

Marital Infidelity of Older Japanese Men: Interpretations and Conjectures

Katrina L. MOORE

Abstract

In this article, I explore the decline in incidence of marital infidelity among older married Japanese men and relate this to changes in masculine identity. Two factors stand out in particular in instigating a shift in this practice: the impact of changing intergenerational relationships, especially the death of the mother-in-law, and the impact of men's retirement. Both factors point to an increased power of wives in the marriages and increased dependency of husbands on their wives. To illustrate this argument, I draw on case studies of middle and upper-middle-class married men in their sixties who retired in the late 1990s and early 21st century. These case studies serve as a lens into broader changes in Japanese society and national soul-searching about the need for men to reappraise the dominance of work and to pay more heed to other aspects of men's identities, including their marriages.

Katrina Moore PhD, is a lecturer in anthropology at the University of New South Wales. She specializes in the study of Japanese sexuality and marital relationships in retirement and the long-term consequences of the dominance of work on Japanese men's identities. She has published articles on retirement and marriage and is currently preparing a book manuscript on upper middle-class women's search for fulfillment and intimacy. Her e-mail is katrina.moore@unsw.edu.au