

THE EMERGENCE OF TRENDSETTERS FOR FASHIONS AND FADS: Kogaru in 1990s Japan

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Analyses of fads and fashions often note the importance of trendsetters whose early adoption of novelties provides an example for others to follow. However, trendsetting is usually taken for granted; there is no effort to explain why some groups assume fashion leadership. This article seeks to account for the rise of *kogaru* (stylish high-school girls) as trendsetters in 1990s Japan. We argue that trendsetting requires resources—particularly leisure time to devote to fashion, disposable income, and communication networks. Kogaru became trendsetters because they gained these resources at a time when the female college students who preceded them had less time for trendsetting, and when economic recession made inexpensive items of the sort kogaru could afford more desirable fashion objects. At the same time, new electronic technologies sped the flow of information among kogaru, while media coverage of this new social type gave kogaru visibility in the larger society.

Many contemporary commercial fashions and fads share a pattern of social organization (Meyersohn and Katz 1957; Miller 2000, pp. 184–186). Their creators seek to promote the new fashion or fad, while media coverage draws attention to the novelty and its dissemination as the innovation spreads among adopters. Georg Simmel ([1904] 1957) argued that adoption begins among those of high status and then trickles down through a status hierarchy as individuals of progressively lower status seek to emulate those above them. In contrast, scholars of diffusion distinguish among adopters at different stages of an innovation's spread; the earliest adopters are not necessarily of high status, but they belong to networks that bring them news of innovations, and they have sufficient resources to afford the risks of experimentation, as well as a willingness to break with tradition (Rogers 1995, pp. 263–280).

In discussing the dissemination of fads and fashions, sociologists often speak of taste-makers or trendsetters who play key roles in influencing other adopters (Meyersohn

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and Katz 1957, pp. 598–599; Crane 2000, pp. 6, 194). Again, these trendsetters often are not the high-status figures envisioned by Simmel. Many observers have noted that the trickle-down model seems ill-suited to account for many fashions and fads that originate in lower-status subcultures before spreading to higher-status groups (Field 1970; Wolfe 1970, pp. 32–42; Polhemus 1994). For example, in recent decades, ethnic minorities, homosexuals, and youth became early adopters of many novelties that then spread widely.

While allusions to trendsetters are fairly common, trendsetters' role in the process of adopting fads and fashions has not received systematic attention. This article addresses this neglected topic, by offering a case study of the rise and role of *kogaru* as trendsetters in 1990s Japan.

KOGARU

Kogaru¹ (or *kogal*) is a term for stylish, high-school age girls in Japan. “Ko” evokes both high school (*koukou*) and smallness (for example, *kodomo* means children). “Garu” reflects the Japanese pronunciation of the English word “gal.” Thus, kogaru means high-school gal or small gal. The term supposedly emerged among the staffs of discos in the early 1990s, when female high-school students became a more visible segment of the clientele (Henshu-bu 1998).

Kogaru should not be understood as simply a demographic category, as referring to all girls of high-school age. Rather, the word designates a recognizable “social type” (Klapp 1962), analogous to such American social types as “yuppie” or “soccer mom.” Kogaru usually are urban; they are girls particularly attuned to matters of style, identifiable by their clothing and grooming choices. These styles, of course, change from season to season and year to year. In addition, this social type has evolved, with new subtypes emerging in recent years, including *datsu-gyaru* (post-kogaru), *ane-gyaru* (older kogaru), *ganguro* (heavily tanned kogaru, so as to resemble African Americans), and *bihaku-gyaru* (nontanned, white-skinned kogaru) (Watrous 2000; Sunji Mikami, personal communication, 2001; Talarowska-Kacprzak 2001). While many kogaru know and interact with other kogaru, they should not be viewed as a single subculture but rather as a category used by Japanese observers to classify youth. That is, kogaru is a recognizable social type, distinguished by age, sex, and styles of dress, grooming, and consumption. Obviously, the degree to which given individuals manifest the characteristics associated with the social type will vary. Again, our focus is the emergence of kogaru as trendsetters within Japanese society.

Media coverage of kogaru during the 1990s had two major themes—sexual deviance and trendsetting (Kinsella 2002). The press initially linked kogaru to various deviant sexual arrangements, including *burusera* (selling used school uniforms or underwear to fetishists), *enjo-kousai* (dating businessmen for money), and prostitution through *tele-cura* (firms that mediate telephone conversations between males and females). The media reported that kogaru engaged in these behaviors, not because they were desperately poor but because they wanted to earn spending money (Yamamoto 2000). Some critics warned that these sexual activities reflected a moral collapse that should be addressed through moral education (Stroh 1996; Watts 1997), although others argued that deviance was simply a more profitable alternative to the modest wages kogaru could earn by working in fast-food shops or family restaurants (Miyadai 1994; Kohama

1998). Although the commentators assumed that the number of sexually deviant high-school girls was increasing, there was no strong evidence to support this claim, although *burusera*, *enjo-kousai*, and *telecura* were new ways of linking young women to male customers seeking sexual services. While the initial media coverage sensationalized the sexual deviance of kogaru, we focus on kogaru as trendsetters.

As time passed, Japanese media coverage began to shift their focus to kogaru's role in setting trends. "Between 1995 and 1998 real schoolgirls in uniform became a perpetual presence on national television. . . . many intellectuals suggested that the concept 'high-school girl' had itself become a kind of unofficial brand label" (Kinsella 2002, pp. 227, 229). Television programs, magazines, books, and newspapers often covered kogaru's lifestyles: "High school students make up only 4% of the population [in Japan]. But these young women in particular command a disproportionate share of the media and marketing spotlight. Firms are targeting them in hopes of sparking national and even international crazes" (Watanabe 1997, p. A1). Because they are young, have limited disposable income, and usually buy goods used in daily life, kogaru's fashions tended to concentrate on inexpensive consumer goods, such as snack foods and desserts (e.g., *Koala-no-march*—chocolate-stuffed cookies shaped like koala bears; *nata-de-coco*—a Philippine dessert made from fermented, congealed coconut milk), soft drinks (e.g., *Oolong Soucha*—Chinese oolong tea with a breath-freshening ingredient), toys (e.g., *Tamagotchi*—a virtual, electronic pet), clothing (e.g., *camisole fashion*²—wearing a camisole as an outer garment; *loosesocks*—long white socks that kogaru loosen at the tops so the socks hang around their calves and ankles), accessories (e.g., *Shinikake Ningyo*—a dying person doll), and stationery items (e.g., *Hybrid Milky*—a ballpoint pen with nonpermeable white ink).³

Tamagotchi and Hello Kitty were especially big fashions among kogaru. Tamagotchi was a short-lived commodity fad; Bandai, a toy company, distributed one thousand units to stores across Japan for test sales a month before the toy's official market debut in November 1996. Tamagotchi caught on with kogaru, and soon became a fad among other generations all over Japan. Bandai sold 350,000 units in just two months, and 13 million by 1998 in Japan alone (Pollack 1997; *Nikkei Trendy* 1998). Hello Kitty, a white, round-faced kitten motif, made its debut in 1974; it adorns everything from erasers to televisions and automobiles. There was renewed interest in the motif after kogaru began favoring it in the spring of 1997. Hello Kitty then caught on with junior-high-school girls and women in their twenties and thirties; about five thousand different commodities featured Hello Kitty (*Zaikaijin* 1998; McVeigh 2000).⁴

Kogaru also were trendsetters for fashions in communication tools. Electronic pagers (*pokebell* or *pocket bells*) had been mostly used for business in the 1980s, but they became a fad among kogaru who adopted them for private uses after prices fell in 1993. Soon other age groups started adopting them: 1.4 million units were sold in 1993, another 2 million units in 1995. *PHS* (a portable phone) went on the market in July 1995 as a less expensive cellular phone. PHS companies initially assumed housewives would be their main consumers because PHS was originally marketed as a cordless phone to use near the home. However, kogaru adopted it first; indeed, they rapidly replaced *pokebell* with PHS which, in turn, was replaced by cellular phones after their price fell in 1998 (Lippit 1995; *Nikkei Trendy* 1998; Sakamoto 1998). *Purikura* or *Print Club* (photo stickers) became a fad among kogaru within three months of their debut in July 1995. *Purikura* booths in Japanese cities were crowded, not only with kogaru, but also

with junior-high-school students, college students, and adults. Among girls and women in their early twenties, it became popular to swap the photos with friends and people they meet, and they carry thick minialbums filled with hundreds, even thousands, of stickers. There were more than fifteen thousand purikura machines in Japan in 1997 (Watanabe 1997; Chalfen and Mururi 2001).⁵

Many such fads and fashions that appeared in 1990s Japan began with kogaru, then spread to other age groups, including younger teens, college students, workers in their twenties, and older adults. As one Japanese journalist notes: "Fashion and fads of high school girls involve all other generations and become big trends" (Sasaki 2000, p. 158). Although other age groups started other fads (for example, *Pokemon* [a game character] among children, or British-style gardening and herbs among housewives), these fads usually faded without extending to other sectors of the population. That is, during the 1990s, kogaru became Japan's principal trendsetters for fads that other generations adopted.

THE ROLE OF TRENDSETTERS

Sociological analyses of fads and fashions can be divided into top-down models emphasizing direction and bottom-up models of selection. Directional models follow the tradition established by Simmel ([1904] 1957); they argue that fashions are established by and for elites. Thus, analyses of fashions in women's clothing during the first half of the twentieth century suggested that Parisian designers dictated shifts in fashions and that their designs trickled down as women at progressively lower positions in the class system sought to imitate their betters (Barber and Lobel 1952; Fallers 1954). Similarly, discussions of tastemakers emphasized the roles of elite designers and critics in setting tastes in art and design (Lynes 1954). Studies of diffusion often adopt a top-down orientation, in effect asking what sorts of arrangements those promoting innovations can use to maximize the prospects for successfully spreading new products or practices (Rogers 1995). Similarly, Paul M. Hirsch (1972) views fads and fashions as cultural products produced and distributed by particular industrial arrangements designed to maximize success. In directional models, high-status designers and elites set fashion agendas; although their efforts to make specific products or styles popular sometimes fail, they generally are able to exert their influence.

In contrast, other sociologists emphasize the role of selection; they argue that, for fads and fashions to spread widely, many individuals must choose to adopt them. Herbert Blumer (1969) identifies collective selection as fashion's central process; his study of the Parisian fashion world found that even the leading designers struggled to create designs that buyers, the media, and customers would select as particularly influential. More recently, Stanley Lieberman (2000, p. xiii) used parents' choices of first names for their children to study "fashion mechanisms . . . that drive tastes even in the absence of commercial influences." Selection models focus on the processes by which individuals adopt fashions or fads; while designers and other powerful figures may seek to influence these choices, these models emphasize that the adopters must eventually decide for themselves.

Trendsetters are among the first to adopt prospective fashions. Thus, trendsetters occupy a key place in the fashion process; they are early consumers who sort through the available offerings, choose some for themselves, and thereby influence the choices of

others. They set styles or trends. Their activities involve both selection (in that they make choices for themselves) and direction (in that their choices influence those of others). Trendsetters may be members of elites, such as socialites or celebrities, but they need not be, so long as their choices have the power to influence others.⁶

Trendsetters require followers. This implies a sequence: trendsetters adopt fashions before their followers do. The process also requires familiarity; followers must know about both the trendsetters and the styles or products they adopt. In general, styles adopted by the same trendsetters repeatedly flow to the same followers. Trendsetters' influence often leads fashion creators to try to co-opt them, by supplying trendsetters with new products at little or no cost, by making special efforts to make trendsetters aware of new products, or even by inviting trendsetters to participate in planning new products. Trendsetters are navigators for other consumers; they introduce new fashions to others and show their followers the direction of society's changing tastes. At the same time, trendsetters' sensibility to public tastes can help creators produce commodities that will become fashionable.

However, trendsetting is a precarious status. It is important to understand that followers are not necessarily trying to emulate—let alone join the ranks of—the trendsetters. Rather, followers may use trendsetters as a source of information about new products and styles, and they, too, must decide whether to select the same choices as the trendsetters. Followers need not ratify the trendsetter's choices and may reject their influence if they move too fast or in directions other consumers do not want to follow, that is, if their tastes are too different from the larger public's. If trendsetters' sensibility to public tastes stops helping creators produce and distribute prospective fashions, their influence as trendsetters will end, and creators will no longer rely on their sensibilities. Thus, both creators and followers constantly assess the influence of trendsetters.

Obviously, trendsetters can only exist within environments conducive to fashion (Blumer 1969). In addition, trendsetters depend upon structural and organizational supports. Social structure advantages some prospective trendsetters by making it easier for them to become immersed in developing a sensibility to public tastes. Changes in social structure may promote shifts in the groups receiving these advantages. Leisure time and discretionary income are important resources for prospective trendsetters. In addition, they need public recognition. In contemporary society, the mass media play a key role by discovering, identifying, and reporting on the activities of trendsetters. This fosters public recognition of the trendsetters and serves to greatly increase their audience of potential followers. These conditions—an environment conducive to fashion, a social structure that provides necessary resources, and social recognition—combine to encourage specific categories of people to become trendsetters.

THE SUCCESSION OF TRENDSETTERS IN POSTWAR JAPAN

Kogaru's status as trendsetters in Japan in the 1990s was new. Trendsetting is an unstable, temporary status that can shift from one category of people to another in modern society. After World War II, and until the end of the 1950s, Japanese trendsetters were usually movie stars. Most fashions and fads emerged from movies because they were the main sources of visual information at that time (*Across* 1995; IFS 1996).

In the 1960s, Japan experienced significant economic growth that greatly changed Japanese lifestyles and contributed to increased consumption; television also became

widely available. With this social change, youth in their twenties (the baby boomers) assumed the position of trendsetters. For example, in the mid-1960s, miniskirts and bowling became popular, first among youth, and subsequently all over Japan (*Across* 1995; Bandou and Ojisanbunka-tankentai 1996; IFS 1996; Sato 1997).

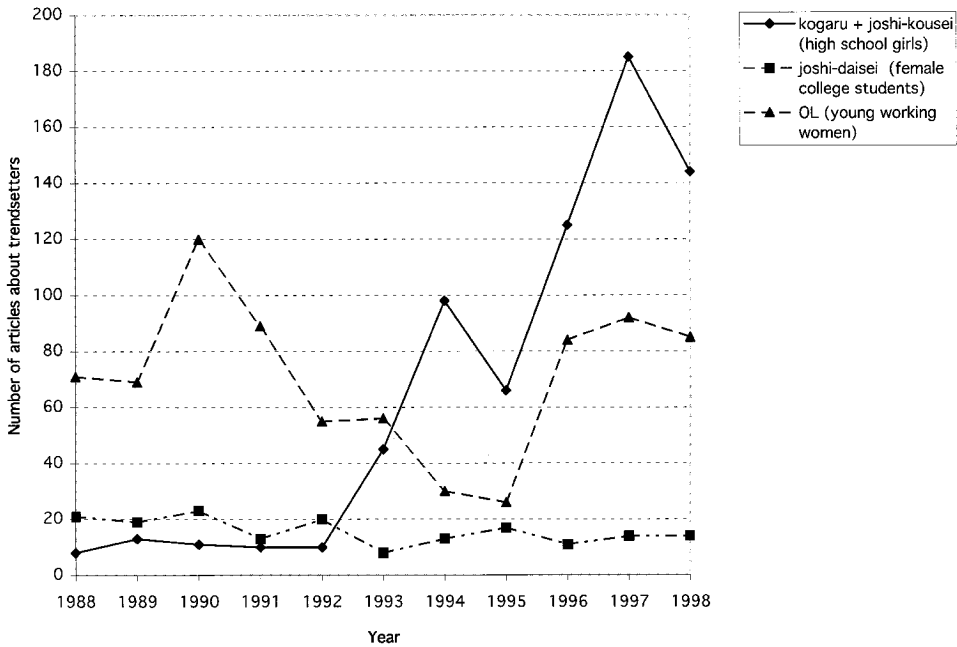
In the 1970s, college students became trendsetters. Blue jeans, which had become popular among college students through the student and hippie movements at the end of 1960s, spread to other age groups, from children to middle-aged people. College students established the *smile mark* fad (the round happy face) in 1972. Also, in the late 1970s, college students and youth in their twenties set fashions of *new tora* and *hama tora* for women, as well as *surfer fashion* for both men and women. New tora (or *new trad.*) emerged in Kobe, while hama tora (*Yokohama trad.*) appeared in Yokohama, before both spread across Japan; both featured traditional, conservative fashions (an Ivy League look), as opposed to the preceding jeans fashion that symbolized rebellion against the establishment. College students and other youth in their twenties also set fashions in brands of scarves, bags, and accessories, as well as in activities and sports such as surfing, tennis, Frisbee, skateboarding, and roller skating (*Across* 1995; IFS 1996; Sato 1997; *Kino Hyouron* 1998).

Youth in their twenties, called *shinjinrui*, set fashions and fads in the early 1980s. Some who liked avant-garde music such as new wave, punk, or techno set a *new wave* clothing fashion favoring the color black. This fashion was followed by the *Designers' Character* (DC) fashion in the late 1980s. Also, *shinjinrui*, particularly *OL* (office ladies or young business women) set fashions for *body-conn* (body conscious), *retro boom* (revival of old fashions by adding new tastes), *syochu* (a traditional alcoholic drink), *pool bar* (bars with billiard tables), fitness clubs for members only, *onsen* (hot springs resorts), and *Salad Kinenbi* (a collection of poems by Tawara) (*Across* 1995; Iwama 1995; IFS 1996; Sato 1997; *Kino Hyouron* 1998; *Nikkei Trendy* 1998).

Following World War II, then, different groups served as trendsetters in Japan. Initially, movie stars and other adult figures played the role, but young adults in their twenties became influential in the 1960s, and college students became important trendsetters in the 1970s and early 1980s. Trendsetters generally grew younger during the postwar decades, culminating in the prominence of kogaru in the 1990s.⁷

Content analysis offers evidence for this shift in trendsetters. The computerized database *Oya Soichi Bunko* has indexed most popular Japanese magazines since 1988. To locate items about high-school girls, Tadashi Suzuki searched (using Japanese characters) with kogaru and *joshi-kousei* as keywords. (Although both mean high-school girls, the term *joshi-kousei* has been common for years, while kogaru is new slang from the 1990s.) *Joshi-daisei* refers to female college students and *OL* (*o-eru*) is a term for working women in their twenties. Because these categories did not have additional slang names analogous to kogaru while they were trendsetters in the 1980s, only one search term was used for each of these categories.

Figure 1 shows the search results. *Joshi-daisei*, who were trendsetters from the early to the mid-eighties (before the database began), received modest, fairly stable coverage; references to this category actually decreased slightly during the search period. For *OL*, who were trendsetters in the late 1980s, the level of coverage peaked in 1990, then decreased rapidly until 1995, when it began to rise again. Magazines reported few stories about kogaru until 1992, but coverage increased rapidly in 1993 and peaked in 1997. In short, Japanese magazine stories about high-school girls outnumbered those about *OL*



Source: Oya Soichi Bunko database.

FIGURE 1. MAGAZINE COVERAGE OF TRENDSETTER GROUPS, 1988–1998

beginning in 1994, while joshi-daisei (trendsetters prior to OL) rarely appeared in magazines in 1988–1998.

ACCOUNTING FOR KOGARU’S NEW INFLUENCE

Two basic social changes in the 1990s helped make kogaru trendsetters. First, Japan’s youth population declined. The population of people aged 16–18 peaked in 1990 (6.1 million), then fell to 5.5 million in 1993. It continued to decline by two to three hundred thousand every year (Soumu-cho 1994). The principal effect of this change on high-school students has been to reduce the competition to gain college entrance. With fewer individuals competing to enter colleges that continue to admit essentially the same number of new students, high-school girls have found it easier to gain admission to both four-year and junior colleges. The percentage of female high-school students who pass an entrance examination for college or junior college directly after graduation from high school began to increase in 1984 (32.6 percent), then accelerated after 1990; it reached 48.1 percent in 1999 (Monbu-sho 1999). That is, female students are much more likely to enter either college or junior college directly after graduation from high school, instead of becoming *ronin* (entrance exam rejectees) and retaking their examinations the following year. In short, a decrease in the youth population in the 1990s meant that kogaru experienced less pressure to study in high school than had their counterparts in the past.

They also experienced less competition than male students; only 26.6 percent of males entered college or junior college directly after graduation in 1993, rising to 40.2 percent in 1999 (Monbu-sho 1994; 1999).

Second, in the 1990s, the Japanese economy experienced its most severe recession since World War II. The Japanese economy enjoyed unparalleled prosperity (the so-called *bubble economy*) in the late 1980s until it collapsed in 1991, as if a bubble burst. GDP increased about 26 percent over five years in the late 1980s, from 345,446 billion yen in 1985 to 436,044 billion yen in 1990. However, it rose only 10 percent between 1990–1997, to 479,855 billion yen (Nihon Ginko Chousa Toukei-kyoku 1997). Moreover, after 1997, the economy slowed further due to an increase in the consumption tax from 3 to 5 percent in 1997. The unemployment rate rapidly increased from 2.1 percent in 1990 to 4.7 percent in 1999, its highest level since 1953, when data first became available (Soumu-cho 1999). The employment rate after graduation from four-year colleges peaked in 1991 (81.3 percent), then dropped to 60.1 percent in 1999, the lowest percentage since 1951 (Monbu-sho 1999). Unlike earlier cohorts of college students, who found jobs easily after graduation in the late 1980s, 1990s students needed to worry about finding employment, and they started job hunting earlier. It became more difficult for college students to enjoy their college life in the 1990s.

In particular, female graduates experienced difficulties finding jobs. The employment rate of female junior college graduates declined, from 88 percent in 1991 to 60.5 percent in 1999. Also, the employment rate of female college graduates was 59.8 percent while that of male graduates was 60.3 percent in 1999 (Monbu-sho 1999). Therefore, college women needed to study harder to succeed in job hunting, and double schooling became more popular in the 1990s. That is, many college students attended a second school, such as an English conversation school or a technical school, to receive special qualifications or licenses.

The recession also influenced the fashion tastes of Japanese in general. People's tastes shifted toward lower prices and small consumer products in the 1990s. This shift is indicated in the rapid growth of the *100-yen-shoppu* industry (shops that sell all commodities—such as miscellaneous goods and snacks—for 100 yen [about 83 cents]). Sales in this industry doubled in 1991–1997, from \$413 million to \$826 million, and they continue to grow (Fujino 1999). That is, a tighter economy forced adults to adopt tighter budgets and fostered interest in the sort of less expensive items that kogaru favored.

In short, the declines in youth population and college-entrance competition decreased pressure on kogaru to study, and allowed more time for leisure. The recession in the 1990s shifted the public taste from conspicuous consumption to lower-priced items that matched kogaru's consumption pattern. At the same, this recession decreased the employment rate of college graduates, particularly female students, who formerly had found their jobs easily; this in turn motivated college students to study harder and begin preparing for job hunting earlier, rather than enjoying their leisure. In the 1980s, college students, particularly female students, had been able to devote more attention to fashion. Because they were protected by their comfortable incomes from part-time jobs or parents and because they were confident that they would find employment after graduation, they had had the resources to be trendsetters in the 1980s. They lost these resources with the collapse of the bubble economy in the early 1990s. Thus, demographic and economic shifts created trendsetting opportunities for kogaru at the same

time such opportunities diminished for the female college students who had been the trendsetters.

THE KOGARU LIFESTYLE

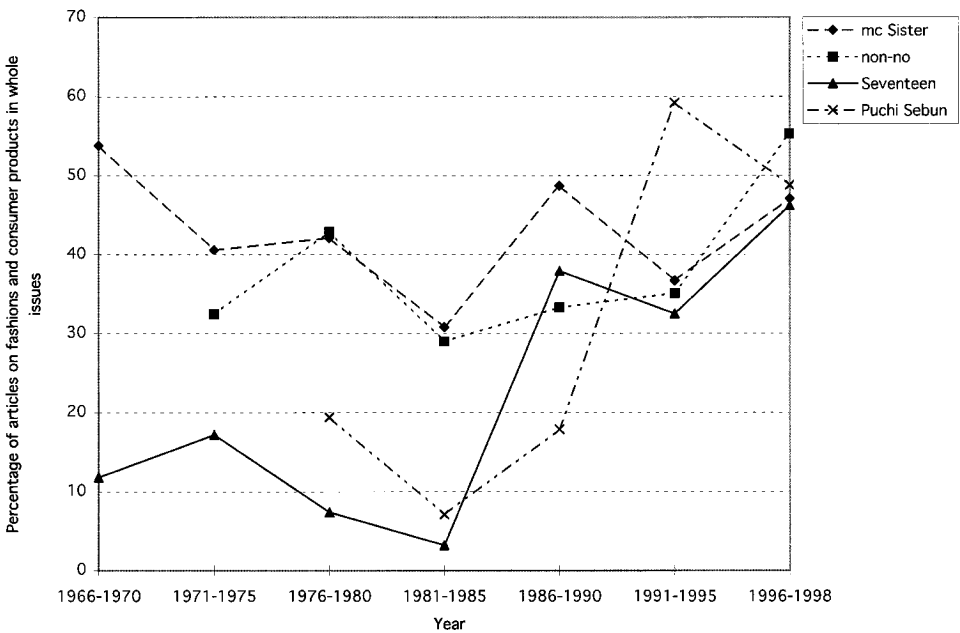
Reduced pressure to compete for college admissions meant that kogaru had less need to study and more free time to devote themselves to fashion. They could go shopping more often on the way home from school and on the weekends, searching for commodities and styles that best matched their tastes. Whereas kogaru previously chose high schools on the basis of their academic ranking, the reduced academic pressure reportedly led some students to choose schools that had appealing school uniforms or that were located near a favorite shopping district (*President* 1994).

Kogaru's main sources of money to spend on fashions are allowances from their parents and income from part-time jobs. About 75 percent of kogaru receive a regular allowance from their parents (Nikkei Sangyo Shouhi Kenkyujo 1996), and 38 percent have part-time jobs (Fukaya 1998). Moreover, "money is spread around smaller families, with Japanese women now bearing fewer than two children each. . . . the majority of teens enjoy their own rooms, televisions, phones and beepers" (Watanabe 1997, p. A1). Allowances and employment averaged 12,900 yen (about \$106) a month in 1996 (Nikkei Sangyo Shouhi Kenkyujo 1996); their total income averaged about 26,600 yen (about \$2,208) a year, including their bank accounts (Nikkei Sangyo Shouhi Kenkyujo 1994):

As a generational cohort . . . , Japanese teens are wealthier than previous cohorts, for although the allowances . . . they may receive tend to be lower than the middle class average in America . . . , they receive large amounts of gift money for major holidays and birthdays, and ask for and get money from parents as they need it. . . . The most popular activity among twelve to nineteen-year-olds is spending money. (White 1995, p. 261)

Still, kogaru have more free time than money, and they tend to carefully select commodities that best match their tastes even when purchasing inexpensive accessories.

In the 1990s, popular magazines were one of kogaru's most reliable sources for fashion information (Nikkei Sangyo Shouhi Kenkyujo 1994). The contents of the popular magazines that kogaru read shifted in ways that supported their becoming prominent trendsetters. Tadashi Suzuki conducted a content analysis of four popular Japanese women's magazines: *Puchi Seibun* (Petite Seven), *mc Sister*, *Seventeen*, and *non-no*; these are the most popular magazines among kogaru (Nikkei Sangyo Shouhi Kenkyujo 1994). He examined the tables of contents for the first issue of each, as well as the April issue for every fifth year since each began publication. Among these magazines, *non-no* has the largest circulation (1,080,000; *Puchi Seibun*: 600,000; *mc Sister*: 385,000; *Seventeen*: 263,000) (Nihon Zasshi Shuppan Kyokai 1999). High-school girls constitute about 54 percent of the readers of *Puchi Seibun*, 52 percent for *Seventeen*, 50 percent for *mc Sister*, and 35 percent for *non-no* (Nihon Zasshi Shuppan Kyokai 1999). That is, although *non-no* has many kogaru readers due to its large circulation, more of its readers are college students or OLs (young working women). Among these magazines, *Puchi Seibun* has the second largest circulation, as well as the heaviest concentration of kogaru readers. Although all four magazines are read by kogaru, each targets slightly



Note: Consumer products include ornaments, accessories, stationery, snacks, soft drinks, and other consumer products.

FIGURE 2. WOMEN’S MAGAZINE COVERAGE OF FASHIONS AND CONSUMER PRODUCTS, 1966–1998

different audiences. *Puchi Sebun* originally targeted junior-high-school girls but, in the 1990s, began aiming for an older, kogaru audience. The audience for *Seventeen* has always been high-school girls. *mc Sister* originally targeted older, college students but now seeks to attract kogaru. *non-no* has maintained the oldest target audience by aiming at OLs.

Figure 2 shows the results of the content analysis. It reveals that all four magazines became increasingly fashion conscious in the 1990s; they published larger proportions of articles about fashions in clothing, cosmetics, and consumer products. This increase can be seen most clearly in the two magazines aimed at younger readers (*Seventeen* and *Puchi Sebun*). In contrast, the magazines with somewhat older audiences (*mc Sister* and *non-no*) had traditionally run more fashion information, so their fashion coverage rose less dramatically. That is, magazines that focused more on kogaru in the 1990s began publishing much more fashion information. In turn, this fashion news helped kogaru develop and maintain their sensibility to fashions and made them more aware of the trends being set.

In the 1990s, other popular magazines, such as *Tokyo Street News*, *Egg*, and *Cawaii!* (cute), often featured photographs of ordinary high-school students (Cameron 2000; Kinsella 2002). These magazines targeted readers who were high-school students, particularly kogaru. For example, the first magazine to adopt this style was *Tokyo Street News* which started publishing in 1994; 90 percent of its readers are high-school students

(Nihon Zasshi Shuppan Kyoukai 1999). *Egg* and *Cawaii!* are full of photos of kogaru taken on the street or contributed by readers. In addition to pictures of kogaru, some popular magazines, such as *Puchi Seibun* and *Seventeen*, often carry rumors and information circulated among kogaru.

Kogaru also collect fashion news on the streets and in stores, particularly in densely populated cities such as Tokyo and Osaka. Tokyo's *Shibuya* ward especially became a hub for kogaru fashions in the 1990s, just as it had been a fashion center for college students in the 1980s. Many kogaru drop by stores on the way home after school, and they collect information about fashions while shopping and by observing other people's fashions. In the 1990s, kogaru could spend more time in these fashion hubs because they had more time available than other, older groups.

Although word of mouth (*kuchikomi*) has always been important in producing fashions, it played a particularly significant role in kogaru fashions in the 1990s (*Across* 1994). For example, nata-de-coco, Koala-no-march, Tamagotchi, loosesocks, and *Sock Touch* (an adhesive to hold socks up) were among the products that became fashions among kogaru without extensive advertising in magazines or on television (Imamura 1993; Dentsu EYE and Kuchikomi-kenkyukai 1995).

Sock Touch was once popular among elementary and junior-high-school students in the late 1970s, but faded out in the 1980s. However, in 1993, when loosesocks became fashionable among kogaru, sales of Sock Touch began increasing again without advertising by the manufacturer. The news about Sock Touch first circulated among kogaru by word of mouth in Tokyo. Its sales rapidly increased in 1993, after *Seventeen* and *Puchi Seibun* ran stories about Sock Touch as a fashion among kogaru. The product sold ten thousand units in 1992, but sales rose to two hundred thousand in 1993, and 4.5 million in 1994 (Dentsu EYE and Kuchikomi-kenkyukai 1995, p. 156).

In cities such as Tokyo and Osaka, with their large, dense populations, it is easy for news to spread by word of mouth. Pagers (pokeberu), PHS, and cellular phones let kogaru contact their friends wherever they are. These personal media facilitated word-of-mouth transmission. The president of one Japanese marketing company suggests that Japanese high-school girls spend eight hours at school, then two or three hours with their friends from other schools, and communicate electronically with about twenty other friends after they return home (Sasaki 2000). The mass media, such as magazines and television, also played a key role in disseminating kogaru fashions, once they came to media attention, to other prefectures and regions in Japan.

Because kogaru evaluate and exchange the considerable fashion news they collect from the media, as well as from their friends, family, classmates, and coworkers at part-time jobs, they can stay current with modern developments. Their sensibility as trendsetters is improved by these information exchanges about new products. Thus, kogaru form a network of heightened fashion sensibility, enabling them to engage in collective selection (Blumer 1969).

Kogaru's Deviance

Although word of mouth played a key role in the early stage of many fashions' appearance among kogaru, media coverage was necessary for the fashions to spread widely to other age groups. This was facilitated by the early media attention to kogaru's links to the sex industry (Kinsella 2002). Of course, there were already high-school girls

involved in the sex industry, but the emergence of new forms of sex work (that often involved high-school girls) attracted media coverage.

Telecura (telephone clubs) began operating in 1985. Telecura is a telephone service business in which men pay an entrance fee (about eight to twenty-five dollars per hour) and enter private booths equipped with telephones. They watch television and wait for calls from women who find the toll-free phone number printed on handy packages of tissues that are distributed on the street or on handbills posted without permission in public phone booths. Each call is connected to every booth, but only the customer who answers first can talk with the female caller. This service enables complete strangers to contact each other, and it is often used by men looking for sex partners. The number of telecura stores increased through the 1990s until they numbered about 2,200 (Watts 1997). According to one 1996 survey, 27.3 percent of girls aged 12–18 had called a telephone club; of those, 78.9 percent only had a phone conversation, but 5.1 percent of them (1.4 percent of total population) had gone to a hotel with a man they'd called (Soumu-cho 1996).

Burusera shoppu were shops that sold kogaru's used underwear for about forty to fifty dollars and school uniforms for a few hundred dollars. Underwear was sold in packages featuring a blindfolded kogaru's photo, or kogaru waited in the shops to take their underwear off in front of customers and directly hand them over to prove their authenticity. Burusera shoppu already existed in the 1980s, but they became widely known to the public when three pornographic video producers and a burusera shoppu owner who sold the porn videos were exposed, and about one hundred kogaru who appeared on the videos were taken into custody in August 1993. The media, particularly gossip newspapers and television shows, gave the story prominent coverage (Fujii 1998).

Date club is another sex business that emerged in the 1980s. Men pay a membership fee (about eighty dollars) and an entrance fee (about forty dollars), enter the date club, and choose a woman among those waiting in the store. Then the man and woman go out of the store on a date: some have sex, while others go to karaoke clubs, restaurants, or coffee shops. Date clubs only receive fees from their male customers; the clubs do not pay the women because that would be clearly illegal (mediation of prostitution). Therefore, date club owners insist that their business is legal because they only provide places for men and women to meet. In the 1990s, *joshi-kousei date clubs* (high-school girls date clubs) that featured only kogaru appeared in Tokyo. There were more than thirty of these stores in 1994, but they were closed after Tokyo's bylaws were changed to regulate date clubs in 1997 (Suzuki 1998).

Around 1995, the word *enjo-kousai* (a compensated date) came to be used to refer to women (usually kogaru) who had dates with men found through sex businesses. According to a survey by the Tokyo metropolitan government in 1996, 4 percent of kogaru in Tokyo had experienced *enjo-kousai* (Tokyo-to Seikatu-bunka-kyoku 1997).

Initially, only gossip newspapers and television shows reported sensational stories about kogaru's links to sex businesses. However, after the burusera shoppu scandal in 1993, major media turned kogaru's deviance into a social issue. For example, *Asahi Shimbun* (a major Japanese newspaper) serialized a debate between two professors concerning kogaru's deviance—the *burusera ronso* (burusera controversy) in 1993 (Miyadai 1993a; 1993b; Okui 1993). Generally, this media coverage depicted kogaru as sexual beings, much like adult women, in contrast to media coverage in earlier decades that had treated high-school girls as children. The stories about their links to the sex industry

served to attract public attention to kogaru in the 1990s. Thus, the word kogaru appeared first in print in *SPA!* (a Japanese popular magazine) in June 1993. The *SPA!* article described kogaru, their fashions and lifestyles, including their sexual deviance. This coverage depicted high-school girls as in the forefront of Japanese popular culture in the 1990s. Similarly, the term first appeared on television when a late-night show, *M10*, ran a special program (“The Kogaru Night”) on August 5, 1993 (Oka 1998). The word kogaru began to be used often in the media and became known widely to the public. When the media first used the term, kogaru referred specifically to high-school girls who had long, bleached brown hair and artificially tanned skin, and who were involved in sex businesses (*SPA!* 1993). However, as the term became more widely known, kogaru came to refer to high-school girls more generally, particularly those who wore loose-socks with a miniskirted school uniform.

Shifting the Focus to Trendsetting

Although initial coverage focused on kogaru’s sexuality, the media soon began describing kogaru as trendsetters. Although some popular magazines had mentioned high-school girls as trendsetters as early as 1989 (*Dime* 1989), most media stories on kogaru as trendsetters appeared after 1993. For example, stories in business and popular magazines described their trendsetting influence: “Trend Spreads to Companies: Belief in High-School Girls” (Imamura 1993), “High-School Girls Run through Fashions” (Erino 1994), and “Is the ‘High-School Girl Market’ Reliable?” (*Shuukan Posuto* 1994). Also, Nihon Keizai Shinbun-sha (a leading Japanese economic publishing company) published a report titled “Exploring the Consumption Activities of High-School Girls” (Nikkei Sangyo Shouhi Kenkyujo 1994). A morning television show, *Mezamashi Terebi* (literally “Alarm Television”) broadcast stories about kogaru’s fashions once or twice a month in 1995–1996 (Oka 1998).

Thus, kogaru themselves became a fashionable topic for the media. Through media coverage that raised such questions as “What are kogaru doing every day after school?,” “What are they carrying in their bags?,” and “What are fads among them?,” kogaru’s lifestyles and fashions come to be known, not only to other kogaru, but also to women of other ages, as well as to males. Thus, the media depictions helped expand kogaru’s fashions beyond the barriers of age, sex, and geography.

As kogaru’s trendsetting became recognized, manufacturers began to use them as consumer-consultants to plan marketing for new products: “Japan has spawned a layer of marketing firms that use high school students to ignite booms for clients ranging from auto makers to cosmetics companies” (Watanabe 1997, p. A1); “Japanese high school girls are unique in the degree to which they wield economic power. . . . a small industry has sprung up dedicated to predicting and harnessing [the Japanese youth market’s] tastes and spending” (Parry 1997). Kogaru often replaced the older college students and OLs who had been consultants in the 1980s (*President* 1994; Yoshinaga 1998). In using kogaru as consultants, manufacturers sought to exploit both kogaru’s sensibility to advanced tastes and their status as advertising agents: “It is no overstatement to say we cannot talk about contemporary marketing without studying the hit commodities created by high school girls” (Dentsu EYE and Kuchikomi-kenkyukai 1995, p. 55). Kogaru particularly worked as consultants for new soft drinks, for example, Calpis Water, Kissour Apricot and Water, Lemon Cologne, and Oolong Soucha (*Nikkei Trendy* 1998;

Sakamoto 1998). In a process of creating Oolong Soucha (a canned oolong tea with plant extract aimed at combating bad breath), about ten kogaru met over thirty times to select its taste, package design, and advertising campaign (*President* 1994).

Marketing firms, such as Boom Planning, Eiga-arū, and Teen Networkship, also exploited kogaru's word-of-mouth influence. After these companies administered focus group interviews or questionnaires about new products to kogaru, information about the new products spread to friends of these kogaru by word of mouth. For example, after a survey about a new telephone service called "Triophone" (allowing more than two speakers to talk at the same time), the number of subscribers tripled over the previous month (Imamura 1993).⁸

DISCUSSION

Sociological discussions of fashion usually take trendsetters for granted. Following Simmel (1957), analysts favoring directional models assume that fashions are set by high-prestige figures—aristocrats, celebrities, the wealthy, and so on—or by powerful organizations, such as the media or fashion industries. For example, Kinga Talarowska-Kacprzak (2001) interprets the emergence of ganguro (black face—the heavily tanned variant of kogaru) in these terms:

The media have successfully introduced and developed the ganguro trend for commercial purposes. The powerful influence of media over everyday life patterns is demonstrated by the growing popularity of the trend despite its variance from traditional norms and images of Japanese women. This phenomenon depends on the well-targeted marketing strategy of the media.

Key evidence for this top-down influence is that "a new singer named Namie Amuro from Okinawa . . . was one of the first women to show her sun-tanned skin to the public. . . . [She] had a huge influence on Japanese girls and encouraged them to adopt the style and introduce it into their daily life" (Talarowska-Kacprzak 2001).

But sociologists who favor selection models need not argue that all fads or fashions originate with their adopters. It is not necessary to somehow prove that Namie Amuro copied her tan from ganguro, any more than Blumer (1969) had to claim that Paris designers took all of their ideas from their customers. Rather, the point is that social life offers countless new styles, products, celebrities, events, and ideas that might serve as a basis for new fads and fashions. Namie Amuro's dark tan was simply one potential source of inspiration at a particular historical moment, but it was one selected by some kogaru as the basis for a distinctive social type: ganguro. In turn, the style spread to some married women (*ganguro mama*) and adolescent boys, as well as to commercials and even art. Talarowska-Kacprzak (2001) acknowledges that editors and fashion designers began to interview ganguro to better understand their preferences and design new products for them (i.e., ganguro were not simple pawns of media manipulation). This portrait of "bi-directional information flow" makes selection's importance in setting fashion clear, even in an analysis purporting to demonstrate direction by the media.

Our point is not that sociologists must choose between direction and selection models, that one is right and the other wrong. Both processes are obviously at work in fashion: evidence for direction may be found in fashion industries that continually

produce new products for consumers whose tastes seem to be constantly shifting or whenever adopters seek to emulate those of higher status. Yet selection is also apparent because adopters must always choose among prospective fads and fashions. Very often, direction and selection coexist in fashion worlds; those of higher status may hope to influence the course of fashions, yet they cannot control the selections that adopters ultimately make, the choices that determine what does and does not emerge as a popular pattern. Nor are we arguing that kogaru represent a unique instance of lower-status trendsetters; such patterns have been documented in other times and places (Field 1970; Wolfe 1970, pp. 32–42; Polhemus 1994). Nor do we mean to imply that kogaru served as Japan's only trendsetters in the 1990s; the argument that kogaru helped establish some trends is not contradicted by, for example, evidence that some other Japanese also followed haute couture developments.

Rather, our focus is on the nature of trendsetters—actors whose role in shaping fads and fashions has tended to be taken for granted by sociologists. The rise of kogaru—who were not especially advantaged by their age, gender, or wealth—to fashion influence reveals a good deal about the nature of trendsetting. Kogaru's emergence as trendsetters was a product of social conditions. During the 1990s, kogaru gained (and the college students who preceded them as trendsetters lost) three key resources: sufficient leisure time to allow kogaru to immerse themselves in matters of fashion and style, sufficient disposable income to purchase new, fashionable items, and social networks that could communicate their fashion choices. This communication occurred both among kogaru (through their exploitation of new electronic technologies) and between kogaru and others far removed from them in geography or social status (via increased mass media coverage of kogaru's fashions).

Traditional discussions of fashion leadership often assumed that trendsetters occupied institutionalized or privileged positions. The haute couture world, in which European designers created clothing for elite women, remained relatively stable for decades, if only because there was a symbiotic relationship between the designers and the fashion media that covered their shows (Crane 1997; 2000). Following World War II, Parisian fashion dominance began to decline, largely due to changes in the economics of the clothing industry. There are now many more people with the time, money, and information needed to follow fashions in clothing. As new groups, such as kogaru, acquire these resources, they have opportunities to become trendsetters. But this is a precarious status that must continually be ratified by others who prove willing to follow the trendsetters' lead. Just as elites cannot dictate trendsetters' choices, trendsetters cannot control their followers; every stage in the diffusion of fads and fashions involves selection. As Blumer (1969) suggests, fashion worlds are scenes of intense interaction, in which prospective fashions are generated by creators, assessed and sometimes selected by trendsetters, and then possibly disseminated to a wider set of adopters. All of these actors make choices, in part, based on their assessments of what the others might do.

Analysts of fashions and fads tend to study costume and novelty items, respectively, because these are visible—albeit frivolous—arenas for shifting styles. The case of kogaru fits this pattern: their trendsetting involved clothing, grooming, and inexpensive consumer items. However, recent analyses have begun to examine fads and fashions in the most serious institutions, such as education and business (Abrahamson and Fairchild 1999; Birnbaum 2000; Strang and Macy 2001). Whether the requirements for trendsetters

within these institutional arenas are the same as those in kogaru's world is an empirical question that merits closer attention.

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NOTES

1. Technically, the word should be spelled *kogyaru*. However, kogaru has become the conventional spelling (as evidenced by the relative number of hits using Internet search engines) (cf. Watrous 2000).

2. Japanese names for fashions often incorporate English words (just as Americans often use French or other non-English words refer to fashions). This practice serves to make the fashion seem exotic, cosmopolitan, or sophisticated.

3. Shunji Mikami (personal communication, 2001) suggests that kogaru's trendsetting extends to language: "Their language is now becoming a new slang or casual expression in most Japanese people beyond their subculture."

4. McVeigh (2000, p. 232) notes that when fads or fashions spread to different demographic groups, their meanings for consumers and the motives for adopting the novelty may change: "for young girls [Hello Kitty] is 'cute', for teenagers it is 'cool' (*kuru* or *torendi*), and for women in their twenties and older it is best described as camp."

5. Chalfen and Mururi (2001, pp. 64–65) offer a detailed analysis of this fad. The manufacturers initially imagined that their customers would be older adults, but "the success story of Print Club is based on adolescents adopting these machines for their own uses, and... reinventing Print Club for themselves and, in turn, driving the market in their direction."

6. Obviously, the notion of trendsetter overlaps the concept of opinion leadership (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955). However, discussions of opinion leadership tend to look at individuals within social networks, whereas our focus is on how particular social types emerge as trendsetters (Klapp 1962).

7. Jun Ayukawa (personal communication, 2001) notes that, since World War II, Japanese culture has become increasingly likely to celebrate youth and particularly the attractiveness of young women. At the same time, youth are seen as maturing more rapidly; in Japanese, *jakunen-ka* refers to the tendency for people's first experiences with sex, crime, and so on to occur at ever earlier ages.

8. For an account of how American marketing campaigns seek to enlist youthful trendsetters, see Gladwell (1999, pp. 206–215).

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