

外 国 語 要 旨

学位論文題目： “Romantic Love” of Young Adults in contemporary Japan—In the Case of Highly-Educated and Regular employees of a Metropolitan City.

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Purpose

Japanese society has been experiencing a stagnation in marriage and an extremely low fertility rate as a result over a number of years. Especially since the reported “1.57 shock” by MHLW (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare) in 1990, research on "romantic love" or sexual behaviors before marriage started to be recognized in several different ways. Many of these studies tended to focus on the concept of “marriage” which was based on the idea of modern family.

The trinity ideology of "sex - love - marriage" that has supported the concept of modern families has weakened in its influence, and each individual element is thought to strengthen independence, consequently giving people a variety of options in how they perceive intimate relationships or their most important life choices. However, is it really true? This study aims to consider how young adults who are highly-educated and work as regular employees in Japan view and understand “romantic love” by focusing on how they communicate.

Data

Qualitative research methodology was utilized in this study. The qualitative research data consisted of 5 groups of discussions and 12 semi-structured interviews. Each group was divided by gender, and the total number of participants in the group discussions was 22 people: 13 females and 9 males born between 1987 and 1990. Personal interviewees were chosen from each group.

Results

We discussed how communication is being carried out through the process of encounter to “go out” (“tsuki-au” in Japanese) to breaking up and why such communication occurs. This study shows how the agreement of “go out” that is required to build a romantic relationship for young adults occurs and also shows how they recognize the “go out” as a contractual relationship tied through ritualistic behavior and a “confession of love”. Moreover, accepting the “confession” means admitting to having a sexual relationship. In other words, it mutually grants each other the right and duty to cross-holdings and mutually monogamous sex. Female interviewees, especially, feel the need to justify their sexual behavior. Therefore, they often decide that they better not have sex before

“defining the relationship”. On the other hand, some male interviewees feel a heavy responsibility to go out exclusively with one person, so they try to control their sexual behavior and not have sex in order to avoid being forced to propose to “go out”, thereby defining the relationship to women. In this way, they communicate with each other in a risk-averse yet reasonable manner.

This study discusses how men and women change the meaning of “romantic love” by focusing on their respective contexts due to changes in circumstances and age. It shows that they rewrite the meaning of “romantic love” based on each individual’s affection for each other to a “romantic love” based on the institution of marriage, and they consider marriage and reproduction as a set, going hand in hand. Therefore, they think it is more reasonable to seek out a suitable person to raise “the family” and collaborate to live together, giving the highest education possible to their child as they have received from their parents, than seek out individually driven romance . These findings were suggested to be influenced by their social hierarchy. Due to their social background, they seek out “romantic love” in a form that follows traditional modern family image.