

Contradictory nature of japanese sexuality

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Historically Japanese sexuality has been very conservative and inclusive. The term the “ old ways” has been mentioned in many cases in my research. This in itself suggests, that even in the modern era that Japanese sexuality continues to maintain its fundamentally conservative attitudes towards sex. Although, at the same time it seems that Japanese popular culture and media projects a sense of hypersexuality. This research paper's main goal is to launch into an exploratory research into the contradictory nature of Japanese sexuality. In short, on the one hand you have the traditional conservative nature suggested by the research. On the other hand you have the hypersexual nature projected by the Japanese media outlets. It is the ultimate goal of this paper to investigate and uncover what Japanese sexuality truly is. Is it as the research reports it or is it the media?

Unveiling Japanese Sexuality from the Media

In an article written in by Vivien (1991), the paper immediately denounces Japanese media as a machine for spreading extravagant versions of Japanese gender, social, and sexual scripts. In this article she suggests that the main reason may be the west is so misunderstanding of Japanese sexuality and culture in general is, because Japanese media acts as a veil that covers up true Japanese attitudes and conventions towards sexuality. One of the biggest misconceptions that should be cleared up first and foremost is the western views on the preconceived notion of female gender roles in Japan.

It is true like the majority of cultures, Japanese women are not free of social scripting that underlines what a woman should be in the culture. In this case traditional maternal attitudes and heterosexuality is greatly emphasized in the Japanese culture. Although, as previously stated the immediate research

suggests that these social scripts are blown out of proportion by the Japanese media. One of the more popular misconceptions is that Japanese women, “ love to be subservient”. On the contrary since the 1990’s Japan has seen an increase in feminist movements like never before. It should also be noted that, Japanese women are also some of the most educated women (Vivien, 1991). This could be a result of female making up 40% of the overall work force in Japan. Which in in-turn, lead to the prompting of the Japanese feminist movement; when the women begin to fight for more rights in the workplace. This workplace feminist can also be seen another form of outdated media, the comic. There has been a recent development of several corporate feminist comic making fun of their stuffy corporate male counterparts (Vivien, 1991).

Although it must be noted that this feminist movement is a relatively recent endeavor and involves younger Japanese women. Sexuality in Japan doesn’t just concern the young as the media would portray it. The sexuality of the elderly in Japan is an issue that very much goes beneath the radar the majority of the time. Straightaway, it should be noted that the research suggests that both aging males and females have differing views on what constitutes a healthy sex life in older age.

In one study, as many as 25% of male participants, between the ages of 52-88, admitted to having extramarital affairs. Unfortunately, due to the difficulty of the subject matter of the interviews, no women would report any extra-material activity. Although, it should be noted that this doesn’t mean that extra-marital activity doesn’t occur in females, simply that they find it difficult to talk about (Moore, 2010). The male interviewee’s in this study

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found it much easier to discuss sex than the females. This varying degree of difficulty to discuss the topic could represent the differing in valance of attitudes towards sexuality in Japan between males and females. According to the research, it appears as if extra-marital affairs by older men in Japan is a common practice. It would be wrong to claim that it is accepted, but it would also be unfair to state that older females had the same desires as older men. Sexual desire was the most reported motivating factor by older men in this single study. It was reported to be natural for a man to grow old and desire women other than their wives.

Older female wives and older females in general, between the ages of 52-78, have very different attitudes than their male counterparts. According to Katerina (2010), there seems to be four reoccurring themes in female attitudes in older martial relationships: show of restraint, men's interests in infidelity, and companionship of partner over martial relationship, and presence of sexual desire or lack thereof. It appears as if older females define showing restraint, as never discussing matters of sexual nature (with anyone). Most of the married interviewees view sex as "disgusting" and "embarrassing", and therefore are very reluctant to share any personal sexual experiences at all. In short, it is perceived as a virtue or Japanese females in a marriage to not discuss sex. The attitude towards their partner's infidelity seems to be common knowledge among female wives. The majority of them in the study reported "knowing" or at least suspecting their husbands of extra-marital affairs. This seems to have developed in a negative attitude towards men, which could explain some of the sexual negativity older females have developed in long-term marriage. As Japanese

females age, it is noted that sexual desire decreases or in some reports absent all together. A result of this seems to be a shifting of female needs in a relationship. Older females report as valuing their husbands in more non-sexually romantic or emotionally supporting roles. It should be noted that according to this study, older females continue to have sexual desires, but they're less than the sexual desire males report (Moore, 2010).

Sexuality of the elderly has been given its time in the spot light, but now it's time to transitions to youth once more. By introducing sexual development of adolescents in this manner it allows us to compare and contrast the two big milestones in sexual development, those being old age and adolescents. An important note should be made that the development of adolescents in Japan around the time of adolescents does not differ from western norms (Coleman, 1981). Most males and females being to experience the growth of pubic hair and initial mensuration/ejaculation around the ages of 10-12 years old. However a reported interest in sex does not occur until 14-15 years for males and 17-18 years for females (Asayama, 1975).

Japanese Media Account of Japanese Sexuality

I know the primary discussion here is about how Japanese media projects Japanese sexuality on the rest of the world, but how does it project itself on its own people? I particular a study that analyzed the projection of gender constructs upon Japanese culture by five popular serial dramas; demonstrated that portrayed stereotypes that are seen as the norm, but research says otherwise. Most of these popular serial dramas portrayal a main female character as being: "feminine, gentle and polite, while being intelligent and strong at the same time" (Poerwandari, De Thouars, & Hirano, <https://assignbuster.com/contradictory-nature-of-japanese-sexuality/>

2014). These characteristics have developed into a social norm shaping men's desired characteristics they look for in a female partner. This then creates a social environment in which men desire these traits, and thus women must then conform to said traits in order to attract a male partner. When interviewed Japanese men who were a fan of Japanese anime, concluded that the traits they most sought in a partner was: "cute, loyal, delicate, innocent, yet sexually attractive and willing to fulfill the sexual fantasies of men" (Poerwandari, De Thouars, & Hirano, 2014). This is just an example of unrealistic standard being projected by the media that eventually create social norms in males and females among a large age range. Japan being an economically driven country, it is no leap of the imagination to think that the most females desire a man that is economically stable. Along with most males desiring a female partner that is attractive and maternal. Although, in these new serial dramas that a large portion of Japanese's college students (among other various demographics) portray a main female character as being economically independent and breaking most of the contemporary female stereotypes. Which raises the question, is the entire media marching to the beat of one drum?

Most of this paper has been out to prove that the media is disseminating false norms to the Japanese people, and also projecting an illusion to the western culture of Japanese sexuality. Although, it has not been mentioned the possibility that a minority of media outlets might, be attempting to transcend prior norms (Min, 2011).

Conclusion

It appears that this topic is not a black & white as originally thought. It must be noted, that investigating sexuality in a sexually conservative culture invites problems. The research that has been gathered suggest that Japan is not the hypersexualized culture that their media portrays them to be. Japan is still a very sexually conservative, but it seems as if the culture is also at a very dynamic point. Where females are attempting to assert themselves in the media as well in the business world to establish an unprecedented push for a change in female social norms. Most advocates of this movement however are younger females. It seems that older female have more fundamentally conservative view on sexuality, although the older males seem to have conflicting views on sexuality. The influence of the media is without a doubt there, but it should be examined more thoroughly for the effect it is having on the culture. It seems that not all media outlets are producing negative stereotypes as previously rumored. It is advised that further research is needed on this topic as it could prove to be very insightful when it comes to the cultural effect of sexuality.