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# The United States and Japan: A Cross Cultural Analysis of Gender Roles and Intimate Relationships

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# The United States & Japan: A Cross Cultural Analysis of Gender Roles and Intimate Relationships

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## INTRODUCTION

Dating is like solving multiple rubik's cubes. You may figure out the cube by solving one side at a time until you finish, but then you come to realize that you have other cubes to now figure out. Within the United States and Japan, research concerning dating is complex like solving multiple rubik's cube because of the multiplicity of angles in relation to the goal. For example, research in the United States uses terms such as 'hooking up' (Epstein, Jerel, Calzo, Smiler, & Ward, 2009) to 'booty call' (Jonason, Li, Cason, 2009), and is not limited to romantic relationships (Sanchez & Broccoli, 2008). Research on *amae* in Japan has demonstrated an important aspect of their interpersonal social dynamics that is also practiced in dating relationships. While dating is a research category by itself, another important area of study to consider is gender roles because much of the dating research implicitly and explicitly addresses it. In this paper, I consider cultural relevance, gender roles, and dating. I pose the research question, is there a relationship between gender roles and dating scripts among emerging adults in the United States and Japan? If so how do they function? Gender roles are examined in the current cultural context of dating in the public domain of the United States and Japan.

In the United States, there are several studies on dating in the fields of psychology and sociology. An important emphasis has been placed on dating scripts, proactive scripts, and reactive scripts (Arnett, 2013) among emerging adults. Dating scripts are the "cognitive models that guide dating interactions" (Arnett, 2013). Proactive scripts and reactive scripts are part of dating scripts but proactive scripts are more common for males and reactive scripts more common for females. Proactive scripts "includes initiating date, deciding where they will go, controlling the public domain, and initiating sexual contact"

whereas reactive scripts focuses more on the private domain, responding to dates public domain gestures, and responding to sexual initiatives (Arnett, 2013, p. 243). The scripts, as this research will demonstrate, are influenced by gender roles related to masculinity and femininity in the United States. Arnett (2013) discusses recent trends changing “a lot more” but the proactive and reactive scripts in the U.S. have remained relatively consistent.

Before considering current research from U.S. and Japanese scholarship, let’s turn to the history of dating. In *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, historian Beth Bailey (1989) examines traditional dating scripts occurring between 1920-1965 in the United States. According to Bailey (1989) dating became a practice that moved from a private to public sphere. She argues that dating itself is considered a commodity, and attributes this change in dating to economics. Bailey (1989) states:

But as more and more young women entered the job market, earning their money and achieving the limited autonomy that comes with economic independence, conventions based on the man-as-provider model clashed more and more with the realities of men’s and women’s lives. (p. 4)

This is where the proactive and reactive script becomes important. The proactive script is based on a male initiating and ‘taking charge’ whereas the female waits. However, if a female has access and the means to provide for herself and does not need to rely on a man for financial support, what can he possibly provide? This new social phenomenon challenges one of the three essential gender roles that a male must fulfill to be considered ‘a man’: provide, protect, and procreate (Arnett, 2013). If a male doesn’t need to provide

then showing his ability to protect and procreate would become a more salient or emphasized part of the dating script.

Bailey's research is based on traditional forms of dating which would be considered courtship. By examining dating traditionally, she looks at courtship and convention rather than experience (Bailey, 1989). Courtship is defined broadly with "the term to encompass a wide variety of conditions, intentions, and actions, for men and women woo each other in many ways, not all of which lead to marriage" (Bailey, 1989). Conventions are culturally constructed and historically specific public codes of behavior and systems of writing (Bailey, 1989). Bailey's research concentrates on the cultural aspects of middle class, young adults from the time period of 1920-1965 but notes that by choosing the "national convention" her study has excluded different groups such as people living in poverty or extreme wealth, ethnic/racial minorities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and religious minorities (Bailey, 1989).

Prior to the twentieth century, relationships were not considered dating but regarded as courtship (Luchetti, 1996) (Lystra, 1989). Romantic expression was primarily conducted in the private sphere because no public displays of affection were socially acceptable in the public sphere (Lystra, 1989). The nineteenth century experience of love was rooted in religion and the ideal self. Lystra (1989) states, "Not fully expressed in public roles, this ideal self was meant to be completely revealed to one person only. Individuals were taught to reserve their truest or best or most worthy expressions for a single beloved" (p. 7). The most essential act was free and open communication of the self to another during this time (Lystra, 1989). Tied to the idea of romantic expressions in private only was religion. Lystra states, "Victorians believed that sexual expression should

be a sacred act of worship, even more specifically a sacrament of love. Being in love was analogized repeatedly as being reborn” (p. 8).

Courtship was a complicated practice in the United States during the nineteenth century because of themes such as individualism, secularization, masculinity, femininity, and sexuality in the middle class (Lystra, 1989). The goal of courtship was dating in the 1800’s was to eventually be married (Luchetti, 1996). Luchetti (1996) gives perspectives among different people from the 1830’s to 1915. Much of her research focuses on testimonials and accounts from different ethnic groups. Based on testimonial literature (Luchetti, 1996) (Lystra, 1989) romantic love was seen as the key for success, inside (those who are married) and outside (those not married) of marriage. Yet marriage and romantic love had its contradictions. Lystra (1989) states:

Romantic love was based upon the “fiction” of the independent self, acting as a “free” agent in terms of personal needs. Yet within marriage, the economic dependence of women entanglement of family, and the whole web of the social fabric acted to challenge the underlying premise of the nineteenth-century American romantic love: atomistic individual freedom. (p. 226)

With so many social forces influencing romantic relationships, people were not necessarily ‘free’. Even though romantic love emphasized freedom, this freedom was a contradiction because of social factors during the time period.

Lystra’s research from an earlier time period provides broader themes that can be applied to more recent studies. The research I focus on is entirely devoted to dating scripts within the last 10 years. Like Bailey (1989) I utilize conventions which she

describes as “public codes of behavior and systems of meaning that are both culturally constructed and historically specific” (p. 6). According to sociologists, gender roles are behavior, attitudes, and activities expected of males and females (Schaefer, 2011).

Therefore, in heterosexual dating practices, gender roles can be significant to social interactions and scripts.

My emphasis on dating in Japanese society is due in part to the quality of research. However, the quantity of research in Japan is lacking. Research on intimate relationships in Japan has been substantially quantitative in its research methodology. Specifically, in the research, the term *amae* was referenced consistently which influenced a further investigation and a concentration on this concept in comparison to research in the U.S.

Japan provides a very interesting cultural perspective on intimate relationship and marriage in comparison to the United States. Marriage has been a long tradition in Japan, but not a static cultural practice. Throughout their society, the Japanese have had different marriage practices organized by gender and class. For example, in 645 CE polygamous marriages existed where wives and families often lived separately (Hamon & Ingoldsby, 2003). Up until 1186 CE, polygamy was practiced with *muko-iri* (husbands marrying into their wives families) (Hamon & Ingoldsby, 2003). From the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, the system that survived until present day has been *yome-iri* (wives marry into their husbands families) and monogamy became the dominant custom at least among women (Hamon & Ingoldsby, 2003). Among the samurai class during the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, marriages were arranged (Hamon & Ingoldsby, 2003). In the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century arranged marriages become the norm amongst all social classes in Japan

(Hamon & Ingoldsby, 2003). Western Christians introduced courtly love, which was deemed as dangerous by the Japanese. Thus men had to be at least 30 and women had to be at least 25 to marry without parental permission (Hamon & Ingoldsby, 2003). It was the mid 1960's in which arranged marriages turned to romantic love marriages (Hamon & Ingoldsby, 2003). Mclelland (2010) discusses Japan in 1945-1952 and how the United States influenced Japanese culture. He writes that "in the context of popular culture "democracy" became rhetorically aligned with music, fashion, romance, and sexual freedom" (Mclelland, 2010, p. 535). Some might regard this social phenomenon as cultural imperialism or at least acculturation. Nonetheless, it helps explain Japan's shift to love marriages or dating as a means to reach marriage.

Dating in Japan became a more common practice by the mid-1960's (Hamon & Ingoldsby, 2003) but it did not look like dating and public displays of affection in the U.S. The undesirability of intimacy and public displays of affection after the age of seven years of age has been influence by Confucian philosophical teachings (Hamon & Ingoldsby, 2003). Hamon and Ingoldsby (2003) state, "Today young adults distinguish dating that is just for fun (*deto*) from dating that is leading toward marriage (*otsukiai*)" (p. 252). *Deto* can consist of going out with friend(s) and is more causal. Sexual activity is not expected on a first date. Conversely, *otsukiai* is dating someone who is a potential person of marriage and is what would be considered a serious relationship (Hamon & Ingoldsby, 2003). Also in Japanese culture there is discomfort about dating or marrying someone who is non Japanese. According to Hamon & Ingoldsby (2003) more than 99% of marriages consisted of couples who were Japanese yet by 1999 it dropped to 95%. In contemporary Japan, intimate relationships can be created and maintained in a variety of



ways such as technology. For instance, technology has become an important outlet for casual dating via dating sites, but when Japanese individuals are more serious, usually introductions occur through friends, family, and coworkers (Hamon & Ingoldsby, 2003). In Japan it is not uncommon to have 10 to 30 introductions before marrying (Hamon & Ingoldsby, 2003). Japanese culture is characterized by arranged marriage but *otsukiai* (dating for the purpose of marriage) is still more common.

### **CRITERIA**

In order to take a culturally relevant approach to discussing research in Japan, this research will utilize criteria from Enrique Dussel in *Politics of Liberation* (2001). Dussel provides criteria that allow one to understand another with awareness of one's own cultural position. Dussel (2011) presents four criteria: subalternity (what is under the surface), alterity (the other in perspective to the lens), exteriority (those outside the system), and totality (the system itself). For example, in the body of research I examine a man is the alterity to the woman and vice versa. The subalternity consists of those people not represented in the research such as those belonging to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. The totality is dating as an institution whereas married couples would be placed outside of the system. As a researcher examining another culture these areas are crucial for developing multiple lens while recognizing the implicit bias one may have.

When applying Dussel's four criteria to dating, the totality is dating in the United States and dating in Japan separately. For example, if one participates or is located within the United States culture then they are part of the system. For people dating in the location of the United States, individuals in Japan would be considered the exteriority. As

a researcher in the United States, Japan is on the exteriority and this research is on the outside looking in. The scope of this paper focuses on emerging adults; therefore people over the age of twenty five are the exteriority, as are non-heterosexuals. With gender roles, men and women are the alterity to one another in the totality that is the dating system. Research I did not include will be regarded as the subalternity because it is underneath the primary emphasis of this paper.

## **THE UNITED STATES**

### **DATING SCRIPTS**

Research on dating scripts in the United States presents an interesting insight on the ways in which men and women interact in the United States. Dating scripts are the umbrella term that covers common terminology such as ‘in a relationship’, friends with benefits, booty call, and more. The scope of research and terminology show that dating scripts are complex, thus the totality of dating is broad.

As mentioned earlier, dating research emphasizes different notions of what dating is. In the past, dating was influenced by social factors such as religious beliefs. Today other major institutions influence ideas of dating. For example, Kim, Sorsoli, Collins, Zylbergold, Schooler, & Tolman (2007) studied heterosexual scripts on television shows from the late 1990’s to present day. Kim et al. (2007) describe the heterosexual script as “the blueprint for societally sanctioned romantic and sexual encounters and interactions” (p. 146). Their research demonstrates the cultural influence television has on dating scripts. First, Kim et al. (2007) found that “in addition to showing sexual talk and behavior, television provides viewers with meaningful information guiding how girls/women and boys/men think, feel, and behave in romantic and sexual relationships”

(p. 154). For example a television show may emphasize older males as romantically inattentive to their partners needs. This influence could lend itself to a woman being non-responsive to the initiation from older men. Secondly, Kim et al. (2007) suggest “via the heterosexual script, television offers mutually impoverished constructs of male and female sexuality, which may ultimately preclude boys’ ability to say no to sex and girls ability to say yes” (p. 154). When males initiate and females respond the dating scripts can be reinforced in society. Pertaining to the second point, those who do not practice these ‘impoverished constructs’ are on the exteriority and become non-conformist in relationship to the common script. While the research from Kim et al. (2007) addresses courtship strategies it fails to investigate what the script actually is.

In addition to dating scripts or heterosexual scripts, other research investigates benefits scripts. Epstein, Calzo, Smiler, and Ward (2009) studied the sexual experiences outside of established relationships with men. This research only studied male participants so women were the exteriority. The research included 97 participants, all of whom were emerging adults. In this qualitative study young adult men were interviewed to collect their definitions of “dating”, “hooking up”, and “friends with benefits” (Epstein et al., 2009). What came from this study was that “compared to the specificity and rigidity of definitional scripts, men’s actual sexual experiences appear to be more fluid. Few men entirely adopted or rejected nonrelational sex” (p. 422). This study, while investigating men, does not fully critique their own research. Women were outside the totality of the study but the researchers did not mention investigation into a replication of this study to include women. This is important because they state “friends with benefits, on the other hand, is defined as “relationships between cross-sex friends in which the

friends engage in sexual activity but do not define their relationship as romantic” (p. 414). It’s this cross-sex relationship that means in a ‘friends with benefits’ relationship men and women are in the totality of that type of hook-up culture and men and women are in alterity to one another.

Another intriguing area of research is the scholarly discussion of ‘the booty call’. Jonason, Li, and Cason (2009) believe that research should extend beyond the examination of lingo in popular culture. The researchers say that a ‘booty call’ “involves the solicitation of a non-long term partner for the explicit or implicit intent of engaging in sexual activity” (Jonason et al., 2009, p. 460). Here the intention of the dating individual differs from the previous research. Jonason et al. (2009) state:

Taken together, our results suggest that, although booty calls are mostly a sexual relationship whereby physical attractiveness is important, there are elements in which booty calls differ from other casual sexual relationships, such as one-night stands or hookups...These findings are consistent with our overall hypothesis that the booty call may represent a compromise between the short-term, sexual nature of men’s ideal relationships and the long-term, commitment ideally favored by women. (p. 467)

The research shows that among this type of interaction men and women differ from what they value. These findings are important because again dating in its totality is complex. Short term relationships differ from long term relationships because of the time investment but also the physical, emotional, and psychological investment. Jonason et al.

(2009) describe physical attractiveness as important however influential behavior for men and women outside of gender roles is equally important.

Family influence can also shape dating scripts. For example, Katz and Kloet (2010) researched undergraduate women whom were all emerging adults and they hypothesized that “greater emotional responsiveness from fathers would promote daughters refusals of unwanted sexual activity” (p. 548). Here males who are in the dating script totality are placed on the subalternity, but the father role is placed as the alterity to the females who are engaged in dating. What the researchers found is that male initiators of sex were refused by daughters with responsive fathers in their lives (Katz & Kloet, 2010). To explain paternal responsiveness the researchers suggest further investigation into attachment between fathers and daughters which may correlate with gender roles.

The influence of television on dating scripts (Kim et al., 2007) as well as parental attachment (Katz & Kloet, 2010) show the various areas in which individuals in the dating system (totality) are affected by forces outside the system (exteriority). Self-objectification is a practice that can affect dating and exist in the subaltern. Sanchez and Broccoli (2008) tested to see if “relationship priming induces states of self-objectification” (p. 547). Priming is the “activation of knowledge structures associated with relationships” (Sanchez & Broccoli, 2008). They tested emerging adults and found for single women self-objectification was induced by relationship priming, while coupled women were less likely to self-objectify under relationship priming (Sanchez & Broccoli, 2008). This research is important because from a Dusselian perspective this illustrates the importance of the alterity. For women in this study, relationship status (having a

significant other or not) determined if they desired to self-objectify (i.e. depicting the female body as a commodity and object of male desire). In other words, for women their own physical attractiveness is important for generating initiation from men, which is the first phase of dating.

Sanchez and Broccoli's (2008) research compliments the third area in studies about dating scripts that focuses on initiation. For emerging adults this is one of the more important aspects of dating. Arnett (2013) describes adolescence and emerging adulthood as the age in which we find ourselves and find others which requires initiation. For instance, Vannier and O'Sullivan' (2011) examine strategies of emerging adults used to initiate sex in committed relationships. They found that partners matched communication styles in initiation and that the communication style was nonverbal (Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2011). However, gender differences begin to show in initiation style where males used indirect communication and females used direct communication (Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2011).

Illustrating even further the gender differences in initiation is the gender role conformity of the dating script. Dworkin and O'Sullivan (2005) examined culturally dominant scripts in male emerging adults. What they found through interviews conducted by men was that "men practiced male-dominated patterns of initiation but sought more egalitarian sexual initiation that included preferences to be an object of desire to female partners or to share the labor of sexual initiation" (Dworkin and O'Sullivan, 2005, p. 155). In other words men switched to a reactive script. This study suggests that sexually women follow a proactive script (initiation) whereas men follow a reactive script

(response). As this study indicates, men were affected by the alterity. Here again it becomes apparent that gender roles matter.

If factors on the exteriority matter, and connection to the subaltern is important too, then another cultural phenomenon to consider is gender roles which are the connection between the exteriority and the subalternity. Gender roles are outside influences (exteriority) which greatly influence the system (totality) and then guide relations between male and female (alterity). It is the internalization of these ideas which would be the subaltern (underneath the surface).

## **GENDER ROLES**

There has been ample research to suggest that gender roles influence dating scripts in the United States. For example, this can be seen by looking at research in sex roles, sexual submissiveness, as well as expressions of masculinity and femininity in relationships. All these areas contribute to the totality of dating. By examining these areas a significant understanding of dating scripts can occur.

Sex roles contribute to gender roles in dating scripts. Sexual scripts are gendered. Michael W. Wiederman (2005) examines male and female scripts for the purpose of contributing to counseling and therapy for couples. Wiederman (2005) states:

In many cases, male-female differences in sexual roles set up a dynamic of polar extremes: the more he pushes for sex, the more defensive she has to be, and vice-versa. For many couples, it can seem as though he is obsessed with sex and she is completely indifferent or disinterested. (p. 498)

This is important from a Dussel perspective. Sex role differences create the alterity because men are on one side pushing and the women are being guarded. The male is

reinforcing the proactive script while the female is not reinforcing a reactive script.

Reinforcing or dismissing the script reifies cultural assumptions about each gender. The male through initiating, is seen as sexually obsessed while the female, in rejecting her script, is seen as indifferent.

The research pertaining to sexual messages of wanting and waiting for sex reify sex roles. Researchers, Morgan and Zurbriggen (2007) looked at emerging adults and collected data through semi-structured one-on-one interviews to gain insight into first significant dating partners. Sex roles are discussed in this research because young adults view sex as important. Each gender believed that the engagement of sexual intercourse was the most important decision they and their partner could make (Morgan & Zurbriggen, 2007). This study confirms the research from Wiederman (2005) by including the gendered sexual scripts because “this study reinforced traditional masculine and feminine sexual ideals including: the man as sexually driven, the man as sexual initiator, and the women as sexual gatekeeper” (Morgan & Zurbriggen, 2007). The proactive and reactive scripts are confirmed as well as the male and female alterity relationship in the dating system. Furthermore, Morgan & Zurbriggen (2007) state:

Once both parties involved have confirmed and experienced behaviors in compliance with traditional norms, these patterns of sexual and romantic interactions can become solidified and re-enacted in future relationships. This re-enactment is frequently to the detriment of both partners, but particularly so for women because sexual encounters that follow these patterns compromise women’s sexual agency and ignore their sexual desire. (p. 537)



Even in the totality of dating, issues arise. What this research is saying is that in the totality the woman's sexual agency is the subaltern. This can be a problem psychologically for women and thus in examining gender roles sexual submissiveness must be explored.

Most literature on sexual submissiveness is focused on the experiences of women. Males are on the exteriority of this particular discussion. Kiefer, Sanchez, Kalinka, and Ybarra (2006) examine women's nonconscious association of sex with submission through two studies. What they found with women is that submission and not dominance is the nonconscious association (Kiefer et al., 2006). Even though the authors do not give causation they do imply through correlation that some women internalize their gender role on a nonconscious level (Kiefer et al., 2006). However, Sanchez, Kiefer, & Ybarra (2006) research the sexual submissiveness in emerging adult women through four studies. Sanchez et al. (2006) state:

In Studies 1 and 2, two different priming techniques showed that women automatically associated sex with submission. Moreover, in Study 2, women who strongly associated sex with submission reported more submissive sexual behavior. Study 3 showed that this association is gender specific: Men did not associate sex with submission, and neither did this association predict submissive behavior. In Study 4, women's submissive sexual behavior predicted less reported sexual arousability and greater difficulty becoming physically aroused. (p. 521)

This research shows the reactive script leads to submissiveness. In the totality of the dating script, the research in this area seems to place women in the subaltern because

of the level of dissatisfaction. However, in the context of committed relationships occasions of sexual compliance are common even amongst a diverse population (Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2010). This study is not conclusive as other research has conflicted with these findings.

Katz and Tirone (2008) examine evidence for women's sexual compliance with men from two alternative concepts. In this study, more than a third of women reported engaging in consensual unwanted intercourse with their partner (Katz & Tirone, p. 353). To preserve the gender role of peace keeper, women voluntarily submit to unwanted sex to avoid deviating from their prescribed gender role (Katz & Tirone, p. 353). This research conflicts with Sanchez et al. (2006) because this study shows that women make conscious decisions based on gender whereas Sanchez et al. (2006) consider nonconscious decisions. However, there are similarities in their findings that suggest sexual submissiveness may present problems related to abuse. Additional research about the unwanted sexual activities of women was conducted by Elizabeth Christine (2009) who found:

Seven percent of men and 8% of women had had unwanted sex at their partner's insistence. A significantly greater proportion of women than of men (12% vs. 3%) had engaged repeatedly in sexual activities they disliked, primarily fellatio and anal sex. Relationship characteristics were associated with sexual insistence, but gender was not. (p. 33)

Most important to this study is that the women repeatedly engaged in unwanted behaviors. While gender was not explicitly associated with sexual insistence Elizabeth Christine (2009) also states, "Sexual scripts that emphasize male pleasure and portray

men as insatiable aggressors and women as passive relationship caretakers increase the likelihood that women will experience all of these reasons to be compliant to a greater extent than men” (p. 37). In research about sex roles a common finding in the relationship between sexual submissiveness and unwanted sexual behavior for women primarily. Therefore gendered research results places women’s needs in the subaltern of the dating system.

Moreover, masculinity and femininity play an important role in the context of dating. A study by Tiegs, Perrin, Kaly, and Heesacker (2007) examines stereotypes and sexually-restrictive gender roles, expressed from participants. They looked at four factors and found: 1) sex as personally and physically pleasurable, 2) sex as beneficial to the self-in-relationship, 3) sex as personally costly, 4) sex as a violation of social injunctions (Tiegs et al., 2007). Men endorsed these factors at the highest rate. The researchers note that men romantically devoted may be derided and women having frequent sex are considered to be promiscuous (Tiegs et al., 2007). Research by Morgan & Zurbriggen (2007) found both genders believe sex is important. Tiegs et al. (2007) confirm this belief in factor two. Factor three emphasizes masculinity because the researchers note the men “walk a fine line between wanting the risky sex that society says they should have and paying the price for having it” (Tiegs et al., 2007, p. 455). This is important because the culture, which I consider to be on the exteriority, is influencing men who are active members in the dating system which is the totality. Factor four shows that women, more than men, believe negative social ramifications occur in greater number if one is sexually active (Tiegs et al., 2007).

When examining expression of masculinity and femininity in dating some researchers ask, “What happens when men defy cultural norms?” Moss-Racusin, Phelan, and Rudman (2010) find that “modest men suffered backlash because men are obliged to engage in status-enhancing displays, whereas they are penalized for status-attenuating behavior” (p. 148). While this explanation may be too simplistic because it gives one answer, it is nonetheless one explanation. Not adhering to traditional notions of masculinity has been shown to produce higher relationship quality for heterosexual men whereas conforming to traditional notions of masculinity can produce relationship complications (Wade and Donis, 2007). This study reflects a male perspective; research replicating this study should be done to highlight a female aspect in order to have a comprehensive understanding of gender expectations.

Feminism and beauty (Rudman & Fairchild, 2007) and the interpersonal power of feminism (Rudman & Phelan, 2007) contribute significantly to the discussion of gender on dating scripts. Rudman & Fairchild (2007) conducted three studies consisting of heterosexual men and women. Their research is unique because they emphasize heterosexual romance itself as a factor in gender inequity. Rudman & Phelan (2007) in answering the title of their research find:

Both genders rated plain women as more likely to be feminists compared to pretty women. However, the stereotype was fully explained by beliefs that unattractive women are likely to be lesbians. Moreover, the negative link between perceived beauty and lesbianism was fully accounted for by the belief that plain women are low on sex appeal (i.e., unpopular dating-wise with men). As a result of these unfavorable beliefs, young adults may

view feminism as unromantic and a hindrance to their own relationships.

(p. 133-134)

This research is illustrating that unattractiveness is on the exteriority along with feminism, and it raises the questions “what is attractive” and “what isn’t” in the context of dating. The assumed implication (influence) here is that if a woman is viewed as feminist then she may not engage with women which then places women in the subaltern. Since women and men will date (or attempt to) it is unrealistic to place either one on the exteriority in this context. Research from Rudman and Phelan (2007) dispelled the credibility of negative beliefs about feminists in that men believe feminism may be beneficial for their relationship. This study should be replicated to assert the reliability and validity of the study.

Altogether, when people engage less in ideal of masculinity and femininity, psychological well being increases. Sanchez & Crocker (2005) investigate well-being and traditional gender ideals. The researchers used emerging adults (343 females and 451 males) in a longitudinal study assessing five factors: investment in gender ideals, self esteem, depression, disordered eating, and external contingencies of self worth (Sanchez & Crocker, 2005). Sanchez & Crocker (2005) find:

People who are less invested in traditional gender ideals have better psychological outcomes because they are less likely to allow others’ opinions, judgments, and performances to determine their self-worth. The process of becoming less invested in gender ideals may require a different framework for determining self-worth that gives greater personal autonomy. (p. 74)

The social and psychological factors are numerous and therefore warrant more about gender roles and dating.

## JAPAN

### INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS & AMAE

Research on the intimate relationships of emerging adults in Japanese culture has emphasized attachment, day-to-day experiences, and self-disclosure in relationships. The research about intimate relationships provides a unique cultural comparison. However, there appears to be some gaps in the research. The gap could be that dating in Japan is not as important to other societies. Or the perceived gaps are due in part to my research methods and my topics narrow scope. Also, my lack of familiarity with Japanese culture places me on the exteriority. For example, I did not know that specifically unique to Japan is the concept of *amae* in intimate relationships which is part of the totality of Japanese culture. As such, this section will give an overview of the meaning of *amae* and its relationship to emerging adults.

*Amae* is practiced in many aspects of social life in Japan. The concept of *amae* is demonstrated in the Japanese way of thinking such as *enryo* (restraint), *giri* (social obligation), *tsumi* (sin), and *haji* (shame) (Davies & Ikeno, 2002). Relationships in Japan consist of the inner circle, middle zone, and outer zone (Davies & Ikeno, 2002). *Enryo* is present in the inner circle, present in the middle zone, and absent in the outer zone (Davies & Ikeno, 2002). “For example, they feel *giri* (obligation) when others toward whom they have *enryo* (restraint), show them kindness” (Davies & Ikeno, 2002, p. 18). The Japanese feel less *haji* (shame) because of the closeness with the inner circle and also with the belief that the *tsumi* (sin) will be forgiven (Davies & Ikeno, 2002). In the middle

zone and outer zone, *enryo* (restraint) becomes more important because of *giri* (obligation) which requires that one behave appropriately. This information is important because to maintain a harmonious relationship and get along with others in Japanese culture, *amae* is vital (Davies & Ikeno, 2002).

*Amae* is an indigenous Japanese concept (Marshall, 2012; Marshall, Chuong, and Aikawa, 2011). Consistent research confirms a general definition of *amae* as pertaining to a Japanese behavior (Marshall, 2012) (Niiya & Harihara, 2012). Niiya and Harihara (2012) state, “The Japanese identify a behaviour as involving *amae* when they: (1) see that the behaviour is inappropriate for that person's age or status; and (2) perceive that the person expects others to accept that inappropriate behaviour” (p. 189). Let’s take the following example. Sakura and Neji are two full time employees with high paying and high demanding jobs. If Sakura ask Neji to cook dinner because she is too tired from work the request would be considered inappropriate by the standards of Japanese culture. If Sakura recently lost both her parents tragically and had to also manage funeral arrangements, Japanese society might not think of her request as being inappropriate because of her inner emotional turmoil. However, if there are no exaggerating circumstances her request may be perceived as inappropriate because Sakura expects Neji to indulge her in which case Sakura’s behavior involves *amae* because of their intimate relationship. This would mean that most Japanese hope Neji indulges Sakura’s request. If *amae* is implied or appropriated then one would be aware that Sakura wants a confirmation of her intimate relationship with Neji. Therefore, she can cross gender role expectations and boundaries with her request to achieve what she wants which is getting her partner to cook dinner even though it is understood that this has traditionally been her

job. *Amae* can be understood as a highly contextual and it reinforces interdependence present in intimate relations.

Marshall (2012) examines attachment and *amae* in Japanese romantic relationships. She distinguishes between three attachment styles discussed in psychology: secure attachment, anxious attachment, and avoidant attachment. According to Marshall (2012) anxious attachment is similar to avoidant attachment but both styles differ from secure attachment. For example, “Anxious individuals tend to doubt their worth to others, seek reassurance, ruminate on distressing events, and fear interpersonal rejection” while “individuals high in avoidance tend to be uncomfortable with closeness and are reluctant to trust or depend on others” (Marshall, 2012, p. 90). The attachment styles yielded different results in the study. Marshall (2012) investigated 30 heterosexual Japanese couples with an average age for men of 21 and women 20. Her findings states:

Consistent with predictions, actor's attachment anxiety was positively associated with *amae*, and actor's avoidance was negatively associated with *amae*— but more strongly and consistently for men. Anxiety was also positively associated with men's relationship quality, and mediational analyses revealed that this was because anxiety contributed to relationship-enhancing perceptions of having received *amae* and having provided *amae* to a partner. (p. 97)

Marshall's results are important because it demonstrates that in the totality of dating in Japanese culture, the alterity relationship is highly important. An anxious man requesting *amae* from the alterity (female) ended up receiving *amae*. Therefore relationship quality is greater with anxious men (Marshall, 2012) which means proactive scripts that involve



making “inappropriate” requests and women’s reactive script of being the gatekeeper of intimacy worked for men because women indulged their partner. However, women did not report higher relationship quality. This study demonstrates that anxiety can motivate other-directed *amae* behavior.

When considering *amae* behavior it makes one wonder how this happens daily. Marshall et al. (2011) observed *amae* in the day-to-day experiences in Japanese intimate relationships. The researchers conducted a survey for the intake phase and recorded information from emails for the diary phase of the data collection (Marshall et al., 2011). The findings in this study confirm the previous study but bring about different results as well. Marshall et al. (2011) state:

When actors and partners engaged in *amae* behaviour, they rated their relationship quality as higher and conflict as lower than when they engaged less in such behaviour...When actors themselves requested *amae*, they reported a greater need to maintain or increase closeness, supporting claims that *amae* requests are often motivated by affective, non-instrumental desires to seek emotional proximity with close others. (p. 32)

Marshall et al. confirms the relationship quality being higher when engaged in *amae*. The need to maintain or increase closeness is something worth investigating further because of the prioritizing of group over self which is embedded in Japanese culture. A possible explanation is the collectivistic culture which emphasizes interdependence. As someone who is on the exteriority, my perspective is limited by my own cultural lens. However, research conducted in the totality, or their own cultural context has reliability and validity.

An important study that emphasizes the function of collective culture is research that compares self-disclosure between Japanese and American cultures. Mie Kito (2005) examine self-disclosures in romantic relationships. In a college student participant survey, comprised of 81 Japanese and 64 Americans, the researcher found that both groups reported more self-disclosure in relationships. A key limitation of this study is that this study did not include Japanese students living in Japan; only those living in the United States for no more than two years were included (Kito, 2005). With Japanese students the disclosure was significantly less than American students (Kito, 2005) and these findings should not be applied to Japan specifically because Japanese students were on the exteriority and assimilated into the totality that is the American culture. While Japanese students were in alterity to American students the influence of American culture distorts the authenticity of studies looking into native Japanese emerging adults. Nonetheless, this study is worth mentioning since it is the only comparative study about emerging adults.

## **GENDER ROLES**

From a research perspective, gender role differences in dating within Japanese culture are speculative for various reasons: absence of explicit research among emerging adults, minor elaboration on implicit findings, and also the social construction of gender roles not being universal across cultures. When considering gender and *amae* there are some differences, but one study is not enough to confirm the gender role influence on intimate relationships. Marshall, Chuong, and Aikawa (2011) state:

Thus, not only was there no evidence of traditional role-taking behaviour, with women more eager to please their partners than vice versa (even at

the expense of women's own need satisfaction), but the present results suggested that it was the men who were particularly attuned to their partner's amae needs, perhaps because relationships were more intimate, satisfying, committed, and conflict-free for both partners when women felt indulged. (p. 33)

The results imply that by taking different scripts or not taking on any scripts then relationship satisfactions increases. According to this study, relationship satisfaction occurs when men indulge women's needs. More research needs to be conducted to understand the gender role influence on intimate relationships, the lack of gender role influence, and or what the gender roles actually are.

Also, research about gender roles can be complicated due to difficulty collecting data sets. Shinichi (2007), regardless of his own data in Tokyo, states, "The relatively low response rate from those under 30, however, is a commonly reported phenomenon for public opinion surveys conducted in Tokyo" (p. 518). This phenomenon of low responses from a researcher on the exteriority of Japan can only be inferred. Collecting opinion surveys for all age groups, especially emerging adults, will be beneficial for research in dating. Expressions of gender do exist in Japan, but it appears that gender role and dating research in Japan is implicit and not explicit. Furthermore, Japanese research on gender roles in media shows a political divide between conservative and egalitarian approaches. Shinichi (2007) finds that television can lessen social change by emphasizing traditional roles among viewers. Also, some Japanese women support the status quo as opposed to wanting it changed (Shinichi, 2007). From the perspective of the exteriority this seems

contradictory because of politics. When examining gender and politics, women are at a political disadvantage. Fuse and Hanad (2009) state:

Japanese women are politically under-mobilized. This is reflected in the fact that only a fraction of women are among members of the national parliament and fewer women show interest in politics than men. Since the Japanese are becoming progressive, the finding that progressive individuals are less likely to have political trust has a significant implication. (p. 855)

This agency that women need is important. Research focusing on gender roles in relationships is even more important to understand since politics could provide another area of investigation. These studies about gender roles, the media, and political agency capture an emerging development in Japanese society.

### **CONCLUSION**

Dating culture in Japan and the United States share similarities and differences. Japan as a collective culture emphasizes the group whereas United States focuses on the individual. In U.S. research, gender roles did influence dating. Japanese research did not explicitly show a correlation between gender roles and dating. However, *amae* gives an insight into Japanese culture and gendered expectations.

From a research perspective, dating in the United States is complicated. Examining gender roles and focusing on dating scripts, which is a key component of dating, has shed light on some contemporary trends. The dating scripts are highly gendered and play out in communication, sex, and media. Also, communication and dating influence sexual practices. Males initiating sex is tied to notions of masculinity

because it is expected that males are supposed to ‘conquer’ females. Whereas, women are placed in a nurture role where they determine the success of the relationship. This alterity for women in dating relationships may lead to issues I see as detrimental. In some relationships not practicing traditional roles places an individual on the exteriority of dating so women men and women do not conform to typical gender roles relationship quality increases. Thus men and women should utilize more egalitarian approaches by being both the initiator and respondent.

Media which produces and reinforces gender roles in dating should be mindful of its content and also present women and men as initiators and respondents. Presenting women as initiators places them in a position to be placed in a derogatory status whereas men are placed in a more favorable status. The norm in media is typically that of a clean athletic male along with an overly sexualized female. Thus in media, men who are respondents should be ‘average’ looking and women who initiate should not be overtly sexualized so as not to perpetuate gender norms based on body image. Additional research about gender roles and dating may further feature the changing role of men and women in public and private spheres.

This research did not consider the way in which technology impacts relationships. Cell phone usage of seeing who receives and sends messages between each gender would enlighten the research even further. Social networking and relationship satisfaction and quality should be examined while looking at whether trends over time of initiators and respondents. Social networking is a relatively new phenomenon. With various social networking sites and people being dishonest with their age the research may not be as beneficial as research that uses participants with and research methodology.

Dating is an important element in both Japanese and United States culture. Whether it is *deto* or *otsukiai* with the incorporation of *amae* in Japan or dating scripts in the United States, more research that examines gender roles and dating could illuminate the complexity of human interactions. A further suggestion is looking at dating through stages, including a variety of testimonials; research like this has been done before and should be replicated (Rothman, 1984). The quality of romantic relationships among emerging adults contributes to happiness (Demir, 2008). Knowing what makes people happy in relationships can or may facilitate more positive cross cultural interactions generally.

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