and household) is economic. The average money earned through part-time work is significantly lower than it is for full-time employment. According to the survey of wage structure by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, if salaries from full-time employment for men are to set 100%, the average money earned by women is amounts to half of this figure. In addition to conditions of part-time employment, the difference between full-time and part-time have increased along gender lines. According to earning rates 66.1% of persons earning under 300 million yen per year are women, and 17.1% of women

earn under 100 million yen. For men these figures are 23.9% make under 300 million yen and 2.9% under 100 million yen. These differences have been maintained through a structure which determines men to be breadwinners and women caretakers. Moreover, if women can earn money, they must do it within the context that caretaking is their primary duty. And therefore the increase of the female employment rate is actually linked to the fact men cannot support their family sufficiently by themselves during the recession.

However we also cannot ignore that women enter into family life in exchange for independence. Levels of life satisfaction are high among married people, and in this group higher for men than women. Furthermore women's satisfaction is affected by the family economic status; so women in low-income families feel less satisfied than those in families with higher incomes. However, it is difficult to correlate satisfaction from relationships with children with income levels, and this relationship between women and children is higher relative to satisfaction that partnerships husbands (Nagata 2014). Modern Japanese women are in a paradoxical situation because they get special social position by obedience to old family norms. To give a fuller picture of these conditions the following section will analyze sexuality and intimacy. Specifically two topics will be addressed: initiative among young couples and suppression to child.

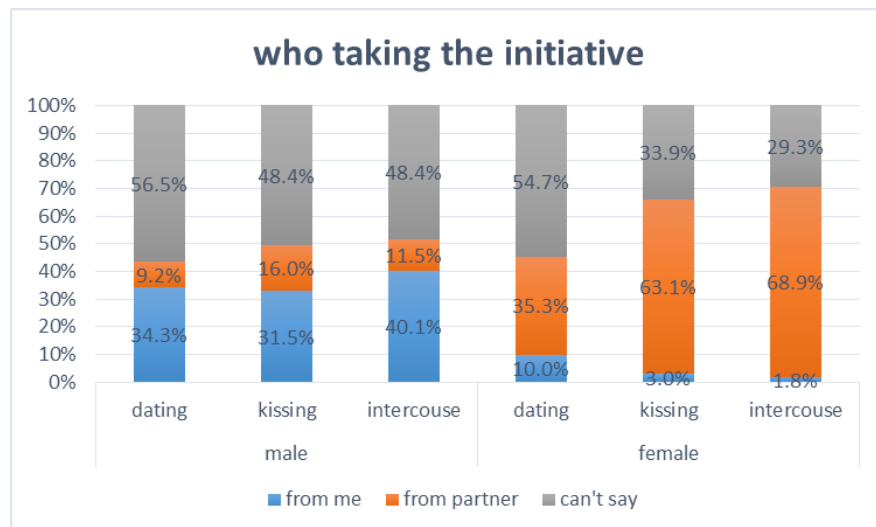
III. Sequence of affection and initiative

In the sociology of family dynamics there is a debate about initiative pertaining to its role in marital power; this often centers on who has a right to decide the allocation of family resources. Koyama has pointed out that it needs to clarify the structure of power because the norm of house customs (legally prescribed by the institution of primogeniture) has been weakened (Koyama 1967). By the 1960s, the family power structure had been transferred from husband-driven to couple-divided (Masuda 1969). It is known that the consciousness of the sexual division of labor is dejected by education, and that approval is decline. However in terms of behavior related to affection, there has been a continuation of the accommodation of sex roles in which the man leads the woman. In this section, using research data, we examine the problem of that contradiction where there was no mention of women leading men.

The *Seventh National Survey of Sexual Activity of Japanese Adolescents (The JASE Survey)* has been conducted at six years intervals since 1974. The survey

delves into changes in adolescents' experience of sexual activity, gender consciousness (such as division of labor between the sexes), sexual education, sources of sexual information, and so on. The *Seventh Survey* was conducted in 2011 among a few large, mid-sized and small cities across Japan. Respondents included junior high, high school, and college students, and the study had 7,640 valid participants.

Results make clear that adolescent romantic behavior takes the following sequence: confession of love – dating – kissing – intercourse; a progression we term 'sequence of affection.' In Japan, it is unknown whether the affection begins with the confession of love that they attach the consent each other in order to maintain their lover relationship. For adolescents, who have little experience in kissing or intercourse, the confession of love is a very big event. Teenagers will develop an intense interest in who to confess to and how a confession should be made. Rates of experience with these confessions of love do not show a difference between genders: males cite 52.8% and females 53.7%. A reason for this lack of difference between genders is the way Valentine's Day is celebrated in Japan; it is positioned as a day when women should confess their love to men, thus making it easier for women to take initiative in starting a relationship.

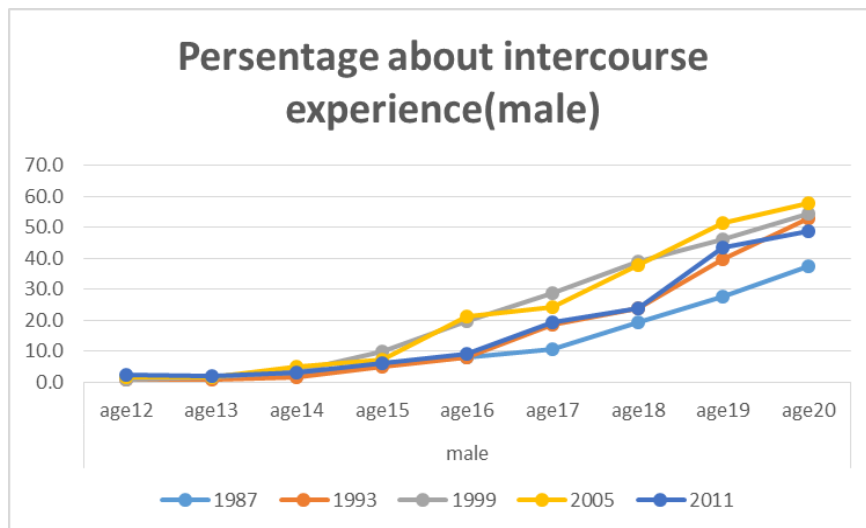


<Figure2> who taking the initiative.

Figure 2 shows whether males or females make invitations. In this sequence there is an increase of invitation by males over time. According to research on ageing this trend does not change. On the other hand, the approval of the gender norm:

where a husband should be the breadwinner, and a wife has to do housework and childrearing, was 23.3% in 1999 and 24.6% in 2011 among high school males. This shows almost no change. Among the college age males it was 31.2% in 1999, and this number has decreased by 12 points in the 2011 survey. Responses by females also showed little change with a 15% approval in both years. This seems to show the effect of education in the older college age respondents.

Therefore we will examine the relationship between initiative among adolescent’s first experience of sexual intercourse and the norm of gender division in labor. The percentage of males who approved of the labor gender norms was 39.9%, including those who replied that they initiated sexual intercourse; while 28.1% approved the gender norm but did not report taking the initiative. We can therefore see a difference of about 10%. However that difference has been progressively shrinking, and in 2011 there was virtually no difference in male respondents who reported taking the initiative being 28.8%, and those who responded that they “can’t say” who initiated intercourse was 28.5%. The trend for females in their responses was similar. The correlation coefficient (Cramer’s V) from the Fifth to the Seventh Study for males changed from 0.202 to 0.055, and for females this change was 0.126 to 0.055; therefore we can see a reduction in the numbers for both genders over a period of 10 years. From this we can surmise that views on the norm of gender division of labor and the behavior of men taking initiative in sexual relationships have declined in tandem.



<Figure3>the rate about intercourse experience by age.

Does this decrease in views of gender norms and male initiative create difficulty in maintaining relationships? In fact, the most important information from the Seventh Study is the data showing a reduction in the rate of adolescents reporting that they were sexual active. This rate had increased from the First study until the Sixth (the information can be seen in Figure 3). The number of adolescents stating that they were sexually active in 2011 was lower than in 2005 or 1999, and the same as in 1993. The figure shows data for male respondents, but the same pattern was shown for females.

Moreover there appears to be a polarization among adolescents; while some become sexually active at an early age, there are others who do not seem interested in sex. Firstly, adolescent sexual activity conducted in private; that is outside the supervision of parents, is connected with independence. The expansion of private space in modern family life has progressed along with informational mobilization. However, there is a need to find a reason for the increase of adolescents who don't engage in sexual activity. Above it was noted there is a gap in the views of the norm for gender division between romantic relationships and actual romantic relationships. This may be illustrated by what is happening in Japanese families. The next section explores the character of Japanese society in regard to the relationship between adolescent sexual activities and family situations.

IV. The Japanese Family and Adolescent Sexual Activity

Sexuality is given a low priority in the Japanese family. Results from research conducted by the Association of Japanese Family Plan in 2014, involving 3000 men and women, show that 44.6% of couples report that they do not have intercourse more than once a month. In contrast to this drifting apart between husbands and wives, intimacy between parents and children is very strong. When a man and woman have a child, they call each other "dad" and "mom"; the mother and child sleep in the same bedroom, and the husband sleeps alone. Rather than husband-wife, the parent-child relationship is the principal axis in the Japanese family. Working hours for Japanese men are typically very long, and during a father's absence the mothers and children grow very close. Thus, we observe that sexuality is often absent from the typical Japanese family.

Also, as noted in section 2, in Japan housework and childrearing is

considered to be the responsibility of women. Specifically, mothers must watch over the children. A child's behavior may be controlled as long as the mother stays at home. Data on adolescent sexuality supports this view. The rate is 5.0% for males under 18 who experienced intercourse whose mothers were housewives. This rate rose to 9.1% for males who had working mothers. The "family image" is related to sexual activity among high school students. Specifically, while the rate of female high school students who are sexually active and answered that they have a "happy" home was 11.1%; females who have a negative view of their family are twice as likely to be sexually active.

In short, satisfaction with one's family relationships is an effective way to prevent females from becoming sexually active at an early age. On the contrary when females have a negative image of their families, this may promote sexual activity. Over a series of studies, rates for "my family is happy" increase and family intimacy deepen. In one study 49% of high school females answered they were "happy with their families" in 1987, this number rose to 63% by 2011. For junior high females, it rose from 54.8% to 73%, and the same numbers were seen for junior high school males. It is possible that this increased satisfaction with family life is connected to a decrease in early sexual activity.

Of course, there are those adolescents who have negative image of their families. Interestingly, there is the gender gap in low affinity rating for the family. Also, methods of coping with family problems are different between males and females. Specifically, high school males tend to stay home and immerse themselves online, while females may go out of the house and structure their social life around their mobile phone. Only 26% of males that cite having a happy home life use their computers more than two hours on holiday. This rate rises to 36% of males who don't have an opinion on their families and 50% of males who cite their home as unhappy. However with males there is no difference in mobile phones usage. Conversely, there is no relationship in the responses from female high school students between satisfaction with family life and computer use. However, these females are more likely to access the internet via their mobile phones. The rate of female students who answered that their family lives were happy, and who used mobile phones over three hours per day, was 28%. This rate rose to 34% for females who had no opinion on their family life and 58% for females who cited family life as unhappy. We can surmise that high school males who feel dissatisfied with their home life tend to spend time on their computers, while females who feel dissatisfied tend to use their mobile phones.

Furthermore, female students who spend large amounts of time away from home are subject to various sexual temptations. Only 27% of the females who responded that they had a happy home life reported that males had tried to pick them up. While for females who had no opinion on their home life or cited it as unhappy, this numbers rose to 36% and 61% respectively. There is a relationship with family image and the experience of receiving sexual advances from persons other than boyfriends or partners. Additionally, reports of female students who have been approached by strangers for sex or engaged in sexual acts with strangers (not partners or boyfriends) are higher for those who cite their home lives as unhappy. Only 4% of females who reported having a happy home life responded that they were “attracted to sexual acts”. This number rose to 7% among females who had no opinion on their family life and 11% for those who described their home life as unhappy.

<Table 1>The result of binomial logistic regression analysis about the experience of sexual temptation

	b	s.e.	exp(b)
family image	-0.321**	.120	.726
part time job	0.209**	.075	1.233
e-mail	0.316***	.077	1.372
playing in downtown	0.245***	.083	1.278
same-sex friend	0.309***	.146	1.362
heterosexual friend	-0.310*	.081	.734
constant term	-2.553***	.549	.078
-2LL			994.414a
Nagelkerke R2			0.1365
n			1393

+p<0.1, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 1 shows results of a binomial logistic regression analysis for experiences of ‘received sexual advances.’ Independent variables are the number of days respondents went to a part-time job per week, amount of e-mail accessed on a mobile phone per day, frequency of hanging out with friends in urban/shopping districts per month, and the number of same-sex friends/number of friends of the opposite sex. Thus there are have four categories of independent variables. The family image is given three points for happy, two points for no opinion and one point for unhappy. Results show that commuting to a part-time job, e-mail usage, spending time in urban shopping districts, the number of same-sex friends, and family image are correlated with experiences of receiving sexual advances. Yet a larger number of friends of the opposite sex correlates with women who have not

had these experiences. We can see here that female students who do not feel happy at home have a growing desire to find other types of contact, and the experience of sexual activity is part of that process.

Respondents who feel unhappy at home have low self-affirmation and tend to support the gender norm that “men must lead women.” In female students this trend seems to lead to an attitude which allows them to accept a partner’s desires. We can see this in responses for motives in engaging the first experience of sexual intercourse; only 8% of females who reported having a happy home life said they did this “because of her partner’s strong desire,” but this number rose to 25% for females who had no opinion on their home life or cited it as unhappy. However, a lack of self-determination tends to lead to risky sexual behavior. The percentage of females who say they have experienced domestic violence from a romantic partner is 38% among those who cite their home lives as unhappy: the figure is twice that of females citing a happy family life. This is especially problematic when we see that 20% of these females cite as having experienced sexual violence from a partner.

With younger males we see different patterns: while there are males who socialize outside the home frequently, there are also a number who stay at home. Additionally females who have a negative family image responded that they have a lot of friends of the opposite sex. However, for males who reported they had many friends of the opposite sex, half had a positive family image.

This could be related to the reasons for popularity among high school males. Often males who are good at sports, rather than academics, tend to make more friends. Participation in sports allows males to exhibit their masculinity. However 62% of males who cited being poor at sports had a negative image of their families compared with 32% who had a positive family image. Not having self-confidence in sports and academics will lead to lower self-esteem. Additionally, these males also tend to support the gender norm that “men have to lead women”. This could be a reason why many of them satisfy their sexual desire through sexually explicit videos or internet sites, as these young men do have not the self-confidence to act as leaders in real romantic relationships.

In other words, though there is a difference in that females are more proactive and males are more passive in their interactions, both seem to believe that men should exert initiative rather than women. This gap between reality and what is seen as ideal creates an obstruction in the development of relationships between Japanese adolescent couples as well as problems they face related to

sexual activity.

The result of binomial logistic regression analysis about the experience of intercourse						
	Model1 (boys)			Model2 (girls)		
	b	s.e.	exp(b)	b	s.e.	exp(b)
part-time job	0.276***	.063	1.318	0.269***	.051	1.308
e-mail	0.532***	.084	1.703	0.436***	.064	1.547
playing in downtown	0.395***	.071	1.484	0.474***	.068	1.606
self-assessments about athletic ability	0.396***	.080	1.486	0.110+	.058	1.116
self-esteem	0.092	.081	1.096	0.266***	.068	1.305
gender norm	0.087	.072	1.090	0.147*	.063	1.159
living with parent	-0.898***	.158	.407	-0.580***	.120	.560
constant term	-3.782***	.404	.023	-4.162***	.362	.016
-2LL			1021.592a			1687.332a
Nagelkerke R2			.310			.225
n			913			1413
+p<0.1, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001						

Based on the responses detailed above, Table 2 shows the results of a binomial logistic regression analysis about adolescents' experience of intercourse. Note that some of the same variables are used as in Table 1 (commuting to a part-time job, accessing e-mail and spending time in urban shopping districts). We added self-assessments about athletic ability, self-esteem, and the norm of gender roles in which respondents could rate "apply" to "not apply" on a four-point scale.

In Model 1, results for males, can be interpreted as showing that a long commute to a part-time job, frequent use of e-mail, often hanging out in urban shopping districts, and self-assessment of good athletic ability is closely correlated with engaging in sexual activity (intercourse). Furthermore, whether or not males still lived at home with their parents affects the reduction rate of sexual activity; but the self-esteem of "I have a strong point" or gender norm of "men have to lead women" was not related to sexual activity. In model 2, for females, self-esteem and gender role were related, but good at sports did not involve as much as males.

These results support those of Section 3. As females are becoming more assertive as a result of more equality in education, we can see that males who desire to take the lead in a sexual context find themselves in a perplexing situation. At the same time living with their parents tends to hold back adolescent sexual activity. Undoubtedly this is also apparent in the trend that adolescents often live with their parents for a long time due to the recession—that is, young people have trouble earning enough money to live on their own. Moreover, they may not see the necessity of independence because they have good relationships

with their parents. In 2010, 53.1% of people in their twenties, 27.6% of those in their early thirties and 20.1% of those in their late thirties live together with their parents (Infrastructure and Transportation Ministry 2012). The higher rate of the 'offspring generation' who live with their parents may have suppressed sexual activity among young people. Moreover difficulty in achieving economic independence may influence adolescent sexual activity family formation from the normative side. Economically defined norms—that men have to pay the bill when dating and gender norms regarding a division of labor—are related. Among young people who believe that men should bear the cost of dating, the percentage of agreement about norms for the gender division of labor is 41.9% of males and 25.4% of females. Conversely, among respondents who do not believe that males should pay while on a date, the percentage drops to 28.9% of males and 19.8% of females. So males are more accepting of the model of the male breadwinner. This connection between social consciousness and the social system may also have an inhibiting effect on sexual activity in young people.

Conclusion

This report presented gender roles as having two axes: one is the gender division of labor, and the other is a men's consciousness of priority regarding women in relationships. In terms of the first; despite the traditional norms regarding gender divisions of labor as not supported by people, still mothers are seen as housekeeper and nanny. This is true even though the status of women has advanced in today's society. In terms of the second axis, focusing on men taking the priority in relationships, this was shown to have an effect on romantic and sexual interactions. Strengthened ties between mothers and children resulting from the gender divisions of labor also seem to regulate adolescent sexual activity. On the other hand interest in sexual relationships tend to decrease if people reject the idea that men have priority, and this rejection is consistent with norms in the current educational environment, and we therefore see a reduction in the rate of adolescent sexual activity.

According to previous research gender roles are related to educational levels. In postwar Japan, there were much greater opportunities for higher education for both men and women; this led to more sexual freedom and gender roles in this regard have largely changed. However, this diversity in views of relationships and marriage has not become a reality. Younger people may have different views of

the roles in romantic attraction; however the traditional form of the modern family persists. After marriage, the husband is breadwinner and the wife does housework. In Japan family and romantic affection exist in a paternalistic condition. Currently in Japan the economic structure supports men having priority. An escape from sexual activity by adolescents is not the same as the prewar patriarchal system which had prohibited sexual activity before marriage and centered on the sexual desire of men.

Adolescents with higher levels of education notice this contradiction, and they often decide to withdraw from romantic engagements. School truancy and dropping out of the labor market are essentially the same strategies applied in different circumstances. Today's sociological challenge is to create a theoretical framework which encompasses diversity in terms of what has been outlined. At the same time it is essential to open the economic sphere for women; there needs to be a change to equal partnerships in parenting and household duties. Moreover, the labor market has become difficult for younger job seekers, with a concentration on part-time work rather than life-time employment. In other words, the patriarchal system can be genuinely dismantled if these points are considered. The rise in people who do not marry or marry late can be seen as a sort of quiet resistance by younger Japanese to the rigid family construct which has been maintained since the country's pre-war societal structure.

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