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'How to Sex'? The Contested Nature of Sexuality in Japan

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Abstract

There has been a tendency in English and other European-language reporting on Japan to stress the strangeness and otherness of Japanese values, particularly in regard to sexuality. Reports of Japanese immorality go back as far as the sixteenth century when the first Jesuit visitors to the country were appalled by open displays of cross-dressing and male-male sexual relations (Cooper 1965). After the 'opening' of Japan in the mid-nineteenth century, Victorian visitors were alternately intrigued and shocked by the government-regulated prostitution that took place in Japan's many pleasure quarters. Commentators have noted how the figure of the geisha, in particular (albeit geisha do not necessarily perform sexual roles), has been much fetishised across the last century by Western observers (Allison 2000).

Keywords

sexuality, japan, sex, contested, nature

Disciplines

Arts and Humanities | Law

Publication Details

McLelland, M. (2015). 'How to Sex'? The Contested Nature of Sexuality in Japan. In J. Babb (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Modern Japanese Studies* (pp. 194-209). United Kingdom: Sage Publications.

‘How to Sex’? The Contested Nature of Sexuality in Japan

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In James Baab (ed.) *The Sage Handbook of Modern Japanese Studies*, London: Sage, pp. 194-209

Introduction

There has been a tendency in English and other European-language reporting on Japan to stress the strangeness and otherness of Japanese values, particularly in regard to sexuality. Reports of Japanese immorality go back as far as the sixteenth century when the first Jesuit visitors to the country were appalled by open displays of cross-dressing and male-male sexual relations (Cooper 1965). After the ‘opening’ of Japan in the mid-nineteenth century, Victorian visitors were alternately intrigued and shocked by the government-regulated prostitution that took place in Japan’s many pleasure quarters. Commentators have noted how the figure of the geisha, in particular (albeit geisha do not necessarily perform sexual roles), has been much fetishised across the last century by Western observers (Allison 2000).

It is this long-standing genre of writing that Michel Foucault drew upon when, in his *History of Sexuality* volume 1, he identified Japan, alongside China, as civilisations that had supposedly developed ‘*ars erotica*,’ that is, arts of eroticism that prioritised pleasure over reproduction. Foucault notes that in this art ‘pleasure is not considered in relation to an absolute law of the permitted and the forbidden, nor by reference to a criterion of utility, but first and foremost in relation to itself’ (1990: 57-58). In his *History* Foucault famously contrasts the *ars erotica* supposedly prevalent in the East with the *scientia sexualis* characteristic of the Christian West, that is, a ‘science’ of sexuality that attempts to unlock the ‘truth’ of sex through a thoroughgoing analysis of its ‘nature’. In the Western tradition

sex supposedly reveals itself as ‘a domain susceptible to pathological processes, and hence one calling for therapeutic or normalising interventions’ (Foucault 1990: 68).

Although in later discussions Foucault was to step back from the starkness of this proposed division between Western and Eastern approaches to sexuality, in the case of Western reporting on Japan, it is still very much the case that the focus is on Japanese libidinal excess, perversity and strangeness. Whether the focus is on the supposed immorality of Japanese schoolgirls engaging in ‘compensated dating’ (*Newsweek* 1996; *Time* magazine 1999), or the all-round perversity and danger of Japan’s highly sexualised manga and anime culture (McGinty 2002), Japanese sexuality is framed as distinctly ‘other’ to a supposedly more rational, disciplined and ‘normal’ form of sexuality characteristic of the West. A classic exemplar of this genre is *Atlantic Monthly* journalist James Fallows’ report, tellingly entitled ‘The Japanese Are Different from You and Me,’ where he points to ‘the prominence of pornography in everyday life’, going on to make the absurd claim that ‘A director can shoot an act of sodomy or rape for a TV drama at the dinner hour with impunity’ (Fallows 1986: 38).

The problem with such reports, apart from the hyperbole, is that they homogenise ‘the Japanese’ and supposed ‘Japanese’ attitudes to sexuality which are in fact complex, diverse and highly divisive. Issues to do with sexuality play out in Japanese culture in complicated and unpredictable ways and are riven by competing truth claims and investments. As Huiyan Fu has pointed out, there exists a ‘blatant contradiction between formal and informal sectors’ regarding the ‘understanding of sexuality and gender in Japan’ (2011: 904). ‘Official’ discourses of sexuality in Japan are, and since the Meiji period, have always been rather moralistic. Indeed, despite sensationalistic claims in the English-language press, detailed depictions of real-person pornography are highly restricted in Japan. Due to strict adherence to censorship codes, there are no images that clearly depict genitalia in any of the print or video pornography available through licensed channels (albeit such images are easily accessed via the Internet). Although depictions of real-person sex acts are available in a wide range of outlets, the offending portions are always pixelated. In fact, until the early 1990s, the showing of public hair, even in non-sexual contexts, was also censored. It is true, however, that the censorship laws are interpreted very literally and narrowly, meaning that as long as no genitalia or public hair are visible, scenarios liable to cause offense such as violence or scatology are permissible in both real-person and fictional pornography.

Hence although Japanese popular culture can contain many representations of potentially offensive sexual acts and scenarios that would be more tightly controlled in some Western contexts, official discourses of sexuality as promoted by government agents are much more restrictive. Indeed since at least the middle of the Meiji period official bureaucratic pronouncements about sex have been characterised by what Foucault terms ‘governmentality,’ and remain so today. That is, in Japan official discourse about ‘sex’ has functioned in much the same manner as it has in Western contexts. In both imperial and postwar Japan sex has been ‘used as a point of anchorage for a whole variety of concerns: disciplining, governing and surveying a population; securing sovereignty of a territory; [and] maintaining the productivity of the nation through the regulation of reproduction and bodily economy’ (Rocha 2011: 329). In particular, as Fruhstuck points out, sexuality in Japan has been constructed ‘as a set of problems related to the necessity of protecting and defending girls and women from men, the populace from certain diseases, and the normal from the pathological’ (2003: 16).

Yet there has also been a great deal of resistance to these forms of governmentality at the popular level. The Japanese media, in particular, have supported a wide range of sexual subcultures and representations, despite the use of national obscenity laws and a range of local ordinances aimed at reigning in this sexual expressiveness. This chapter provides a historical overview of ‘official’ government paradigms for shaping and understanding sexuality alongside more popular discourses that have frequently parodied, contested and undermined these top-down directives.

Historical background

The organisation of sexuality during Japan’s period of imperial expansion dating from the beginning of the Meiji Period (1868-1912) and ending with defeat at the hands of the Allied powers in 1945 has been extensively studied by Japanese and western researchers (Driscoll 2010; Fruhstuck 2003; Yokota-Muarakami 1998). Prior to the reestablishment of imperial rule, Japan had been divided into a number of powerful fiefdoms under the control of the Tokugawa shoguns based in Edo (present-day Tokyo). During this time there were many regional differences in the organisation of marriage and family life as well as splits between city and rural attitudes to sex.

Folk religion, strong in agricultural areas, was very much preoccupied with fertility and peasant attitudes toward sexuality were quite distinct from the more austere Buddhist and Confucian ideals that guided the social elites. Oral histories collected by ethnologist Akamatsu Keisuke (2004) suggest that the poor rural farmers who comprised the vast majority of the population had relatively loose attitudes regarding premarital sex and monogamy. Up until the late Meiji period, the practice of *yobai* or ‘night crawling’ was a feature of village life in some regions where local bachelors would visit eligible young women in their homes at night, often with the knowledge and collusion of the parents. Marriage was often not contracted until pregnancy ensued. Sexual license seems to have been permissible at other times, too, including during the fertility festivals associated with the spring and autumn equinoxes when older women would initiate the young village men who had recently come of age into sexual intercourse. Akamatsu speculates that these practices may have dated back to the warring states period (mid-fifteenth through beginning of the seventeenth centuries) when young farmers were conscripted into the militia resulting in widespread loss of life and a shortage of menfolk.

Attitudes toward sexuality were also riven with distinctions according to feudal status groups, the ruling samurai, under neo-Confucian influence, being the most constrained. Townspeople, by contrast, supported a lively popular culture that portrayed less restrained attitudes to sexuality, including celebrations of eroticism in the pleasure quarters, on stage and in literature and art. So-called ‘pillow books’ and collections of ‘spring pictures’ offered instruction in sexual acts that included self-pleasure, and both male and female same-sex eroticism, as well as heterosexual acts. Despite the plurality of scenarios depicted in popular culture, sexuality at the time was overwhelmingly understood from a masculinist perspective, there being two contrasting ‘ways’ for a man to enjoy sexual pleasure: *nanshoku* (eroticism with men) and *joshoku* (eroticism with women). These two ways were not contradictory since the sexually sophisticated ‘*iro otoko*’ (amorous man) was able to express his desire both with cross-dressing actors associated with the kabuki theatre and female courtesans from the licensed pleasure quarters (McLelland 2005: 16-18).

However, the fact that this erotic culture was largely produced and sustained by the merchant class (officially the lowest rung on the Edo-period hierarchy) often led to conflict with the more austere culture of the samurai governors. It has been estimated that almost half of the woodblock prints produced in the seventeenth century featured erotica and from the 1720s on numerous injunctions came from the shogunate aimed at reining in erotic prints and other

‘dubious materials’ (Thompson 2012: 56). The frequency with which these edicts had to be reissued by the authorities suggests that they were never very successful in stamping out the erotic picture trade, in part because Japan’s feudal political structure meant that there was no single national authority that could enforce censorship across the entire country. The final set of anti-erotica edicts promulgated by the Tokugawa shogunate were part of the Tempō reforms of the 1840s, just prior to the 1868 Meiji Restoration. The Meiji regime established a much more comprehensive and rigorous censorship system that meant that all Edo-period erotic classics went out of print or were only allowed to be reissued in bowdlerised versions (Suzuki 2012). Indeed, as Anne Walthall has pointed out, Edo-period instruction on a range of sexual pleasures represents a ‘historical dead end’ in that from the Meiji-period on this knowledge was largely forgotten (2009: 8).

Japan’s opening to the West occurred at the same time as a ‘science’ of sexuality was being devised by European medical specialists who, building on longstanding religious prejudices encoded in law, pathologised non-marital and non-procreative sexual acts. Japan’s first generation of Western-trained doctors were exposed to these new ways of thinking about sexuality and brought these perspectives back to Japan. These included Mori Ōgai (1862-1922) whose 1909 novel *Vita Sexualis* was one of the first in the Japanese language to make the analysis of the ‘sexuality’ of the protagonist central to the narrative (Yokota-Murakami 1998: 119-21).

From the late nineteenth century on, a new emphasis on the regulation of the household became part of the state’s attempt to manage and improve the Japanese population. The developing field of sexology was key to this attempt as it provided ‘scientific’ justification for the pathologisation of non-procreative sexual acts such as masturbation, prostitution and same-sex sexuality that had not been singled out under the previous regime. From the end of the Meiji period, a range of press reports by a new class of sexual experts defined all expressions of non-marital sexuality as ‘harmful’, particularly those captured by the term ‘*hentai seiyoku*’ (perverse sexual desires).

These changes occurred at a time the Meiji state was embarking on a process of nation building which demolished the old feudal system and attempted to impose new, centralised governance of the population. The 1872 Family Registration Law (*kōseki ho*) was a key measure that sought to organize, rationalize and control all aspects of the population from early education through to marriage and child rearing by ensuring all people were registered

as belonging to a patriarchal family lineage. Part of this ongoing process was the establishment of the 1898 Civil Code which did away with rural and class-based ways of organising marriage and family life. This new value system aimed at disciplining and controlling the sexual expression of the masses was in part rolled out through the education system and by the 1930s had been largely successful. Ethnographer Emma Wiswell, who was studying rural Japanese life at the time, noted a marked gap between conservative village youth and the more liberal attitudes of their parents. She pointed out that 'Far from denouncing the youth of the time for their loose sexual morals, their elders found them positively conservative when compared with themselves when young' (cited in Smith 1983: 77).

However not all sexologists were on message about the deleterious effects of non-marital expressions of sexuality. One influential example was politician and biologist Yamamoto Senji (1889-1929) who was an early pioneer of sex education. Among his findings were that prostitutes were the majority of sexual partners among the student elite, including Tokyo University (Yamamoto 1994: 41). Another research finding revealed the near ubiquity of masturbation among university students, suggesting that it could not be such a deleterious practice if it was so common among the future elite. Yamamoto was among the first generation of Japanese thinkers to attempt to use the status of scientific inquiry to wrest control of discourse about sexuality away from the moralists who used obscenity legislation to restrict the circulation of sexual knowledge in the prewar period.

The prohibition of 'obscene' (*waisetsu*) publications dates back to the 1907 Criminal Code and according to Anne Allison represents the development in Japan of 'a notion of the public as a terrain that is monitored and administered by the state' (Allison 2000: 163). However the lack of a definition of what constitutes obscenity meant that any discussion about sex, particularly anything that contradicted official discourses and policies, could potentially cause trouble. As Sabine Fruhstuck points out, at this time, 'knowledge about sex . . . was considered dangerous to produce, possess, and spread' (2003: 5). Fruhstuck notes how the authorities tended to lump sexologists in with other problem thinkers such as communists and pacifists (2003: 13). Indeed, in the 1920s Yamamoto was often pulled from the stage by the police when giving lectures in the provinces for supposedly speaking positively of masturbation and abortion (2003: 14) and was eventually assassinated by a fanatic in 1929 in retribution for speaking out against escalating Japanese aggression in China. From this point

onward, as the power of the Japanese military over civilian affairs increased, it became more difficult to speak openly about sexual issues outside of officially sanctioned paradigms of marital reproduction.

The developing discourse of sexual abstinence for the unmarried was, however, highly gendered, as it was women in particular who were expected to remain chaste (Shibuya 2003). Ryang (2006) argues that the Japanese state, through institutionalizing the monogamous conjugal couple as reproductive unit while at the same time endorsing a wide range of extra-marital commercial sexual options for men, produced a bifurcation of love and sex—and by extension types of women. Marriage and reproduction were the exclusive provenance of ‘girls from good families’ whereas poor women or women from the colonies were available for recreational sex with men for a fee. Women from the middle and upper classes, often referred to as ‘daughters from good families’, were considered destined to lead lives as ‘good wives, wise mothers’ and their sex lives were expected to be contained completely in the context of marriage. This was reinforced by the legal code, with adultery on the part of wives always being classed as a criminal act whereas for men adultery was only illegal if it involved another man’s wife (Steiner 1950).

Men, however, on account of their supposedly stronger sex drive, were still able to avail themselves of a number of sexual outlets including licensed prostitution. Indeed, the results of a survey into the sex lives of 1000 male students published in 1923 revealed that over half had their first sexual experience with a prostitute (Fruhstuck 2003: 90). Other surveys into the first sexual experiences of men who came of age before or during the war indicate that it was common for them to receive sex instruction in the pleasure quarters (Dai ni ji shin seikatsu kenkyūkai 1982; Yamamoto 1997). The ‘hydraulic’ model of male sexuality was prevalent at the time, assuming that if men were prevented from expressing themselves sexually, blockages might ensue that would be deleterious to their capacity to perform as workers and soldiers. Hence, as the militarisation of Japanese society proceeded in the 1930s, poor Japanese women and women from Japan’s colonies known as ‘comfort women’, were either recruited or coerced into providing sexual services for the increasing numbers of young men drafted into the military (Suzuki 2001). Girls on the other hand, especially those from ‘good families’, had very restricted access to information about sexuality, leading to a number of misconceptions, including the idea that kissing led to pregnancy. Although there were attempts in the 1920s to translate material from European languages regarding birth control

and sex techniques, these were stymied by the authorities. For instance, a 1930 Japanese translation of Dutch gynaecologist Van de Velde's best selling sex guide, *Ideal Marriage*, despite appearing in an expurgated version, was immediately placed on the list of banned books (Akita 1994: 86).

Despite the fact that the authorities exercised a great deal of censorship over the popular media, emphasising in particular the sanctity of the patriarchal home (Driscoll 2010: 183), the press did evince considerable interest in a genre of reporting on 'unusual' sexual activities that came to be known as *ero-guro* (erotic grotesque). As Greg Pflugfelder points out, the widespread interest shown in so-called perverse sexuality thus gave 'the impression not only that "perversion" was ubiquitous but that the connotations of the term were not entirely negative' (1999: 287). Through this genre, Japanese readers were 'introduced to the new kinds of pleasures, passions, anxieties, and exhaustions elicited by modern capitalism in Japan's metropolitan sites' (Driscoll 2010: 153). But by the early 1930s, as Japanese society was increasingly placed on a war footing, this kind of reporting came under official ire and by 1933, partly due to government control of paper supplies, the *ero-guro*, and other 'frivolous' print genres had largely disappeared from Japan's newsstands to give way to more 'wholesome' fare. Media interest in sex was, however, to re-emerge rapidly in the months following Japan's defeat at the hands of the Allies in 1945.

The Occupation Period (1945-52)

One of the first edicts of the new Allied authorities was to dismantle the previous regime's censorship system which had placed strict limits on what could be spoken and written about, including sex. Historian of the Occupation era, John Dower, has described the resulting emergence of 'a commercial world dominated by sexually oriented entertainments and a veritable cascade of pulp literature' (1999: 148). The widespread popularity of 'pulp literature,' termed in Japanese *kasutori* (literally, the dregs), was but one example of postwar Japanese people's rejection of the previous regime's exhortations to frugality and sacrifice.

The Occupation authorities also embarked on ambitious social reform aimed at dismantling the 'household system' and improving the rights of women at school, at home and in the workplace. Choice of marriage partner, which in the previous period had usually been arranged by the family through a go-between, was now to be a purely individual choice, and

the popular press was full of reports on the implications of this new practice of ‘free love’ for the postwar ‘new couple’ (McLelland 2012a). The pursuit of romance, which during the long war years had been downplayed as selfish, suddenly became a means for young people to demonstrate their rejection of wartime austerity and their embrace of new ‘democratic’ lifestyles (Takahashi 1969: 273). Key to this new understanding of male-female equality was the notion that women, like men, also had sexual desires and sexual needs and that sexuality was something to be discussed and negotiated between partners. However, there was very little in print that offered sex advice.

Hence, when advertisements appeared in 1946 for orders of a proposed new and unexpurgated version of Van de Velde’s classic marital guide, there was overwhelming interest, resulting in an expensive full translation being published under the title *Kanzen naru kekkon* (Perfecting marriage) later that year. Six months later a rival shorter and much cheaper edited version aimed at the mass market entitled *Kanzen naru fūfu* (Perfect coupledness) appeared ensuring that the book became a best seller. Even for those who did not purchase the book, the main principles were discussed throughout the press (McLelland 2012a; Shimokawa 2007: 25).

In many ways Van de Velde’s text confirmed the attitudes toward sexuality that had been inculcated by the previous regime. He put forward the view that it was the male partner who experienced the stronger, more ‘active’ sex drive and that the male should be the one to take the initiative in the sex act. He also emphasized that the ultimate role and purpose of sex was procreation. His text thus refrained from discussing contraceptive measures and his long and detailed exposition of a variety of coital postures pointed out how each aided or detracted from the aim of achieving conception. As Dower notes, what did seem ‘startling’ to many readers at the time (1999: 164) was Van de Velde’s insistence that women, like men had sexual needs, that the sexual satisfaction (*sei manzoku*) of both partners was key to a successful marriage, and that couples should strive for simultaneous orgasm since it was at that point the physical and spiritual sides of matrimony were united.

This radical idea caught on and was much debated in the *kasutori* press and in a series of other sex guides aimed at tutoring couples on how best to achieve this elusive goal. The most influential of these was the magazine *Fūfu seikatsu* (Married life) published between 1949 and 1955 which, at its peak, sold between three-hundred and four-hundred thousand copies monthly. Ronald Dore, who was researching married life in Tokyo in the early 1950s, noted

that one of the couples he surveyed subscribed to the magazine. He also mentions that among his informants, '*fūfu seikatsu*—the word translated married life—is one commonly heard and has primarily sexual connotations' (1999: 178).

The editors of the magazine were able to steer clear of the censors and charges of obscenity due to restricting discussion exclusively to marital sexuality – but since there were no limits on who could purchase the title, it was able to reach a much broader audience. Van de Velde's *Perfecting Marriage* was the first sex manual to be published in Japan since the Edo period and his central tenet, that sex should be satisfying for both partners, was taken up and expanded upon endlessly in *Fūfu seikatsu* and similar magazines throughout the 1950s. However these magazines continued to support a masculinist bias since sexual knowledge was generally promoted as something that men should learn in order to improve their performance with their female partners. Although there were some editorials and reports offering a 'female perspective,' the number of women writing on sexual topics remained few.

Despite this new emphasis on the pleasures of sex discussed in the popular press, official pronouncements and directives from Japanese government agencies continued to stress the need for 'purity education' and reinforced the connection between sexuality and reproduction (Ryang 2006: 68). In this way the Japanese authorities carried over prewar sentiments into the postwar period, especially via the provision of sex education.

Sex education and the Japanese state

Since the end of the Second World War 'official' discourses of sex education promulgated by government agencies, continuing a trend established in the Meiji period, have emphasized 'purity' and 'chastity' in materials aimed at young people. What came to be termed 'purity education' was initially conceived by the Ministry for the Interior as a response to the massive expansion in Japan's sex industry following Japan's defeat and occupation by Allied troops (Tashiro 2000). Japan had always had, and maintained until 1958, specifically designated areas where sex work was legal and subject to government monitoring. What concerned the postwar authorities was the sudden increase in unregulated 'private prostitutes' who blurred the previously clear distinction between the 'professional' women of the brothel world and 'women in general'. Purity education was essentially conceived as a means of promoting 'wholesome thought' and providing guidance on 'correct relations between men

and women' and establishing 'sexual virtue'. Establishing 'correct' attitudes toward sexuality, in particular through linking sexuality to reproduction in the context of the monogamous nuclear family, was clearly articulated by architects of the purity education policy as a key 'nation building' initiative as a response to the social instability of the early postwar years (Tashiro 2001: 87).

From 1947 onward, the provision of purity education became an official policy of the Department of Education. This was largely in response to the imposition by the Allied administration of co-education in Japan's middle and high schools and national universities. The old Confucian maxim that 'boys and girls should not sit together after age seven' was, in the new 'democratic' environment of the Occupation period, deemed 'feudal' by the Allies and the introduction of co-education required the development of a whole new etiquette of male-female relations in classrooms and on campuses across Japan.

This policy was elaborated on in a report released by the Education Ministry in 1949 entitled *Junketsu kyōiku kihon yōkō* (Basic points concerning purity education). As well as promoting 'correct, scientific knowledge about sex', the report also emphasized the need for developing a 'cheerful environment' that encouraged young people to engage in 'healthy recreations' such as sports, religious activities and cultural pursuits (Tashiro 2001: 87). In this and subsequent directives from the ministry, emphasis has been placed on the role a 'correct' or 'proper' sex life plays in the context of marriage as a means of producing children. 'Uncontrolled sex' outside of marriage was represented as both physically and morally dangerous, leading to the potential for disease and estrangement from family and society. Advice has tended to stress the role of parents, particularly mothers, in instilling a 'correct' attitude toward sex, one that established a firm connection between love, monogamy and child rearing. As Sonia Ryang notes, these materials make it clear that moral standards pertaining to sex are 'not to be set randomly by individual men and women, but by the state' (2006: 68).

However, despite the official rhetoric that speaks of 'correct' relationships between the sexes, as Sabine Fruhstuck has pointed out, purity education has always been 'primarily, if not explicitly, directed at girls' (2003: 180). Thus postwar developments in sex education have tended to reinforce the double standard pertaining to male and female sexuality characteristic of the prewar period. The emphasis on safeguarding the sexuality of young girls from corruption was accentuated during the New Life Movement (Shin Seikatsu Undō) of the late

1940s and 1950s. This movement was ‘a set of loosely connected initiatives of government ministries and women’s organizations’ aimed at rationalizing Japanese households and improving family life (Gordon 1997: 246). This discourse was highly gendered, focussing mainly on ‘proper roles for women’. As Gordon notes, ‘gender issues such as sex roles, reproduction and the definition of the “housewife” were never far from the center’ of these debates (1997: 247). This reflects the shift from the prewar model of the patriarchal household to a postwar model that emphasised the nuclear family with the wife/mother as household manager. However, the particular emphasis on sexual restraint *for women*, is a clear continuation of prewar trends.

The discourse of ‘purity education’ carried on until 1965 when the Education Ministry began to replace this ideologically laden term with more descriptive labels such as ‘guidance in sexual matters’ or simply ‘sex education’. However the explicit linkage between sex, marriage and procreation has been maintained in materials developed for schools with issues such as self-pleasure, contraception and alternative sexualities receiving little attention. As Fu notes, even today the sex education curriculum of Japanese schools is primarily geared toward ‘sound and healthy societal maintenance’ via the management of reproduction within the context of the conventional nuclear family (Fu 2011: 903).

Directives from the Education Ministry have been concerned with the need for instilling proper ‘etiquette’ between the sexes through the establishment of healthy environments and wholesome activities on school campuses. Since sex was designated as part of the ‘world of adults’ emphasis has been placed on maintaining the ‘natural pureness’ of young people and avoiding circumstances that might result in precocious interest in sexual matters (Castro-Vasquez 2007: 34). Hence, there has never been an explicit *sex* education curriculum provided by the ministry nor, until 1992, were there specially designated sex education classes – teachers were expected to follow the general guidelines provided by the ministry and address relevant aspects of sexuality in the context of other classes such as biology, the social sciences and health and fitness.

The eventual introduction of classes specifically branded as ‘sex education’ in 1992 was the result of a number of factors including an increase in teen-age pregnancy, anxieties about HIV infection and concern over declining fertility rates. The latter point reinforces Fu’s argument that ‘the state production of sex education policy has consistently focused on the control of both the quantity and the quality of the Japanese population’ (2011: 906). This can

be seen in the fact that even in the more detailed post-1992 sex education curriculum, “‘unproductive’ individual-oriented functions of sex such as homosexuality and pleasure are either denied or silenced’ (2011: 907).

However, these ‘top down’ directives aimed at promoting the ‘healthy development’ of youth by government ministers and teams of bureaucrats should not be overestimated. As Fu notes in relation to sexuality education, ‘[t]here are also always competing truth claims and practices, which challenge the statements of the ruling elite’ (Fu 2011: 908) and a range of other voices have been competing to change the course of sex education in Japan. These include representatives of sexual minority and feminist NPO (non-profit organisations) concerned with issues of women’s reproductive health, sex work and HIV (Hyōdō 2008).

One of the most long-lived of these NPOs is the Japanese Association for Sex Education (JASE), first founded in 1972, which has produced more holistic information about sexuality in its materials that are made available to teachers. JASE has also played an important role in producing empirical research into actual sexual behaviours, conducting six-yearly surveys of the sexual behaviours and attitudes of high-school and tertiary students since 1974. The most recent edition is the sixth survey released in 2007 as the *Wakamomo no sei hakusho* (White paper on young people’s sexuality; Nihon Seikyōiku Kyōkai 2007). JASE has pointed to a number of factors when arguing that Japan’s sex-education policies need to be overhauled. These include the increasingly young age at which Japanese children are entering puberty and teens are beginning to engage in sexual activity. Increased sexual activity is also resulting in a gradual rise in the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases and in the teen-age abortion rate. Importantly these surveys also indicate that a majority of young people get their information about sex from peers and the media, not from parents or school, suggesting that the official emphasis on abstinence and the reduction of sex to reproduction has had little impact on young people’s attitudes and behaviours.

Sex and the media in Japan

As noted above, the relaxation of censorship regulations pertaining to sexual matters during the Occupation period enabled an entire print industry aimed at sex instruction to flourish. Despite the sexually graphic detail that many of these instructions contained, they were largely protected from police intervention because they discussed marital sexuality under a

‘scientific’ or at least medical paradigm. The Japanese government was, however, quite prepared to use obscenity legislation to move against representations of non-marital sexuality as can be seen in the guilty verdict in the 1951 obscenity trial launched against the translator and publisher of D H Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*. The defence lawyers pointed to the volume of graphic sexual descriptions from the popular press to prove that such sex talk was now consistent with community values. This did not persuade the prosecution, however, who argued that it was the *adulterous* nature of the sex acts described that rendered them obscene. As Cather notes, ‘the prosecution was attempting to stop adultery in reality via a ban in representation’ (2004: 32) and this is further evidence of how on an official level at least prewar sensitivities were carried over into the postwar period.

However, discussion of another sexual topic that had been banned during the wartime regime -- contraception -- was enabled in the postwar period by a number of factors. Firstly, the repatriation to Japan of over five million Japanese nationals who had been fighting overseas or living and working in Japan’s colonies led to economic and social distress as there was simply insufficient food and shelter, especially in the major cities that had been ravaged by bombing. Any new increase in the population therefore needed to be carefully managed. With this in mind, an economic distress clause was included in the 1948 Eugenic Protection Act, which permitted abortion under certain circumstances. Alongside loosening restrictions on abortion, family planning was also promoted as a means to securing a more affluent lifestyle.

In 1955 an international family planning conference was held in Tokyo and reports in the media about the event ensured that *kazoku keikaku* (family planning) became a household term, women’s magazines in particular devoting considerable space to the issue. It was about this time that condom and prophylactic jelly manufacturer Sanshii came up with the popular catch-phrase ‘*Sukunaku unde yutakana kurashi: ichi hime ni tarō san sanshii*’ which can be translated ‘Giving birth less [leads to] an affluent lifestyle: one -- a girl, two -- a boy, three -- *sanshii* [contraceptives]’, basically recommending that after a couple had produced the postwar standard of two children it was time to stop (Nakagawa 2001; Ishikawa 1977: 114). An advertisement for Sanshii jelly in the February 1955 edition of popular women’s magazine *Shufu no tomo* (Housewife’s friend) shows a boy and a girl – the older girl combing the younger boy’s hair (it was thought best to have a girl first so that she could help care for younger siblings) testifying to the normalcy contraceptive advice had attained by this stage.

However, despite the fact that from the early postwar period family planning was endorsed by the government and popularised via the media, contraceptive choice remained limited. The Japan Medical Association prevented the contraceptive pill from being legalised until 1999, officially due to anxieties about its long-term side effects, although the Association was criticised by some feminist groups for also trying to protect the lucrative medical trade in abortion.

The idea that sexuality was something that needed to be properly ‘managed’ was of course not new. *Fūfu seikatsu* had established a strong connection between sexuality, contraception and pleasure as part of its envisioning of sexuality as an aspect of relationship building for the postwar ‘new couple’. This trend, however, accelerated during the 1960s and was spurred on by the success of a new marital sex guide: *Sei seikatsu no chie* (Sex-life wisdom) published in 1960 by medical professor Sha Kokuken. Whereas previous sex guides had simply described how to perform sexual acts, Sha’s book used artfully posed wooden dolls to demonstrate sexual positions (Ishikawa 1977: 114). Since the book was ostensibly about marital sexuality, and contained detailed explanations on how conception was achieved, it was able to bypass the censors despite its graphic discussion of sexual acts.

In the mid 1960s a number of factors impacted upon the scale and discussion of sex in the Japanese media. From 1964 on the volume of pornographic films made in Japan shot up considerably. Known as ‘pink films’, these were swiftly made, low budget items produced by a growing number of small-scale ‘eroduction’ companies who screened their wares at businessmen’s retreats and at cinemas in red-light districts. Although these early 1960s efforts were of low quality, from the early 1970s some mainstream film companies who were battling with falling revenues due to the impact of television on cinema audiences moved into eroduction. One company in particular, Nikkatsu, Japan’s oldest surviving studio, developed a highly successful genre known as ‘*roman poruno*’ (romantic porn) which had better production values and stronger story lines.

Japan’s strict censorship laws prohibiting the showing of the sex organs and even pubic hair forced the eroduction directors to be creative in their approach to the filming of the sex scenes, creating more interesting stories and compelling characters than was usual for pornographic movies. Thus, although these movies were much softer than those being developed in Europe or the US at the same time, the eroduction companies were successful in bringing sex to the big screen in a new way in Japan. Many of these titles, including the one

largely credited with launching the genre – the 1971 *Danchizuma hirusagari no jōji* (Apartment wife: Affair in the afternoon) – featured sexually unfulfilled women in search of greater eroticism and stimulation. Although the large majority of these movies were aimed at a heterosexual audience, a few were made with homoerotic themes. The *roman poruno* genre was thus another popular media format that directly contravened official sex-education dictums which associated sexuality with marriage, monogamy and reproduction. *Roman poruno* remained a popular Japanese film genre until the early 1980s when the development of the VCR enabled an explosion in low-budget pornography aimed at both straight and gay audiences for the home market.

From the mid 1960s, due in large part to globalising discourses of sexual liberation, the mass media too, began to discuss sexual issues with greater freedom. *Heibon panchi*, a popular weekly magazine for men dedicated to ‘fashion, cars and sex’, was first published in 1964 (Shimokawa 2007: 165) and in 1965 the *11 pm* show brought sexual discussion onto late night television. During the 1960s the tabloid press expanded considerably and sex and scandal was a popular way to fill its pages. These sex scandals, often involving bureaucrats and the misuse of public funds, drew attention to the growing discrepancy between ‘official’ discourses of sexuality and actual practice.

One important event in the development of sex instruction literature was the publication in 1971 of the book *How to Sex* (its title was in English) by former obstetrician Narabayashi Yasushi. This was the first book in Japan to use actual couples to demonstrate positions. Widely reported on in the press, the book became a best seller and created an entire ‘how to sex’ genre in tabloid (particularly sports) newspapers and magazines that henceforth included a column of sex instruction along with raunchy line drawings. These male-oriented publications promoted the assumption characteristic of most postwar writing on sex that sexual knowledge was something that men should learn about in order to pleasure women. However the early 70s also saw the development of vibrant feminist and lesbian movements in Japan that channelled new ideas about the difference and autonomy of female sexuality that were being developed in Europe and the US at that time.

A great deal of early feminist literature on women’s sexuality was channelled into Japan via translation projects, including a chapter on the myth of the vaginal orgasm, which appeared in the 1971 collection *Onna kara onna tachi e* (From women to women). Other influential texts were the 1973 Japanese translation of the US women’s sexual health book entitled *Our*

Bodies Ourselves which focused on women's lived experience of sexuality and the 1976 *Hite Report on Female Sexuality*, important for explaining the role of the clitoris and debunking the Freudian notion of the vaginal orgasm (Ishikawa 1978: 179-80). Throughout the 70s, there were also many locally produced and distributed zines associated with various women's liberation groups that addressed issues of sexuality from women's perspectives. Over the following decades a vibrant tradition of feminist scholarship has been established in Japan with many prominent authors launching searing critiques of the continuing patriarchal bias in Japanese society, particularly regarding the double standard in attitudes toward male and female sexuality. Many of these materials were made available in public libraries or in women's welfare centres funded by local councils. However the distribution of feminist material that seems to conservative commentators to be 'radical' and 'inappropriate' has recently led to a backlash in some areas, with local women's centres being defunded or merged with broader community focussed initiatives (Kano 2011; Women's Asia 21 2006).

By the late 1960s the sexualisation of mainstream media outlets saw even media directed at young people beginning to deal with sexuality in a new, less restrained manner. One outlet in particular, the massively popular boys' manga magazine *Shōnen janpu* (Boys' jump) pushed the envelope with its serialised comic story, *Harenchi gakuen* (School of shame), about the sexual antics and frustrations of life at a co-educational high school which began in 1968. Although very popular with young male readers, this series, which alluded to such things as the male teaching staff's sexual obsession with female students, as well as sexual tensions between students themselves, caused considerable outrage among teachers and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) throughout Japan (Shimokawa 2007: 201).

The sexualisation of media directed at young people, particularly boys, continued apace throughout the 1970s and 1980s. One genre, in particular, *rori-kon* or 'Lolita complex' manga (highly sexualised representations of school-age girls) was often singled out by parents as a bad influence on young people's sexual values. By the end of the 70s, though, girls' manga, too, had also become increasingly sexualised. These included a genre dedicated to 'Boys Love' (BL for short) that detailed male-male love stories, containing graphic representations of the kinds of 'unproductive' sexual acts deemed inappropriate by the authorities. Indeed such was the concern over the volume of BL materials available in public libraries that in 2007 there were unsuccessful attempts in Osaka prefecture and elsewhere to have BL titles designated 'harmful to youth' and removed from the shelves (McLelland 2014; Ueno 2009). Hence, the sexualisation of youth media, including some outlets directed at girls

and young women, stands in stark contrast to official pronouncements on sexuality, particularly those channelled through the school system, which present ‘correct’ attitudes toward sexuality solely in a reproductive marital framework.

The sexualisation of youth media has been controversial in Japan and overseas. One of the most sustained calls for reform of manga content followed on from the tragic murder of four infant girls between 1988 and 1989 by serial killer Miyazaki Tsutomu. An investigation of Miyazaki’s background and lifestyle revealed that he was an isolated youth who had been an avid collector of ‘Lolita’-style manga and animation, as well as adult pornography. Following on from the Miyazaki scare, a coalition of PTA committees, feminist groups and women’s organizations lobbied local and national politicians for increased surveillance and regulation of violent and sexualised imagery in manga and animation, particularly those marketed to young people. These groups also lobbied publishers, sending letters of complaint about manga that they considered particularly harmful. One result of this increased vigilance was a spike in 1990 in the number of manga designated ‘harmful to youth’.

The industry response to this popular movement calling for increased vigilance concerning manga content was to set up or reinforce existing systems of self monitoring. Rather than tone down the level of fantasy sex and violence in all manga, the major publishers began to relabel manga that might be considered harmful to youth as ‘adult manga.’ These manga were clearly labelled on the dust jacket as ‘adults only’ and were often sold shrink-wrapped to stop young people reading them in store. Some stores set up adult manga corners to better supervise readers.

As noted earlier, Japan’s obscenity legislation has been applied very specifically to rule out representations of genitalia and pubic hair but overall sexual scenarios that can include violence, group sex and even rape are not captured by the legislation, so long as the offending organs are blurred or blanked out and an appropriate age rating is published on the cover. This has caused considerable consternation overseas and lies behind the often hyperbolic denunciation of Japanese popular culture in the English-language press discussed in the introduction to this chapter. Of growing concern to some international agencies are sexual and violent representations of characters who are or may ‘appear to be’ underage. The manga aesthetic tends to exaggerate youthful appearance and many representations do seem to be of very young or childlike characters. This means many Japanese manga and anime that deal in sexual themes fall foul of ‘child-abuse publications’ legislation in some Western countries

including the US, Canada, the UK and Australia, which have all seen successful prosecutions for possession of such material in recent years (McLelland 2012b). In Japan, however, although the production and distribution of child pornography was outlawed in 1999, ‘simple possession’ of these materials remains a grey area, largely to do with ambiguity about what, exactly, constitutes ‘child pornography’ (Nagaoka 2009). Japan, for instance, supports a large ‘junior idol’ industry consisting of print and digital reproductions of Japanese and Caucasian child models in skimpy swimsuits in poses that could be deemed erotic. This material is not covered by obscenity legislation since there are no visible genitalia. Also, unlike many Western nations, Japan does not include in its definition of child pornography purely fictional representations of child sex, meaning that there are no restrictions on manga or anime depictions of under-age sexual activity so long as the no visible genitalia rule is followed by the creators.

Despite lobbying by international agencies such as UNICEF (2010), there has been little movement on a national level to address these concerns (McLelland 2011). However, in 2010 the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, under the leadership of conservative governor Ishihara Shintarō, used a local regulation known as the *Seishōnen Hogo Ikusei Jōrei* (Regulation for the Protection and Education of Young People) to introduce further restrictions on sexualised depictions in manga and increase police powers of censorship and control over their distribution (McLelland 2014; McLelland 2011; *Japan Times* 2010; Nogami et al. 2010). These restrictions technically only apply in the Tokyo area but given that this is where most manga are produced and where the main distributors and markets are based, the new regulations are widely expected to have a chill effect on the level of sex represented. However in an era of convergent media where young people have unlimited access to the internet via their mobile phones, it is unlikely that these measures will be effective in restricting their access to sexual content.

Sexual minorities and the media

To speak of ‘sexual minorities’ in the early postwar years would be to read back into history a way of thinking about sexual identity and practice that was not clearly intelligible at the time. This does not mean that there was no consensus about what constituted ‘normal’ versus ‘abnormal’ sexual interests, but rather that an interest in the abnormal was not necessarily considered to be constitutive of a specific sexual identity. In the early postwar period in

particular the Japanese press was much more open to discussions of ‘abnormal’ sexualities than were any Anglophone media.

On the whole Japanese society has not deployed legal restrictions to control sexual activities considered outside the norm, but rather relied on social pressure to enforce conformity. Even during the militarist period when homosexual men were subject to imprisonment and death under the Nazi regime as well as to a host of legal restrictions and impediments among the Allied nations, Japan never criminalized same-sex sexual behaviours. In fact, evidence from the early postwar period suggests that intergenerational same-sex relationships between senior military officials and their much younger orderlies were a visible and tolerated aspect of military life in some circles (McLelland 2005: 45-47). The largely *moral* repugnance that has often framed Western responses to male homosexuality has not been so apparent in Japan. Indeed, as discussed earlier, the most visible representations of male-male sex and romance outside of the gay press in Japan has, since the early 1970s, appeared in a genre of girls’ comics known collectively as ‘Boys Love’, a development unthinkable in the Western context (McLelland and Welker 2014).

In the US context, until the 1957 Roth decision which limited the kinds of material that could be censored on account of their purported obscenity, the very topic of homosexuality was arguable obscene, thus making it hard to discuss the topic openly. However depictions of same-sex sexualities in the Japanese press have been subject to the same obscenity codes governing heterosexual acts. This means that even at the height of the Cold War period in the 1950s when discussion of male homosexuality in particular was highly restricted in the US, issues to do with same-sex sexuality were widely discussed in the Japanese media, especially in relation to the entertainment world.

This does not mean however, that social elites were unconcerned with the proliferation of narratives and depictions of same-sex sexuality that were commonplace during the US Occupation. As we have seen above, official sexual discourse in the late 1940s was very much concerned with situating ‘healthy’, ‘proper’ and ‘correct’ sexuality in the context of a monogamous heterosexual marriage. The reason that social elites felt that they had to invest so much in ‘purity education’ was partly a response to the enthusiasm in the popular press for a range of sexual activities and escapades which clearly fell outside of ‘normal’ paradigms.

In the early postwar years, non-normative sexual interests were brought together under the rubric *ryōki* or ‘curiosity hunting’. One of the main protagonists who emerged in the sex

press of the Occupation years was the *ryōki shumi otoko* or ‘man with curiosity hunting interests’ who, rather than staying at home with his wife and engaging in nation-building acts of procreation, was out and about on the streets of Tokyo and other large cities looking for unusual sexual escapades. These sometimes included sex with the growing number of male cross-dressing prostitutes who were known to congregate in specific parts of the city. Reports in the popular press about these cross-dressers served to advertise not only their whereabouts but also their preferred sexual practices and ensure that anyone with an interest could track them down (McLelland 2012a: 156-65).

Although an interest in male prostitution clearly ran contrary to government imperatives to develop sexual virtue, many press reports about the phenomenon were more intrigued than repulsed. Indeed, interest in *ryōki* pursuits was widespread across the media and one magazine first published in 1946, entitled *Ryōki*, self-consciously rejected the nation building rhetoric of government officials when it announced in its editorials that the contents were aimed at those ‘exhausted by the task of reconstructing the nation’. It is not surprising then that in January 1947, for the first time in the postwar era, the police used Japan’s obscenity legislation to censure the magazine’s editor and publisher for disseminating obscene materials. However this tactic actually backfired since the notoriety of the case, discussed widely in the mainstream press, simply increased the cachet of the term *ryōki* with readers and led to the emergence of new titles such as *Ōru ryōki* (All curiosity hunting) which carried on the tradition of reporting on the strange and unusual sexual escapades to be found in Japan’s cities.

Although the *ryōki* genre had mostly run its course by 1949 when growing social stability finally meant that the police were able to rein in the largely uncensored sex press of the early Occupation period, from 1950 onwards a new genre of magazines emerged, focusing on ‘perverse sexuality’ (*hentai seiyoku*). Commonly referred to as *hentai* (perverse) magazines, these publications were quite different from those such as *Ryōki* which had announced in its editorials that it had ‘no intention whatsoever to enlighten’ its readers. On the contrary the *hentai* magazines were edited by intellectuals who deliberately courted a readership of ‘cultured persons’ and included submissions from a wide range of ‘experts’ including sexologists, medical doctors and literary figures (McLelland 2005: 69). Less encumbered by censorship than their wartime peers had been, this new generation of sex experts set themselves up as an alternative source of sexual knowledge and often challenged restrictive government policies and discourses head-on in their publications. These liberal, left-leaning

intellectuals provided an important counterbalance to official ‘purity’ discourses and disseminated their views via a variety of small-scale coterie magazines as well as in the mainstream media.

These ‘sexperts’ included people such as Takahashi Tetsu, a psychology graduate and Freudian counselor, whose 1953 book *Arusu Amatoria* (Amorous arts) was a best-selling sex guide that challenged Van de Velde’s emphasis on ‘positions’ as the key to successful sex, stressing instead the primacy of a couple’s feelings. Although his sex guide was very much about the marital relationship, Takahashi’s two periodicals launched in 1950, *Amatoria* and *Ningen tankyū* (Human investigation) did much to expand the parameters of acceptable sexual expression. In contrast to clinical psychologists in Japan and the increasingly normative ends to which Freudian psychology was being put by therapists in Cold War America, Takahashi was a liberal interpreter of Freud who felt that people should be helped to come to terms with their ‘abnormal’ desires rather than be punished for them. Hence, the focus of his magazines and other titles in the genre was very much on ‘paraphilias’: that is, precisely those sexual acts and interests which ran contrary to the Japanese state’s formulation of ‘correct’ sexuality.

Despite his scientific credentials, Takahashi did, however, run afoul of the censors. In 1956 he was prosecuted by the police for publishing explicit ‘sexual experience’ narratives solicited from readers in his members’ only magazine *Seishin repōto* (Life and mind report). A complete collection of reports from the magazine was later published in a two volume set in 1987 and it is easy to see why the authorities at the time might have been wary of the publication. The reminiscences included a large number of accounts that contradicted the official ‘purity’ narratives of the time, including many relating to adultery as well as a range of paraphilias including group sex and bestiality. There were also a large number of accounts recalling the sexual abuse perpetrated by Japanese soldiers during the second world war, including accounts of the ‘comfort stations’ set up to service the troops (Yamamoto 1997). The comfort women issue had not been revealed in the media at the time and it is easy to see why the authorities would have been interested in restricting the circulation of these narratives.

Takahashi rejected the charge of obscenity, arguing that he published these accounts in order to analyse them using Freudian insights but the police countered that the ‘raw nature’ of the reminiscences which went into graphic detail about sexual acts committed rendered them

prurient. Takahashi defended the case, arguing that the ‘scientific’ nature of the members-only publication meant that the depiction of sex in the magazine could not be considered obscene. However the court disagreed and he lost the original case in a verdict handed down in 1963 as well as an appeal to the High court handed down in 1970, just months before his death (Saitō 1996).

Takahashi was no doubt targeted by the police because of his relatively high profile in the mainstream media and the possibility that material from his members magazine, might eventually find its way into the wider public sphere. However, the early 50s saw a wide range of other members’ clubs founded for the ‘study’ of sexuality, particularly non-normative sexualities, many of which produced their own members-only magazines that were not intercepted by the police. Some of these clubs emerged out of readers’ requests to the editors of so-called ‘*hentai*’ magazines such as *Fūzoku kagaku* (Sex-customs science) and *Fūzoku zōshi* (Sex-customs storybook) to set up regular meetings for readers who wanted to take their study of perverse sexuality further. These included the FKK club that published the magazine *Rashin* (mid 50s) and the Long Yang club founded by prolific author on male homosexuality, Kabiya Kazuhiko, which published the members’ journal *MAN* between 1954 and 1957. With names that served to obscure or only subtly allude to their true interests, others clubs included the Adonisu kai or Adonis club founded in 1952 which produced a magazine dedicated to the study of male-male love and the Engeki kenkyūkai or ‘Theatrical society’ founded in 1955 whose members’ magazine was dedicated to studying cross-dressing in the theatre and beyond (mostly beyond). These mimeographed magazines often did not contain obligatory information concerning publication date, and the names and addresses of the printer and editor required under Japanese publishing law and so were technically illegal. These privately-circulated publications, examples of which became available on and off from 1952 until their demise in the late 1960s, largely escaped police attention even though they contained the most explicit descriptions of male same-sex activities (including full frontal nudity). Although their circulation was only ever in the hundreds, some of this early pro-homosexual writing was later republished in the 1970s commercial gay press.

The materials discussed above were largely subcultural and not always easy to obtain, especially by readers outside major cities. Information about sexual minorities that circulated in mainstream media outlets was of a different kind altogether. Until the 1970s the majority of reporting on ‘abnormal’ sexual identities took place in the context of articles on deviant identities in the entertainment world. However, unlike the deeply pathologising treatment that

such reports received in Western outlets, the tone in Japan was rather more benign. From the mid 1950s reports about a new style of male homosexual, the *gei bōi* (gay boy), began to circulate in tabloid journals. It was reported that early postwar *danshoku kissaten* (male-eroticism coffee shops) were being transformed into trendy nightspots where *gei bōi* hosts entertained a mainly heterosexual clientele, including many women. These trendy new *gei bā* (gay bars) were contrasted with the *homo bā* (homo bars) frequented by actual homosexuals that were smaller and usually off limits to drop-in guests. Other entertainment-oriented identities that were often discussed in the media included the *burū bōi* (blue boy), a male-to-female transgender category popular in the early 60s following on from a successful Japan tour by French transsexual cabaret, Carrousel de Paris, and, also in the 60s, the female-to-male transgender identity *dansō no reijin* (male-dressing beauties) who played roles similar to the *gei bōi*, entertaining a primarily heterosexual clientele in designated clubs and cabarets.

However, media reports seemed confused as to whether these cross-dressing tendencies were symptomatic of abnormal sexual tendencies or simply an expression of artistic license. This confusion was abetted by the strong division made in Japanese society between the *gei no kai* (world of entertainment) and the real world of everyday life, family and business. It was not entirely apparent whether the *gei bōi* (gay boy) was an example of abnormal sexuality or was simply one kind of *geinōjin* (entertainer) since the Japanese term *gei* meaning entertainment is homophonous with the English loanword ‘gay’ meaning homosexual. Indeed both the term *gei* and *gei bōi* continued to be used in confusing ways and almost entirely in relation to the entertainment world by the mainstream media until the 1990s. At this time, due in part to the globalizing tendency of the internet, the growing number of internationally aligned ‘lesbian and gay’ organizations and a ‘gay boom’ that saw minority sexual identities being discussed outside of an entertainment paradigm in the mainstream press for the first time, *gei* began to be recognized as a sexual identity category both by the media and increasingly by ‘*gei*’ men themselves (McLelland 2005: 103-106).

It was due to the widespread confusion over the meaning of the term *gei* that local subcultures of same-sex desiring men avoided the term, settling by the mid 1950s on the term *homo* as a self descriptor. However it was not until 1970 that a commercial magazine with national distribution directly targeting ‘*homo*’ men was established. The magazine’s editor, Itō Bungaku, had inherited the family’s publishing firm, Dai ni shobō, and their catalogue already held several sex-related publications. Itō’s interest in developing a commercial magazine for homosexual men dates back to 1965 when he received a manuscript on

masturbation practices by a male writer on sexual customs, Akiyama Masami. Thinking back to the sex-instruction he received when a youth which spoke of masturbation as harmful, he thought that the time had come for a book emphasizing the pleasure and health benefits to be derived from masturbation. Accordingly, Dai ni shobō released the book in 1966 under the title *Hitori bottchi no sei seikatsu* (A solitary sex life).

The book was an immediate success and continued to sell well over the next decade. Itō received numerous letters relating to the book, including letters from men who confessed that they found the illustrations of naked men sexually arousing and so he began to wonder if there was a market for a book concerning male homosexuality. However, he decided that as a first venture it would be better to publish a book on lesbianism since this would appeal to a crossover market of heterosexual men as well as women with an interest in other women. Accordingly, he commissioned Akiyama to write a book entitled *Resubian tekunikku* (Lesbian technique). Contrary to appearance, the book actually offers a literary, social and historical survey of lesbianism and is not particularly explicit on details, nevertheless it proved popular.

Heartened by the success of *Lesbian Technique*, Itō thought the time was right for a book on male homosexuality, also written by Akiyama, which he released in 1968 under the title *Homo Technique*. Akiyama's books raised the public profile of homosexuality and led to a number of homosexual men contacting Itō requesting that he publish more similar titles. It was due to this demand that Itō conceived of *Barazoku* (the rose clan), the first commercial magazine targeting same-sex identified men. *Barazoku* was an important innovation since due to Itō's established connections with the book world he was able to ensure national distribution for the title, thus reaching a wider audience than any of the *hentai* magazines. Although Itō himself was heterosexual, he assembled a key team of same-sex desiring men to work as contributing and commissioning editors, thus ensuring that the magazine's focus appealed to its target community. Running to 70 pages or so and originally published bi-monthly, *Barazoku* was not particularly sexually explicit, although it did include nude male photography and erotic short stories. From 1972 many of these short stories and others reprinted from the earlier *hentai* magazine genre were gathered together and published by Dai ni shobō in a 'homo poruno' (gay porn) series helping establish same-sex desiring men as a specific niche market. These texts were however still rather vague on the specifics of sex instruction. It was not until 1974 that Minami Teishirō, one of the original editors on *Barazoku*, started his own commercial magazine, *Adon*, a much more hard core venture than

Barazoku, which directly addressed issues of male-male *sexuality*, including sexually graphic photos as well as articles on sexual practices and sexual problems and diseases. This was followed in 1977 by the most graphic and detailed magazine of all, *Za gei* (The gay) published by high-profile sex radical Tōgō Ken. Unlike the editors of other magazines who were careful to stay within the limits of Japan's obscenity laws, Tōgō pushed the barriers in both photography and prose and was frequently in trouble with the police (Tōgō 2002).

Actual sales figures for these and other, later, magazines is difficult to come by but editors involved in the industry informed me that even at its peak in the mid-1990s, *Barazoku* was only ever selling about 40,000 copies. The influence of these magazines, not only on providing sex instruction, but in helping develop what today can be described as a gay identity in Japan was extensive. Copies of the magazines have always been available to read in Japan's many gay bars, and old copies are constantly on sale throughout Japan's extensive networks of second-hand book stores. Indeed, early copies of these magazines (and the *hentai* magazines that preceded them) have become collectors' items and are eagerly sought out by aficionados.

Although, if we include the members' magazines circulating from the early 1950s, there has been a comparatively long tradition of community-produced sex information for homosexual men, the amount of public information available for lesbians has been considerably less. So far no evidence of members magazines aimed at a lesbian readership has come to light prior to the early 1970s. From the mid 60s, the supposed activities of 'lesbians', most often reduced to the problematic term *rezu*, were often discussed in the media but this was almost exclusively in male terms and for the titillation of a male audience (Sugiura 2006: 494).

Although discussion of female same-sex love (*joshi dōseiai*) had been a staple of the early 50s' *hentai* magazines, as this genre developed into the 60s, representations of 'lesbians' became increasingly pornographic and prurient, often with a sadomasochistic slant (McLelland 2004). Indeed it was this colonization of lesbian sexuality by male pornography that led prominent lesbian author and critic Kakefuda Hiroko to speak of the difficulties some women experienced in identifying with the term 'lesbian' in her 1992 book '*Rezubian*' *de aru, to iu koto* (On being 'lesbian') (Suganuma 2006).

However from the early 1970s small-scale lesbian groups were successful in reclaiming space for their own self expression, achieved in part through a series of community-based publications. These self-published zines have appeared in different forms under different

titles depending on available funding and community support from the early 1970s and today mostly exist online. It has, however, proven more difficult to sustain commercial publications. The first attempt, the magazine *Phryne* released by mainstream publisher Sanwa Shuppan in 1995, lasted only two issues. Between 1996 and 1997 seven issues of a lesbian periodical entitled *Aniise* were released by Terra Shuppan (which also released popular gay men's magazine *Badi*). However slow sales meant the publication was put on hold. Back number sales enabled the title's reissue in 2001 but it folded again due to poor sales in 2003. Japan's third commercial magazine, *Carmilla*, which had a much more explicit focus on lesbian sex than the earlier more community oriented and political publications, was released in 2002 and saw 10 issues in all. *Carmilla* was a controversial publication for some in the lesbian community because its sexual focus also made it appealing to a readership of men, a readership that the publication's editor, Inoue Meimy, did not necessarily repudiate (Suganuma and Welker 2006). However despite this cross-over appeal it still failed as a commercial proposition and ceased publication in 2005. The latest venture for lesbians and bisexual women was published in 2012. *Novia Novia Magazine* (title in English) is a slick, lifestyle oriented publication that introduces a variety of lesbian and gay friendly businesses and spaces around Japan. The magazine is also supported by an interactive website.

Japan's lesbian and gay magazines (and a host of publications aimed at the male-to-female transgender market that space does not allow us to discuss here) remained the key sources of information about minority sexualities for three decades until the end of the 1990s when the widespread uptake of the internet rendered them largely redundant. As Itō discovered early on, one of the main functions of these magazines was getting like minded people in contact with each other through the personals' columns. The ease and convenience of online interaction quickly supplanted this role and even *Barazoku*, Japan's longest running gay publication, went out of business in 2004 after 43 years in production, although it has subsequently been revived by a different publisher.

These magazines were important as they provided a space for *tōjisha*, that is, 'those directly concerned' with the realities of gay and lesbian life in Japan to represent themselves and establish a sense of solidarity and community (Macintosh 2009) that was very different from the misleading stereotypes prevalent in the mainstream media. However, as is the case for heterosexual sex, since the early 2000s, the internet has emerged as the main conduit for information about sexual minority practices and problems and is often the first port of call for

young people just beginning to explore their sexual identities. This means that the market for print media aimed at sexual minority readerships will remain limited.

Conclusion

As can be seen from the above account, the representation of sexuality has always been the site of scrutiny and contestation in Japan with conservative factions within the administration using a range of measures including obscenity legislation, censorship, zoning laws and school curricula to support narrow, heteronormative, pronatalist constructions of sex. Indeed, attempts by social elites to ‘manage’ the sexuality of the masses have a long history in Japan. It is no surprise that those opposed to conservative Tokyo Governor Ishihara’s measures to rein in depictions of sexuality in young people’s media drew attention to the fact that he was displaying a paternalism that was characteristic of war-time leaders (Nagaoka 2010). Ishihara’s hostile attitude toward sexual minorities, too, has seen him labelled as out of touch, and rather less charitably as an ‘old codger’ (*ossan*) by some media commentators. However conservative factions remain strong in Japanese politics and it should be noted that although obscenity prosecutions have been infrequent in the postwar period, complaints are almost always upheld by the courts.

The conservative bent of Japanese politics must, however, be balanced by the wide range of sexual scenarios available in popular media. Emerging just months after Japan’s defeat at the hands of the Allies, the media in Japan have always displayed an interest in things sexual. Even in the early postwar period it was possible to find rather explicit discussions of both marital sexuality (in the couple magazines) and a range of ‘paraphilias’ (in the *ryōki* genre). Indeed, in the late 1940s and early 1950s in Japan it was much easier to openly discuss issues such as male and female homosexuality and cross-dressing in the media than it was in the US or Europe. As the Cold War intensified and the US became increasingly hostile to sexual minorities, Japanese commentators did not, on the whole, follow suit, and there remained vibrant media subcultures dedicated to the discussion of a whole range of non-marital, non-heterosexual sexualities that is only now being reconstructed by historians of sexuality.

The development of the internet, which is widely accessible in Japan on a variety of hand-held devices, has also enabled the proliferation of sexual information and representation as well as people’s access to them. The borderless nature of the internet has also facilitated the

transmission of Japanese popular culture overseas where certain genres, particularly those such as *rorikon* and BL featuring sexualised depictions of characters who are or may appear to be under age, are proving problematic in jurisdictions with broad anti child-abuse materials legislation. International organisations have been putting pressure on Japanese legislators to further rein in sexualised media that are available to youth and conservative lobby groups in Japan have been playing on this international concern in their calls for further restrictions on media content. The many contradictions between official restraint and media mayhem are thus likely to continue to play out in Japan in the coming years.

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