

Where boys and girls don't talk to each other

Vasudha Venugopal, Lavanya M.

There is something uncannily similar in the way students behave on the engineering campuses here. In one, the buses arrive and the girls get down and walk in groups, followed much later, by the boys. One of them hurriedly puts away his iPod in his bag. "I am going to get caught one of these days. They don't allow these things but what to do during the four hours of commute," says the third year student.

Further away, at the dining area which has separate seating for girls and boys, a group of men gets alert when they see a girl and a boy talking, and ask them what the issue is. "We target only those who have bad intentions, not all," says one of them. This scene at Jeppiar Engineering College is not very different from that at many other engineering colleges. "A boy once helped me in my project. The counsellor immediately called me and publicly humiliated me saying, 'I am developing bad habits,'" says Chitra of Panimalar Institute of Technology.

Campuses seem to be infested with restrictions of all kind. Students can leave campus only twice a month; that too after producing fax messages from their parents. Separate staircases for girls and boys are common. But a conversation between a male and a female student is what earns the maximum wrath of faculty members.

A supervisor patrols every floor and every bus in many top engineering colleges. "A 'behaviour in-charge' berates students publicly if they notice anything 'wrong'," says V. Prabhu, a former student of Sri Sairam College of Engineering.

The 'violations' range from 'unnecessarily talking to boys/girls, not wearing id card, not being dressed in salwar - kurta with a 'v-shaped *dupatta*' pinned on both sides or formals, says a student of Sathyabhama University. Trees have been cut off, say students, to make sure boys and girls do not gather under them.

"If the teachers see you talking to boys, it gives them a bad impression. So even in the absence of rules, we play it safe because they mark us for our internals," adds Priya of Velammal Engineering College. Colouring the hair or not wearing a dupatta is taboo in most colleges.

So have students never protested? "Last year, they introduced separate seating areas for students, depending on the number of arrears they had. We protested and we remain barred from industrial visits," says a student of Vel Tech Technical University. "Recently, some of us were threatened with suspension for laughing loudly with friends outside the campus, he adds.

The case in hostels is no different. "Cell phones are allowed only in hostels, but no romantic ring tones; else, they will evoke 'romantic feelings' in us, says our warden" laughs Raghuvir of Panimalar Institute of Technology. Counsellors who are supposed to be a source of relief to students seem to exist only to talk students of relationships and sometimes, even report matters to the management.

An alumnus of Anna University, Sai Pradhyuman, remembers how several years ago, a professor who had come to their class to teach a subject in mechanical engineering was shocked to see that girls and boys were seated together.

“He stormed outside the class and later insisted that we follow ‘decency’. Much later, he acquired positions of power and introduced dress codes for the students of the University,” he recalled. College heads and parents, however, have a different opinion. K. S. Babai, principal, Meenakshi Sundararajan Engineering College, feels strict rules are necessary to prepare the students for life.

“We feel we can correct them here. They are adolescents who need to be told what is wrong and we are just doing that.” These rules are the reason I think my son will not get into bad company, feels A. Ramkumar, a parent of a student in St. Mary's Engineering.

“Late adolescent is when students are bound to have an intimate relationship,” says S. Yamuna, an adolescent physician. “A restricted environment will only prompt students to go against rules. Colleges often bring in these rules as a reassurance to parents that they are providing their children a safe environment, but parents need to realise that instead of prohibiting them, parents should encourage their children to discuss their lives with them.”

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/where-boys-and-girls-dont-talk-to-each-other/article3321558.ece>

Boy-Girl Relationship

BGR, what does it stand for? BGR stands for boy-girl relationship. What is it you might ask? Is it the intimate relationship between a boy and girl? Courtship? The relationship that holds a marriage together? Or is it just a typical relationship between a boy and girl? To be frank, it is all of the above stated. BGR is all about the relationship between a male and female whether it is intimate or not. Relationships are very important in our lives. It is what strives us to be who we are and it is able to change the character of person, depending on the relation that is established and the intention of a person of what he/she wants to gain from it, but above all else, relationships are still important.

Moving on, I'd like to ask of you, what do you think runs a relationship? To me, relationships are run on trust. Without trust, a relationship is nothing more than a car without fuel. It will not move and will never last. There is a saying that goes “trust is greater than love” and to this I agree fully. Why do I say so? Because to love is to have a feeling of affection towards another person. Whereas to trust a person is to believe in that person fully without doubt in mind. That is why a relationship has to be fuelled by a strong trust between 2 people and not to forget about love as it is also important.

Going back to the main topic, BGR is a very important relationship as it can go beyond friendship between a boy and a girl, although it is possible to keep a BGR as a platonic friendship. A platonic friendship is a relationship between 2 people that will just remain as friends and will never go beyond that. Most people get tend to get involved in a boy-girl relationship very often these days. Sometimes, I even wonder what they hope to gain from it. I

see most people who are indulging in this type of relationship as to be hopping around from 1 person to another after breaking up with their current lover, if it can be merely for scoring. ..

<http://www.studymode.com/essays/Boy-Girl-Relationship-867471.html>

Mixed relationships

Most relationships require compromise and effort if they are going to succeed, but what about when you come from different religious backgrounds - or from different races?

Can you be together if you're from different religions or a different race?

Whatever background you come from, there will always be some differences between you and your partner, but they won't necessarily be based on your religious beliefs or race. However, if you completely disagree on important issues you may find life difficult. To some extent, it will depend on what religion you both are, and how religious you are.

You don't always have to agree with your partner, in fact it can make life interesting to be close to someone who disagrees with you, just as long as those disagreements don't become monumental hurdles that you'll never get over.

Telling your friends

Friends might believe stereotypes and have negative reactions to your choice of partner at first. Explain to them how you feel about your partner and let them meet each other and form their own opinions based on the person rather than the religion.

"Often people go through a process of uncomfortableness before they see each person as a human being, rather than from the culture that they are from," explains Emily Sommerman, a clinical psychologist.

Her advice is to prepare yourself for every kind of reaction: "Before you introduce your new partner, work out internally what your own reaction to other people's comments would be, and then decide how you want to talk to people about it."

What if my/their parents don't approve?

Both your family and your partners' family may have problems accepting the relationship. Your partner may choose to keep your existence a secret from them. It doesn't feel nice to be someone's dirty secret but you have to try to be understanding.

21-year-old Ali, a Muslim, had a three-year relationship with a Catholic girl. He chose to keep the relationship a secret from his family. "Girlfriends aren't allowed in Islam," he explains. "My family would be ashamed and my dad would probably have disowned me. Keeping the relationship secret was an emotional drain and made my girlfriend feel uncomfortable, but I didn't feel like I had a choice."

According to relationship advisor Matt Whyman, this kind of problem isn't uncommon. "The main problem people face when getting into a relationship with someone of a different background is negative reactions from family and friends," he says.

So what can you do? “The most important factors are respect and understanding – for your family and your partner. Be prepared to sit down and discuss issues; listen as well as talk. You need to address problems without steaming in with demands.”

Cultural differences

You may have to get used to certain customs, such as removing shoes, special diets and celebrating religious holidays. Keep an open mind and remember it doesn’t hurt to compromise. “Sometimes I felt my girlfriend was insensitive to my culture and I disliked that,” says Ali.

Make an effort to learn about your partners’ religion so you understand their point of view. Some things may seem strange at first, but if you stay together long term, they will quickly seem natural. If you are unwilling to make small changes it’s unlikely that the relationship will work in the long run.

“Any relationship is going to throw up vast differences – any two people have cultural differences, but in these situations there’s more to negotiate,” says Emily. “Don’t forget controversy and difficulties can bring you closer together.”

Happily ever after...

However, when it comes to bigger issues such as moving in together, marrying and having children, it’s important to talk early on and set some boundaries on how much you’re willing to change. If either of you have strong feelings that your children should be brought up in a certain way, for example, you will need to come to some agreement about it.

Sarah, 22, was in a three-year relationship with a Hindu man. “I’d never go out with someone of a different religion again after my bad experience,” she says. “I think it’s easier being with someone the same as yourself.”

Ali disagrees. He thinks there is a lot to be gained from mixed religion relationships. “Being with someone of a different religion broadens your perspective and teaches you how to compromise,” he says.

According to relationships advisor Matt from askTheSite, a mixed relationship can be a success so long as the couple work at it. “Whether the relationship will survive long term depends upon the strength of feeling involved and the two people putting the effort in to making it work.”

<http://www.thesite.org/sex-and-relationships/relationships/mixed-relationships-2918.html>

Sex Education

Sex education is instruction on issues relating to [human sexuality](#), including human [sexual anatomy](#), [sexual reproduction](#), [sexual activity](#), [reproductive health](#), emotional relations, [reproductive rights](#) and responsibilities, [abstinence](#), and [birth control](#). Common avenues for sex education are parents or caregivers, formal school programs, and public health campaigns.

Human sexuality has biological, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects. The biological aspect of sexuality refers to the reproductive mechanism as well as the basic biological drive, [libido](#), that exists in all species, which is strongly influenced by hormonal levels. The emotional or physical aspect of sexuality refers to the bond that arises between individuals, and is manifested physically or through emotions such as love, trust and caring. There is also a spiritual aspect of sexuality of an individual or as a connection with others. Experience has shown that adolescents are curious about aspects of their sexuality as well as the nature of sexuality in general, and that many will seek to experience their sexuality in some way.

Traditionally, adolescents were not given any information on sexual matters, with discussion of these issues being considered [taboo](#). Such instruction as was given was traditionally left to a child's parents, and often this was put off until just before a child's marriage. Most of the information on sexual matters was obtained informally from friends and the media, and much of this information was of doubtful value. Much of such information was usually known to be deficient, especially during the period following puberty when curiosity of sexual matters was the most acute. This deficiency became increasingly evident by the increasing incidence of teenage pregnancies, especially in Western countries after the 1960s. As part of each country's efforts to reduce such pregnancies, programs of sex education were instituted, initially over strong opposition from parent and religious groups.

The outbreak of [AIDS](#) has given a new sense of urgency to sex education. In many [African](#) countries, where AIDS is at epidemic levels (see [HIV/AIDS in Africa](#)), sex education is seen by most scientists as a vital [public health](#) strategy.^[citation needed] Some international organizations such as [Planned Parenthood](#) consider that broad sex education programs have global benefits, such as controlling the risk of [overpopulation](#) and the advancement of [women's rights](#) (see also [reproductive rights](#)). The use of mass media campaigns, however, has sometimes resulted in high levels of "awareness" coupled with essentially superficial knowledge of HIV transmission.^[1]

According to [SIECUS](#), the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States, 93% of adults they surveyed support sexuality education in high school and 84% support it in junior high school.^[2] In fact, 88% of parents of junior high school students and 80% of parents of high school students believe that sex education in school makes it easier for them to talk to their adolescents about sex.^[3] Also, 92% of adolescents report that they want both to talk to their parents about sex and to have comprehensive in-school sex education.^[4] Furthermore, a "...study, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research Inc. on behalf of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, found that abstinence-only-until-marriage programs are ineffective."^[5]

[India](#)^[edit]



Know Aids - No Aids road sign in [Spiti Valley](#), [Himachel Pradesh](#), India, 2010

AIDS Clinic, [McLeod Ganj](#), Himachel Pradesh, India, 2010

In [India](#), there are many programs promoting sex education including information on AIDS in schools as well public education and advertising. AIDS clinics providing information and assistance are to be found in most cities and many small villages.^{[23][24]}

“India has a strong prevention program which goes hand in hand with care, support and treatment. We have been able to contain the epidemic with a prevalence of just 0.31 %. We have also brought about a decline of 50% in new infections annually.” Shri Gulam Nabi Azad, Hon’ble Minister of Health and Family Welfare, 2011.^[25]

Nevertheless, according to experts such as Rev. Fr. John Zachariah one of the sexologists in India, sexual ignorance is one of the major problem faced by the population of India.^[citation needed]

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex_education

Thursday, 10 January 2013

Female Foeticide

Female foeticide/ infanticide The term female foeticide means killing the female foetus in the mothers womb. How savage? The practice has been followed in India for ages, a country that once described its women as goddessess. For this case, Indian women will soon get extinct. Surprised? The most bustling part is being played by the women themselves -- why? erect for the mere compulsion of a boy, mothers dont feel pretty in strangulating their daughters in their wombs. Can anyone be more cruel? Â In India, sex ratio stands at a despicable 933:1000, i.e., 67 women short of constantly 1,000 males. Can you imagine how stinking the situation is -- in the coming times, the boys of this country will prep ar to stand single because there will be no girls.Â Â However, ever thought why mothers are being constrained to kill their daughters even before they are born? As far as I can think, the main reason behind this gruesome scenario is the cost of the girl child ever since she takes birth. When a girl takes birth, parents have to bear the consignment of obstetrical delivery her up. Then, in todays scenario, girls have to be provided education, so the burden of educating someone who will, one day, leave the parents house for her husbands ordinate is too much. The mere thought of this sends few parents shivering, i.e., they feel

that they are wasting their precious resources on someone who is not their own. In any case this, protecting and safeguarding the girl child, today, has become an uphill task for their families, as the crime rate against women is on the rise. How bad? For this reason, few parents quash their daughters from going outside and they have to stay home apart from the rest of the world. Women are subjected to cruelty from the male section of this so-called advanced society. Even educated women face such treatment, what to say about uneducated, illiterate women. Then last but not the least, the bride price or dowry is a factor which is the height killer of many girls after marriage. The greed for getting more...

<http://best-essays-now-blog.blogspot.in/2013/01/female-feticide.html>

Tata Tea gives 'Power of 49' wake-up call to politicians

Conceptualised by Lowe Lintas, the 'Power of 49' campaign, an extension of the brand's 'Jago Re' campaigns, aims to make people aware of a simple statistic – that women constitute 49 per cent of the vote-bank – and they can make and break politicians and governments

'Jaago Re' has become synonymous with awakening. Over the years, the Tata Tea Gold campaign has been involved in awakening minds. It's time once again to open minds and Tata Tea Gold has come out with a new campaign – Power of 49 – aimed at awakening the nation to yet another important issue – women empowerment. The 39-second TVC has been designed by Lowe Lintas.

The idea behind the campaign was to portray the increasing but often neglected importance of women. While the problems women face are increasing every day, it cannot be ignored that they make an almost equal percentage of the voter base. Though women constitute 49 per cent of the voter base in our country, most of them are unaware of this fact and the power it connotes. Tata Tea Gold's new campaign aims to educate women and the rest of the country about this statistic and show them the impact it could have.

The TVC opens with a woman asking her politician husband if he is going to ignore her now that elections are drawing close. She then asks him to make a cup of tea for her, which he does. While the tea leaves open up in the steaming kettle, the woman asks whether her husband's mind has opened up as well. She explains that while he can ignore her, he should not ignore the 49 per cent of the vote bank that women constitute. If they can make a government, they can also be the reason for its removal.

The campaign has been designed as a call to women to come together and unite to show the nation the power of 49 per cent. As the long leaves of the tea open up in the boiling water, the campaign tells women to open their minds to their power.

Amer Jaleel, National Creative Director, Lowe Lintas, said, "Given the times we live in today, it is absolutely necessary for us to empower women. It is imperative that the world is told that women must not be treated the way they are, that they are a force to reckon

with; especially politicians and governance both which can do so much more to better the way things are for women in India, but aren't doing much."

The campaign is well timed since the elections are approaching and will work as a reminder to both women to be aware of their power and the government that women cannot be ignored if they wish to hold positions in the governance of the country.

Jaleel further said, "This is what we set out to achieve with this campaign, by trying to open everybody's eyes, including those of women of course, with a simple but powerful statistic people are ignorant about – a massive 49 per cent of India's votes come from women. This means they are truly powerful; they can vote and make or break a government. They can bring to power a government which genuinely works for their betterment, or in the least, governments might just start taking women seriously by wooing this massive 'vote-bank' as they typically do by working in the interest of women, for the simple classic motive of winning at the elections. So, certainly do not ignore the Indian woman Mr Politician. It's time for you to wake up to real power – the Power of 49 per cent."

Apart from the traditional media of advertising, Tata Tea Gold also partnered with the IIFA Awards 2013 for the Power of 49 campaign. Celebrities like Shabana Azmi, Shahrukh Khan, Abhishek Bachchan and Vidya Balan gave powerful messages telling people at large about the Power of 49, therefore lending the power, reach and effectiveness of Bollywood and its stars to make this important message known.

Tata Tea's earlier campaigns had been a wake-up call on different issues, such as awakening the nation to the need to vote for the right candidate, raising a voice against corruption and, more recently, biases against women.

<http://www.bestmediainfo.com/2013/08/tata-tea-gives-power-of-49-wake-up-call-to-politicians/>

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE WOMEN OF INDIA

- You are a resident of India. You pay your taxes. You work. You run a beautiful home and you take care of your family.
- You give great thought to your wardrobe, ensure that all deadlines are met at work and provide your children with every possible opportunity to excel. You attend to every little detail and ensure that nothing goes unnoticed or unattended to.
- Well, almost.
- One very important detail has gone unnoticed. You forget that before anything else, you are a powerful woman. You forgot that you have the power to decide who gets to make the policies by which you must live in this country.
- Like you, 49% of the registered voter base in India has the same power. YOU and the rest of them have the power to VOTE for a government that will be attentive to your issues. And why shouldn't a government in power be so?

- Women form almost half of the base that elects the government. Imagine the possibilities and change in policy making you could affect if only the lot of you decide to use the power that is granted to you as a fundamental right? Vote... and encourage every woman you know to do so as well.
- It's time to make the system aware of the Power of 49%.
- Don't start a movement. Just join the one you already are a part of - #PowerOf49!

<http://www.jaagore.com/power-of-49/an-open-letter-to-the-women-of-india>

Hindu Goddesses: Durga, Laxmi, Kali, Sarasvati, Parvati, Jagadamba ...

Currently there are 19 women who are President or Prime Ministers in the world.

http://www.filibustercartoons.com/charts_rest_female-leaders.php

Some important and well recognized political figures from the present and past are – Sirimavo Bandaranaike (Sri Lanka), Golda Meir (Israel), Margaret Thatcher (United Kingdom), Indira Gandhi (India), Angela Merkel (Germany), Julia Gillard (Australia), Benazir Bhutto (Pakistan) – Are these symbolic or with substance and might to change the world order?

Short Essay on Honour Killing

By Pranjana Mallick

Honour killing can be defined as the homicide of the member of a family or social group by other members due to the belief of the perpetrators that the victim has brought dishonour upon the family or community.

In most of the cases, honour killings are mostly directed against the women especially in the South Asian and Middle Eastern Islamic cultures. Sadly, this culture is prevalent in some parts of the Indian society too.

Mainly the method of honor killing is adopted when a girl goes against the wishes of her family and marries a guy who does not belong to her own community. In some of these cases, both the boy and the girl are killed either secretly by the family members and even openly claiming that the respective boy or girl have brought dishonour and disrespect to the family and to the society or community as a whole.

Each and every individual has the right to live his or her own life according to their own wishes. After attaining the age of 18 and 21 by the girl and the boy respectively, the family has no right to force them into marriage or any other act if they are unwilling to do so. If an individual be it a boy or a girl feels that he or she wants to marry according to their wishes, their parents should accept the wishes.

In fact, parents only desire to see their children happy and if the children are happy, the parents should let them do what they desire. But for a number of families, their status and position in the society is so much more important than their kids that they do not mind killing them or sacrificing them just to maintain their desired status.

Only one question comes into the mind of all the people- Is the society more important than your children? When asked all will say that their children are more important. But in some of the cases the reality is totally different. These people who kill their children for the breach of so called code of conduct of their societies are actually only concerned about their status and position in the society.

Such people can be termed as criminals who are far more dangerous than the terrorists. Terrorists kill people who are unknown to them. But these people who support honour killing and are a part of it are heartless because only a heartless individual can kill someone they love and that too for a baseless reason.

The government of India has formulated laws against honour killing but still this inhuman practice exists. In my opinion people involved in honour killing should also be treated as criminals and should be punished as severely as possible. Even capital punishment should be offered to these individuals so that they realize that how painful death was to the person they killed.

<http://www.shareyouressays.com/100760/short-essay-on-honour-killing>

Mr. Mom, Meet Alpha Dad: A New Type of Father

In the '80s, a stay-at-home dad was a punch line. Today, fathers balance life at home and the office, and—surprise!—sometimes they're better at it than Mom.

By Sheelah Kolhatkar from *Reader's Digest Magazine* October 2013 and *Bloomberg Businessweek*

Three Deloitte Dads are eating breakfast across the street from the Toronto office of their financial-services company, Deloitte, spearing eggs and discussing how they juggle their careers and families.

“‘Work-life balance’ is one of those terms that tend to get overused,” says Robert Lanoue, 44. “It’s ‘balanced/unbalanced,’” chips in colleague Andrew Hamer, 30.

This male version of a conversation that happens countless times a day among groups of women touches on the challenges of getting home for bath time, showing up at recitals, and how all that must be reconciled with driving ambition. The only thing missing is the guilt and self-flagellation that so often punctuates chats among working women.

Lanoue wears an open-collar shirt and dive watch and exudes a relaxed jock vibe. Hamer is more a hunky corporate hipster, with a beard, jeans, and checked blazer. Rounding out the trio is slender and mellow-voiced Jonathan Magder, 35. You might call them Alpha Dads, guys who are as serious about their parenting as they are about promotions. What they illustrate is that men might actually be better at handling “women’s issues” than women. They don’t believe in “balance.” They believe in getting what they want, even if it’s time to cheer their five-year-olds from the sidelines of a soccer game on a Wednesday afternoon.

“New dads can be their own worst enemies,” Magder says. “The biggest thing for sure is time management.”

Lanoue, who became partner in 2010, has two children in school full-time, a six-year-old and a ten-year-old, and he estimates that he works one day a week out of his basement office at home, partly to spend more time with them. He manages this, he says, by “being proactive with my calendar, weeks ahead”; he plans his schedule meticulously, moving in-person meetings to conference calls when he needs to and being blunt and in-your-face about it.

Even when he goes into the office, he sometimes has to leave at 3:30 p.m. to drive his son to his hockey games, a fact he broadcasts to help dispel the stink that can trail people when they sneak out early. “Everyone knows my routine when I’m not there,” he says. “Between 3:30 p.m. and 7 p.m., I’m available by e-mail. If there’s anything I have to review, it will happen well into the evening.” In other words: It’ll get done, but on his time.

Hamer has a two-year-old who goes to day care and an infant who’s currently not sleeping—he sports the dark eye circles to prove it—and at the moment his assignment takes him out of town three nights most weeks to work at a client’s office. “For me,” he says, “flexibility is more about being able to take part in morning routines and not having to worry about the commute.”

Magder has three children, ages six, four, and two. He tries to be home at least two or three times a week for dinner and bedtime. Sometimes it’s tough, he says, recalling one period when he was working 80 or 90 hours every week and was desperately short on sleep. But, he says, “most people understand that if I leave for the day, I’m

just changing my [work] location.” Magder and his colleagues sound in many ways like typical MBA guys, only they’re applying the principles of efficient management to the task of parenting.

The Deloitte Dads were inspired to organize by the Deloitte mothers’ group, Career Moms, which was launched in 2007 by Anushka Grant, a consultant who has three children of her own.

Career Moms proved to be hugely popular and now has four chapters across Canada; it arranges networking opportunities for the firm’s working mothers and distributes a “survival guide” offering advice on stress management, shopping for office clothes before returning to work, and more. The 20-page memo puts to shame the maternity-leave advice buried in most companies’ HR handbooks.

Hamer pitched the dads’ equivalent of Career Moms to the firm’s management in 2010 on the basis that highlighting the company’s friendliness to working fathers would help recruit and retain the best male employees too. “It was a business case,” he says. “I presented factual arguments around why it’s actually accretive to the firm to do this.”

After the Globe and Mail newspaper published an article about the group in March, Deloitte’s chief diversity officer started getting calls from other companies wanting to learn their ways. “Welcome to Deloitte Dads, the Fraternity of Paternity,” reads one of their leaflets.

Their group found an especially friendly audience because Deloitte’s consulting arm has an “entrepreneurial, performance culture,” as Hamer puts it; the pace is demanding, and employees are expected to manage themselves. “The culture is about the work,” Hamer adds. “It allows us to not have to be in at a certain hour for the sake of it.”

The Deloitte Dads lack their own demi-celebrity in the mold of Facebook Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg, whose bestselling book *Lean In* urges women to pursue their careers aggressively and not be put off by worries about how they’ll balance their work with their families. Sandberg touches on men and how important it is to choose the right one to procreate with, but she’s primarily focused on women and what they can do to push their way further up the corporate ranks.

That’s a fine agenda for Sandberg’s book, but Kathleen Gerson, a sociologist at New York University who studies families and work, asks, “Why do we continue to focus on this as a women’s issue, when the evidence makes it so clear that it’s shared by men?” She adds, “The irony is there is some research that suggests men feel as much or more conflict and have as great or a greater desire for balance than women.”

In fact, a March 2013 Pew Research study about modern parenthood found that nearly equal proportions of parents were trying to “do it all.” Fifty percent of working fathers and 56 percent of working mothers found it “very” or “somewhat” difficult to balance work and family, according to Pew, while 48 percent of working fathers and 52 percent of working mothers responded that they’d prefer to be home with their children but needed to work for the income.

The Deloitte Dads and their imitators reflect not only the demands of men to have more flexible schedules and be more involved parents but also the increasing number of couples negotiating whose career will take priority. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the share of married-couple families in which both parents work was 59 percent in 2012. And signs of changing priorities were evident as much as a dozen years back: A poll taken by the Radcliffe Public Policy Center in 2000 asking men and women in their 20s whether they would accept a lower salary to spend more time with their families found that about 70 percent of the men answered yes, compared with 63 percent of the women.

“If you listen to the best young male workers, the ones coming out of the top business schools, they all talk about wanting to be really involved fathers, expecting and assuming that their wives are going to be committed to their careers,” says Michael Kimmel, a sociology professor at Stony Brook University who consults with companies around issues of gender equality. “And then they get to the workplace and find the same things that the women are bumping up against.”

“We’re primed for a cultural shift,” says Warren Farrell, a consultant and author of seven books, including *The Myth of Male Power* and *Why Men Earn More: The Startling Truth Behind the Pay Gap—and What Women Can Do About It*. This is in part, he says, because these “bright young men are feeling that they want something more out of life than just climbing a ladder.”

They have their work cut out for them: Human resources departments are almost entirely focused on preventing lawsuits and addressing the needs of women and minority employees. Opening up the options to the guys is the inevitable next step, says Farrell, one that the upcoming generation of ambitious male workers is demanding.

Roger Trombley, a research engineer at Ford Motor who lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan, is just the sort of bright young man Farrell is talking about. In 2010, when Trombley was expecting his first child, he and his wife, who also works at Ford, weren’t thrilled with the child-care options available, and she wasn’t eager to become a stay-at-home mother. Trombley remembered that a former colleague had worked out a novel solution with her husband: Both worked part-time, allowing each to have time at home with their kids.

Ford didn't offer paternity leave, but it did offer a part-time track. When baby Dylan arrived, Trombley told his bosses he wanted to drop down to 70 percent of the standard workweek and work from home two days a week.

"Knowing there was the potential for backlash wasn't going to change what I was doing," Trombley says. "There was some nervousness. Will [working part-time] affect my performance reviews, how people view me at work, my potential to get promoted? But [in the three years I've been doing this] I've gotten great feedback."

Now three other men in Trombley's department have similar part-time setups. "Every one of them asked for recommendations on how to create the situation for themselves," he says proudly.

Despite the benefits that men like Trombley have enjoyed, the idea that men are more fulfilled when they spend less time accumulating corporate pelts and more time roughhousing with their toddlers is generally still more mocked than celebrated.

Even as advertisements for Tide, Wells Fargo, Yoplait, and others have caught on to the hands-on father as a consumer group, the "incompetent dad" remains a potent meme, with the wife often telling him what to do by text message or Post-it. A guy with an infant strapped to his chest is far more likely to be held up as a source of comedy than as a masculine ideal. The image of the Baby Björn dad as unattractive and inept may have to change before more concrete things do.

Partly to counter this perception problem, Sweden, which has some of the most family-friendly policies in the world, funded an advertising campaign intended to encourage men to take advantage of the ample paternity-leave benefits their country offers them (85 percent of Swedish fathers now do). The ads feature photographs of hunky men in various states of undress, including a well-known Swedish wrestler, cradling infants in their bulging arms.

For now, at least, the Deloitte Dads are improvising a more daddy-friendly future in their own way. The day before a meeting, Andrew Hamer sent an e-mail: "Folks," it began, "can I propose a slight change? I decided to work from home this morning so I could take my toddler to day care and help my wife with our newborn (have been on the road all week). May I suggest a conference call? Dial-in information below."

<http://www.samachar.com/Mr-Mom-Meet-Alpha-Dad-A-New-Type-of-Father-njyaLqhfgcd.html>

Crime Against Women

In the ancient Indian women held a high place of respect in the society as mentioned in *Rigveda* and other scriptures. Volumes can be written about the status of our women and their heroic deeds from the *vedic* period to the modern times. But later on, because

of social, political and economic changes, women lost their status and were relegated to the background. Many evil customs and traditions stepped in which enslaved the women and tied them to the boundaries of the house [1].

1. Violence and Protective Measures for Women Development and Empowerment by Aruna Goel, New Delhi, Deep & Deep Publications, 2004, pp. 3-4
2. Violence against Women and Children-Issues and Concerns, By Awadhesh Kumar Singh and Jayanta Choudhury, New Delhi, Serials Publications, 2012, p.1 3 Ibid, p.2

The official statistics showed a declining sex-ratio, health status, literacy rate, work participation rate and political participation among women. While on the other hand the spread of social evils like dowry deaths, child marriage, domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment, exploitation of women workers are rampant in different parts of India. Humiliation, rape, kidnapping, molestation, dowry death, torture, wife-beating etc. have grown up over the years [2].

2. MEANING OF CRIME / VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

“The Semantic meaning of „crime against women“ is direct or indirect physical or mental cruelty to women. Crimes which are „directed specifically against women“ and in which „only women are victims“ are characterized as „Crime Against Women“ [3].

It is equally important to clarify the concept of „Violence“ against women. Violence is also known as abuse and include any sort of physical aggression or misbehave. When violence is committed at home it becomes domestic violence and involves family members such as children, spouse, parents or servants. Domestic violence may involve different means such as hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, restraining, throwing objects. In broad terms, it includes threats, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, controlling or domineering, intimidation, stalking, passive/covert abuse and economic deprivation, rape, abduction, kidnapping, murder (all cases of criminal violence, dowry death, wife battering, sexual abuse, maltreatment of a widow and for an elderly women (all cases of domestic violence) and eve-teasing, forcing wife/daughter-in-law to go for foeticide, forcing a young widow to commit sati, etc (all cases of social violence), are issues which affect a large section of society [4].

The United Nations defined “Violence against Women” in 1993 in Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. It defines it as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life [5].

<http://164.100.47.134/intranet/Crimeagainstwomen.pdf>

What it will take for men and women to reach real parity at work and home

Anne-Marie Slaughter strides backstage after her latest TED talk. A little over a year ago, Slaughter was a highly respected but relatively anonymous academic. Her life changed last June, when her article for *The Atlantic*, ‘Why Women Still Can’t Have It All’, became the most read in the magazine’s history. Her TED speech is titled ‘Real Equality’ and considers what it would take for the twin pillars of human life — care-giving and breadwinning — to be given equal value; for men and women to reach proper parity at work and at home.

Slaughter recently quit her job as first female director of policy planning at the US state department after concluding that “juggling high-level government work with the needs of two teenage boys was not possible”. She had been commuting each week, leaving the house at 4.20 am Monday and arriving back late on Friday. Her 14-year-old son was having problems at school. She decided enough was enough.

The article prompted a firestorm. Many assumed the piece asked for women to give up and get back to the kitchen. Others pointed out that work-family balance is also very difficult for men to achieve. “I didn’t anticipate it would go so viral,” says Slaughter, 54, who is working on a book provisionally titled *Real Equality*.

In the US, issues of work-family balance are pressing. It is one of only four countries in the world that doesn’t have mandatory paid maternity leave, along with Lesotho, Swaziland and Papua New Guinea. The US is also the only first-world country that doesn’t guarantee workers paid leave. When Slaughter worked in government, she knew women who had saved up all their off days throughout their career to take maternity leave. In her speech, she points to countries such as Norway and Sweden which “provide childcare [and] support for caregivers at home... These societies show that breadwinning and care-giving reinforce one another.”

The structural problems are corporate as well as governmental. Earlier this year, Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, advised women to *Lean In* to their careers — to be ambitious, sit at the top table; the other side, says Slaughter, is that people need to “lean on corporations”, to push them to improve their policies. One measure that could help parents is scheduling all meetings in school hours, and she says that the really innovative corporations “are the results-only workforces ... This can be done at different levels, but the basic idea is here’s your work, here’s your deadline, and then I don’t care where you get it done. So it gets rid of the culture of face-time.”

Both Sandberg and Slaughter are interested in women’s success: while Sandberg has focused on individual paths to achieving this, Slaughter is interested in the governmental, corporate, cultural changes that might help.

Women may still be scarce at the top, but they have made considerable inroads in the workplace over the last half century, while men have arguably made less impact in the home. One useful shift, says Slaughter, would be for “working dads” to be as normal a phrase as “working mums.”

<http://www.thehindu.com/features/the-yin-thing/working-dads-working-moms/article5204969.ece>

The New York Times: Sunday Review

By LAVANYA SANKARAN

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The Good Men of India

BANGALORE, India — IN India today, the rapes of women, from children to grandmothers, are daily news. Frothy television programs on sentimentalized family values are interrupted by advertisements for a new smartphone app: VithU, which allows women in danger, at a double press of a power button, to send an S O S alert with their location to predesignated friends and family members.

Universities are debating requiring students to abandon jeans and adopt formal dress codes, as though the trappings of civilization are needed to hold at bay the anarchy of sexual violence. Twelve-year-old schoolgirls are attending rape awareness seminars, in a death of innocence.

Indian cities are awash with feral men, untethered from their distant villages, divorced from family and social structure, fighting poverty, exhausted, denied access to regular female companionship, adrift on powerful tides of alcohol and violent pornography, newly exposed to the smart young women of the cities, with their glistening jobs and clothes and casual independence — and not able to respond to any of it in a safe, civilized manner. This is the world of women under siege, the medieval world of the walking undead, the rise of the zombies, targeting females rich and poor. For women, at least, winter is coming.

In this context, it might appear odd to examine any other variant of the Indian male. But it is important to do so and to do so now. To bear witness to an alternate male reality that also pervades India on a daily basis.

This is what I witnessed on a recent flight from Kolkata to Bangalore. The plane was typical of budget air travel: full of businessmen and mothers. The smart flight attendants were young men. The pilot, captain of the flight deck, was a woman. This is not an uncommon combination in India these days. I was struck instead by the behavior of the male passengers.

In most countries, a woman clambering aboard a plane with a fretful infant and turning a crowded row of six into a de facto row of seven is usually met with hostility. Here, every other row seemed larded with these women and their babies. But those stuffy Indian businessmen — men of middle management, dodging bottles and diaper bags and carelessly flung toys — they didn't grumble. Instead, up and down the plane, I saw them helping. Holding babies so that mothers could eat. Burping infants and entertaining toddlers. Not because they knew these women, but because being concerned and engaged was their normal mode of social behavior. So, I will say this — Indian men can also be among the kindest in the world.

Women know this. When I asked my friends and acquaintances — both Indian and expatriate — about their perceptions of Indian men, they mentioned intelligence, wit and a reverence for learning. Others described gregarious partners who knew how to relax and enjoy themselves. All

of them talked about commitment and caring. One said, “I love that he is deeply concerned about his parents.” An Englishwoman said of her long-term Indian partner, “He makes me feel cherished and taken care of in a manner I never experienced in the U.K.” Another said of her father, “He supported my mother through their marriage, through her job, with the kids, her health, everything.” A 16-year-old schoolgirl echoed this: “You feel safe with them. No matter what, they will see you home safely.”

Strong familial commitment is not a phenomenon restricted to the urban middle classes. Migrant laborers care for wives and children, and still send money home to their parents. The young woman who was gang-raped on a New Delhi bus on Dec. 16 had a village-raised father who supported her ardently. This part of the story is so unsurprising, it rarely makes the news.

Let me introduce the Common Indian Male, a category that deserves taxonomic recognition: committed, concerned, cautious; intellectually curious, linguistically witty; socially gregarious, endearingly awkward; quick to laugh, slow to anger. Frequently spotted in domestic circles, traveling in a family herd. He has been sighted in sari shops and handbag stores, engaged in debating his spouse’s selection with the sons and daughters who trail behind. There is, apparently, no domestic decision that is not worthy of his involvement.

There is a telling phrase that best captures the Indian man in a relationship — whether as lover, parent or friend: not “I love you” but “Main hoon na.” It translates to “I’m here for you” but is better explained as a hug of commitment — “Never fear, I’m here.” These are men for whom commitment is a joy, a duty and a deep moral anchor.

At its excessive worst, this sensibility can produce annoyances: a sentimentalized addiction to Mummy; concern that becomes judgmental and stifling; and a proud or oversensitive emotional landscape.

But when it is at its best, the results, in women’s lives, speak for themselves. If the image of the Indian female as victim is true, so, too, is its converse: the Indian woman who coexists as a strong survivor, as conqueror, as worshiped goddess made flesh. Indian women have served as prime minister and president. They head banks and large corporations. They are formidable politicians, religious heads, cultural icons, judges, athletes and even [godmothers of crime](#).

Modern India has a muscular democracy and a growing economy, both of which have significantly transformed the lives of women. But female success, in a place like India with complicated social structures and a tradition of the Old Uncle Network, doesn’t happen in isolation. A successful woman is very likely to have had a supportive male in her life: a father, a spouse, a friend, a mentor.

For his part, the Indian male, when nested in family and community, is part of a domestic tapestry that is intricately woven and vital, it seems, to his own sense of well-being. Take that away from him, hurl him away — and a possible result is a man unmoored, lost, adrift and, potentially, a danger to himself and to his world. Disconnection causes social disengagement and despair — and the behavior that is the product of alienation and despair.

Lavanya Sankaran is [the author](#) of the novel “The Hope Factory.”

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/20/opinion/sunday/the-good-men-of-india.html?_r=0

Why have young people in Japan stopped having sex?

What happens to a country when its young people stop having sex? Japan is finding out...

Abigail Haworth investigates

Ai Aoyama is a [sex](#) and relationship counsellor who works out of her narrow three-storey home on a Tokyo back street. Her first name means "love" in Japanese, and is a keepsake from her earlier days as a professional dominatrix. Back then, about 15 years ago, she was Queen Ai, or Queen Love, and she did "all the usual things" like tying people up and dripping hot wax on their nipples. Her work today, she says, is far more challenging. Aoyama, 52, is trying to cure what [Japan's](#) media calls *sekkusu shinai shokogun*, or "celibacy syndrome".

Japan's under-40s appear to be losing interest in conventional relationships. Millions aren't even dating, and increasing numbers can't be bothered with sex. For their government, "celibacy syndrome" is part of a looming national catastrophe. Japan already has one of the world's lowest birth rates. [Its population of 126 million](#), which has been shrinking for the past decade, is projected to plunge a [further one-third by 2060](#). Aoyama believes the country is experiencing "a flight from human intimacy" – and it's partly the government's fault.

The sign outside her building says "Clinic". She greets me in yoga pants and fluffy animal slippers, cradling a Pekingese dog whom she introduces as Marilyn Monroe. In her business pamphlet, she offers up the gloriously random confidence that she visited North Korea in the 1990s and squeezed the testicles of a top army general. It doesn't say whether she was invited there specifically for that purpose, but the message to her clients is clear: she doesn't judge.

Inside, she takes me upstairs to her "relaxation room" – a bedroom with no furniture except a double futon. "It will be quiet in here," she says. Aoyama's first task with most of her clients is encouraging them "to stop apologising for their own physical existence".

The number of single people has reached a record high. A survey in 2011 found that [61% of unmarried men and 49% of women aged 18-34](#) were not in any kind of romantic relationship, a rise of almost 10% from five years earlier. [Another study found that a third of people under 30](#) had never dated at all. (There are no figures for same-sex relationships.) Although there has long been a pragmatic separation of love and sex in Japan – a country mostly free of religious morals – sex fares no better. A survey earlier this year by the [Japan Family Planning Association \(JFPA\)](#) found that 45% of women aged 16-24 "were not interested in or despised sexual contact". More than a quarter of men felt the same way.

Many people who seek her out, says Aoyama, are deeply confused. "Some want a partner, some prefer being single, but few relate to normal love and marriage." However, the pressure to conform to Japan's anachronistic family model of salaryman husband and stay-at-home wife remains. "People don't know where to turn. They're coming to me because they think that, by wanting something different, there's something wrong with them."

Official alarmism doesn't help. [Fewer babies were born here in 2012](#) than any year on record. (This was also the year, as the number of elderly people shoots up, that adult incontinence pants

outsold baby nappies in Japan for the first time.) Kunio Kitamura, head of the JFPA, claims the demographic crisis is so serious that Japan "might eventually perish into extinction".

Japan's under-40s won't go forth and multiply out of duty, as postwar generations did. The country is undergoing major social transition after 20 years of economic stagnation. It is also battling against the effects on its already nuclear-destruction-scarred psyche of 2011's earthquake, tsunami and radioactive meltdown. There is no going back. "Both men and women say to me they don't see the point of love. They don't believe it can lead anywhere," says Aoyama. "Relationships have become too hard."

Marriage has become a minefield of unattractive choices. Japanese men have become less career-driven, and less solvent, as lifetime job security has waned. Japanese women have become more independent and ambitious. Yet conservative attitudes in the home and workplace persist. Japan's punishing corporate world makes it almost impossible for women to combine a career and family, while children are unaffordable unless both parents work. Cohabiting or unmarried parenthood is still unusual, dogged by bureaucratic disapproval.

Aoyama says the sexes, especially in Japan's giant cities, are "spiralling away from each other". Lacking long-term shared goals, many are turning to what she terms "Pot Noodle love" – easy or instant gratification, in the form of casual sex, short-term trysts and the usual technological suspects: online porn, virtual-reality "girlfriends", anime cartoons. Or else they're opting out altogether and replacing love and sex with other urban pastimes.

Some of Aoyama's clients are among the small minority who have taken social withdrawal to a pathological extreme. They are recovering *hikikomori* ("shut-ins" or recluses) taking the first steps to rejoining the outside world, *otaku* (geeks), and long-term *parasaito shingurus* (parasite singles) who have reached their mid-30s without managing to move out of home. (Of the estimated 13 million unmarried people in Japan who currently live [with their parents, around three million are over the age of 35](#).) "A few people can't relate to the opposite sex physically or in any other way. They flinch if I touch them," she says. "Most are men, but I'm starting to see more women."

Aoyama cites one man in his early 30s, a virgin, who can't get sexually aroused unless he watches female robots on a game similar to Power Rangers. "I use therapies, such as yoga and hypnosis, to relax him and help him to understand the way that real human bodies work." Sometimes, for an extra fee, she gets naked with her male clients – "strictly no intercourse" – to physically guide them around the female form. Keen to see her nation thrive, she likens her role in these cases to that of the [Edo period](#) courtesans, or [oiran](#), who used to initiate samurai sons into the art of erotic pleasure.

Aversion to marriage and intimacy in modern life is not unique to Japan. Nor is growing preoccupation with digital technology. But what endless Japanese committees have failed to grasp when they stew over the country's procreation-shy youth is that, thanks to official shortsightedness, the decision to stay single often makes perfect sense. This is true for both sexes, but it's especially true for women. "Marriage is a woman's grave," goes an old Japanese saying that refers to wives being ignored in favour of mistresses. For Japanese women today, marriage is the grave of their hard-won careers.

I meet Eri Tomita, 32, over Saturday morning coffee in the smart Tokyo district of Ebisu. Tomita has a job she loves in the human resources department of a French-owned bank. A fluent French speaker with two university degrees, she avoids romantic attachments so she can focus on work. "A boyfriend proposed to me three years ago. I turned him down when I realised I cared more about my job. After that, I lost interest in dating. It became awkward when the question of the future came up."

Tomita says a woman's chances of promotion in Japan stop dead as soon as she marries. "The bosses assume you will get pregnant." Once a woman does have a child, she adds, the long, inflexible hours become unmanageable. "You have to resign. You end up being a housewife with no independent income. It's not an option for women like me."

[Around 70% of Japanese women](#) leave their jobs after their first child. The [World Economic Forum](#) consistently ranks Japan as one of the world's worst nations for [gender equality at work](#). Social attitudes don't help. Married working women are sometimes demonised as *oniyome*, or "devil wives". In a telling Japanese ballet production of Bizet's *Carmen* a few years ago, Carmen was portrayed as a career woman who stole company secrets to get ahead and then framed her lowly security-guard lover José. Her end was not pretty.

Prime minister Shinzo Abe recently trumpeted [long-overdue plans to increase female](#) economic participation by improving conditions and daycare, but Tomita says things would have to improve "dramatically" to compel her to become a working wife and mother. "I have a great life. I go out with my girl friends – career women like me – to French and Italian restaurants. I buy stylish clothes and go on nice holidays. I love my independence."

Tomita sometimes has one-night stands with men she meets in bars, but she says sex is not a priority, either. "I often get asked out by married men in the office who want an affair. They assume I'm desperate because I'm single." She grimaces, then shrugs. "*Mendokusai*."

Mendokusai translates loosely as "Too troublesome" or "I can't be bothered". It's the word I hear both sexes use most often when they talk about their relationship phobia. Romantic commitment seems to represent burden and drudgery, from the exorbitant costs of buying property in Japan to the uncertain expectations of a spouse and in-laws. And the centuries-old belief that the purpose of marriage is to produce children endures. [Japan's Institute of Population and Social Security](#) reports an astonishing 90% of young women believe that staying single is "preferable to what they imagine marriage to be like".

The sense of crushing obligation affects men just as much. Satoru Kishino, 31, belongs to a large tribe of men under 40 who are engaging in a kind of passive rebellion against traditional Japanese masculinity. Amid the recession and unsteady wages, men like Kishino feel that the pressure on them to be breadwinning economic warriors for a wife and family is unrealistic. They are rejecting the pursuit of both career and romantic success.

"It's too troublesome," says Kishino, when I ask why he's not interested in having a girlfriend. "I don't earn a huge salary to go on dates and I don't want the responsibility of a woman hoping it might lead to marriage." Japan's media, which has a name for every social kink, refers to men like Kishino as "herbivores" or *soshoku danshi* (literally, "grass-eating men"). Kishino says he

doesn't mind the label because it's become so commonplace. He defines it as "a heterosexual man for whom relationships and sex are unimportant".

The phenomenon emerged a few years ago with the airing of a Japanese manga-turned-TV show. The lead character in *Otomen* ("Girly Men") was a tall martial arts champion, the king of tough-guy cool. Secretly, he loved baking cakes, collecting "pink sparkly things" and knitting clothes for his stuffed animals. To the tooth-sucking horror of Japan's corporate elders, the show struck a powerful chord with the generation they spawned.

Kishino, who works at a fashion accessories company as a designer and manager, doesn't knit. But he does like cooking and cycling, and platonic friendships. "I find some of my female friends attractive but I've learned to live without sex. Emotional entanglements are too complicated," he says. "I can't be bothered."

Romantic apathy aside, Kishino, like Tomita, says he enjoys his active single life. Ironically, the salaryman system that produced such segregated marital roles – wives inside the home, husbands at work for 20 hours a day – also created an ideal environment for solo living. Japan's cities are full of conveniences made for one, from stand-up noodle bars to capsule hotels to the ubiquitous *konbini* (convenience stores), with their shelves of individually wrapped rice balls and disposable underwear. These things originally evolved for salarymen on the go, but there are now female-only cafés, hotel floors and even the odd apartment block. And Japan's cities are extraordinarily crime-free.

Some experts believe the flight from marriage is not merely a rejection of outdated norms and gender roles. It could be a long-term state of affairs. "Remaining single was once the ultimate personal failure," says [Tomomi Yamaguchi](#), a Japanese-born assistant professor of anthropology at Montana State University in America. "But more people are finding they prefer it." Being single by choice is becoming, she believes, "a new reality".

Is Japan providing a glimpse of all our futures? Many of the shifts there are occurring in other advanced nations, too. Across urban Asia, Europe and America, people are marrying later or not at all, [birth rates are falling](#), [single-occupant households are on the rise](#) and, in countries where economic recession is worst, young people are living at home. But demographer [Nicholas Eberstadt](#) argues that a distinctive set of factors is accelerating these trends in Japan. These factors include the lack of a religious authority that ordains marriage and family, the country's precarious earthquake-prone ecology that engenders feelings of futility, and the high cost of living and raising children.

"Gradually but relentlessly, Japan is evolving into a type of society whose contours and workings have only been contemplated in science fiction," [Eberstadt](#) wrote last year. With a vast army of older people and an ever-dwindling younger generation, Japan may become a "pioneer people" where individuals who never marry exist in significant numbers, he said.

Japan's 20-somethings are the age group to watch. Most are still too young to have concrete future plans, but projections for them are already laid out. According to the government's population institute, women in their early 20s today have a one-in-four chance of never marrying. Their chances of remaining childless are even higher: almost 40%.

They don't seem concerned. Emi Kuwahata, 23, and her friend, Eri Asada, 22, meet me in the shopping district of Shibuya. The café they choose is beneath an art gallery near the train station, wedged in an alley between pachinko pinball parlours and adult video shops. Kuwahata, a fashion graduate, is in a casual relationship with a man 13 years her senior. "We meet once a week to go clubbing," she says. "I don't have time for a regular boyfriend. I'm trying to become a fashion designer." Asada, who studied economics, has no interest in love. "I gave up dating three years ago. I don't miss boyfriends or sex. I don't even like holding hands."

Asada insists nothing happened to put her off physical contact. She just doesn't want a relationship and casual sex is not a good option, she says, because "girls can't have flings without being judged". Although Japan is sexually permissive, the current fantasy ideal for women under 25 is impossibly cute and virginal. Double standards abound.

In the Japan Family Planning Association's 2013 study on sex among young people, there was far more data on men than women. I asked the association's head, Kunio Kitamura, why. "Sexual drive comes from males," said the man who advises the government. "Females do not experience the same levels of desire."

Over iced tea served by skinny-jeaned boys with meticulously tousled hair, Asada and Kuwahata say they share the usual singleton passions of clothes, music and shopping, and have hectic social lives. But, smart phones in hand, they also admit they spend far more time communicating with their friends via online social networks than seeing them in the flesh. Asada adds she's spent "the past two years" obsessed with a virtual game that lets her act as a manager of a sweet shop.

Japanese-American author [Roland Kelts](#), who writes about Japan's youth, says it's inevitable that the future of [Japanese relationships will be largely technology driven](#). "Japan has developed incredibly sophisticated virtual worlds and online communication systems. Its smart phone apps are the world's most imaginative." Kelts says the need to escape into private, virtual worlds in Japan stems from the fact that it's an overcrowded nation with limited physical space. But he also believes the rest of the world is not far behind.

Getting back to basics, former dominatrix Ai Aoyama – Queen Love – is determined to educate her clients on the value of "skin-to-skin, heart-to-heart" intimacy. She accepts that technology will shape the future, but says society must ensure it doesn't take over. "It's not healthy that people are becoming so physically disconnected from each other," she says. "Sex with another person is a human need that produces feel-good hormones and helps people to function better in their daily lives."

Aoyama says she sees daily that people crave human warmth, even if they don't want the hassle of marriage or a long-term relationship. She berates the government for "making it hard for single people to live however they want" and for "whipping up fear about the falling birth rate". Whipping up fear in people, she says, doesn't help anyone. And that's from a woman who knows a bit about whipping.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/20/young-people-japan-stopped-having-sex>