

Jendā and Gender: Young Australians and Japanese on Gender Equality and the Women's Movement

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Introduction

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Australian women's movement was a powerful force for changing and challenging gender relations in Australia. In this period too, the Japanese women's movement also questioned gender relations in Japan. By the 1990s, a 'generation debate' had emerged in Australia, in which young women reflected on the achievements of the women's movement. Some young women argued that women's equality had been achieved and so feminism was no longer needed. Others criticised the 'victim' feminism of their putative mothers, claiming that they wanted a new kind of feminism, 'power feminism' (something like the 'girl power' of the Spice Girls). Still other young women rejected what they saw as the requirements for conformity to a single version of womanhood in women's liberation. Intrigued by this generation debate, I wanted to find out what young people in Australia thought about the women's movement. I also wondered whether something like the young Australian women's debate with their mothers' feminism was also occurring in other countries. This paper reports on some of my research findings on young people's attitudes to feminism and gender issues in Australia and Japan.

Equality and difference feminism in Australia and Japan

There are a variety of ways of distinguishing the different strands of feminism. In recent years, the tripartite classification of radical, liberal and socialist feminisms has been displaced for sameness, or equality, and difference feminisms.¹⁾ Equality feminists claim their right to equality with men: to the same legal rights, to equal wages, to the same career opportunities, to suffrage and political participation. Both liberal and socialist feminists fall into the category of equality feminists, although liberal feminists seek the equality of women with men in the present social formation and socialist feminists seek the equality of men with women following a revolution to transform liberal capitalism. Difference feminists assert that women should demand the transformation of society and of men to reflect some of the devalued characteristics of women, for example nurturing others in the domestic space, commitment to peace rather than violence, skills in intimacy and connection. Difference feminists include 'maternalist' feminists who promote the needs of women and seek more recognition for the tasks of nurtur-

¹⁾ For an overview, see Chilla Bulbeck, *Re-Orienting Western Feminisms: Women's Diversity in a Postcolonial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 7–15.

ing in society and 'radical' feminists who focus on the specific wrongs women suffer, often through their bodies, for example sexual violence or lack of reproductive freedom. Some commentators have suggested that Australian feminism, in line with other Anglophone feminisms, has a history of 'sameness' while Japanese feminism, in line with other Asian feminisms, has focused more on women's 'difference'. This paper explores the deployment of sameness and difference discourses, both by the feminist movement in the two countries and by young Australians and Japanese as they consider the women's movement in their own societies.

Australia - equality feminism?

The Australian women's movement is usually divided into two phases. The first wave feminists were active from the 1880s to the 1920s and the second wave feminists from the 1970s to the early 1990s, such a classification implying a 'trough' of inactivism between the waves.²⁾ Both Carol Bacchi³⁾ and Marilyn Lake question a stark opposition between equality feminism and difference feminism. Lake asserts:

Significantly, in the long history of the women's movement in Australia, feminists were more likely to name [economic] "independence" and "freedom", rather than "equality", as their goals.⁴⁾

'Feminists looked to freedom from masculine, specifically conjugal, tyrannies', which were retained until the 1980s when rape in marriage became a crime.⁵⁾ Feminists extended the notion of the rights attached to (male) citizenship, by claiming that women could not be independent citizens without bodily integrity and personal inviolability.⁶⁾ Such analyses turned an equality refrain (rights) into claims for difference (particular kinds of rights for women's particular condition). Citizenship was composed of three aspects: 'individuality [for example the rights of women to retain their nationality after marriage], economic independence and bodily inviolability'.⁷⁾ Men saw citizenship as freedom from the power of the state, as freedom of speech, assembly, and movement. But feminists saw women's citizenship as also requiring conjugal freedoms, freedom from certain forms of male domination. Furthermore 'Australian feminists sought to combine a liberal emphasis on the sanctity of the individual with a recognition of human interdependence and a call for collective provision and state regulation'.⁸⁾ The

²⁾ Some scholars question the notion of waves, instead claiming that the interests of women shifted to encompass 'maternal feminism' in the so-called trough from the 1920s to 1960s. For example, see Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1999), 72.

³⁾ Carol Bacchi, *Same Difference* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1990).

⁴⁾ Lake, *Getting Equal*, 5.

⁵⁾ *ibid.*, 93.

⁶⁾ *ibid.*, 93.

⁷⁾ *ibid.*, 141.

⁸⁾ *ibid.*, 55.

Australian women's movement did not merely call for equal wages with men, but also for legislation to require husbands to share the family wage, for wives to have legal entitlement to some of the household savings, for various forms of state payment to women in their role as mothers. Feminists claimed that the labour of mothers was crucial and embraced infant and maternal welfare centres, women's hospitals, children's courts, maternity benefits and eventually child endowment.⁹⁾

It is arguable that the feminist politics of protection, by dwelling on men's power and women's helplessness, worked to reinforce women's sense of vulnerability.¹⁰⁾ In the 1950s, Australian feminists became more aware of such limitations of maternalist feminism, and they shifted the emphasis of their campaign to demands for equal pay, and the repeal of the marriage bar.¹¹⁾ This new focus on equality meant that motherhood was no longer seen as an activity to be recognized and rewarded, but as a handicap to be overcome.¹²⁾

Second wave feminism commenced in the summer of 1969-70 when women returning from the United States announced the inaugural meeting of the Women's Liberation Group in Sydney. By 1971, there were women's liberation groups in every major town in Australia, clustering in the inner-city suburbs and around the universities.¹³⁾ Newsletters and magazines sprang up, consciousness-raising groups formed to ponder issues like the myth of the vaginal orgasm,¹⁴⁾ demonstrations against beauty pageants were organised.¹⁵⁾ The Australian women's movement, a powerful force for changing and challenging gender relations in Australia in the 1970s and 1980s, contained both equality and difference arms. Radical feminists demanded a complete revolution in capitalist and patriarchal society. Liberal feminists established the Women's Electoral Lobby in 1972, which sought reform through women exercising their vote on behalf of women's concerns, for example legal abortion, equal pay, government-supported childcare. By-lined 'Think WEL before you vote', survey results of political candidates' atti-

⁹⁾ For example, Edith Cowan, the first woman to be elected to an Australian parliament (Western Australia in 1920) worked for child welfare, kindergartens and playgrounds and equal inheritance rights for mothers whose adult children died intestate (Lake, *Getting Equal*, 55-56).

¹⁰⁾ *ibid.*, 62.

¹¹⁾ *ibid.*, 150. The marriage bar, introduced in the 1920s, required women to resign from paid work on marriage.

¹²⁾ *ibid.*, 173.

¹³⁾ Verity Burgmann, *Power and Protest: Movements for Change in Australian Society* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1993), 77; Ann Curthoys, 'Doing It for Themselves: The Women's Movement Since 1970' in *Gender Relations in Australia*, eds. Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 430; Gisela Kaplan, *The Meagre Harvest: The Australian Women's Movement, 1950s-1990s* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1996), 32.

¹⁴⁾ Marian Sawer and Marian Simms, *A Woman's Place: Women and Politics in Australia* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1993), 234.

¹⁵⁾ Lyndall Ryan, 'Feminism and the Federal Bureaucracy, 1972-1983' in *Playing the State: Australian Feminist Interventions*, ed. Sophie Watson (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1990), 58.

tudes to these issues received wide media coverage.¹⁶⁾ First the Australian Labor Party and then the Liberal Party realised that they must woo the 'women's vote' to win office.¹⁷⁾

Reflecting their 'utilitarian and egalitarian' principles,¹⁸⁾ Australian women added their own variant to the tools available to feminists: the role of femocrat.¹⁹⁾ The word combines feminist, bureaucrat and aristocrat, denoting the appointment of feminists to senior positions in the public service whose brief it was to introduce programmes for the benefit of women.²⁰⁾ Thus the heady days of the 1970s were replaced by the institutionalised days of the 1980s; protestors became politicians, lobbyists and femocrats; students became lawyers, journalists and academics; volunteers became funded community workers. According to Kaplan,²¹⁾ 'Per capita, Australia probably had more feminist organisations, collectives, interest groups and social clubs than almost any other nation'. A number of these, like the Leichhardt Women's Health Centre or the first women's refuge (Elsie), were institutionalised by Elizabeth Reid as Women's Advisor to the Prime Minister in the early 1970s, giving them legitimacy and government funding. Femocrats, often in conjunction with politicians, changed the laws governing marriage, divorce and custody; introduced anti-discrimination and affirmative action legislation; expanded government-funded childcare places; developed changes in the welfare and taxation systems, most notably recognising women's independent right to support as either primary care-givers or worker-citizens. Legislation and services sought to extend women's control over their bodies, including freedom from domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape and sexual assault, reproductive freedom and better health.²²⁾

Japan – difference feminism?

Japan has been described as a country located 'between the imperialising Subject and the colonized Other'.²³⁾ Economic 'development' was not enforced by western invasion but chosen by the new rulers under the Meiji Restoration. The Meiji rulers (1868–1912) further centralised the Japanese state, extending the process developed during the Tokugawa regime.

¹⁶⁾ Curthoys, 'Doing It for Themselves', 435.

¹⁷⁾ Chilla Bulbeck, *Living Feminism: The Impact of the Women's Movement on Three Generations of Australian Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997), 22.

¹⁸⁾ Kaplan, *The Meagre Harvest*, 61.

¹⁹⁾ Hester Eisenstein, *Gender Shock: Practising Feminism on Two Continents* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1991), 12.

²⁰⁾ Hester Eisenstein, *Inside Agitators: Australian Femocrats and the State* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1996), 68.

²¹⁾ Kaplan, *The Meagre Harvest*, 61.

²²⁾ Bulbeck, *Living Feminism*, 23; Marian Sawer and Abigail Groves, *Working From the Inside: Twenty Years of the Office of the Status of Women* (Canberra: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994), 45.

²³⁾ Jane Caplan, 'Afterword' in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600–1945*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 321.

The government made decisions concerning which western technology and which western values and institutions they would adopt and adapt to Japanese society. To purify western values and synthesise them with the Japanese world, the Meiji rulers stressed Chinese Confucianism's emphasis on women's obedience to husbands and seniors.²⁴⁾ 'Confucian family-state' citizenship positioned everyone as subjects of the Emperor, but also made married women, along with minors and other legal 'incompetents', additionally the subjects of their husbands. By contrast with the stronger distinction in the west between the privacy of the family, cordoned off from the public sphere, the internal workings of families were regulated by government laws.²⁵⁾

From the 1910s, in particular, Japanese women criticised the Meiji conception of womanhood, arguing for women's political and economic rights and for state support for women with children.²⁶⁾ Female and male liberal reformers argued for a democratic liberal form of citizenship, 'freedom and popular rights', including the idea of monogamous marriage based on love and the nuclear family. While women lost any rights to political participation as a result of the Meiji Restoration,²⁷⁾ they gained access to secondary education (the first school being established in 1874) and university education (1900, about a decade after women entered Australian universities). They 'gradually came to debate their own situation' rather than being the object of analysis by male commentators.²⁸⁾ Japanese women were active as liberals, socialists and feminists, and combinations of these. The textile industry, which produced forty per cent of gross national product, had a workforce that was sixty to ninety per cent female.²⁹⁾ Socialist feminist women struggled for improvements in the conditions and wages of female factory workers, the backbone of Japanese industrialisation.³⁰⁾ The campaign between 1904 and 1909 for modification of Article Five of the Public Peace Reform Law, which prevented women from joining political parties or attending public meetings, was the first group action by Japanese women for the attainment of political rights in which comparisons were made with other countries, particularly Australia where women could vote and stand for office.³¹⁾ Other women ac-

²⁴⁾ Nancy R. Rosenberger, 'Introduction' in *Japanese Sense of the Self*, ed. Nancy R. Rosenberger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 11-12; Kathleen S. Uno, 'Women and Changes in the Household Division of Labor' in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 30-3.

²⁵⁾ Vera Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 29.

²⁶⁾ Sharon H. Nolte and Sally Ann Hastings, 'The Meiji State's Policy Toward Women, 1890-1910' in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 155.

²⁷⁾ Some women had been able to vote in the Tokugawa period but lost this right. Women were not allowed to attend political meetings until 1922, or join political parties until 1945.

²⁸⁾ Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 27.

²⁹⁾ Bernstein, 'Introduction', 7; Nolte and Hastings, 'The Meiji State's Policy Toward Women, 1890-1910', 153, 158.

³⁰⁾ Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 35.

tivists sought to recast the idea of Japanese women's motherhood to include a wider civil and social involvement, rather than being confined to the patriarchal family and producing children for the nation. The Bluestockings used motherhood as a metaphor for women's individual creativity.³²⁾ The 'new women' of the 1920s and 1930s³³⁾ sought active expression of women's sexuality and, therefore, reproductive control. They argued that the state should either allow abortion or ensure the welfare of children; they queried the role of commodified sexuality, including prostitution, and what is now called sexual harassment.³⁴⁾

During the fifteen years of war that culminated in the United States Occupation of Japan, Japanese feminists were forced to grapple with Japan's role as an imperial and colonial power. Mackie discusses forms of co-option and refusal by Japanese feminists during Japan's imperial period.³⁵⁾ The *ryōsai kenbo* ('good wives, wise mothers') ideology dovetailed neatly with the 'patriotic women' ideology. The Patriotic Women's Association had 817,000 members in 1912, 'the largest women's organization in the Meiji period'.³⁶⁾ The membership grew to six million in 1942, when the National Women's Defence Association had over nine million members.³⁷⁾ Between 1937 and 1940, several prominent women served on government committees advising on education, social welfare, labour inspection and so on, including suffragists, a Bluestocking and a social democrat.³⁸⁾ But there were others who resisted this emotional mobilisation, for example Yosano Akiko who wrote '*Kimi shini tamau koto nakare*' (Do not give up your life for the Emperor).³⁹⁾

During the years of the Occupation, SCAP (Supreme Command of the Allied Forces) 'purged' some women who had been involved in wartime support for the government, but in most cases only temporarily.⁴⁰⁾ Women 'immediately' petitioned both the Japanese government and SCAP 'on women's political rights and for relief of the starving population'.⁴¹⁾ The Constitution guaranteed equality of the sexes, marriage based on mutual consent and equal

³¹⁾ Vera Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women in Japan: Gender, Labour and Activism, 1900-1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 62-63.

³²⁾ *ibid.*, 85.

³³⁾ Miriam Silverberg, 'The Modern Girl as Militant' in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 258-264.

³⁴⁾ Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 48-59.

³⁵⁾ *ibid.*, 88.

³⁶⁾ *ibid.*, 30.

³⁷⁾ *ibid.*, 104.

³⁸⁾ *ibid.*, 107.

³⁹⁾ *ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁰⁾ For example, the purge on Ichikawa Fusae was rescinded in 1950 and she served for most of the years between her election to the Upper House in 1953 and her death in 1981, advocating women's participation in politics and clean elections. *ibid.*, 127.

⁴¹⁾ *ibid.*, 114.

rights of both partners, 'equal pay for equal work', and the establishment of a Women and Minors' Bureau.⁴²⁾ But neither the SCAP nor the largely intact Japanese civil service really had the stomach for wholesale social reform and gender equality. Following the outbreak of the Korean War, the USA redefined Japan as an ally in the war against Communism. 'The housewife became the archetypical figure of womanhood, in the same way that the salaryman became the archetypical figure of masculinity'.⁴³⁾

Following the economic 'miracle' of income-doubling in the 1960s, Japanese women's liberation in the 1970s appeared to have many of the characteristics of western movements.⁴⁴⁾ This is hardly surprising as movements in the United States, Australia and Japan responded to the thwarted aspirations of highly-educated women being told they had no autonomous place in either the economy or the polity. Japanese women had returned to the workforce from the 1960s, but noticed that this did not significantly improve their social status. Like western women, Japanese women turned to consciousness-raising to develop a clear self-identity, with sexual liberation as its focus, achieved in part through better information about contraception and the female body. In 1974 the feminist movement successfully lobbied against a proposed revision to the Eugenic Protection Law, aimed at prohibiting abortions for economic reasons.⁴⁵⁾ An International Women's Year Action Group was formed in 1975 and the movement shifted from consciousness-raising to changing social institutions, focusing on health and reproductive rights, discrimination at work, childcare, challenges to the marriage system, combating sexism in the media with feminist publications, protest against war and environmental exploitation, violence against women and sexual harassment.

Today there are local women's centres in 'nearly every prefecture and major city'.⁴⁶⁾ In January 2001, the position of Minister of Gender Equality was established and a Council for Gender Equality was established within the Cabinet Office.⁴⁷⁾ Despite this national legislative activity, Mackie notes that most shelters and such like are still initiatives of private volunteer organizations with private and local government funding.⁴⁸⁾

As in Australia, Japanese feminism contained and contains many strands. Sumiko Iwao

⁴²⁾ *ibid.*, 129-131.

⁴³⁾ *ibid.*, 123.

⁴⁴⁾ Kazuko Tanaka's description of Japanese feminism's emergence from the 1960s presents an almost western textbook case. See Kazuko Tanaka, 'The New Feminist Movement in Japan, 1970-1990' in *Japanese Women: New Feminist Perspectives on the Past, Present and Future*, eds. Kumiko Fujimura-Fanselow and Atsuko Kameda (New York: Feminist Press, New York 1995).

⁴⁵⁾ Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 347.

⁴⁶⁾ *ibid.*, 162-3, 179.

⁴⁷⁾ 'Strengthening of the National Machinery in Conjunction with Reforms Including that of the Central Government', *NWEC Newsletter* 18:1 (July 2001): 2-3.

⁴⁸⁾ Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 209.

claims that, while Japanese women believe in equal pay for equal work and equality of opportunity, they do not wish to be equal to men, who they see as inherently sexually different.⁴⁹⁾ Two examples of this acceptance of difference are women's access to menstruation leave and maternity leave. Female bus conductors struck for menstruation leave in 1928, while intense lobbying by labour unions resulted in three days' (later reduced to two) menstruation leave in the Labor Standards Law of 1947.⁵⁰⁾

In the United States, because of women's actual physical differences from men, it took years of legal contortions by feminist lawyers before women's 'equal' right to maternity leave was guaranteed. Because men did not get pregnant, the courts at first refused to accord women pregnancy leave, and feminist lawyers had to draw analogies with 'disability' or sickness, which men did experience. According to some commentators, maternity leave seems an unquestioned right to Japanese women, who have been guaranteed maternity leave as well as lighter loads for pregnant women and nursing breaks for breastfeeding mothers since the law of 1947. However, others note that only nineteen per cent of businesses provided parental leave in 1988. Childcare leave dates from the 1970s, although it was confined to those professions whose unions conscientiously represented their female members, such as teaching.⁵¹⁾ However, these forms of leave were not framed in terms of women's rights so much as the need to protect their fertility for the nation.⁵²⁾

Equal opportunity legislation, introduced in 1985, provoked sophisticated debates concerning the difference between protection or *hogo* (of women as mothers, potential or actual) and guarantees (*hoshō*) of a suitable or fair working environment for all workers⁵³⁾ (for example parental leave being available to the father as well as the mother).⁵⁴⁾ The 1986 Equal Employment Opportunity Law was weak, undermining some of women's previous conditions. Menstruation leave was incorporated into the more general sick leave, although maternity and (unpaid) childcare leave have been extended.⁵⁵⁾

Encouraged by the Fourth United Nations meeting of women in Beijing, in June 1999, the

⁴⁹⁾ Sumiko Iwao, *The Japanese Woman: Traditional Image and Changing Reality* (New York: Free Press, New York, 1993), 13.

⁵⁰⁾ Barbara Molony, 'Japan's 1985 Equal Opportunity Law and the Changing Discourse on Gender', *Signs* 20: 2 (Winter 1995): 268–302 at 279.

⁵¹⁾ Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 279–280.

⁵²⁾ Vera Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women in Japan: Gender, Labour and Activism, 1900–1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997), 76–77.

⁵³⁾ Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 180–184.

⁵⁴⁾ Glenda S. Roberts, 'Pinning Hopes on Angels: Reflections from an Aging Japan's Urban Landscape' in *Family and Social Policy in Japan: Anthropological Approaches*, ed. Roger Goodman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 70.

⁵⁵⁾ Molony, 'Japan's 1985 Equal Opportunity Law and the Changing Discourse on Gender', 289.

Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society was promulgated. The translation of the title of this most recent piece of gender legislation in Japan also suggests that western feminist movements may focus on 'equality' or 'liberal' feminism while their Japanese counterparts work more with a notion of women's 'difference'. Nowhere in the Japanese title do the words "equal" or "gender" appear. In fact, the literal translation of *Danjo Kyōdō Sankaku Shakai Zukuri Hōhō* would read: "Basic Law for the Creation of a Male/Female Collaborative Participatory Society". *Danjo Kyōdō Sankaku Shakai* is more descriptive and arguably more romantic than the English equivalent. In particular, the word *kyōdō* (collaboration; to work together or team up) evokes images of a harmonious and mutually engaged relationship. The katakana-ized word *hāmonī* has even been incorporated into the titles of some prefectural level interpretations of the Law for a Gender Equal Society.⁵⁶⁾

Third wave feminism?

Second wave feminism, or women's liberation, responded to structural changes in women's position as well as contributing to further changes. Prior to women's liberation, women entered the Australian workforce in growing numbers, particularly as the services sector expanded, thus fuelling demands for equal pay. The increased age of marriage and first childbearing as well as reduced family size narrowed the mothering years and challenged the notion of motherhood as women's central role. Women also sought increased control of that role, through government financial support for single parents so women could leave violent marriages, access to more reliable contraception and liberalisation of abortion laws so women could choose motherhood; access to divorce so women could choose to end a marriage. In the 1970s and the 1980s, structural changes and ideological shifts opened new opportunities for Australian women, particularly in terms of education and paid employment. The 1990s seem to have corralled women's dreams as well as their options.

Not everyone agrees with this pessimistic scenario, some commentators arguing that women's equality has been achieved and feminism is no longer relevant. Other commentators suggest that there is a third wave of feminism, comprising young women who grew up in the light of second wave feminism, and knew nothing other than the world created by feminism in the 1970s and 1980s. However, these third wavers are not always the 'grateful' daughters their feminist mothers would wish them to be. In the 1990s in Australia, North America and Britain, a 'generation debate' emerged, in which young women questioned the value of feminism, some claiming that they wanted a new kind of feminism, 'power feminism'. In general the battle lines are drawn starkly. Young feminists focus on 'entitlement feminism'⁵⁷⁾ or 'do-it-yourself' feminism.⁵⁸⁾ Second wave feminists criticise power feminists who believe feminism is about "my"

⁵⁶⁾ Laura Dales, draft chapter from her doctoral dissertation, pers. comm.

⁵⁷⁾ Beverley Skeggs, 'Women's Studies in Britain in the 1990s: Entitlement Cultures and Institutional Constraints', *Women's Studies International Forum* 18:4 (July-August 1995): 475-485 at 478.

career, “my” rights, “my” pursuit of happiness.⁵⁸⁾ In retort, the older generation’s ‘institutionalised feminism’ is condemned for assuming a homogenous womanhood⁶⁰⁾ based on shared oppression.⁶¹⁾

As the two waves are distinguished solely on the basis of generation, geographical, class and ethnic differences are ignored. Furthermore, like other oppositions, this one fails to hold water for very long. Many second wave feminists reject institutionalised feminism. Many younger feminists propose an activist agenda. I became intrigued by this generation debate and wanted to find out what young people in Australia and Japan thought about the women’s movement and gender issues, such as sharing housework, role reversal, pornography and same sex relations.

Methods

The paper uses data from a research project funded by a large Australian Research Council grant and support from the Center for Pacific and American Studies at Tokyo University. Over the last three years, I have surveyed about 560 young Asians, in high school and university, from seven countries, including Japan. The results for Japan so far processed come from Tokyo, Sophia and Kogakuin Universities and from Kokusai High School (a total of 75 women and 50 men). The results for Tokyo are compared with a survey of about 250 young women and 150 young men in the South Australian sample. Except for a handful of respondents at Tokyo and Sophia Universities, who chose the English language questionnaire, the questionnaire was translated into Japanese by my local researchers and the results translated back into English for me.⁶²⁾

The questionnaire had two major sections that will be discussed in this paper, one on feminism and the women’s movement and the other on gender issues. In the section on feminism, the questions asked were:

1. Feminism is personally relevant.
2. Feminists share my values.
3. I would call myself a feminist.

⁵⁸⁾ Kathy Bail, ‘Introduction’ in *DIY Feminism*, ed. Kathy Bail (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1996).

⁵⁹⁾ Jan Bowen, *Feminist Fatales: The Changing Face of Australian Feminism* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 1998), 126, 212.

⁶⁰⁾ Catherine Lumby, *Bad Girls: The Media, Sex and Feminism in the '90s* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1997), 155.

⁶¹⁾ Rebecca Walker, ‘Being Real: An Introduction’ in *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism*, ed. Rebecca Walker (New York: Anchor, 1995).

⁶²⁾ My thanks to the translators Kamikubo Kazuyo, Umino Rumi, and Wakai Yasuhiro; to Suga Miya for her assistance, and to those who administered questionnaires or gave me access to their classes: Suga Miya, Michael Jacques and Nakano-san. Thanks also to Jenni Rossi for producing the SPSS file.

4. The women's movement has achieved good things for women of my country.
5. The women's movement has achieved good things for men of my country.⁶³⁾

Among the questions concerning gender issues, respondents' reactions to the following were sought:

- Sharing housework where husband and wife have the same number of hours of paid work.
- Role reversal: it is acceptable for the man to stay home while the woman goes out to paid work.
- It is acceptable to show women's naked bodies in advertising and magazines like *Playboy* (pornography).

Attitudes to feminism and the women's movement in Japan and Australia

In Australia, there is wide support for at least some of the achievements of the women's movement. Opinion polls have found that, depending on the issue, between 75 per cent and 95 per cent of respondents support equal opportunity legislation, equal pay, childcare, sharing housework when both partners work.⁶⁴⁾ As Tables 1 and 2 reveal, on almost every item the young Australians evince more support for feminism and the women's movement than the young Japanese do, although the patterns of support are quite similar with the most support (about three-quarters of the sample or more) for the statement that the women's movement has achieved good things for women and the least (about one-fifth and one-third of the samples) for self-definition as a feminist. For example 34 per cent of young South Australian women, but only 22 per cent of young Japanese women are willing to call themselves feminist. A marginally higher proportion of young Japanese women consider that they share feminist values, while in both samples support for the good achievements of the women's movement is strong: 88 per cent of young South Australian women believe the Australian women's movement has achieved good things for Australian women while 71 per cent of young Japanese women believe that the Japanese women's movement has achieved good things for Japanese women. Similarly, the young Australian men are more supportive of the women's movement than are the young Japanese men, in all cases except sharing feminist values, where the young Australian men maintain the low support for this that they endorsed for the personal relevance of feminism whereas the young Japanese men were less willing to distance themselves from feminists.

Women's studies are taught in many schools in South Australia as well as almost all the universities. In Japan, although there is a 'current wave of women's studies', no university pro-

⁶³⁾ These questions were taken from a Time/CNN poll conducted in the United States in the mid-1990s. Gina Bellafante, 'Feminism: It's All about Me', *Time* (29 June 1998): 54-60.

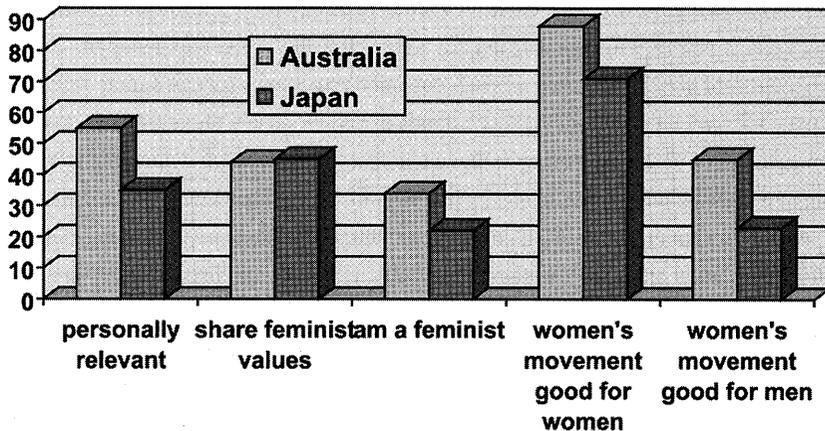
⁶⁴⁾ Catherine Armitage, 'Women's Rights Wronged', *The Australian* (10 October 1994): 10; Sex Discrimination Commissioner, *Report on Review of Permanent Exemptions Under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1992), 15; Michael Bittman and Frances Lovejoy, 'Domestic Power: Negotiating an Unequal Division of Labour within a Framework of Equality', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 29:3 (November 1993): 302-321 at 304-5.

vides a major in women's studies. Between 1996 and 2000, the increase in the percentage of universities offering women's studies courses rose from 37 per cent to 64 per cent of the national universities, 12 per cent to 51 per cent of the public universities and 28 to 49 per cent of the private universities. Two-thirds of those in charge of courses are women.⁶⁵⁾ Reflecting perhaps this lesser extension of women's studies through the education system in Japan, there is more knowledge of and support for the women's movement in the South Australian than in the Japanese sample, as can be seen from the following charts. Among the Tokyo sample, only a handful noted that they were studying feminism:

the boys at [XX] High School have learned much about feminism, and women are of course for feminism (female, high school, 1902911082).

Generally speaking, there is also more knowledge of the women's movement in the South Australian than in the Japanese sample, as can be seen from charts 3.1 and 3.2 below, revealing a pattern across all the questions in this section of the questionnaire: a higher 'no opinion/don't know response' for the young Japanese respondents.

Chart 1: Endorsement of feminist goals: Agree strongly and agree more than disagree: Japanese and Australian women compared



⁶⁵⁾ Mieko Goda, 'Research on Courses Related to Women's and Gender Studies in Higher Education Institutions (offered in fiscal 2000)', *NWEC Newsletter*, National Women's Education Centre, Saitama, 19(1) (2002), 1-4, at p 2.

Chart 2: Endorsement of feminist goals: Agree strongly and agree more than disagree: Japanese and Australian *men* compared

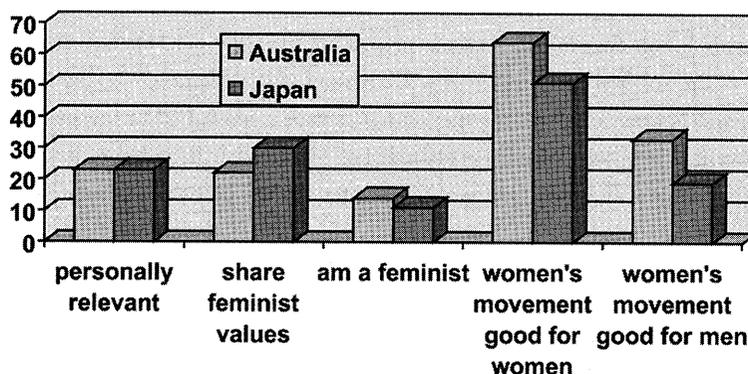


Chart 3.1: Australian and Japanese samples compared: Young people, 'I would call myself a feminist'

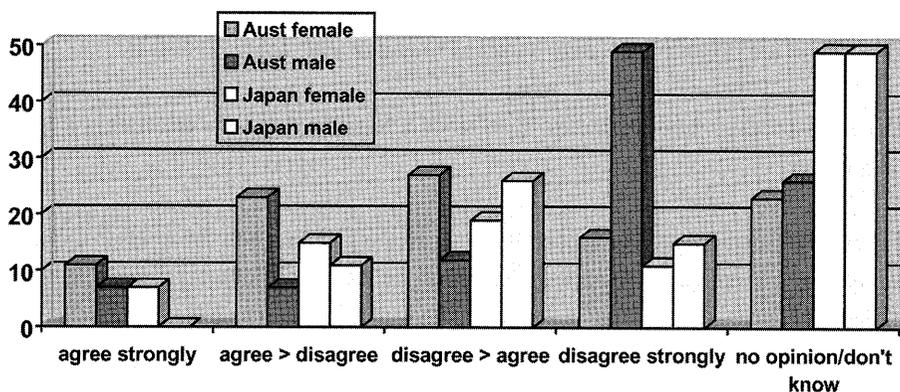
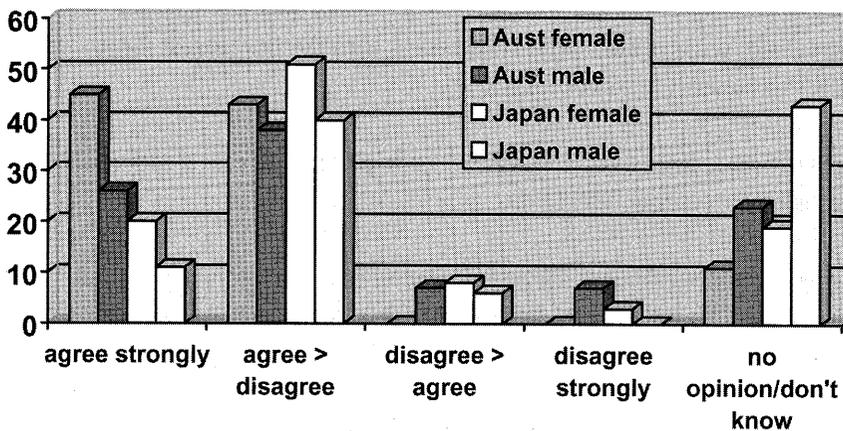


Chart 3.2: Australian and Japanese samples compared: Young people, 'The women's movement has achieved good things for women of my country'



Many South Australian respondents noted the gains of Australian feminism, particularly suffrage which was won first among the colonies in South Australia in 1894, but also equal wages, equal employment opportunities, access to education and so on. It would appear that among the young South Australians a major reason for the wide discrepancy between positive endorsement of the women's movement's achievements for women while also refusing to call oneself a feminist is that the women's movement is safely consigned to the past, to the 'dark ages' when women were downtrodden and needed liberating. In general, women were depicted as having 'come a long way' so that the need for the women's movement is a thing of the past:

no, I wouldn't call myself a Feminist, I mean I think that we [women] have come a long way since the early 1900s and before. I am quite happy where women stand now (South Australian female, Catholic school, 10091275).

I have no concept of what modern Feminists do. It appears irrelevant to me. (But I believe the pioneer Feminists shaped modern perceptions and roles of women—which is relevant to me) (South Australian female, Protestant girls school, 111351).

Several Japanese respondents also mentioned a feminist past, one attributing it to overseas influences:

I think that Japanese women gained their equality owing much to the overseas, especially American, movements' influences, rather than by their own [efforts] (female, university, 1903021111).

While few young Japanese commented on a proud past of female activism in Japan, they joined with the young Australians in condemning at least some aspects of feminism as too radical, another mechanism by which young people distanced themselves from feminism:

I agree with some of their beliefs but I don't 'burn the bra' protest (South Australian female, Protestant girls school, 10011050).

it's beneficial to have — over exaggerated can get tiring though (South Australian female, Protestant girls school, 10011352).

Another reason for the high support for feminism among the young Australians is the use of an 'equality' or 'liberal' feminist framework. They commented on 'women's rights', 'equal rights' with 'everyone else', 'equal opportunities', opposition to discrimination and unequal treatment. The Japanese respondents were less likely to use the equality rhetoric. One noted that she was experiencing discrimination in job hunting and another that she 'can sympathise

with the idea of an independent life without being influenced by the man' (female, university, 1903021122). However, the search for women's rights or equality was opposed by a number as excessive, making a strong contrast with the South Australian sample. One young Japanese man criticised feminists who 'cry for rights regardless of sex or gender' (Japanese male, university, 1903021104), while two young women noted:

feminists insist on their own rights. These rights are not essential. It is ridiculous to emphasise rights. However it [feminism] is helpful for women, and I agree with them to some extent (female, high school, 1902911081).

there is diversity even among the feminists, and some are too extreme. It is natural that men and women are different. With my own values, I cannot agree with those [feminists] who simply cry for equality (female, high school, 1902911085).

While there was strong support for the benefits of the women's movement for women, there was much lower support for its benefits to men. A number of the young Australians asserted that the Australian women's movement was good for men, making them more tolerant, requiring them to treat women more fairly, improving men's relationships with women, giving them access to a greater variety of roles and masculine performances:

it has allowed for the more 'sensitive' 'softer' man to be a tad more accepted (South Australian male, open access college, 100131479).

But the backlash against feminism was also noted:

it has made some of them more aware + changed their attitude, but others have become angered and intimidated (South Australian female, public girls school, 10011050).

Of the four categories of respondents, the young Australian men were the most likely to disagree strongly with each item. Indeed, a handful of young South Australians made much angrier comments than any of the Japanese respondents. One South Australian male asserted that 'I believe women belong in the house' (male, private boys school, 10081227); another that he 'couldn't give two shits about feminism' (male, working class public co-educational school, 10041111) and a third that:

[feminism] has corrupt[ed] a perfectly good system that has worked for a long time (South Australian male, private school, 10081227).

By contrast, several Japanese respondents felt that the Japanese women's movement had made little impact on Japanese men:

not many middle-aged to elderly men in Japan listen to and learn about equality between men and women (Japanese female, university, 1903021098).

But some applauded the changes, a male noting that 'it offers me the opportunity to reconsider myself' (male, university, 1903021104). One young woman argued:

[men] might think they are losing something because of the women's movement. But equality should be the natural way of social existence (Japanese female, university, 1903021119).

This comment alerts us to the fact that, while equality was a stronger discourse among the young Australians, it was not completely absent among the Japanese respondents.

Discourses of sameness and difference

Turning now to the attitudes concerning gender issues, as Chart 4 below reveals, in both the Australian and Japanese samples, there is high support for sharing housework when both partners work. But, where the young South Australians saw role reversal as much the same thing as shared housework and also approved of this, the young Japanese saw role reversal as a very different idea and offered only lukewarm support for it. Interestingly, however, the young Japanese men were more enthusiastic than the women, perhaps anticipating their future of long working hours as a corporate warrior culminating in *karōshi*, death from overwork.

Those who opposed role reversal often justified their answer in terms of women's natural superiority in childcare, although one respondent did so somewhat regretfully:

it should be shared equally but in reality it would be difficult. For example, in childcare the relationship between the mother and the child is more emphasised/seen as more important; thus there are many things only women can and should do (female, university, 1903021102).

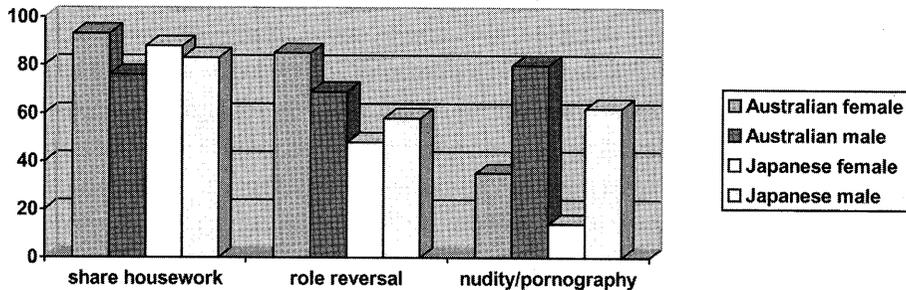
Several noted the difference of men, in terms of their work obligations:

even if they work the same hours, a man also has to go out drinking for work after that. But men should participate in child rearing (Japanese male, university, 19031211149).

To some extent these young Japanese respondents reflected their own experiences. Despite parental leave being available to the father and the mother in Japan, in 1999, while 56 per cent of eligible mothers took such leave, only 42 per cent of eligible fathers did so.⁶⁶⁾ By contrast, a number of the Australian respondents referred to their own experience of role reversal, either in their parents' case or the case of friends, for example 'my dad looked after me

and my sister while mum worked' (female, private girls high school, 10091294); 'I know men that do both' (female, private girls high school, 10091264).

Chart 4: Attitudes to gender issues: agree strongly or agree more than disagree



In both countries, women are much more opposed to female nudity than men, as shown in Chart 4. The opposition of the young Japanese women is certainly not based on a culture of censorship, Japan being famous for its liberal approach to pornography and foreigners constantly commenting on grown men reading sexually violent manga on the subways. Rather, I argue that the stronger purchase of the individualist rhetoric among the South Australian sample meant that few used a feminist argument to oppose pornography. Most claimed it was up to those concerned, some even arguing for equality for women to look at naked men (which only two Japanese respondents claimed):

I think that it's up to the individual woman to decide if she wants to be photographed naked and if somebody doesn't like it — tough luck. Don't buy the magazine, or look at the advertising, simply ignore it (South Australian female, middle class girls high school, 10021004).

The Japanese respondents were much more aware of the different interests of men and women in relation to pornography:

these magazines show pictures men love [to look at]. ... it is discrimination against women (female, university, 1903021108).

I do not understand why they can put up the advertisements in public places such as trains and so on. From my aspect I think it is an abduction of women and is sexual harassment. It's really discomforting and should be stopped (female, high school, 1002911073).

⁶⁶⁾ Glenda S Roberts, 'Pinning Hopes on Angels: Reflections from an Aging Japan's Urban Landscape' in *Family and Social Policy in Japan: Anthropological Approaches*, ed. Roger Goodman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002), 70.

Young Japanese women have used the feminist language of sexual harassment, aired through *seku hara* legislation, to protest men's access to nude images of women, and to aver that this creates other undesirable outcomes, such as groping in crowded carriages.

Conclusion: feminist futures in Australia and Japan

In Australia, the so-called 'daughters' of feminists, young women, take *formal equality* for granted but live in world without *substantive/real equality*. There are a number of reasons for this. As the feminist movement developed, 'other' women—for example indigenous women, women from non-English speaking backgrounds, women with disabilities—asked whether feminism was also for them or was just a 'white middle class' movement. This debate, although necessary, fragmented the experiential, political and theoretical unity of the category 'woman' and made it harder for the women's movement to go on claiming their goals in relation to the collective of women. Secondly, feminism has won a number of victories for women, for example equal wage rates, access to affordable childcare, legal responses to rape charges, removal of the marriage bar. As a result, class or socio-economic status possibly now divides Australian women much more significantly than it did in the 1960s. In many ways, the life chances of a middle class girl will be more like her brother's or her husband's than like that of her sister who has not finished high school and who will be lucky to find more than intermittent casual employment.

Another challenge has been that the discourses of liberalism, individualism and economic rationalism have gained such strength in Australian society and politics that few can see structural inequalities, whether of class or gender. Linked to this, young women so persistently refuse to be labelled victims that they claim their equality even when it does not exist. They claim that they and their partners share housework, even when time diaries prove otherwise.⁶⁷ They claim that it is their choice to undergo cosmetic surgery and this has nothing to do with patriarchal beauty standards or what men desire in women. Finally, the liberal or sameness rhetoric has been the major way in which success in obtaining feminist goals has been achieved in the last thirty years. Women have claimed access to the same rights and opportunities as men. But this has left little space for difference claims, for example that family-friendly workplaces are needed for both parents, or that pornography is not just an issue affecting individual men and women but also the way men understand and evaluate women in society. As a result the most pressing problem facing Australian women today is the triple burden, of child and other care, of paid work and of voluntary community work.

But the birth 'strike' of young Australian women, their response to this structural dilemma, can also be seen in Japan's 'collapsing' fertility rate.⁶⁸ The values of the 'good wife,

⁶⁷ This is described as 'pseudomutuality' by Michael Bittman and Jocelyn Pixley, *The Double Life of the Family* (St Leonards, Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1997), 145–171.

wise mother' *ryōsai kenbo* ideology is expressed also as *otoko wa shigoto, onna wa katei* (men have a job, women have the household). More accurately it is said, *otoko wa shigoto, onna wa katei to shigoto* (men have a job, women have the household and a job), which identifies the changing role of Japanese women alongside the unchanging nature of men's role.⁶⁹ I am certainly not arguing that Japanese women experience a utopian celebration of their female qualities in contrast with the hard-nosed requirement that Australian women take it like a man. The equality rhetoric has delivered Australian women a more equal place in the workforce. Despite their almost equal levels of education compared with men, Japanese women's participation in politics and management remains low, and lower than it is for Australian women. Women comprise 72 per cent of the part-time workforce, 7 per cent of lower level managers and 1.5 per cent of departmental heads.⁷⁰ While only six Australian women are named in the 'Rich 200' (as distinct from being perhaps part of a rich 'family'),⁷¹ 11 per cent of top executives among 2,500 large employers were women in 1998, while about twenty per cent of managers are women.⁷² By contrast, Japanese women, although confined to lower paid less secure 'part-time' work, receive more sympathy from their employers in relation to their childcare needs,⁷³ while motherhood and mothers appear to retain a higher status in Japan than in Australia. But Japanese women, too, like Australian women, must assert 'sameness' if they are to enter the professional track of employment.

Women's movements adapt themselves to the possibilities provided by the political lineaments of the nations in which they operate, although it is clear from the history told here that both Japanese and Australian feminists developed diverse strategies to seize an array of opportunities. But success in one direction seems inevitably to produce lost opportunities in another, so that Japanese women still suffer the scourge of difference just as Australian women exhaust themselves claiming the impossibility of sameness.

⁶⁸ Roger Goodman, 'Anthropology, Policy and the Study of Japan' in *Family and Social Policy in Japan: Anthropological Approaches*, ed. Roger Goodman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 10.

⁶⁹ Kaye Broadbent, *Women's Employment in Japan: The Experience of Part-time Workers* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 5.

⁷⁰ Data for 1995: Broadbent, *Women's Employment in Japan*, 3, 10. Of the 27 directors of the Japan Medical Association none are women. Of the 84 directors of the Japan Federation of Bar Association, one is a woman. 14 per cent of medical doctors are women, 10 per cent of lawyers, 8 per cent of certified public accountants, 3 per cent of real estate appraisers, 63 per cent of elementary school teachers, 41 per cent of junior high teachers, and 14 per cent of university teachers: Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office, 'Survey on the Status of Gender Equality in the Region', *NWEC Newsletter*, National Women's Education Centre, Saitama 19:1 (July 2002): 7-9.

⁷¹ Narelle Hooper, 'Up, Up and Away: The Rich 200', *Business Review Weekly* (25 May 1998). http://www.brw.com.au/content/250598/rich_016.htm

⁷² Sally Jackson, 'Sex Handicap Runs until 2175', *The Australian* (22 October 1998), based on Affirmative Action Agency report.

⁷³ Broadbent, *Women's Employment in Japan*, 79.