



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

HUGVÍSINDASVIÐ

Courtship in Japan and Iceland

Then and Now

Ritgerð til BA-prófs í Japönsku Máli og Menningu

**Thelma Rún Heimisdóttir
September 2015**

**Háskóli Íslands
Hugvísindasvið
Japanskt Mál og Menning**

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Kt: 060692 – 2549

Leiðbeinandi: Gunnella Þorgeirsdóttir

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine and compare the ritual of courtship and dating in Iceland and Japan in modern times and how they relate to each other i.e. similarities and differences. This thesis will attempt to give a general overview of the history of courtship, marriage and dating around the world to explain the general background of each term. The thesis discusses the history of courtship and marriage in Iceland and Japan to learn the differences and similarities between those two cultures during history as well as today and how it has evolved into modern dating. In order to attain the best research possible, miscellaneous literature sources were used as well as several interviews were conducted.

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Introduction

Where there is love there is life. (Ghandi, 2001, p. 12)

While primitive instincts may play a large role in the courtship behaviour of most people, social and cultural factors form the framework within which it is normally expressed. Courtship is important for people to reproduce, and if we assume primitive instincts affect our courtship behaviour, we can question whether people from different societies perform courtship in a similar manner around the world. Consequently, it is of interest to compare the courtship rituals of two island nations situated so far apart geographically and whose cultures differ considerably.

During my year abroad in Japan, I experienced various culture clashes between the opposite sex and myself. What I considered normal friendly behaviour, the Japanese males considered to be flirting. Many of my non-Japanese female friends also had this experience, and some of them wondered how they could successfully date the Japanese males they were interested in. With many of them failing, this extreme culture clash and various consequent embarrassing situations led me to want to research and study the different courtship behaviours between Iceland and Japan.

Iceland and Japan have a few similarities in regards to their environment such as geology (earthquakes and volcanoes), food (fish) and even habits such as taking one's shoes off when entering a house. However, the two have stark contrasts when it comes to social habits and customs. Especially in relation to courtship traditions and dating habits. I have always found it interesting how Japan and Iceland are similar in some ways yet so different. It is very intriguing to see how different traditions and cultures have been practiced throughout history, and how different historical events have shaped Japan and Iceland into the countries that they are today. Such as the events of World War II affected Iceland and Japan in a way that both countries largely avoided the industrial age and headed straight into the technological age.

As part of my research for this paper, I interviewed both Japanese and Icelandic people, asking them various questions about how courtship and dating are performed in

each respective country. The first chapter of this research paper will explore prehistoric courtship and explain how and why humans performed courtship, and will also explore how prehistoric courtship evolved into modern courtship. The history of marriage and dating around the world will also be delved into, so the reader can understand how marriage and dating works, and also to enlighten the reader on the history of marriage and dating among heterosexual couples. The first chapter will also look into the definitions of courtship, marriage and dating. The second chapter will then explore the history of Icelandic and Japanese courtship. Iceland's courtship will be investigated from the 8th century, due to the fact that Iceland was first settled in the 9th century. However, Japan's courtship will be explored as far as the Jomon period (14,000-300 BC) to understand how courtship has evolved throughout the centuries. The differences and similarities between Iceland's and Japan's courtship will also be highlighted. The third chapter will then explore the modern courtship and dating lifestyle within Japan and Iceland among young, straight adults who have never been married. The results of the interviews will be used in the last chapter to enlighten the reader on how native Icelandic people and native Japanese people have experienced courtship and dating in their respective countries.

In this thesis, I will attempt to compare the history and culture of courtship between Iceland and Japan, examining the similarities and differences between the two countries while making use of both literature research and interviews. The aim is to unearth where the differences lie and how and why they drifted into different directions from each other within their modern dating lifestyle.

Methodology

Multiple interviews were conducted as part of the research for this paper, the process was twofold, first in Iceland and later in Japan, with the large majority being in an organized school setting, which will be explained later. The first respondent was Rúna Hjaltsted Guðmundsdóttir from Hafnarfjörður, Iceland. She participated in two interviews. Rúna Hjaltsted Guðmundsdóttir is a historian in Medieval and Ancient History, Art History and Medical History. Her Masters thesis was about friendship in medieval Iceland. She is also a

lecturer at Hamrahlid College where she teaches Art History, History of Medicine and Medieval History. Due to her vast knowledge of history I wanted to interview her about the history of marriage throughout Europe and Iceland. The interview concerning marriage in medieval Europe was conducted on May 5th 2015, and the interview about Icelandic medieval marriage was conducted on August 23rd 2015. In the latter interview, she also answered questions relating to the dating lifestyle in Iceland during the 1960s-1980s.

The majority of the interviews were with students, the exception being an in-depth interview was conducted on the 31st of August 2015 with an 85 year old man from Hafnarfjordur in Iceland, and a 79 year old woman from Reykjavík in Iceland. Both of the interviewees answered questions about their courtship experiences during the 1940s-1950s in Iceland.

The second part of the interviews was conducted by the researcher at Gakushuin University in Tokyo, Japan in November 2014. A total of 25 Japanese students were interviewed separately, 14 females and 11 males, ranging in ages from 18-22 years old. The teacher advertised for willing participants at Gakushuin University, highlighting the fact their names would not be used, only their age and gender. The interviews were performed in a classroom while other foreign students were also interviewing their Japanese subjects at the same time, which could have affected the results somewhat due to the shyness of answering some of the questions. The fact the interviewer was also a female foreigner and that it was done face-to-face might have affected the results due to gender, misunderstanding and shyness. These factors were taken into consideration. The respondents were asked a set of ten questions, only these questions were allowed to be asked and conversations were not allowed. However before the interviews were conducted the participants were asked if they were heterosexual, seeing as the project was related to heterosexual relationships. Some female participants found it difficult to answer the question: "What would you like in a prospective partner?" as they found the question to be embarrassing. Therefore, the interviewer had to give examples of their own to encourage the female interviewees to answer. The questions can be found in Japanese on page 48.

Chapter 1 - What is Courtship?

1.1 Prehistoric Pair-bonding

Since the emergence of modern humans about two hundred thousand years ago, humans have evolved physiologically as well as behaviourally. As humans evolve so do their behaviours and traditions, which is why *courtship* has a few definitions that are the same, yet slightly different. Courtship is defined by the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary as: “the activities that occur when people are developing a romantic relationship that could lead to marriage or the period of time when such activities occur.” Another definition from Merriam Webster is: “the behaviour of animals that leads to sexual activity or the period of time when such behaviour occurs”. The meaning also varies between each individual. For certain individuals, it is an old-fashioned word used to describe when men pursue and woo women for their hand in marriage while social scientists use the word to describe the act of selecting a mate. For tens of thousands of years, humans have engaged in pre-sexual or pre-marriage courtship rituals that have evolved through time alongside themselves.

The *Pleistocene period* (c.a. 1.6 million to 10.000 years ago) is an important era in human evolution because it was during this time that human nature as we know it today developed and evolved (Miller, 2000, p. 179-180). Around 1.6 million years ago, at the very beginning of the Pleistocene period, our ancestors had slightly smaller brains, walked upright and made primitive tools (Miller, 2000, p. 180). Near the end of the period, our ancestors had evolved into modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) with more developed brains and more complex tools and had in addition begun to migrate out of Africa. Human relationships also evolved significantly during this period.

Courtship rituals were presumably an essential guide for early humans to find an ideal partner and thus essential for successful breeding (Britannica, 2015, n.p.). In this sense, it is similar to the way animals in the wild perform courtship activities and so, arguably, the latter definition of courtship applies here. Scriptures did not exist until after

prehistoric times,¹ which ended around 3500 BC when Egyptian and Mesopotamian scripts started appearing (Coulmas, 2003, p. 173). Therefore, scientists have very little to refer to when researching human behaviour, traditions, and rituals of prehistoric times. Consequently when scientists attempt to explain the details of courtship rituals of early humans, specifically the Pleistocene period, they often look to how animals behave in nature, especially chimpanzees as they are our closest cousins (Miller, 2000, p. 182). Our ancestors usually lived together in small groups during the Pleistocene period; females and their offspring lived together near to where the food source was great and males lived together near where the females were (Miller, 2000, p. 181). This gradually evolved into monogamy when females benefited from finding food alone and each male would then separate from the group and form a pair with the lone female (Miller, 2000, p.183). This behaviour can also be seen in various species of monkeys such as lemurs, gibbons, African monkeys (Miller, 2000, p. 183). However, harem-type groups also existed during the Pleistocene period. If food distribution was enough for several females, they would form a group and a single male would attempt to join that group and try to exclude other males from sexual access (Miller, 2000, p. 183; Ellsworth & Connolly, 2015, p. 68). It seems the main purpose of courtship during the Pleistocene period was essentially to drive ahead sexual selection. During the late Pleistocene period, our ancestors started to migrate out of Africa, marking the start of a new chapter in human history: the creation of different cultures and traditions, and the beginning of the evolution of romantic courtship.

The period immediately following the Pleistocene period, called the *Holocene period*, began around c.a. 11,700 years ago and continues to this day according to Rabett & Jones (2014) (as cited in Walker et al. 2009, n.p.). It is sometimes called the “Age of Man” due to the fact that it includes all of recorded human history (Miller, 2000, p. 180). Eleven thousand years is a long time for alterations to take place and so, naturally, an abundance of factors regarding human nature and their habits had been reshaped since the Pleistocene period. As evolutionary psychologist Geoffrey F. Miller (2000) puts it:

¹ According to Merriam-Webster prehistoric means: “of, relating to, or existing in times antedating written history”.

It [the Holocene period] saw the emergence of inherited wealth, arranged marriages, hierarchical societies, patriarchy, feminism, money, prostitution, monogamous marriage, harems, personal ads, telephones, contraception and abortion. (p. 180)

Courtship during the Holocene period changed dramatically and those changes paved the way for modern courtship and monogamous marriage as we know it today.

1.2 The Making of Marriage

Since the development of marriage, its definition and purpose, along with its rites and responsibilities, have changed a lot throughout history and appear in a wide variety of forms in relation to different cultures, social cultures and periods in history. To confuse things further, the meaning of marriage also varies from person to person. When interviewees were asked how they would define marriage, the most popular definition was that of two people pledging an oath of eternal love. Although, in its broadest sense, marriage is an institution in which two (or more) people form an interpersonal union that is recognised legally, religiously, or socially - and interpersonal relationships are recognised (Haviland, Prins, McBride, Walrath 2011, p. 209). There are numerous variations of marriage when it comes to the number and gender of spouses involved. However, the following two types are the most commonly occurring throughout the world and throughout history: monogamy², the practice of being married to one person at a time, and polygamy³, the practice of being to more than one person at a time (Haviland et al., 2011, p. 209). As well as having numerous roles in various cultures, marriage also has a multitude of purposes that have evolved since its birth. Polygamy can also be split into two sub-groups: *polyandry*, when a female marries more than one male, and *polygyny*, when a male marries more than one female (Bowker, 2000, p. 450).

Pair-bonding is proved to have been around since before 10,000 BC (Miller, 2000, p. 177). However, the origin of ceremonies to commemorate a life partnership (*i.e.* marriage) is a problem that most anthropologists seem to disagree on, due to lack of evidence. Although there are many theories as to why humans may have begun to marry. The

² from Greek *monos*: single, *gamous*: marriage

³ from Greek *poly*: many

historian Coontz (2005) argues that the goal of marriage was to build relationships between groups for cooperation, therefore the children had relatives in two groups rather than one. On the other hand, Lévi-Strauss (1949) claimed the origins of marriage came from exchanging women; in order to establish ownership, inheritance of land and even arranging alliances. There are many theories as to why marriage arose, however, most if not all historians seem to agree that the main reason for marrying was not for love, but for legacy. According to Coontz (2005), marriage was also used to strengthen affiliations usually within the same family; cousin-marriage (marriage between first or second cousins) was often practiced and still remains common today throughout the world. For example in the year 2007 58.5% of marriages in parts of Saudi Arabia were first cousin marriages (Atighetchi, 2007, p. 257). During the Middle Ages in Europe, many royal and aristocratic families practiced eugenics, a pseudo-science which justified racial superiority by using genetics, therefore many aristocratic families married their cousins or within their other people within their aristocratic group. In some cases, parents would marry their child to the spirit of a deceased child in order to strengthen familial bonds - this type of marriage is referred to as a *ghost marriage* and it has been practiced throughout history in Asia (Coontz, 2005, p. 26). Throughout history in many cultures, parents often married their young girls to older men, this could have been due to the short lifespan of humans (Saller, 1993, p. 89). Often times the children could not refuse to marry and they didn't have the authority to choose their own partner; everything was decided and arranged by their parents (Rowling, 1968, p. 74). Arranged marriages and child marriages have been practiced throughout the world and throughout history such as; Ancient Rome, Ancient Greece, Middle Ages in Europe and Imperial China. Even in modern times child marriage is practiced in many developing countries. Marrying children is illegal in many countries today and is denounced by human rights organisations (United Nations Population Fund, 2012, p. 12). The minimum legal age for women to marry is 18 years in around 158 countries, in the present day. However according to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (2014), in certain civilisations such as South Asia and parts of Africa, many children under the age of 18 are arranged to be married, specifically girls and many of those girls marry older men.

The modern Western image of marriage is a long life commitment of two people who are in love, a monogamous institution. On the other hand, many Western societies engage in serial monogamy, which is having many spouses consecutively instead of at the same time (Ferraro & Andreatta, 2014, p. 226). However, polygamy was a preferred type of marriage in some early civilisations, where in most cases, it was the man who had several wives (polygyny). Gradually, from the 19th century onward polygamy became illegal in more and more countries around the world (Coontz, 2005, p. 26). Although there are countries in modern times where polygamy is legal due to a mixture of cultural and religious reasons, such as in Egypt and Iran. Cultures that practiced polyandry (when a woman is married to multiple men) were in the minority. An example of this can be found in some societies living in the Himalayan mountains, where a family of brothers would marry the same woman to avoid dividing land between different households (Levine, 1998, p. 375).

For a long time, marriage was a personal matter between families. On the other hand, it soon became an official institution administered by religious and civil powers, although numerous traditions and rules were still important in a religious wedding ceremony. The earliest surviving proof of the establishment of marriage comes from *Ur-Nammu* (c.a. 2100-2050 BC), an ancient law code from Mesopotamia which was written on clay tablets. A handful of laws from *Ur-Nammu* show the specifics for the regulation of marriage, such as punishments for adultery, marriage between slaves, and also acknowledgement of the situation when children were born to slaves (Edzard, 2015). In ancient Rome, marriage was strictly monogamous and was governed by imperial law until the fall of the Roman Empire in the 5th century (L. Adkins, R. Adkins, 2004, p. 377). In Imperial China, a legal code called the *Great Qing Law Code* was the legal code of the Qing dynasty (c.a. 1644-1912 AD) had many strict, specific laws pertaining to marriage. Most if not all of these laws were actually restrictions rather than allowances. Failing to adhere to these laws led to severe punishments by the state (Xu, 2012, p. 185). Marriage was also largely influenced by Confucianism and was seen as a filial duty to one's parents. According to Baker (1979), the parents of the groom chose a wife for him, the wife's duty was to

continue the family line and help with household chores of the family rather than just being her husband's wife.

Coontz (2005) states that between the sixth and ninth century, monogamy became the favoured type of marriage in Western cultures. This was mainly due to the fact that men were often not able to provide for multiple women (and their children) at a time. Monogamous marriages were also largely influenced by Christianity and the Catholic Church, and by the ninth century monogamy became the main principle of Christian marriage. Another characteristic of marriage in the Middle Ages in some countries around the world, was that marriage between social classes was often forbidden - aristocrats married aristocrats and peasants married peasants (R. Guðmundsdóttir, personal communication, May 5, 2015). This highlights the importance of stability and legacy in marriage, and the minor need for love and romance. *Gratian's Decretum* (Latin: *Decretum Gratiani*) is a compilation of almost 3,800 texts, compiled by the Benedictine monk Gratian in ca. 1140 (Britannica, 2015). The texts are a collection of religious laws and regulations, which were used by canonists of the Roman Catholic Church up until 1918 (Landau, 2008, p. 23). Gratian's Decretum had texts which revolved around the rules of marriage and one of the rules called for the verbal consent and consummation of couples to forge a marital bond (McCarthy, 2004, p. 22). No longer could couples be forced into marriage unless they gave verbal consent (McCarthy, 2004, p. 22).

In medieval Europe where the Catholic Church had authority, the Church accepted the validity of a couple's marriage if the couple declared they had exchanged vows, even without witnesses (Coontz, 2005, p. 2). This led to another canon law to help reduce the influx of invalid marriages. The canon law required prospective newlyweds to post public notices or banns in their local parish, otherwise their marriage was not considered valid (R. Guðmundsdóttir, personal communication, May 5, 2015). Governments soon began to become more involved in the matters of marriage. In some countries, their governments required by law that prospective newlyweds obtain marriage licenses and that the marriage be performed in an official ceremony by a minister. Otherwise, the marriage would be deemed invalid (R. Guðmundsdóttir, personal communication, May 5, 2015). This led to civil

marriage, a marriage that has no religious affiliation but is a marriage recognised and recorded by the state and also governed by its laws.

As societies grew more complex over the next several thousand years, marriage evolved into a worldwide institution adopted by numerous societies and religions. In consequence, the reasons for marriage became more than merely being a way of securing heirs and withholding land. Due to the division of people into lower and upper classes, the purpose of marriage slightly varied between the classes. People of wealth and the elite often married to gain political allies and for economic considerations such as to combine their wealth and land, or even unite dynasties (R. Guðmundsdóttir, personal communication, May 5, 2015). Likewise, those who came from little or no wealth married for similar political and economical incentives as the wealthy, although on a much smaller scale (Coontz, 2005, p. 6). Marriage also became to be about equality between the husband and wife, both of them sharing labor and ensuring both have equal rights in marriage and divorce. These changes in straight marriages helped introduce the possible legalisation of gay marriage in many countries. Seventeen countries in the world have allowed same-sex couples to marry, and as of June 26th 2015 America has also legalised gay marriage (“US supreme court“, 2015). Up until the early 19th century, the role of marriage was a practical one - something that would benefit the family as whole. It was not until later that love became the main reason for marriage.

In 17th century in most of Europe and North America a marital revolution occurred. Due to the Enlightenment political, economic and cultural changes brought about changes in conventional marriage for the first time in a few hundred years (Coontz, 2005, p. 7). Many Enlightenment philosophers even examined marriage and the theory of happiness within marriage (Abbott, 2011, p. 138). The economy was moving from an agricultural economy to a market economy, which meant that a large number of individuals no longer had to rely on their parents for inheritance of land or work. It also could have meant individuals could choose their own partner based on affection and not out of necessity for inheritance or legacy. This was the start of a new form of marriage: *love marriage* or *autonomous marriage* (Coontz, 2005, p. 5). Arranged marriages were slowly dying out and people were

encouraged to marry for love which before was seen as irrational and even harmful to a successful marriage as it was a weakness identified as sin (Rowling, 1968, p. 15). People undoubtedly had fallen in love with their partner or other people, however it was not the main or sole reason for marriage but it was seen as something that could possibly develop over time (Coontz, 2005, p. 6). This change also led to several other sociological changes such as; the right to divorce, equal rights for women (surviving economically without having to marry), the right for same-sex partners to marry and also the roles of the man and the woman in marriage. Marrying for love was also a huge change for the equality of women. Throughout history, men were permitted to have mistresses and concubines by law, whereas it was frowned upon for women. Now women do not have to tolerate a loveless marriage to have a secure future. This revolution of love soon spread to Asia in the early 20th century although some marriages are still arranged nowadays and some even employ a matchmaker to help them find a partner. Marriage has changed considerably throughout history and as our economy continues to change and globalisation grows, perhaps the purpose of marriage will change yet again in the future.

1.3 The Dawn of Dating

As previously mentioned, the original purpose of marriage was to secure a legacy for a given family, and it was most often the parents who arranged the marriages. Thus, a “trial period” before the arranged marriage was probably not necessary. Although arranged marriage was still the predominant form of marriage for hundreds of years, a rebellion against arranged marriages led to the importance of love, romance and chivalry in medieval courtship (Powell, 2015). According to Powell (2015), medieval courtship in Europe is most likely the predecessor for today’s traditional romance and dating etiquette, due to its infamous chivalry (Medieval Chivalry section, para. 3).⁴ *The Medieval Code of Chivalry* that developed in the 12th century (c.a. 1170-1220) for knights, was a system of moral, religious and social

⁴ “the system of values (such as loyalty and honor) that knights in the Middle Ages were expected to follow” or “an honorable and polite way of behaving especially toward women”, according to Merriam Webster Dictionary (2015).

code of knightly conduct; bravery, honour, loyalty, courtly manners and gallantry toward women (R. Guðmundsdóttir, personal communication, May 5, 2015). It was introduced into literary works such as *Tristan and Isolde* and made famous in medieval literature, poems and ballads such as the *Arthurian legends* centered on King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table⁵ and in the Spanish novel *Don Quixote* (sp. *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha, 1605*). This helped to further strengthen the idea of courtly love and chivalry in medieval courtship. Similar to various animal species in the animal kingdom, the women were often passive and the men aggressive during courtship. Men would often have to write romantic poetry and sing songs of love to try to woo the women they had an interest in marrying or were arranged to be married to (Powell, 2015). Which is usually referred to as courting someone *i.e.* courtship. An example of the romantic love poem *Foy Porter*, from the 14th century by the French poet Guillaume de Machau (trans. Brians, 1997):

Refrain:

<i>Foy porter, honneur garder</i>	I want to stay faithful, guard your honor,
<i>Et pais querir, oubeir</i>	Seek peace, obey
<i>Doubter, servir, et honnourer</i>	Fear, serve and honor you,
<i>Vous vueil jusques au morir</i>	Until death,
<i>Dame sans per.</i>	Peerless Lady.

An interesting point made by Coontz (2005) was that many men and women did perform acts of adultery during the medieval times in Europe. The aristocrats of that time considered adultery to be the highest form of love and men often wooed women other than their wives - whom they had married for political reasons and not for love. Undoubtedly in other parts of the world it was the opposite, such as in New Mexico and Paraguay, the women were the courtiers and proposed to men they wanted as partners (Westermarck,

⁵ Chrétien de Troyes,(1130-1191), was a french poet known as the author of five Arthurian romances

1922, p. 158). In China, due to the influence of filial piety from Confucianism, courtship and love was viewed as unnecessary to a traditional marriage, according to Baker (1979). As mentioned before, the main purpose of a Chinese marriage was to carry on the family lineage. Courtship was usually practiced by men who had concubines a custom that was also practiced in Japan and Korea (Coontz, 2005, p. 16).

In the Western world during the early 1800s, if a young, fair maiden would catch the eye of a strapping, young lad and he'd take the modern approach of walking up to her and asking her to go out for an evening meal, it would have been considered a social catastrophe - particularly in England and America. According to Phegley (2012), following the rules and ethics of courtship of that time, the young man would first have to be introduced to her by a mutual friend. If both parties were interested in each other, they would proceed to meet under the watchful eyes of the young girl's parents until they deemed it acceptable for them to meet un-chaperoned. While chaperoned, the couple would spend a certain amount of time getting to know one another before the marriage ceremony. Similar to medieval courtship, romance was also a big factor in Victorian courtship and became an art form among the aristocrats; many men attempted to woo future wives with love letters and poems. Arranged marriage became unfashionable and it seemed love was becoming the basis of Victorian marriage (Phegley, 2012, p.36). Seeing as love marriage was becoming more acceptable, it (possibly along with other changes) likely ushered a new form of courtship: dating.

1.4 Modern Dating & Techno-dating

The courtship rituals and rules from the medieval times and Victorian era are particularly different from modern courtship, which is usually referred to as *dating*. Dating seems to be a recent modern evolution of courtship. The evolution process from courtship to dating is often debated and still uncertain. Although, as sociology professor of Harvard University, Martin Whyte (1990) suggests; "the rise of individualistic and consumption and market-oriented philosophies" aided in the evolution of dating (p. 17). Despite all of this, how would one define the term "dating"? Defining it is incredibly difficult as it means

something different to each person, each culture, each religion, and each social class. For each person, it can also mean something different to them at various stages in their lives. So all in all, there is not one complete definition of the word “dating”. Some people think of dating as an enjoyable distraction from their lives to let off some steam. While others think of dating as a serious process, where people determine whether the person they are dating could become a potential life partner. However, according to Britannica (2015), dating is defined as: “In societies in which individuals choose their own mates, dating is the most typical way for people to meet and become acquainted with prospective partners. Successful dating may result in courtship, which then usually leads to marriage”. Dombusch et al. (1981) also define dating as “a social engagement between two young people with no commitment beyond the expectation that it will be a pleasurable event for both” (as cited in Burgess and Locke, 1945, n.p.).

Dating can be seen as the modern, more liberating version of courtship. People usually choose their own mate by themselves - only sometimes seeking approval from their parents - and proceed to have regular romantic appointments, known as *dates*, to see if their chosen mate could become a potential life partner. A few people even date several people in their lifetime before finding someone they’d want to spend the rest of their life with. Some couples choose not to marry, even while living together, or instead continue to date each other for the rest of their lives. In contrast to courtship, a date often takes place in public and customarily consists of various activities that the couple enjoy together such as eating a meal, watching a movie or going to an amusement park. However, in some parts of the world such as in the Middle East and South Asia, it is frowned upon if a couple goes out by themselves in public (Bowen & Early, 2002, p. 96).

For the past few decades, advancements in technology have given us things such as computers and smartphones, which have become a part of daily life. This inevitably leads to changes in human communication and as a consequence the social platform of dating has evolved at a rapid rate. A new platform of dating called *online dating* was formed in the mid-1990s (Kauflin, 2011, para. 1). Most individuals who date online would normally use an online dating service to find a partner with whom they can develop a personal, romantic or

sexual relationship. Online dating services are websites, such as *match.com* and *eharmony.com*, which provides users with a matchmaking service over the Internet. The users upload pictures of themselves and also upload personal information about themselves, *e.g.* age, gender, location, hobbies etc. on their online profile (Grabianowski, 2005). This enables other users to find their ideal partner all over the world by searching the website's database using the above information. The previously mentioned dating service, *match.com*, was launched in the year 1995 and was the first online dating service available on the internet (Match.com, 2013). Since the emergence of *social networks* such as *MySpace* (founded in 2003) and *Facebook* (founded in 2004), online dating became a byproduct of social networking. Since the year of the launch of *match.com*, many dating services have since then been developed. Some websites even cater to the specific needs of its users - *e.g.* sexual orientation, religion, race and hobbies - broadening the platform of online dating. An example of this would be *millionairematch.com* and *gaydar.net*, the former catering to the needs of millionaires and the latter for homosexuals. The number of people who use dating sites is growing as the internet becomes more ingrained into our daily lives.

However, online dating is not only restricted to computers and laptops, as recently smartphones have played a huge part in introducing a new alternative to meet partners. A smartphone is a multifunctional phone that enables its users to do more than call and text; such as accessing the internet, using calculators, checking emails and so forth (Merriam-Webster, 2015). Even though smartphones have been around since 1992, they became immensely popular and more sophisticated in the mid-2000s when the *iPhone* and the *Android* were introduced to the market (Lobo, Kaskaloglu, Kim, Herbert, 2011, p. 33). The *iPhone* and the *Android* completely redefined smartphones by implementing touchscreens to their smartphones and also adding more advanced application, sometimes shortened to app (singular) and apps (plural) (Lobo et al., 2011, p. 34). All sorts of applications are available to entertain smartphone users; for instance gaming apps, music apps, learning apps and dating apps.

A dating app called *Tinder* was launched on September 15, 2012. Tinder is described as “...a location-based social discovery application that facilitates communication between mutually interested users. The dating app allows users to chat with their matches.” (Tinder Inc., 2013) This dating application introduced a new form of meeting people for a casual or serious relationship. Compared to online dating sites, Tinder is simpler as the user does not have to make a profile as their Facebook profile is automatically uploaded. They swipe right on their smartphone if they find someone who they like, mainly based on their outer appearance, and if they find someone who is mutually interested in them they can message each other (Tinder Inc., 2013). Also, unlike dating websites, Tinder is more focused on finding people within a short distance of the user. It seems as though as long as technology continues to play a big role in human lives, we can assume social interaction will evolve alongside the evolution of technology.

Courtship has come a long way since the early pair-bonding in the Pleistocene period. As societies became more complex, marriage and marriage laws were formed to bring about order among the unification of a couple. Marriage was not practiced for love until the 19th century, however, we can assume that primitive instincts did play a part in the role of marriage throughout the ages. As people married for the benefit of their offspring, as well as for their family, whether that was land, money, alliances or legacy. However, as arranged marriages declined dating became popular as did love marriages. Every country in the world has practiced different customs and traditions within courtship and marriage, and the differences are even bigger when it comes to countries on the opposite side of the Earth.

Chapter 2 - Historical Courtship & Marriage: Iceland & Japan

2.1 Iceland

During the Viking era in Iceland (c.a. 870-1200 AD), the sole purpose of marriage between the stronger families was not love but the inheritance of land, wealth, brokering alliances and even settling animosities. Which was similar to the rest of Europe during that time (Bagge, 2010, p. 109). In the Viking sagas, courtship was portrayed in a rather negative light.

If a man courted a woman in the sagas it usually ended in death for him, as Frank (1973) states: "The sagas all agree in representing courtship as the single most deadly pastime for the young Icelandic male". The Vikings believed a man courting a woman did not consider the family's best interests but his own, this was thought to be dangerous for the family's economic and social welfare since families often tried to increase their social status in society, specifically the poorer families (Carter, 2015, p. 98). Another reason as to why courtship was hardly practiced was the restrictions against love poetry. While love poems were an incredibly popular method of courtship in mainland Europe and in Japan, they were not accepted in Icelandic society (Foote & Wilson, 1970, p. 112). Magic spells are often written in the form of poetry, so the Vikings believed that the poems acted as spells which supernatural powers such as gods or trolls would use to ensnare the maiden (Foote & Wilson, 1970, p. 112). This was probably so the parents of the intended could control the whole marriage process. Much like the deadly urban legends from America that scare teenagers into not having premarital sex.

While under Norwegian rule, a collection of Icelandic laws from the 13th century called *Grágás* was introduced to Iceland (Dennis, Foote & Perkins, 2007, p. 9). *Grágás* had various laws regarding marriage, which indicate that Icelandic people of that time practiced arranged marriage. According to *Grágás*, the father of the family chose the groom or the bride for his children. However if the father was not present or had passed away the eldest son (if he was over 16 years of age) would choose the bride or groom for his siblings and even his own mother (Gísladóttir et al, S. Kristjánsdóttir, Þ. Kristjánsdóttir, & Harðardóttir, 2004, p. 9).

In the early settlement period in Iceland (c.a. 874-930 AD), the Vikings had two different kinds of pagan marriage customs which were practiced in Germanic countries; *Kaufehe* and *Raubehe* (Jochens, 1995, p. 17). *Raubehe* (German for marriage by capture) is a practice which the Viking men have been notorious for. During the time when Viking men traveled and engaged in battle abroad, they also raped and captured women taking them back to their native land. This could have lead to marriage between the captor and the captive, although according to some sagas some women were captured as slaves and might

have married other colonists once they had settled down in Iceland (Jochens, 1995, p. 18). However, *Raubehe* was not practiced within Iceland and other Viking colonies due to the Viking's tendency to retaliate with a vengeance if someone hurt their family (Carter, 2015, p. 92). *Kaufehe* which means marriage by purchase in German, was an economic arrangement made by the fathers of the bride and groom (Carter, 2015, p. 92). Although the father of the bride often had to wait for a suitor to propose marriage and the father decided whether or not the marriage should proceed (Carter, 2015, p. 92). The arrangement allied the two families making sure the families would promise to help and protect each other (Frank, 1973, p. 473). This meant that marriage was more centred around the family's interests rather than of the individuals getting married. According to the some Icelandic family sagas, the engaged couple did have a say in their marriage especially if they were of higher status - which was in contrast from most of Europe at that time (Carter, 2015, p. 94). Both the man and the woman could also initiate divorce (Byock, 2001, p. 320). Considering the fact that the families pledged an oath to protect each other, the relationship between the married couple had to be pleasant so the families could cooperate and so they could successfully run a farm and/or household.

Marrying between classes was very rare, especially during the Sturlung period (c.a. 1050-1270 AD), so the bride and groom often came from similar backgrounds and were equal in social prestige and wealth - a concept called *jafnræði* (Icelandic for equal match) (Carter, 2015, p. 97). Although most often the groom's family was usually a little wealthier than the bride's family, which meant it was difficult for the intended to refuse the engagement (Carter, 2015, p. 97). People of little wealth were not allowed to marry according to the law, as their children were thought to be a burden on their society (Jochens, 1995, p. 21). After several meetings and as long as the bride's family accepted the proposal, a date for the pagan wedding would then be set - usually on a Friday in Autumn to honour the goddess of marriage Frigg (Davidson, 1990, p. 112). Also, in autumn there would be enough food for a wedding ceremony and good weather for guests who travelled from afar (Gísladóttir et al., 2004, p. 6).

Iceland has been ruled over by both Norway and Denmark separately, from 1281 AD until 1918 AD (Parnell & O'Carroll, 2007, p. 28). Marriage laws and customs, therefore, became quite similar to the rest of Scandinavia. When Iceland was free from Danish rule in 1918, new laws were introduced to the land which had a profound effect on the social lives of Icelandic people (Gísladóttir et al., 2004, p. 13). Until then, civilians in Iceland continued to marry to combine assets until love marriage started to take over during the 20th century (Gísladóttir et al., 2004, p. 13). New marriage laws were introduced to Iceland the year 1921, these laws did not state whether the parents had any control over who their children should marry (Gísladóttir et al., 2004, p. 13). This law and also other changes within society brought about a revolution in courtship which led to love marriage in Iceland (Gísladóttir et al., 2004, p. 13).

During the next several decades, courtship changed slightly. Especially in the 1940s when American and British armies settled in Iceland and the infamous *Ástandið* (Icelandic for "The Situation") happened (Karlsson & Ragnarsson, 2006, p. 257). The name for this period is used to highlight the influence that American and British soldiers had on Icelandic women (Karlsson & Ragnarsson, 2006, p. 257). Many of them courted and even married Icelandic women, which could have had a great effect of the transition to dating within Icelandic culture (Karlsson & Ragnarsson, 2006, p. 257).

2.2 Dating in Iceland during the 20th Century

Karl Daníel Finnbogason was born and raised Siglufjörður in Iceland in 1930. Coming from a family of fishermen, he spent most of his youth out on the sea and travelled to different ports in the country by boat. When he was 19 years old he met his late wife of 65 years in Neskaupsstað. Sigrún Hjaltsted was born and raised in Reykjavík in Iceland in 1936. She came from an affluent family and travelled abroad from a young age. She has had two husbands both of whom she met during the earlier years in 1950. Both of them experienced courtship during the 1950s and also remembered the courtship of their parents during the 1930s. When asked whether the American and British armies had influenced courtship while settled in Iceland during the 1940s, they both answered:

The American and British armies did influence courtship to some extent. Many women were involved with the soldiers for a short period and many men tried to imitate the soldiers' behaviour, such as dating. Dating activities such as going to see the movies and going out to eat ice-cream was very popular.

They pointed out that they believed their parents did not participate in such activities and that after the soldiers left these activities became quite popular. The activities were limited due to the lack of affordable places where young couples could go on their dates. They went on to mention how they met and what their courtship was like. Karl explained how he first met his late wife at a dance in Neskaupsstað, he initiated their conversation. A year passed when they met again at the same place which is when they decided to meet after the dance and become a couple. Due to the fact that they were both quite poor they could not afford to go out to restaurants or go on many dates, although they did once to see the movies and spoke a lot over the phone. He also mentioned that he would send her love letters. Sigrún then explained how she met her current husband and her ex-husband. She explained how people their age were always with a group of friends of the same gender when they went out; people usually would not go out by themselves. She met both her husbands at a theatre in Reykjavík. Both her husbands initiated the conversation and asked her out on dates; they went out for ice-cream, went out often to see the movies, and spoke often on the phone. Although both husbands and Sigrún herself came from affluent families, none of them could afford the expensive restaurants in Reykjavík. We can draw a conclusion from their stories that people of little wealth could not afford to go dating often, they would get to know each other over the phone and through letters. On the other hand, wealthy people had the chance to experience the dating lifestyle.

When asked whether they knew of any instances of arranged marriages they both responded that they had never heard of arranged marriage happening in their lifetime and pointed out they found dating culture in Iceland to be very progressive. The dating culture in Iceland seemingly gained a following quite soon after World War II and seemed to be heavily influenced by foreign customs. This possibly affected courtship and may have even introduced dating to Icelandic culture. Dating was a fairly new social engagement after the Second World War and became quite popular in Iceland during the 1960s-1980s (R.

Guðmundsdóttir, personal communications, August 23, 2015). The dating culture was influenced by mostly American media such as TV shows, movies and books (R. Guðmundsdóttir, personal communications, August 23, 2015). Dates were usually a car ride around the city, going to the cinema or eating at a restaurant (R. Guðmundsdóttir, personal communications, August 23, 2015). Icelandic independence, American and British soldiers, and foreign media all influenced courtship and introduced dating to Icelandic culture which continued to evolve during modern times.

2.3 Historical Japanese Courtship

The history of Japanese dating and courtship is a long and ever-changing one. It can be divided into eight periods: Jomon-Yayoi (c.a. 12,000 BC - 240 AD); Yamato (250 AD - 587 AD); Azuka-Early Heian (593 AD - 1000AD); mid- to end Heian (1018 AD - 1192 AD); Kamakura Shogunate and Nanboku-cho (1192-1336 AD); Muromachi-Asuka-Edo (1336-1568-1603-1867 AD); and Meiji-Taisho-Showa-Heisei periods (1868-1912-1926-1989-present AD) (Quah & Kumagai, 2015, p. 117).

In ancient Japan, from the Jomon period (c.a. 14,000-300 BC) to the Yayoi periods (c.a. 300 BC-250 AD), *nai-kon* was practiced (Quah & Kumagai, 2015, p. 117). *Nai-kon* means that within a small group of hunter-gatherers many men shared one woman (Quah & Kumagai, 2015, p. 117). Later in the period once the groups came together and built communities and farms, people started to look for partners outside of their small groups (*gai-kon*) and marriages came to be considered community-centred (Quah & Kumagai, 2015, p. 117) Thus, individuals married within their community or people who they already knew. By the Heian period in the 12th century, marriage had become more family-centred and was considered to be a merging of the households, based on political interests or money issues (Dunn, 1969, p. 63). Heian marriage also had certain conditions, as stated by McCullough (1967):

- 1) the physical relationship between a man and woman, continuing normally over an extended period of time and resulting in children; 2) the recognition of the relationship by the society as an accepted mode of behaviour; and 3) the acknowledgement of family responsibilities (however minimal) by both members of the marriage. (p. 104)

These were the basic conditions for marriage in Heian society and when these conditions were fulfilled the relationship between the couple was elevated to that of wife and husband. An equal social status was also important in aristocratic Japanese marriages in order to further the man's career while also making sure the woman had financial and social protection for their children (McCullough, 1967, p. 137). Like the Vikings, Japanese men and women of the Heian both also had the right to initiate divorce (McCullough, 1999, p. 141). Arranged marriage was also popular during this time period in Japan.

Much like Icelandic people, the Japanese parents arranged the marriage for their children (Dunn, 1969, p. 63). However the difference is that many of the aristocratic Japanese parents, arranged the marriage often through a go-between or a mediator, referred to as *nakodo* in Japanese (Motona & Beitz, 1983, p. 172). However among the lower class marriage depended more upon the feelings of the couple involved, due to their poverty they did not have much to gain or receive from arranged marriages (Dunn, 1969, p. 63). Quah & Kumagai (2015) suggest that the role of the *nakodo* was important as he was the one who investigated the families, arranged the meetings and assisted in making a decision (as cited in Yamada & Shirakawa, 2013, 163-165). This form of mate-selection is called *Omiai Kekkon* (literally meaning "meet-and-look marriage"). *Omiai* was practiced profusely among the samurai class, although by the Meiji period it had spread throughout the classes (Kumagai, 2014, p. 102). Parents who had an interest in setting up their child with a future spouse would first meet up with the *nakodo* and pick a family from the same social background, who they thought would be suitable enough for their child. As stated by Kumagai (2014), each family was thoroughly investigated to confirm they were from the same social and economic backgrounds (as cited in Kodansha, 1983, n.p.), the intended were then introduced to each other by older family members (usually the parents) and the *nakodo* (mediator). Although the intended were usually not informed about the arranged marriage until the negotiations and investigations were completed (Davies & Ikeno, 2002, p. 166). The parents of the couple and the *nakodo* always attended the meetings until they believed it to be appropriate for the couple to meet by themselves. Providing the families were impressed with each other, a date was set for the wedding. The wedding ceremony

was often of Shinto tradition while Buddhist weddings were less common (Davies & Ikeno, 2002, p. 166).

Dissimilar to Iceland, it seems there was only one form of courtship: love poems. Especially during the Heian period (794-1192 AD), which is famous for its romantic love poems among the aristocrats and it was an extremely important element in Japanese relationships (Schalow, 2007, p. 12). According to many literary sources of that time, such as the *Kokinshu*, almost all romantic relationships seem to have begun with poems. The parents complete involvement in the love lives of their children could have affected courtship in some way and sending poems to one another could have become the easiest form of courtship. The men most likely courted their lovers with love poems which they had written themselves, and the women answered them with poems of their own. Adultery and polygamy was not rare amongst the aristocrats, both the wife and the husband might have had lovers outside their marriage to whom they also wrote poems to, and some high-ranking men might have had a few wives at once (Ebrey & Walthall, 2014, p. 264, McCullough, 1999, p. 141-142). An example of a love poem by an anonymous *waka* poet from the early Heian period (trans. Rodd & Henkenius, 1996, p. 213):

*warinaku mo
nete mo samete mo
koishiki ka
kokoro o izuchi
yaraba wasuren*

*irrationally
I long for my love whether
asleep or awake
where can I send my heart that
it may forget you in peace*

The living arrangements of the married couple changed greatly throughout the centuries up until the 13th century. Going back to the Yamato period (*c.a.* 250-710 AD) the married couple never officially formed a household together or lived together. Instead, the husband would make nightly visits to his wife and would sometimes stay the night; both the wife and the husband lived apart in their parent's home (Kumagai, 2014, p. 42). Therefore, the husband married into his wife's family, which was referred to as *muko-iri*, and living arrangements were matrilineal (Ochiai, 2015, p. 124). This changed slightly in the early Heian period (*c.a.* 794-900 AD) to the mid-end Heian period (*c.a.* 900-1185 AD), living arrangements were still matrilineal, however, the groom immediately cohabited with the

bride and her family (Kumagai, 2014, p. 42). The father of the bride was the head of the wedding and sometimes asked the groom to court his daughter before marriage (Kumagai, 2014, p. 43). Nearing the end of the Heian period (c.a. 1086-1192), the married couple started to make their own independent household with financial help from the bride's family (Kumagai, 2014, p. 44). During the rise of the Kamakura Shogunate (c.a. 1185-1333 AD), the living arrangements of the bride and groom changed slightly yet again. The living arrangement was referred to as *mukotori-kon* and meant the wedding took place with the bride moving into the residence of the groom's parents after the parents moved out or passed away (Kumagai, 2014, p. 45).

From the 14th century up until the 19th century there was a great change to the marital systems of Japan. Through the rise of the samurai, the marital system changed into a patrilocal system (McCullough, 1999, p. 639). Women were now marrying into men's families and living in the groom's family's residence, this was referred to as the *yometori-kon* (Kumagai, 2014, p. 46). Although the household head of the groom's family would decide whether or not they would accept the bride into the family (Kumagai, 2014, p. 46). This led to the family lineage becoming patrilineal, the wife not receiving any property rights and conceiving a son became her main purpose in the marriage (Kumagai, 2014, p. 46).

2.4 Japanese Courtship in the 19th-20th Century

During the 1870s, a young American girl by the name of Clara Whitney moved to Japan with her father. She wrote a diary during her stay in Japan and noted all her observations and cultural differences. In one of Whitney's (1979) entries it reads:

Here the youth of the two sexes keep entirely separated and never mingle as we do, and they couldn't very well, for the morals manners, etc., are so different from those at home. A girl *must* marry whom her parents will and, as she sees very little of other men, she does not know what it is to love until after she is married. (p. 97)

It would be worth mentioning that in America, dinner parties with the intention of courtship were held where young men and women mingled and interacted (Bardsley & Miller, 2011, p. 103). Which we can assume was unheard of in Japan during that time according to Clara

Whitney's diary entry. We can also assume that arranged marriage was still the preferred type of marriage and courtship before an engagement was possibly quite rare.

Nearing the end of the Meiji Period (*c.a.* 1868-1912 AD), courtship and marriage seemed to have slightly changed once again. A newspaper article dating back to 1904 says:

If a susceptible Jap [sic] loses his heart to a fair young Japanese maiden... He must obtain the service of a trusted friend to arrange with the damsel's father for permission to become a suitor for the hand of the daughter.⁶

This could imply that young Japanese individuals started to become more independent in their love lives - they did not have to depend on their parents to arrange a marriage for them. It also seems as though it became socially acceptable for Japanese men to request their friend to ask a lady's father's permission for him if he could court her. If the author did not romanticise the situation, it also seems as though some people might have started to marry for love - due to the wording "...loses his heart..." Although this could have been quite rare as up until the 1940s around 70 percent of marriages were arranged (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, 2011). Many factors could have affected this change in Japanese courtship, although it could be that the change in the foreign relations policy might also have had a great effect. The Japanese foreign relations policy *Sakoku* which was legislated by the Tokugawa shogunate remained in effect from *c.a.* 1639-1854 AD (Ito, 1992, p. 8). This policy caused Japan to close its borders to foreign trade and also foreigners. After the borders opened up again goods could be traded and foreigners could visit. There could be a possibility that foreigners could have brought ideas to Japan that might have affected courtship, as the traditional Japanese courtship was slowly but surely evolving towards a more Western ideal; i.e more independent courtship.

In the 1920s terms such as *mobo* (shortened from *modan boi*) and *moga* (shortened from *modan gāru*) were emerging, the former meaning "modern boy" and the latter meaning "modern girl" (Wollaeger & Eatough, 2012, p. 573). Modern girls and boys of the 1920s were similar to America's flappers in the 1920s; a sexual and independent revolution.

⁶ <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=TS19040521.2.21>

According to Lancaster & Leonardo (1997), the *Modern Girl* and *Boy* arose due to Westernisation and foreign influence (p. 494). Yet Silverberg (2006) argues that the Modern girl was “not on a Western trajectory” and a “highly commodified cultural construct crafted by journalists” (p. 51). Perhaps it was a mixture of the two that influenced the creation of the Modern Girl and Modern Boy rather than just one solely having such a big impact in Japanese culture. Perhaps there are also other factors that also play into the creation of the Modern Girl and Boy which are unknown. According to Silverberg (2006), the Modern Girl was depicted as flirtatious and sexually promiscuous, so we can assume that she as well as the Modern Boy, probably chose their own suitors (p. 54). The Modern Girl was also financially and emotionally independent (Silverberg, 2006, p. 59). Couples who were dating were referred to as *abekku* (comes from the French word *avec* meaning “with”) (McLelland, 2010, p. 18). There were not many places for *abekku* couples to go on their dates, however, these places increased steadily after World War II (McLelland, 2010, p. 18).

After the Second World War in the Showa era, arranged marriages started to decline (IPSS, 2011). Courtship and marriage started to revolve around the individual's interests and feelings, rather than for political reasons or for the family's interests. Many factors seemed to have affected the change in courtship and marriage in Japan. Such as foreigners in Japan who introduced new customs to Japanese people. However, Japanese people who worked and studied abroad might also have witnessed the differences in courtship in America, Europe and other parts of the world; this also might have affected the change in courtship and the influx of dating. The growing independence of women also had an obvious influence. Although, dating was probably still quite rare until the mid-1950s (Mente, 2004, p. 215). The sudden rise in dating culture then led to arranged marriages decreasing and *renai kekkon* (love marriage) increasing. Moving into the Heisei period we see a more modern approach at courtship blossoming and dating was starting to take hold.

Chapter 3 Modern Courtship & Marriage: Iceland and Japan

3.1 Icelandic Perceptions

In Iceland, children born out of wedlock seems to be very common, in 2014 70.5% of the children born in Iceland were born out of wedlock (“Undir 30% barna”, 2015). This is completely contrasting in Japan where around 2% of children born in 2005 were born out of wedlock (Hertog, 2009, p. 2). We can assume this has not changed much in Japan due to the stigma and difficulty of out-of-wedlock childbearing. As stated by Hertog (2009), “...economic theories predict a low birth rate outside wedlock in Japan...single motherhood is an economically disadvantageous decision” (p. 5), due to the fact that welfare for single Japanese mothers is quite weak (Hertog, 2009, p. 5). We can also assume due to the high birthrate of out of wedlock children in Iceland, that there perhaps little or no stigma at all - due to the liberal attitudes toward premarital sex within Icelandic society.

Various articles have been written about Iceland’s dating lifestyle, and many of them write about the lack of dating in Iceland - such as the article “Why is there no dating in Iceland?” written by *Reykjavík Grapevine’s* Valur Gunnarsson.⁷ Clearly indicating that dating before entering a relationship does not seem very popular in modern day Iceland as expressed by a 24-year-old interviewee.

I do not believe dating is very popular among young Icelandic people. I have not been personally aware of any dating lifestyle among my friends. At least not until the couple is in a serious relationship and call each other “boyfriend and girlfriend”.

According to her, Icelandic people are too shy to go out dating in public with a person with whom they are not in a serious relationship with. Iceland is a small country with a population of only a few hundred thousand, so gossip and rumours start easily which is something many Icelanders would rather avoid. She then described her perception of how Icelandic people usually meet their prospective partners.

Hook-up culture is very popular in Iceland. Most of my friends met their partners downtown in bars and clubs. Many young Icelandic people go downtown and at the end of the night

⁷ <http://grapevine.is/mag/column-opinion/2013/11/26/why-is-there-no-dating-in-iceland/>

usually go home with someone they met at a bar. If they meet that same person again downtown on a night out and go home with them a few times, it is thought they are heading towards a serious relationship.

This is also mentioned by Gunnarsson (2013) in his article: "...Icelanders almost always hook up at bars and almost nowhere is not a subject that needs debate". An interview taken with a young woman in *Morgunblaðið* also believes that there is no dating culture within Iceland and explains it's perhaps due to shyness in Icelandic males (María, 2015). She also pointed out an interesting point about how Icelandic people court. Instead of first wooing their person of interest or introducing themselves, they kiss them. According to the interviewee, kissing has become a way of greeting people, at least downtown on a night out.

According to the interviewee, internet dating seems to be very popular in Iceland and she went on to describe how some of her friends and acquaintances met their partners on Tinder - even a few people over the age of 40 met their partners on the dating app. She claimed Icelandic people are not shy or afraid of dating via the internet due to the small population of the nation.

Icelandic people are very liberal, free and independent. There also has been no reason for arranged marriages for hundreds of years, especially in modern times. There are no social classes, so there is no reason for people to marry someone of a higher social status to elevate their own. Also, Iceland is a small country and everyone knows everyone, there is no reason for people to make connections through arranged marriage.

The interview along with articles on the subject (Gunnarsson, 2015; María, 2015) would indicate that dating is not very popular among young, single Icelanders. However, courtship behaviour among Icelanders seems to quite liberal due to the so-called "hook-up" culture. However referring to the previous chapter, dating was quite popular in the 1980s, somewhere between the 1980s and 2010s began to decline and the hook-up culture became popular instead. It would be interesting to see how the hook-up culture will affect marriage rates and divorce rates in the future, however it could be having an effect on STD rates among Icelanders - in 2012 1.893 cases were diagnosed with chlamydia (Stefánsson, 2013). Supposedly, Iceland has the highest rate of chlamydia in Europe and compared to other Nordic countries Icelandic women have more sexual partners (Stefánsson, 2013). The average rate of chlamydia per 100,000 residents in Iceland during 2007 was around 600

while in Japan there was an average rate of around 30. Taking into account the popularity of the hook-up culture in Iceland, we can assume that it might affect the rate of chlamydia in Iceland.

3.2 Japanese Modern *Omiai Kekkō* & Technological Dating

A few decades ago in Japan, women were expected to stay at home housewives and mothers. Today that view has changed somewhat and many women are choosing careers over marriage, or choose to get married later in life (McLelland, 2000, p. 85). Dating in Japan also seems to be a complete post-war sensation influenced by Western standards. According to a survey done by IPSS (2010), the average age of women getting married for the first time was 28.5 in 2010 (compared to 25.3 in 1987) and the average age of men was 29.8 in 2010 (compared to 28.2 in 1987). Looking at the numbers we can see that Japanese are getting married later in life compared to previous years and that the numbers seem to be getting higher - while arranged marriage seems to become less popular as time goes by.

In modern Japan arranged marriage is steadily declining; although it still exists in a more modern form - today around five percent of marriages are arranged (IPSS, 2011). Contemporary *Omiai Kekkō* is quite similar to the traditional version in that the young couple are introduced to each other through a mediator at meetings, which is organised by an older family member, friend or even their boss from work (McLelland, 2000, p. 86). The person who organises the arrangement is usually of higher age or of higher social standing than the couple (Applbaum, 1995, p. 37). Sometimes the young couple contacts a matchmaking agency separately of their own agenda without another's involvement, especially people who are very busy with their careers (McLelland, 2000, p. 86). However Farrer & Gavin (2012) claim that mediated forms of dating such as *omiaï*, are a way to reduce the anxiety and stress that some feel when meeting complete strangers (p. 711). The contemporary *Omiai Kekkō* also seems to have evolved into being more considerate towards the interests of the betrothed with suggestions from the parents and the *nakodo* himself, rather than being completely centred around the interests of the parents. It is also more acceptable in modern matchmaking for either side to turn down the other (Hendry,

2010, p. 138). This has become the mediator's job to tactfully turn down the rejected party (Hendry, 2010, p. 138). Therefore the modern mediator's job has more responsibilities compared to the traditional mediator; other responsibilities include the development of the relationship until they get married or until the couple decide to separate (Hendry, 2010, p. 138). According to Applbaum (1995), Japanese people who go through the process of *omiai* tend to want their potential spouse to come from the same environment as themselves - they seem to be uncomfortable with a stranger who they know nothing about (p. 37).

Due to the fact arranged marriage is becoming less popular, online dating seems to be slowly gaining popularity as a technological matchmaker (Farrer & Gavin, 2012, p. 711). Online dating offers users to get to know each other without any face-to-face interaction that seems to be a comfort for some Japanese people (Farrer & Gavin, 2012, p. 711). According to Farrer & Gavin, people also appreciate the fact they can end communication easily online without any embarrassment (p. 717). On the other hand, online dating may not be as popular as regular face-to-face dating, as a result of the negative stigma in Japan that seems to be attached to online dating. *Deai-kei* (translates to online dating website in Japanese) appears to have a particularly bad reputation in Japan as it is sometimes associated with sexual assault and prostitution (Farrer & Gavin, 2012, p. 711). Assuming that foreign or domestic dating sites manage to erase the stigma that is attached to online dating, perhaps online dating could become even more popular within Japan.

3.3 Japanese Interviews about Dating

Modern perceptions towards dating in Japan can be gleaned from the several interviews conducted. According to an in-depth interview with a 21 year old male, modern dating in Japan has taken on a few forms such as "group dates" (*gōkon*), which seem to be quite popular in Japan among college students and high school students. Group dates in Japan consist of social activities by a group of friends, usually of mixed sex, by which they get to know one another better. The social activities often take place in public in places such as restaurants, amusement parks or *izakayas*, which are Japanese-style pubs. Some couples, he mentioned, often meet for the first time on group blind dates, while others organise a

group date so their friends can get closer to the object - by first becoming friends. A problem referred to was that many young Japanese people are too shy to ask a stranger out on a date and that it also seems as though they want to get to know each other's personality before the relationship gets too serious. Many Japanese relationships generally start off as a friendship (which is the purpose of the group dates) and it is quite a subtle and lengthy process for the relationship to develop into a romantic one, which could often take months. After several group dates, the couple go on a private date to get to know each other even more, without telling their friends or family; the first date usually takes place in an aquarium or at a movie theatre. Most Japanese male respondents indicated that the aquarium was a perfect place for a first date, and reasoned that aquariums give off a romantic atmosphere. While all the female respondents answered "At the movie theatre" and argued that once the movie was over, if there would be an uncomfortable silence, they could talk about the movie the couple had just seen.

When asked how to indicate an attraction, all of the female respondents answered if they had confidence they would greet the person they were interested in whenever they saw him. Interestingly, all the male respondents answered they would try to become her friend. So it would seem that Japanese males are more aggressive than the females when it comes to initiating courtship.

Once the relationship becomes more serious, the female or the male confess their love (*kokuhaku*) to the other often using the word "*suki*" which translates directly to "like". Once either the female or male has confessed, they are considered to be officially dating and choose to call each other "boyfriend and girlfriend". Some couples choose to announce their new relationship to friends and family while others keep it a secret until they feel ready to announce their new relationship. Interestingly, the 21-year-old-male respondent mentioned that if the couple are of high school age many young Japanese teenagers ask their parents for permission to pursue the relationship.

When asked what their reason for dating is, all of the respondents answered that they hoped for a serious relationship due to the fact they already know the personality of the person they are interested in. Which was in contrast to the answer of the Icelandic

respondent gave: "If Icelanders date, they date strangers to get to know one another's personality within a casual or private setting".

Conclusion

Within the span of mere two hundred thousand years of human history, courtship rituals have evolved greatly. During the Pleistocene period, courtship was necessary for successful breeding, which again was necessary for the survival of their species. During the Holocene period, as humans evolved into more complicated beings, it also meant their social habits became increasingly complicated, as did the reason for courtship. To complicate things even further, marriage was born.

In its broadest sense, it seems as though from the early Holocene period up until the 19th century, many people married to regulate money, to secure land ownership and to create allies. Which meant many marriages were arranged by the parents of the intended in order to regulate this. The major decision for marriage was to secure their legacy - the survival of their family lineage. Which is similar to prehistoric courtship as courtship was for the survival of their own species, instead of the whole human race. It seems as though as humans evolved more, their reason to practice courtship became more centred on the individuals themselves. Prehistoric courtship was for the survival of the species and historical courtship was for the survival of the family lineage. However, modern courtship (dating) seems to be a mixture of both in many countries. Increasingly individuals in modern times choose the best possible mate they can find, fall in love, and mate. Whether that be via the internet or other means. Quite possibly unaware of the greater implications yet conscious only of their own interests. Meanwhilst, some countries in the world still practice arranged marriages to secure family lineages.

Historical courtship and marriage in Japan and Iceland seemed to have the same focus as other countries throughout history – to have been family centred. Although with moderate differences due to their own traditions and customs. Similar to historical Japan, Icelandic marriage was practiced during the Viking era to ensure legacy. Yet interestingly, courtship and love poems, were not practiced as they were not considered appropriate. Which was in contrast with Japan as the upper classes only form of courtship were love poems - and some Japanese fathers even asked the groom to court his daughter. Another point that was also interesting was that equal status of the couple was of paramount

importance in both Icelandic and Japanese marriages, to ensure their legacy would be protected or even in some cases to ensure their legacy would be worth more.

The current research has shown that Iceland's and Japan's courtship traditions and actions leading up to marriage throughout history have been quite similar until influences, such as Sakoku in Japan and Ástandið in Iceland, possibly had the greatest effect on the social constructs within each country. Research has also shown that modern Iceland has become so liberal in its courtship that the dating lifestyle is dying out, while Japan is still quite conservative in its courtship and the dating lifestyle exists yet the marriage rate is declining – the two extremes. However, in-depth interviews were only conducted with one young Icelandic woman and one young Japanese man, due to unavoidable circumstances, which means the data received from these interviews are not concrete and explain only their perception of dating within their respective countries. Although their experiences do give an indication of how courtship behaviour is performed among some young people within their country, as they also mention experiences they heard from their friends. This material would be worth pursuing at a future date to do a more precise in-depth study. Seemingly, various customs and habits seem to have affected the courtship of Iceland and Japan respectively, eventually leading to each country practicing different versions of courtship. Icelandic people have always seemed to be quite independent, something deeply-rooted within their society, as Viking couples did have a say in their marriage even though it was arranged while Japanese couples of the Heian period probably had very little, if any say at all. Therefore it can be suggested that Japanese people still practice arranged marriage in the modern sense due to their busy career lives and also to preserve their honour. Icelandic people are more liberal towards pre-marital sex that could explain why their out-of-wedlock birthrate is so high. While in Japan it is incredibly low in comparison to Iceland.

It has become obvious that these cultural factors affect courtship behaviour within each country, as the respondents from the Japanese interviews declared they date for the purpose of serious relationships. The basic concept of courtship is to find a mate, although the method of finding a mate and what is deemed normal and acceptable is clearly different

in each culture. Old traditions and customs clearly had an effect and still have an effect on courtship and dating in today's society. However a question remains, will these traditions and customs still continue to affect courtship in the future as our world gets smaller?

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Personally Conducted Interviews

Finnbogason, K. (2015, August 31). Personal interview.

Guðmundsdóttir, R. H. (2015, May 5). Personal interview.
(2015, August 23). Personal interview.

Hjaltested, S. (2015, August 31). Personal interview.

Ooyama, K. (2015, June 4). Personal interview.

Þorkeldsdóttir, D. (2015, August 31). Phone interview.

Appendix

Interviews

An interview was performed on November 2014, at Gakushuin University in Tokyo, Japan. In which 25 students participated and answered the following questions.

1. あなたは同性か異性ですか。
2. 好きな人ができたら、自分からアピールしますか。告白しますか。
3. あなたはどのようにアピールしますか。
4. あなたの理想のタイプはどんな人ですか。
5. 何でデートしたいですか。
6. 初めてのデートで、どこに行きたいですか。
7. デートで何をしたいですか。
8. 別れたいとき、どうしますか。
9. ナンパすることかアピールすること、どちらをしますか。ナンパについてどう思いますか。
10. どこで結婚相手を探したらいいと思いますか。