

An Introduction to Sociology of Shyness

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This paper attempts to explore the possibilities of “Sociology of Shyness”. There are a few sociological studies about shyness. I am, however, thinking that “shyness” is very interesting topic from the viewpoint of a current social and cultural change in Japanese society. Recently people come more and more to be expected or forced to actively participate in human relationships and master high social and communication skill to get job and have girlfriend or boyfriend.

Therefore it is informative to review the history of emotion culture/rule about shyness, a passive attitude in interactions, in American society which is known for very active mode of communication. McDaniel (2003) is only one study about shyness in terms of constructionist approach to mode of communication. She examined the historical changes of social value on “shyness” in some social spheres, namely, heterosexuality, work place, and friendship. I introduce her discussion and point some deficits and questions. These works could provide very useful framework to study the changes of discourse on communication mode in Japanese society.

There is another important issue in the study about shyness. “Shyness” came to be serious problem in the late 1970s, when some psychologist picked up it as one topic of psychology. Then, “Shyness” tends to be replaced by or incorporated into “Social Phobia/ Social Anxiety Disorder”. McDaniel (2003) is valuable as a case study of “Medicalization of Shyness”. I supplement her study with some documents, and suggest that we try to examine the relations among individualization, mental health professionals, and normative communication mode.