Feminisms and differences in Japan: *Korean-Japanese*

women's activism and Japanese feminisms

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Abstract

This paper aims to give a brief overview of contemporary Korean (*zainichi*) women's groups in Japan and their contribution to Japanese feminist discourse and activism.

Research in the area of marginalisation has been significantly informed by gender and feminist theory. As Anthias and Yuval-Davis have argued; "the heterogeneous nature of racism needs to be considered not only in terms of ideologies surrounding biological difference but also in terms of fluid intersections of class, ethnicity, race and gender" (1992: 20). While feminists in Japan have published widely on the problems of patriarchy, androcentricity and inadequate notions of the reproductive family as the fundamental social unit in contemporary society, it is only recently that migrant women have voiced their concerns through feminist and gender studies frameworks.

Introduction

For the betterment of the situation for minority women in Japan it is not enough for just those within our ranks to modernise: in order for the broader Japanese society to undergo change we have to include groups outside as well. I would like to consider the possibility of collaboration with majority Japanese women as a way forward in reforming Japanese society in general.[1]

In her statement above, Pak Hwa-Mi relates the concerns of contemporary Korean-Japanese Korean women engaging with mainstream Japanese society and feminisms. Focusing on the relationship between mainstream (or ethnically-Japanese) and minority women, Pak observes that broad-scale social change in Japan requires the incorporation of Korean-Japanese perspectives into mainstream feminist critique. For non-Korean-Japanese feminists, this involves self-reflexive examination of "the multiple axes of gender, class, and ethnicity".[2] This paper aims to contribute to this examination, focusing on the potential commonalities and differences between mainstream Japanese and Korean-Japanese feminist approaches,

From the outset we are critical of the reification of a single perspective as the "authentic" mainstream Japanese or Korean-Japanese woman's view. As non-Japanese scholars there are

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[1] Hwa-Mi Pak, 'Zainichi Korian josei o meguru mondai: Zainichi Chōsenjin onna hitori kai', in IMADR-JC (eds) *Minoriti Josei ga Sekai o Kaeru: Minoriti Josei ni Tai suru Fukugō Sabetsu,* Booklet 6, (Kaihō Shuppansha, 2001) pp. 12-19 at p.16.
[2] Vera Mackie, "Dialogue, distance and difference: Feminism in contemporary Japan", *Women's Studies International Forum,* 21 (6)(1998): 599-615 at p. 611.

obviously issues of representation, and such discussions aside, there should be no ranking of "truth" to this assessment of subjectivity. It simply acknowledges the potential for different outcomes given different perspectives, reflecting that the view is largely dependant on the vantage point.[3]

Located somewhere at the junction of First/Third World and East/West binaries, Japan is not easily placed in standard categories of Other - post-colonial, socialist or post-socialist, or "developing nation". Straddling the divide between what Caplan calls "the imperializing Subject and the colonized Other", Japan can thus be seen as the site of a selective and specific blurring of binaries, and as such represents a challenge to those frameworks - feminist included - founded on the constructs of Similarity and Difference.[4]

Constructions of "Japanese" womanhood must therefore be understood as embedded in specific relational contexts that reflect international relations (including wars and globalisation) as much as domestic social trends. A study of feminism and women's experiences in Japan thus evokes the various "figure(s) of difference", including but not limited to, those which mark

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[3] Leila J. Rupp, 1999. "Feminisms and internationalism: A view from the centre", in Mrinalini Sinha, Donna Guy and Angela Woollacott eds., *Feminisms and internationalism*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), pp. 191–194 at p. 191.
[4] Ibid, p. 321.

women from men, Japanese from Asian and Japanese from Western.[5] Within this, this paper focuses on the specific voices of Korean-Japanese women, who have until recently been marginalised in discussions of both "Japaneseness" and "feminism". Throughout the contemporary development of Korean-Japanese identity and self-determination, the interests of Korean-Japanese women have been subsumed and flattened in the interests of political strategy. This discussion therefore seeks to reconstitute and tease apart some of the strands of Korean-Japanese feminism, addressing both mainstream and Korean-Japanese constructions (and obstructions) of difference, and commonalities between Korean-Japanese and mainstream Japanese feminisms.

The paper begins with a examination of the development of Korean-Japanese feminism, and overview of the central issues in contemporary mainstream Japanese feminism. We then examine disparities and commonalities between Korean-Japanese and mainstream Japanese feminisms, concluding with a discussion of the implications of multiple axes of discrimination for feminists and women in Japan.

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[5] Jane Caplan, "Afterword", in Gail Lee Bernstein ed., *Recreating Japanese women, 1600-1945,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 315–321 at p. 315.

Zainichi activism and Korean-Japanese women[6]

Korean-Japanese women in Japan have only recently begun to confront discrimination specific to their situation. The catalyst for this mobilisation can be traced to the early 1990s when a number of Korean women made public declarations of enforced prostitution during the Second World War. The so-called "comfort women" issue involved tens of thousands of women from around Asia, mostly Korean women, being forced to service Japanese soldiers in what many have described as sexual slavery.[7] The public declarations of these women caught the attention of the global public and also impacted on the way in which Korean-Japanese women thought about their situation in Japan. The 1991 visit by Yun Chŏng-ok (from the "Korean Council on the Matter of Comfort Women" to Japan was a defining moment for Korean-Japanese women. Yun's visit led to the formation of the *Jūgun Ianfu Mondai Uri Yosong Netto* (Our Women's Network for the Military Comfort Women Issue) group, as well as the publication of a book in Japanese containing entries by Korean-Japanese women authors.[8] Besides helping with the fight for compensation on behalf of the "comfort women", the *Jūgun Ianfu Mondai Uri Yosong Netto* group aimed for the eradication of both racism and sexism in Japan, while the book touched on

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[6] The term "zainichi" has been widely used to describe the Korean diaspora in Japan. Recently, the term Korean-Japanese has become increasingly utilised by this community as an oxymoronic representation of the existence of difference in Japan in the face of mythical notions of Japanese ethnic homogeneity.

[7] For example see Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*, (Columbia University Press, 2000) and Lisa Yoneyama, 'Travelling memories, contagious justice: Americanization of Japanese war crimes at the end of the post-cold war' *Journal of Asian American Studies*, Volume 6(1), 2003: 57-93.

[8] Chŏng-ok Yun (ed), *Chōsenjin josei-ga Mita Ianfu Mondai*, (San'Ichi Shobō, 1992).

such issues and the personal experiences of Korean-Japanese women in Japanese society and their feelings about the "comfort women" issue.

The link between the "comfort women" issue and the plight of Korean-Japanese women in Japan is perhaps best described by Kim Pu-ja, who postulates that many zainichi men believe the "comfort women" issue to be solely a racial one. She denounces this attitude and argues that Korean patriarchy is responsible for the more than forty year delay in this issue's emergence into the public arena. She also draws parallels between this and the delays in dealing with problems of sexism and gender discrimination in zainichi society, due to what she believes is a failure to go beyond a criticism of Japanese society.[9] Historically, ubiquitous notions of Japanese national identity assiduously aligned with Japanese ethnic homogeneity coupled with a vicarious Korean nationalism within the zainichi community have precluded consideration of other dimensions of exclusion and prejudice (Pak 2000a: 12). In this context, gender has been relegated to a secondary position behind ethnicity.

These and subsequent approaches adopted by Korean-Japanese women are thus a significant departure from prior zainichi activism by that focussed largely on racial/ethnic discrimination by mainstream Japanese society. Korean-Japanese women have used feminist and gender studies' critiques to bring new perspectives on the zainichi context into focus. Particular

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[9] Pu-ja Kim, 'Looking at sexual slavery from a Zainichi perspective ', in AMPO (eds), *Voices from the Japanese Women's Movement*, (New York: M. E. Sharpe: 1996): 157-160 at p. 157.

attention has been drawn to the absence of the dimensions of gender and sex in considering the effects of oppression and exclusion. Furthermore, although the importance of the nexus between gender and ethnicity is not lost on the Korean-Japanese feminist, it is an area that has gained little attention within or without the zainichi population. As Pak Hwa-mi has stated,

> There has been much debate and as a result more understanding of the multilayered complexity of racial/ethnic and class prejudice against the *zainichi* in Japan. However, there is little discussion or consideration of gender and sexual prejudice against *zainichi* women.[10]

In the past, solidarity as an ethnic group actively opposed to ethnic and racial discrimination has led to a number of positive changes in social opportunity and social policy for the zainichi population. For example, such struggles have resulted in greater access to some welfare services, slightly more equality of opportunity in employment and the abolishment of fingerprinting in the registration process for permanent residents in Japan.[11] These important changes occurred through the 1980s and early 1990, when **human** rights were pursued and social movements attracted large numbers of both zainichi and Japanese participants. Although such successes are significant, the criticisms of Korean-Japanese women have been levelled at the

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[10] Hwa-mi Pak, 'Okotte kurete arigatō', in *Horumon Bunka* 9, 2000:11-32 at p. 12.

[11] The fingerprinting requirement was revised in 1992 for special permanent residents and since January 8 1993 it has been replaced by a signature. Other changes to welfare restrictions came about as a result of not only pressure from the zainichi communities but also from the global community for Japan to ratify the UN Refugee Convention in 1982. This was because Japan was accepting Indo-Chinese refugees at the time. Such pressure forced Japan to remove the nationality clause from a number of welfare relates laws allowing non-nationals access to some civil services.

privileging of Korean cultural and ethnic identity as the only dimensions through which the struggle for equality is pursued.[12] Korean-Japanese women argue that such privilege compounds the problem of ethnic prejudice already faced in the broader community by minority women and devalues their position overall. Moreover, there have been claims that the marginalisation of women has been further aggravated through community practices of patriarchy and androcentricity. As Chŏng Yŏng-hae has clearly articulated, the zainichi has been represented as male, with the zainichi man as the central focus. She has also criticised the construct of the zainichi family as the central social unit.[13] The concerns about patriarchy and androcentricity have led to overlapping discussions of family/marriage, work, gender discrimination and the nexus between class, gender and ethnicity.

Ethnically marginalised women are constructed differently than men by both the state and by ethnic communities. They are often seen as primary biological reproducers and reproducers of culture and nation.[14] As Mackie has argued, the relationship between the individual and state is mediated through familial structures relegating women to the domestic sphere.[15] The same can be said of the individual's relationship with the broader ethnic community. Women in the zainichi

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[12] Hwa-Mi Pak, 'Zainichi Korian josei o meguru mondai: Zainichi Chōsenjin onna hitori kai', in IMADR-JC (eds) *Minoriti Josei ga Sekai o Kaeru: Minoriti Josei ni Tai suru Fukugō Sabetsu,* Booklet 6, (Kaihō Shuppansha, 2001) pp. 12-19 at p. 14.
[13] Yŏng-hae Chŏng, 'Zainichi' onnakakari', *Korian Mainoriti Kenkyū* 4, 2000: 5-45 at p. 21.
[14] F. Anthias and N. Yuval-Davis, 'Introduction', in Anthias & Yuval-Davis (eds), *Woman, Nation, State*, (London: Macmillan, 1989): 1-16 at p. 7.
[15] Vera Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan: Citizenship, Embodiment and Sexuality*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) at p. 5.

community for instance are seen as markers of culture who belong in the domestic sphere. As Sin Suk-uk explains, the uniforms worn by girls from Korean ethnic schools in Japan have not modernised over time in contrast to boy's uniforms that have been permitted to change with the times.[16] Moreover, Yi Pon-mi has written about the pressure to remain in the domestic sphere rather than in the public space that the workplace can represent. Yi also denounces the inconsistency of positions adopted by zainichi males who criticise women in the public space but at the same time devalue the domestic duties they are expected to perform.[17] Not only are women in zainichi society prevented from equal access to employment in Japan on the basis of ethnic and gender difference they are also limited by gender in accessing employment within their own community.

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[16] Suk-uk Sin, 'Zainichi' onnakakari', *Korian Mainoriti Kenkyū* 4, 2000: 5-45 at p. 13.
[17] Pon-mi Yi, 'Josei ga genki na zasshi "Sai"', *Horumon Bunka*, *Horumon Bunka* Vol. 7, 1997: 73-77 at p. 75.

For some Korean-Japanese women, appeals to mainstream Japanese feminists may be one way of assisting in a greater awareness of their position and aiding the struggle for liberation. Similar to issues between ethnically marginalised women and mainstream feminists elsewhere indications are that there is still distance and divergence between "majority" women and marginalised minority women in Japan. Pak Hwa-mi has proposed some strategies for furthering collaboration between minority and majority feminists in Japan. Firstly, she argues that "majority" women in Japan need to realise that they occupy a position of privilege and authority. Secondly, she argues that "majority" women see issues such as class, race and gender as separate when "minority" women see them as inseparable and intrinsically related. She adds that collaboration between majority and minority women is not possible without the realisation of this disparity and without minority women ready to articulate such incongruence.[18]

Contemporary concerns in Japanese feminism

Contemporary Japanese feminist analyses can be broadly divided into three focal categories: family/marriage, work and (hetero)sexism. The overlap between these issues is significant, such that discussions of work inevitably involve discussion of the family, while discussions of the family in turn evoke questions around sexism and heterosexism.

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[18] Hwa-Mi Pak, 'Zainichi Korian josei o meguru mondai: Zainichi Chōsenjin onna hitori kai', in IMADR-JC (eds) *Minoriti Josei ga Sekai o Kaeru: Minoriti Josei ni Tai suru Fukugō Sabetsu,* Booklet 6, (Kaihō Shuppansha, 2001) pp. 12-19 at p. 16.

These issues crystallise in discussions of the current low birth-rate/aging society and its implications, and it is from this perspective that I survey contemporary Japanese feminist discourses.[19]

The current and potential ramifications of low-birth-rate and aging society have provoked significant action and reaction among feminists in Japan. Some women have engaged in the development of legislation promoting gender equality, specifically the Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society (1999), and/or in critique of its impact and implementation at local and national levels.[20] Others have explored the causes and effects of trends of late or non-marriage, shifting life expectations and low fertility among young women.[21] The rise and effects of these trends feature prominently in feminist analyses of work, family and heterosexism because of how they speak to Japanese women's lives and position in society in past, present and future Japanese society.

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[19] It should be noted that the demographic trends of low fertility, delayed marriage and non-marriage are also apparent in other prosperous Asian countries, including Taiwan and particularly Singapore, and in some less prosperous nations such as Thailand. See Gavin W. Jones, "Asian demographic transitions: Transitions to what?", paper presented at *The Australian Population Association*, Canberra, Australia, 15-17 September 2004, pp.12-14.

[20] See for example: Mari Ōsawa, *Danjo Kyōdō Sankaku Shaka wo Tsukuru,* (Tokyo: NHK Books, 2002); and Kazue Muta, "Danjo Kyōdō Sankaku Jidai no [Jotei]ron to Feminizumu" (Feminism and Views on the Empress in the Era of Gender Equality), in *Gendai Shisō – Toranzunashonaru Feminizumu: Josei no Saihaichi,* (Contemporary Thought – Transnational Feminism: Realigning Women) 1(31)(2003) pp 115-129.

[21] See Junko Sakai, *Makeino no Tōboe,* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2003); Tamako Sarada, 1998. *Parasaito Shinguru* (Parasite singles), (Tokyo: Wave Shuppan, 1998); Chikako Ogura, *Kekkon no Jōken* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 2003).

Family

Criticism of the patriarchal family system features in some mainstream Japanese feminist discourse. Yoshizawa argues that the Women's Lib movement in Japan focused on the deconstruction of the "fantasy of the modern family" (*kindai kazoku gensō*).[22] She suggests that while post-war Japanese society successfully transplanted the Western nuclear family model promoted by the U.S Occupation, the concept of "family" remained essentially Japanese, grounded not in an Oedipal patriarchy but in the "myth of maternity".[23] Thus it is the myth of maternity, in which a woman "does not become a mother through giving birth to a child, but through marriage becomes an all-encompassing mother", that oppresses modern Japanese women.[24] The centrality of maternity in Japanese feminism is reflected in its presence in core debates in suffrage, second-wave and later theoretical debates, including the ecological feminist debate between feminist academics Ueno Chizuko and Aoki Yayoi.[25]

In the high-growth period of the 1980s, the feminine ideal was embodied by "full-time housewife", who quit work in "marriage retirement" (*kekkon taishoku*) and was engaged completely in housework and child-rearing, particularly in overseeing the children's education.[26]

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[22] Natsuko Yoshizawa, . "Utsukishī mono ni okeru taitō", in Yumiko Ehara ed., *Feminizumo Ronsō: 70 nendai kara 90 nendai e* (Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 1990), pp. 93-132 at p. 99.
[23] Yoshizawa, "Utsukishī mono ni okeru taitō", p. 100.
[24] ibid.
[25] Yoshizawa, "Utsukishī mono ni okeru taitō", p. 102.
[26] Chizuko Ueno, *Onna Asobi* (Tokyo: Gakuyō Shobō, 1988), p. 104.

By choosing to become housewives, women were choosing the perceived "easy option", defined in comparison with a standardised masculine role ideal (embodied by the *sararīman*), and its related hazards (*karōshi*, or death from overwork, fatigue and social isolation). The "full-time housewife" (*sengyō shufu*) ideal is perceived as one in which women can pursue their own interests, or as a kind of aristocratic class (*kizoku kaikyū*).[27] Ogura observes that for contemporary young women, marriage can be understood as a means of "survival, dependence or preservation", depending on the education and class of the individual woman.[28] In Ogura's study, women who are high-school graduates see marriage as essential for financial survival, particularly those in rural areas where jobs are limited. For women who are junior college/ three-year university graduates, marriage represents an escape from the workplace and a new career as housewife and mother, where they are supported entirely by their husband's wage. The four-year university graduates among Ogura's interviewees do not necessarily aspire to be economically supported, but seek a marriage that will preserve their single lifestyle, and husbands who will support their decision to continue working.

The continuing drop in marriage and fertility rates can be seen in part as a response to the perceived gap between formal change and substantive change in ideas of gender, marriage and the work/family balance. The formal changes in this area are in part effected by legislative

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[27] Ueno, *Onna Asobi,* p. 129.
[28] Chikako Ogura, *Kekkon no Jōken* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha), pp. 30-39.

reforms and government campaigns to redress gender inequalities in the home, community and the workplace

Work

Women's labour-force participation levels reflect, inter alia, sociocultural constructions of gender ideals related to marriage and motherhood, economic expectations and aspirations, and the effects of anti-discrimination legislation such as the 1986 Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL). Feminist analysis therefore posits these factors as central to projects of reform and equity. A brief examination of the EEOL and the 1999 Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society illustrates the effects and limitations of such projects.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Law or EEOL (*Danjo Koyō Kikai Kintō Hō*) became effective in April 1986.[29] The Law aimed to prevent sexual discrimination in employment, and specifically in "recruitment, hiring, training and retirement".[30] The EEOL built on the provisions of the 1947 Labor Standards Law, explicitly prohibiting discrimination on sexual grounds, not only in respect to wages but also to job access and training provisions.[31] Amendments enacted at

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[29] Vera Mackie, *Feminism in modern Japan,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 184.
[30] ibid.
[31] Linda N. Edwards, "Equal Employment Opportunity in Japan: A view from the West", *Industrial and Labour Relations Review,* 41(2) (1988): 240-250 at p. 242.

the same time as the Law removed restrictions on overtime for women, "dangerous and harmful work" and late-night hours for female workers.[32]

Even in its infancy, predictions for the EEOL noted its contingency on social practices and gender mores.[33] While laws such as the EEOL officially mandate gender equality in the workplace, workers, and particularly full-time workers, are bound to gender ideals and expectations, and individual compliance with the law remains subject to external socio-economic factors. In this sense, individual and family circumstances creating gender (in)equality remain beyond the effective scope of legislation. Furthermore, while the legislative creation of an "equal playing field" meant that expectations on women were stepped up to match those placed on men.[34]

Japanese women's opposition to the underlying assumptions of the law manifested in some areas as a revival of the housewife ideal. For others, dissatisfaction with this law was a stimulus to develop a broader-based, socially-focused legislation, and helped to produce the Basic Law for a Gender equal Society. The 1999 Law defines a "gender-equal society" as one "where both women and men shall be given equal opportunities to participate voluntarily in

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[32] Edwards, "Equal Employment Opportunity in Japan", p. 243; Vera Mackie, "Equal Opportunity and Gender Identity: Feminist Encounters with Modernity and Postmodernity in Japan", in Yoshio Sugimoto and Johann P. Arnason (eds). *Japanese Encounters with Postmodernity,* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1995), pp. 95–113. at p. 100.
[33] Edwards, "Equal Employment Opportunity in Japan", p. 249.
[34] Mackie, "Equal Opportunity and Gender Identity ", p. 100; Mami Nakano, "Ten years under the Equal Employment Opportunity Law", in AMPO (ed). *Voices from the Japanese women's movement*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), pp. 65–81 at p. 65.

activities in all fields as equal partners in the society, and shall be able to enjoy political, economic, social and cultural benefits equally as well as to share responsibilities".[35] While it specifically aims to eliminate gender inequality from the family upwards, to ensure that "every citizen is able to fully exercise their individuality and abilities regardless of gender", the Law does not provide for cultural or class differences, nor for family structures beyond the heterosexual norm. Muta argues that the Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society's recommendation that "men and women respect the other's human rights and share their responsibilities" is not only bound to an assumption of male/female relationship, but that the "human rights" flowing from or elucidated by such relationships are particularly privileged.[36]

Ogasawara observes that analysis of the gendered workplace needs to address links between collective status and individual opportunities.[37] While women have succeeded at the executive level, the majority of Japanese women do not aspire to let alone attain managerial and high-level employment positions.[38] The connections between gender-specific opportunities and obligations complicate depictions of the workplace as oppressive for either gender exclusively.

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35 "Chapter One, 'General Provisions' (Articles 1-12), *The Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society,* http://www.gender.go.jp/english/basic_law/chapter1.html (17/03/06).

36 Kazue Muta. "Danjo kyōdō sankaku jidai no [jotei]ron to feminizumu" (Feminism and views on the empress in the era of gender equality), in *Gendai Shisō – toranzunashonaru feminizumu: Josei no saihaichi*, (Contemporary Thought – transnational feminism: Realigning women) 31(no. 1)2003: 115 –129, p. 125.

37 Yuko Ogasawara, *Office ladies and salaried men,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p.6.

38 Jean R. Renshaw *Kimono in the boardroom: The invisible evolution of Japanese women managers*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

The responsibility and potential success attainable by salaried men (at all levels of power) should not be seen as the binary opposite of the respective unavailability of these to female colleagues.

Feminist analyses of work, the family and (hetero)sexism illustrate the nexus between gendered, aged and sexist inequalities. Constructions of femininity and motherhood, implying particular (heteronormative) family patterns, undermine efforts to increase women's participation in paid labour. The insufficient provision of (often prohibitively expensive) public-care facilities, for children and the elderly, has further compromised the capacity of women to engage in labour outside the home and family.[39]

The balance of family and career remains a central concern of Japanese feminists, even as the number of women choosing to attempt the balance diminishes. It is in part the failure to address such core issues that has seen Japan's marriage and fertility rate drop in the last decade, and that has encouraged the rise of feminist discourse which deconstructs, problematises and sometimes repudiates marriage and motherhood as goals for women. Legislation such as the Basic Law for a Gender equal Society aims to reduce the unqualified demands of care placed on women in the household, but does not problematise the presumption of heterosexuality, let alone the ideal of motherhood. Significantly, despite focusing on the family and community, legislation

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[39] Glenda S. Roberts, 2002. "Pinning hopes on angels: Reflections from an aging Japan's urban landscape", in Roger Goodman, ed., *Family and social policy in Japan*: *Anthropological approaches*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp. 54–91, at p. 58.

such as the EEOL and the Basic Law also ignore the implications of ethnicity and cultural differences on individual women's experiences of gender and discrimination in Japan.

Sexuality

Questions of women's sexuality and gender roles have featured in contemporary feminist activism and discourse in a number of ways. While Ogura argues that Japanese feminism ignored sexuality until the recent advent of sexuality studies, arguably the construction and implications of women's sexuality have long been reflected in critical engagement with issues such as prostitution, reproductive health and feminine role ideals.[40] Anti-prostitution activists challenge the hegemony of masculine sexuality over female bodies, ecofeminists question the implications of medical technology for women's bodies and advocates of gender equality challenge the full-time housewife/full-time mother ideal of femininity. Sexuality features, sometimes explicitly and often implicitly, in discourses that address (mainstream) Japanese women's inherently subordinate position in the family, the workplace and society. While a central focus on queer or lesbian sexualities has not been a feature of all contemporary feminism, and remains outside the scope of official government discourse on women, the recent work of feminists such as Kitahara Minori challenges normative heterosexuality and promotes sexuality as a (or perhaps "the") central feminist concern.

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[40] Ogura, *Kekkon no Jōken*, p. 212.

According to feminist Miya Yoshiko, individual women's liberation is essential to the success of feminist politics.[41] "Liberation" for Miya refers particularly to the status of the physical female body, and requires the recognition and deconstruction of taboos around sexuality and reproductive health.[42] The promotion of sexuality as an issue separate from but related to reproduction represents one aspect of this process, and, while initially identified during Women's Liberation (*Ūman Ribu*) and post-Lib feminisms, remains a "women's issue" for address in government and non-government forums.

Hara Minako argues that Japanese women's sexual self-determination and freedom of expression have been won by the work of self-identified lesbian and bisexual women.[43] This work has involved the deconstruction of heterosexuality and marriage as central to ideals of femininity, promoting critical engagement with the family as the site at which these ideals are maintained. While this critique of heterosexism has its roots in queer and lesbian activism, Hara suggests that the implications of the heterosexual ideal extend to non-queer women.

> Heterosexual marriage openly justifies sanctions against any voluntary expression of women's sexuality in any other context, so the "lesbian wife" is not considered worthy of protection, and the "lesbian lover" appears to deserve punishment. [44]

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[41] Yoshiko Miya, "Interview" in Sandra Buckley, *Broken Silence: Voices of Japanese feminism*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p.160.
[42] Miya, *Broken Silence,* p. 161.
[43] Minako Hara, in AMPO ed., Voices from the Japanese women's movement, p.129.
[44] Hara, p. 131.

According to Hara, and for heterosexual and married Japanese women at least, sexual self-determination represents an obstacle to the fulfilment of ideal (domestic) femininity, which is primarily reproductive and responsive. However, as Kitahara argues, it is not heterosexuality but rather heteronormativity that impedes women's sexual self-determination. Promotion of the reproductive (heterosexual) family as the basic social unit supports gender reform insofar as it encourages the provision of child-care, family-friendly workplace practices and laws such as the Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society. However, by conflating heterosexuality and reproduction with the Japanese family, the framework excludes those outside "traditional" families, just as it obscures diversity within the category "Japanese".

Commonalities and Divergences

Outside Japan, charges of essentialism by women of colour against English-speaking (predominantly white, western) feminists have underwritten the drive towards an awareness of multiple discriminations and the risks implicit in universalisation of women's experiences.[45] Speaking in Other voices, women of colour have argued the limitations of white, western, Anglophone feminism in theorising on the lives of women specifically and systematically

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[45] hooks 1984; Minh-ha 1989, Spelman 1988, Collins 1990).

excluded from white, western, Anglophone societies.[46] These limitations relate to the culturally and historically specific conditions in which women live, and which resist collapsible definitions constructed outside these conditions.

These limitations are also evident in discussions of feminist discourses within Japan. The relationship between Korean-Japanese feminist discourses and mainstream feminist discourses is problematised by the diversity of both categories, and by the varied form of feminist critique in Japan. For Korean-Japanese feminists, engagement in activism at a community level has led to a bottom-up development of feminist theory. The work of Korean-Japanese public intellectuals is marked by their ethnicity as well as their gender, and interpreted by mainstream and Korean-Japanese audiences with such qualifications. By contrast, mainstream Japanese feminists such as Haruka Yōko are seen to speak for (and as) "all" women in Japan, focusing their critique on everyday issues such as ageism and workplace sexism without addressing issues of ethnic or cultural diversity.

One location in which zainichi feminists believe patriarchy to be especially entrenched is the family. Echoing Yoshizawa's reference to the "fantasy of the modern family" above, Pak Hwa-mi is particularly vocal in regard to what she calls a feudalistic and patriarchal zainichi family system. She argues that such a system places the father as head and excludes women that

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[46] (Barrios de la Chungara in Davies 1983:41; Minh-ha 1989; Collins 1990; Mohanty 1991; Moraga and Anzaldúa 1993; Alexander and Mohanty 1997).

exist outside the orthodox role of wife, caregiver and mother, declaring such terms as the `modern zainichi family` oxymoronic.[47] Also similar to the connection drawn by Yoshizawa's between the notion of the "all-encompassing mother" and the suppression of women, Pak remarks on the commonly held belief of the zainichi mother as *idai na omoni* (great mother) and the need to dispel such a myth in order to attain liberation for women.[48]

Japanese psychologist Kayama Rika suggests that there are three requirements for broad-scale social change in Japan: a return to focusing on the individual; a move away from meritocracy (which emphasises performance over everything); and the return of women to the workforce.[49] The latter concern addresses the specific trend of "full-time housewife ambitions", in which "the family (is prioritised) over the individual". Kayama suggests that the emphasis on the "family" risks slippage into emphasis on "the country", and argues that "women's independence is fundamental".[50]

Pak Hwa-mi takes up this point when she discusses her motivation for founding the Korean-Japanese Korean One-Woman's Group (*Korean-Japanese Chōsenjin Onna Hitori Kai*) in 1990.[51] In a rebuke of the group-centred approach of Korean-Japanese activism in which masculine identity is prioritised, Pak argues that the struggle for liberation is better served at an

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[47] Hwa-mi Pak, 'Okotte kurete arigatō', in *Horumon Bunka* 9, 2000:11-32 at p. 17-18.
[48] Hwa-mi Pak, 'Zainichi' onnakakari', *Korian Mainoriti Kenkyū* 4, 2000: 5-45 at p. 12.
[49] Rika Kayama, interviewed by Tsujimoto Kiyomi, *Shūkan Kinyōbi*, 540 (01/14/2005), pp.20-25.
[50] Ibid. p. 25.
[51] Hwa-mi Pak 2001:13.

individual (*kojin*) level.[52] She believes the "cooperative" group (*kyōdōtai*) including the family, is an environment in which individual identity is suppressed.[53] Pak also sees the family as a context in which tradition, culture and customs posit Korean-Japanese identity as male. This, she argues, is an area of Korean-Japanese life that remains largely unproblematised.[54]

As non-Japanese feminists negotiate multiple axes of discrimination, mainstream Japanese feminists are called to address their experience of multiple axes of privilege. Pak Hwa-mi's call to recognise the privilege of class, ethnicity and language invites mainstream Japanese feminists to re-conceptualise their position in Japanese society, and to revisit the implications of the term "*josei*" (woman/women) in feminist theorising.

Conclusion

Divergence among feminist scholars and activists has featured strongly in each wave of feminism. These differences have stimulated productive dialogue and have encouraged the development of feminist analysis and critique, but have also led to redefinitions of the feminist playing field. Essential differences in key issues make feminists such as Ueno Chizuko wary of the implications of the generalised term "feminist". Referring to a feminist who supports the

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[52] Ibid, p. 13.
[53] Ibid, p. 12.
[54] Ibid, p. 14.

separate-surname reform, Ueno observes that she does not feel confident that simply "because (a woman is) a feminist we can understand each other".[55]

The implication that feminism bridges all gaps between women is therefore politically strategic but ideologically and practically conflicted. While mainstream Japanese feminists have theorised on gendered experiences of work, family and marriage and sexuality, ethnicity remains under-observed and underplayed in critique. Mainstream and Korean-Japanese feminists have prioritised particular issues for attention, with the family and marriage featuring strongly in both broad traditions. Sexuality, and specifically heterosexism, has featured less prominently in feminist critiques, and particularly in Korean-Japanese feminisms, arguably because of political strategy and the desire to focus on the implications of ethnicity in gender discrimination.

Just as women of colour have in the past been excluded (or partially included) from North American feminists analyses, minority women in Japan are included in Japanese mainstream feminisms as representatives of their gender but not their ethnicity or cultural background. While laws such as the EEOL and the Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society officially mandate gender equality in the workplace, family and community, individuals remain bound to gender ideals and expectations, and individual compliance with the law remains subject to external socio-economic factors, including class, ethnicity and ability.

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[55] Chikako Ogura and Chizuko Ueno, The Feminism (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2002), p.90.

Aoki Yayoi has argued that the incentive to organise in a political capacity must be tied to ideological goals rather than simply the maintenance of material comfort.[56] The lack of such ideological foundations is manifest in the failure to acknowledge the relationship between Japanese women and women in other (specifically developing) countries.[57] Aoki's argument should be extended to emphasise acknowledgement of the relationship between women within Japan – particularly, between mainstream Japanese women and minority women, including Korean-Japanese women.

Ueno's observation suggests that the term "feminist" should be interpreted as a self-ascribed identity as much as an identification decided by the reader or subject of the discourse. The fluidity of the term and its definitions is a critical factor in its public reception and currency, allowing for women with significantly conflicting stances to fall together into one political and theoretical box. The drawing of subjectively defined borders of "feminism" at once enhances and stifles the potential of feminist organisation and critique – while including all feminists means feminism has greater chance of public support, compromise requires the collapse of the principles from which critical engagement and reform develop.

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[56] Yayoi Aoki, "Interview", in Buckley *Broken Silence,* p. 9.
[57] Ibid, pp. 8,10.