

GALE Newsletter Autumn 2006

Newsletter of the Gender Aware Language Teachers (GALE)
Special Interest Group (SIG) of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT)

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Editor: Robert Croker <croker@nanzan-u.ac.jp>

In 2005 GALE members and others collaborated to jointly write an intermediate English level textbook that would provide an introduction to gender issues to non-native speakers. The title of this book, which emphasizes active learning and critical thinking, is "Gender Issues Today." The classroom activities "activate" all of the original seven multiple intelligences identified by Howard Gardner and all Myers-Briggs type learning style preferences, in an effort to accommodate all kinds of learners. This book is currently being used successfully by college teachers in Japan but has been found useful also by some overseas educators. Themes of the 16 chapters of Gender Issues Today include: What is gender? Gender socialization, Gender and language, Gender and family issues, Gender and employment, Gender and violence, Gender and health issues, Sex work, Gender stereotypes, Masculinities and men's movements, Heterosexism, Reproductive rights, Gender and the environment and others. For further information or to order this book, please check the GALE website at <<http://www.tokyoprogressive.org.uk/gale/>>, or contact Mr. Munetoshi Kawamura at <kawamura@c-enter.co.jp>.

Tango “Lessons” and Decision-Making in Teaching

Louise Haynes

In the spring of 2003, Mayumi and I were on our way out of the station near our home when a young woman approached us with a flyer for a new dance school that had just opened a few minutes' walk from the station. The school offered ballroom dancing, ballet stretching classes, and jazz dance for children. I mentioned to Mayumi that since junior high I had always wanted to learn to waltz and tango, just like Fred Astaire (my dream was to dance *with*, not *like*, Ginger Rogers). Mayumi's eyes opened wide and a broad smile came over her face. She had always wanted to learn, too.

So the next Thursday evening we strolled over to the tiny, two-storey building with the hand-painted posters in the windows: “Sign up now for a discount—no joining fee!” Naturally, we were curious as to how they taught and just what we had to do. We walked in with no dance shoes, in jeans and T-shirts, and were put in a class with two other beginners. We started our first lesson in our socks. The teacher, a woman in her early 50s, started walking across the narrow dance floor, indicating that we should follow her and walk exactly as she did. I thought to myself, if this is ballroom dancing, I'm disappointed. I certainly don't need to learn how to walk! Where are the waltz steps? The tango? The cha-cha? Little did I know how important that training in the “simple” art of walking would be.

Within the next few weeks, we had shoes to dance in, and became regular faces at the school. The frown I carried on my face that first night had faded into a smile as we progressed through the basic steps of the waltz, blues, and rumba. The teacher didn't flinch at all when I told her I wanted to learn the man's part. Actually, I think she was a bit relieved because there were all women in the class, which meant that she would be the only male lead. Another male part would increase the chances for everyone to have a partner to practice with. I also happened to be several centimeters taller than everyone else.

Over the next year and a half, we focused mainly on remembering the order of the steps, and gradually were introduced to the quick step, jive, paso doble, and my favorite, the tango. The dance instructor kept showing me how I needed to move in order to signal to my partner the next direction we would be moving in, or even the next step if we were not following a pattern. She said, “The tango needs a strong male lead. You must show the woman where to go.” My problem was that I could not think fast enough of all the possible steps to choose from and therefore could not give my partner the appropriate signal. In other words, I was having trouble leading.

It was into that second year that I started to reflect on my dancing and how it related to my teaching. I thought about leading in the classroom, since I do that every day for a living. Just what was my style in the classroom when it came to being the leader? I began to compare how I managed a 90-minute language class with how I approached my role as the lead in a two-partner dance. I observed myself as I moved through my conversation classes and found that I spent most of the time letting the students take over. I would set a task for them, and let them go at it. I was not leading the class; I was facilitating. I realized that I had a rather negative definition of “leading,” which, to me, meant that it took away options for the students. It meant imposing my teacher-talk on people who needed to make the most of the class time to develop their own speaking skills. So in order to provide them with that time, I did as little “leading” as possible. In the role of the teacher, I was much more apt to strive for consensus among the members of the class, thinking about how the learners might best achieve progress with as little interference as possible on my part.

In the role in the dance, I had to make the decisions and they had to be, and would be, followed. I wondered if this was what people who identified with qualities that are often assumed to be male felt. Do such people find it easy to make decisions for others and assume they will be carried out without question? Had I ever experienced this myself or had I followed the decisions made by others? Was the role of decision-maker really a male role or was I assuming that it was? Was I seeing seeing it now as a male role because of the dance, whereas before, I had thought it to be a human role?

I think I was also somewhat afraid of changing. Maybe somewhere within myself I was worried that if I were to find that part of me that took command in the dance, it would also have an impact on my personality and on my teaching style. I was confusing the power of being the person in charge with becoming autocratic. What models of decision-making did I have to draw on?

Looking inside, I thought about my past and the beliefs I held that came from my family. My mother was a working single parent, raising a daughter with the help of her parents. My mother worked most of her life as a secretary in companies where the men made the decisions. Most of the major decisions in our family were made by my grandparents—my strong-willed grandmother, in particular—until they died. After they died, and after I moved out of my mother’s house, my mother had trouble making important decisions and relied heavily on me for advice. In adulthood, I now approach decision-

making in relationships by open discussion and agreement, or compromise, not by one partner's domineering rule.

Looking outside, I asked: Who are the people making major decisions in the world today? What kinds of decisions are they making? What are some of the consequences of those decisions on the non-decision-makers around the world? Is top-down decision-making admirable in today's globalized/globalizing world? Whose voices are not heard when decisions are made by those who have the power and the authority to make them? Are alternative decision-making methods available? Effective? Preferable?

Looking at examples of many political leaders around the world left me sad. But there are other kinds of leaders I would like to emulate: Arundhati Roy, Howard Zinn, Amy Goodman, Yuri Kochiyama, and so many others throughout history. Although they are not in positions of powerful decision-making, these leaders do have a considerable degree of influence on the thinking of millions around the globe, and are people who take action in bringing about needed changes in social policy that will benefit the voices drowned out by decision-makers of established "authority." There are no gender roles in this kind of leadership.

Yet, assumptions about gender roles are all around us in dance class. The teacher often tells the other women that they should be 女らしく (onna rashiku) or lady-like with their steps, not opening their legs too wide in some turns, for example, and always following the male's lead, reinforcing the stereotype of woman as coy and compliant. In reality, dance requires that both partners be equally strong, agile, quick, and alert. As far as I can see, the only real difference between the partners is that one, who happens to have the label "male," makes the decisions.

In the classroom, there is no gender assigned to the leadership role.

Both dance and teaching are ongoing processes of refinement, exploration, and adjustment. As my dance and my teaching take the next step in the routine, I maintain my belief that the teacher can make some of the decisions and leave other decisions to the students. I can look to leaders of progressive movements for inspiration and example in how to move forward while being aware of others' advancement as well, and I can hold that leadership does not necessarily mean authoritarian decision-making. In dance class, I can characterize the decision-maker as the person who points out a safe direction in which both partners move together as equals in the fluid movement of the dance.

Breakaway: A Personal Essay

Ayano Fukui

Graduate School of Creativity and Culture, Aichi Shukutoku University

“Make a wish, take a chance, make a change, and break away”—these are lyrics from the song “Breakaway” performed by Kelly Clarkson. They suggest how I want to act. I always want to try to believe that I must be the strong one although I do not look so. Sometimes I still wonder how I can truly be strong. I have tried to “make a change” by jumping into Japanese pop culture. I might also need to make a change in myself, and notice what is going on inside myself a bit again.

Last March and April, there was a big television advertisement for KAT-TUN, a new singing group of boys from the well-known Japanese show business agency, Johnny’s Entertainment, Inc. Over those two months, every time I turned on the television, there was that group of boys. Somehow, such boys from Johnny’s have been my obsessive enemy for a long time—is it because they are the most appealing representation of Japanese *kawaii* culture, I wonder? Although I have been anti-Johnny’s boys in a sense, I dared to approach them in my last essay. However, every time I see their performances on television shows, something still feels awkward. Why do they look awkward to me? And what does it mean to consider boys rather than girls?

Ongoing Problems from the Past

“Who is your favorite among Johnny’s boys?” was a frequently asked question in my junior high school days. My answer was always, “I don’t have a favorite.” All my classmates who heard my answer looked uncomfortable, and I guess that they regarded it as quite natural that any teenaged Japanese girl would be a fan of Johnny’s boys. As I recall those days in my junior high school, I feel it was a crazy time in life. When I was thirteen or fourteen, girls around me suddenly tried to become different. They looked like they were competing and in a hurry to become “mature.” They crazily watched Johnny’s boys on television and magazines, and worried about how they were looked at by boys. I did not care about how boys thought about me, at all. I realized that these were girls in a hurry to make the transformation from “just a *kawaii* girl” to “a *kawaii* and bit sexy woman.”

Sometimes I wonder where I belong, when I watch these types of “a bit sexy” young women. I have not considered myself in terms of what kind of “woman” I am and it might be unusual since most girls and women around me seem to have a certain image of what kind of women they want to be, such as coquettish or independent.

Comparing Japanese girls' ambitions of image transformation with American girls, I generally feel the latter are motivated by being sexy, rather than Japanese notion of *kawaii*. For example, the music video of "Stupid Girls" performed by Pink who is obviously a feminist, ironically represents "sexy." The lyrics of "Stupid Girls" speak of outsider girls' feelings, which are just like mine:

Maybe if I act like that, that guy will call me back
Porno paparazzi girl, I don't want to be a stupid girl
Baby if I act like that, flipping my blond hair back
Push up my bra like that, I don't want to be a stupid girl

The lyrics of Pink's song might sound harsh, but, to me, the girls in my junior high school days undoubtedly were responding to something related to "being sexy." Japanese girls do not tend to focus on "being sexy," although nowadays there is a female singer Kumi Koda who dares to perform sexy songs and girls seem to feel attracted to her. In fact, most Japanese female singers sell coquetry and I feel quite wary of watching them on television, although I think Hikaru Utada and Angela Aki, who are my favorite singers, do not.

One of my questions about being a girl or a woman has been, "Is it necessary for girls to be sexy or coquettish? In this world, there has been a borderline between "men" and "women", but also there are distinctions among women. Being sexy or *kawaii* [cute]: which had I better choose?" I have observed girls around me including my friends, and I have secretly been concluding that every girl has something coquettish in there somewhere in themselves. Something coquettish in communicating with someone. The question, whether or not I also have something coquettish in communicating with someone, haunts me. And "independence" which my feminist self sets as a goal—even though I try to believe that I am strong, sometimes I am unable to believe in my strength and occasionally I might have felt that "independence" sounds empty. Emptiness and sadness are quite human emotions, I think, and my question has been how feminists deal with these feelings. The fact that I have these questions might however prove that I am immature as a feminist.

Johnny's Boys versus Myself, Round 1: A Song Negotiates

As I have mentioned, there is something about Johnny's boys and their representation of cuteness that always strikes me as awkward. Yet, I have come to start watching Johnny's boys more and found some interesting things. I decided to explore them, to attempt to reconcile this tension.

In the spring of 2006, SMAP, arguably the most famous group among Johnny's boys, performed a song called "Dear Woman" and in the lyrics of the song, every Japanese woman is praised for being beautiful:

Welcome ようこそ日本へ 僕らが生きてる時代へ

舞い降りた偶然に 心からありがとう

君が 君でいることが とても美しい

Welcome *yokoso* ["welcome"] to Japan, to our epoch

The coincidental encounter with you, I heartily appreciate it

You, being yourself, are beautiful indeed

My goal as a feminist has been exactly this. Being just myself and thinking of myself as beautiful.

From a feminist view, it is difficult to reconcile this feminist recognition of beauty with the construction of Johnny's boys and their *kawaii* look. Any born-good-looking person makes me feel inferior. It is difficult to approach them, and even if I do, there is still a distance between us. When I consider the lyrics of "Dear Woman," I wonder if this song is Johnny's boys' attempt to approach feminists? If so, do I have to respond in kind? It seems difficult to try to love what up till now I did not care about. Probably I am feeling like the character Charlie (Nicholas Cage) in Spike Jonzes' film *Adaptation* (2002), as he struggles to adapt a book about orchids for the screen. In one scene of the film, Charlie gets a hint about how to remedy his writer's block: "Find one thing that you care passionately about and then write about that." Exactly. If I can find one thing about Johnny's boys that I really care about, then I can approach them in writing and this battle can be begun.

Johnny's Boys versus Myself Round 2: A Lyricist of the Songs for Johnny's Boys Negotiates

My brother and mother are big fans of Johnny's boy Tomohisa Yamashita, who starred in *Nobuta wo Produce* (2005) and *Kurosagi* (2006) and performs the song "Daite Senorita" which recorded 600 000 sales. "Isn't he just too cute?" my brother and my mother ask me. I know how important the Johnny's boy look on the outside is. Is it because he is 'too cute' that the song Yamashita sings has enjoyed such success?

The lyrics of the song "Daite Senorita" were written by zopp, who is also responsible for the lyrics of "Seishun Amigo," the song I mentioned in my last essay. I have been keeping my eye on zopp's blog since I started wondering what kind of person would write lyrics for a song performed by Johnny's boys. Something inside the lyrics of

“Seishun Amigo” fascinated me and I longed to know why. I browsed zopp’s entries in the blog and some of his thoughts caught my attention:

悩む事も多々あります

でも、人生なるようにしかならんやろ。とりあえず色んな声は聞こえる

けれども、自分は自分だし

辛い事があるから、幸せという言葉があるんだし

失敗という言葉があるから、成功という言葉も初めて成立するし

自分を信じてあげます

そういうもんです

I worry about many things, but life goes on the way it does.

People say various opinions to me, but I am myself

There is pain and therefore there is a word, “happiness”

There is the word “failure” and that’s why the word “success” exists

I believe in myself

This is how I act

I tend to love people whose writing style is like this, who can forthrightly say, “I am myself” and “I believe in myself.” Reading the blog entries, I figured out what caught me inside his lyrics — a passion to lead a life with hope and strength. This stance can also be distinguished in his latest lyrics for the song “Daite Senorita.”

Last May, zopp set up a temporary e-mail form on his blog which allowed anyone to send e-mail to him. I sent a message to him telling that I was a big fan of his lyrics and looked forward to his new works. Within a week, I received an answer from him. Whenever I succeed in making contact with people I admire—in e-mail I have interviewed a director of my favorite film, *Anastasia* (1997) and an author of a book about *Anastasia*—I passionately feel a joy in life. I still remember how deeply I felt that the world I am in is amazing since there are these wonderful people in it. This amazing world, however, is not peaceful in terms of gender relations or political consciousness, and I know it’s not something I can think about in a thoroughly optimistic way.

Zopp’s answer to my email was humorous. He wrote that he loves film very much and will continue to write lyrics with various themes. I have heard that zopp’s lyrics are inspired by films; for example, the lyrics of “Seishun Amigo” were inspired by Luc Besson’s *Le Grand Bleu* (1988) especially the beautiful blue sky in the film. As I am also a film freak, zopp’s answer seemed special and convinced me that I might be able to relate, and even love, Johnny’s boys’ songs. That made me think I should take a closer look at them.

If I am able to love their songs, then am I able to love the performers? I took a look at the two boys who performed “Seishun Amigo” on a TV show. The two of them are good looking, I’d say I can love them for their cute looks. Two other songs with lyrics by these two boys are included on the CD of “Seishun Amigo” and I listened to them. One of the songs, “Colorful,” which was written by Tomohisa Yamashita, somehow caught me just like “Seishun Amigo” had. “Colorful” begins with 誰か教えて どこに行けばいい? 誰か教えて 僕にできること [Tell me someone, where I should go, tell me someone, what I can do] and ends with 未来に祈るように 月を見上げてみる カラフルな世界へ [Like praying for the future, I look up the moon, I move on to a ‘colorful’ world].

The world should be colorful, indeed. Part of the reason why this song grabs me is because my first name, “aya” in Japanese kanji means “colorful”. Most people say that I have a beautiful name. But my mother gave me this ‘beautiful’ name which mocks my own relationship with beautiful. Since the relationship between my mother and me is complicated, sometimes I hated my name. However, in Japan it is believed that a name shows the self. Wryly thinking of the promise of my name, I have set one of the goals to accomplish in my lifetime—to be a person with “colorful” views.

My brother told me that Yamashita is a unique Johnny’s boy and warned me that I must not define him as just *kawaii*. In fact, Yamashita’s biography is interesting. He joined Johnny’s “by himself when he was 11 years old since he dreamed of becoming an actor when watching a young boy from the agency on television” (*Asahi Graph Person 33*; my translation). In contrast with Yamashita, Kazuya Kamenashi, his partner of Yamashita in “Seishun Amigo,” joined the agency following a suggestion by a female relative (Clip from *HEY! HEY! HEY! MUSIC CHAMP*). As far as I know, most boys enter this agency with the encouragement of their mothers, sisters, or aunts – that is, the women around them. I wonder if women, rather than men, are responsible for intuiting potential *kawaii* boys. On the other hand, Hiromu Kitagawa, the founder of Johnny’s agency is a man who had a yearning for Hollywood style show business after being inspired by the musical *West Side Story* (*Janiizu Kitagawa-san wo Shitteimasuka?* 30, 40-41). Once a boy enters the agency, he has to survive some competitive moments since not everyone in this agency can gloriously debut in the show business world. The boys begin their careers as stage dancers behind Johnny’s currently popular boys and then wait for the audience to spot their potential talents or aura, which allows them a chance to also become a popular Johnny’s boy.

What's So Appealing? The Battle is Over and Breakaway

Considering that Yamashita succeeded in his career as an actor at quite an early stage raises the question about what makes him appealing to audiences besides his cute looks? In fact, it has been said that it is the “personality that a Johnny’s boys has that sells and is the most appealing point]” (Matsumoto 186; my translation). As I browsed interview articles on magazines and clips from television shows I felt something quite embarrassing and funny about my research. My conscience inquired, “Am I stalking this guy?”

Yamashita seems to have big ambitions to succeed in show business and his stance sounds quite earnest. In television clips he sometimes looks like a straight-A student; that is he does not laugh but just smiles. This may also suggest he has a talent for comedy. I was impressed by the fact that he is currently a university student. Yamashita comments:

大学は将来どんなことをやろうかと考える場であっていいと思うけど、卒業してダラダラしてるのはよくないと。

Universities might be the place where you look for what you long to do in your future. If you don't look for it and if you just waste time after graduation, it's not good. (*Monthly TV Navi* 45)

As far as I know, the popular Johnny’s boys of earlier generation, such as SMAP, did not go to university and it seemed plausible that Johnny’s boys were more interested in being cherished show business stars than in cherishing education. My research so far indicates that Yamashita is the only one to start his career so early and to try to have both show business career and get a university education at the same time.

A funny thing happened to me in the process of researching Yamashita. While I was watching his interview on television, my mother suddenly murmured, “That guy sounds a bit like you: the ambitious stance.” I was surprised to find my own ambitions being reflected by a *kawaii* boy. Ambition is something found in men and women, certainly, but do men and women achieve their ambitions in specifically gendered ways?

These days, I notice myself changing. Two popular Japanese cultural productions, namely Johnny’s boys and anime, which I have ignored so far in my life, now seem to be taking on greater significance. I find myself selectively drawn to Johnny’s boys, and, in terms of anime, have become a big fan of *BLOOD+* (2005-), which is about a girl’s memory, her past and identity. My feminist self sometimes whispers to me, “Do you think this anime is appropriate for a student of gender studies?” and in fact it is, as Junichi Fujisaku, the director says that he wants to “make the girl different from the typical girl character in other animes” (*Production I.G Magazine* 6; my translation). For me, this anime shows the importance of living life with all my strength.

Are these changes in my interests in popular culture moves away from feminism? Essayist and feminist Minako Saitou has referred to the phenomenon of feminists becoming anti-feminists because “[...] feminism is not dauntless and it contains imperfect areas” and Saitou cynically writes that the only people who completely agree with feminism might be the “experts” and the beginners, who are inspired and think, “This can save me!” However, the high hopes promised by feminism might lead to depression (Saitou 293; my translation).

When I was at the stage of being a beginner, I completely welcomed the situation where my mind asked me the question, “Is this appropriate in terms of gender studies?” Indeed, feminism taught me the strength and joy of the pioneer spirit, which started with questioning myself. Now, feminism partly irritates me mentally because every time and every moment I observe something, questions yell at me and never stop. I continue to have the ‘exceeding’ hope that Saitou mentions, but it makes me want to ignore the questions, at least temporarily, and jump into something I have not cared about so far, like anime or Johnny’s boys—I’d love to break away. From now on I will try to consider anything as a potential topic of interest and willingly jump in, sneak a look at it, and if it sounds funny, or has a great appeal, go further. I want to freely think of topics for research in this creative way.

However, I have felt that it might not be easy to break away in the place where I am now. At graduate school where I entered in April, there seems to be a binary between high and popular culture, and also in the power relationship between teachers and students. Some teachers seem proud of their belonging to *noble* academia, as if it were an exclusive club to which they can only welcome *noble* studies. Surely they would not welcome what I am doing in this essay as they believe that Hollywood films and other aspects of pop culture are not noble and therefore not worthy of research. At times there seems to be an edict against me jumping into something and speaking with my own voice; instead I am supposed to stick with welcoming famous thinkers’ voices and, of course, what the teachers themselves say. I wonder if the binary between teachers and students is similar to that which continues to segregate men and women. Academic research should encourage enquiry, not limit it, and be open to difference and debate. I realize that there might not be a place for me to fit in, and perhaps I had better stop looking for it, and keep on laughing. I long to become talkative, humorous, and ambitious without feeling constrained. I realize that my personality longs to find its own voice—it’s time for my “breakaway” now.

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Domestic Violence in Japan

Tokie Takahashi

Introduction

Domestic violence (DV) is increasingly emerging from obscurity to be a serious issue in Japan. There is growing recognition that a number of Japanese women are victims of DV. According to a survey on DV conducted among 4500 people in 1998 by the Prime Minister's Office, one third had experienced DV and 5 percent of the women who suffered from DV felt in danger of death.¹ As a result of this increasing awareness of DV, in April 2001 the Domestic Violence Prevention Law was enacted in this country.

It is said that Japan's education system has been highly egalitarian since the end of World War II. Many highly educated women have participated in the workforce and they seem to have become more financially independent than women in prewar Japan. Women marrying later, the declining birth-rate, the increasing divorce-rate and also number of unmarried couples living together show us that women's lifestyles and choices are changing.

Although men have been educated under the newly introduced egalitarianism as well as women, it does not seem that they have changed as much as women have. Of course, DV is not a new problem: it has been around, concealed or condoned, for a long time, but it has only recently become a topic for discussion. The current attention on DV cases might reveal the incompatibility between changing lifestyles and attitudes of women and men's continuing belief in their essential superiority in a still male-dominated Japanese society. Therefore, gender perspectives must be taken into account in looking for the causes of the problem of DV and where changes need to occur, to encourage for more understanding between the sexes. This essay examines and analyzes the issue of DV in Japan from the viewpoint of radical feminism.²

Reproduction as the cause of women's oppression

Radical feminists³ assert that women's oppression in modern human society originated from biological differences between the sexes. For example, in *The Dialectic of Sex* (1979),

¹ *Domestic Violence*, <<http://law.ris.ac.jp/ilc01/contents/991100043/>> on Feb./5/2004 at 10:23 a.m., Japan time.

² Radical feminism rose in the 1970's in the U.S. Its argument is women's oppression is originated in patriarchy and sexism.

³ Typical feminists are Sulamith Firestone in the U.S. and Mitsu Tanaka in Japan. They claim the emancipation from the men-dominated society and from the role of reproduction.

Shulamith Firestone⁴ claimed that the systematic subordination of women under patriarchy is rooted in a particular belief, that there is a biological inequality of the sexes. This argument is certainly applicable to the situation in Japan before World War II. Women were regarded as inferior to men in those days, and, women submitted themselves quietly to ill-treatment, while carrying the hard burden of domestic jobs and caring for family members. It was widely accepted that wives should always obey their husbands, and even if a husband hit his wife, nobody was concerned about it. Nobody doubted that the battered wife was wrong because she had made her husband angry. Nobody accused her husband of violence because his wife belonged to him. In other words, it was common for a housewife to endure the tyranny of her spouse. She tended to blame herself for being selfish or defiant towards her husband. This belief that men had a right to abuse women perpetuated offensive situations. It is said that once this kind of relationship is established, people tend to become conditioned to accepting violence as a reasonable means of settling conflicts inside the home, which creates a vicious cycle of DV. Therefore violence itself went generally unrecognized and underreported. It was considered a private matter so the actual state of DV cases went on behind the paper screen and was not brought into the open.

However, the tide has turned. Thanks to the declining birthrate and the spectacular economic development of Japan, more and more young women have had access to higher education and learned the rights of equality and entitlements under post-World War II conditions. Women now represent 47 percent of the working population.⁵ They are willing to enter the workforce and acquire an independent spirit and financial power. They have stopped being hesitant to speak out, expressing their own opinions and put a higher value on self-fulfillment. In the process, many women have become less patient and less tolerant than they used to be about tyrannical or unreasonable treatment while many men have held onto the illusion that they are superior to women and can control their wives, without realizing the change in women's attitudes and ways of thinking. This discrepancy between men and women is one of causes that have brought DV into the open; DV is now finally being recognized, and DV cases are now on the news program. According to a survey conducted among 4500 women in Tokyo in 1998, one third of them experienced domestic violence.⁶ The skeleton in the closet has been exposed at last.

⁴ Firestone, Sulamith (1979) *The Dialectic of Sex*, The Women's Press: London.

⁵ *Rodosho-no-seisaku gaiyo* (An outline of the Labor Ministry's policy) 3, <<http://www2.mhlw.go.jp/topics/seisaku>> on Feb./4/2003 at 11:21 p.m., Japan time.

⁶ *Domestic Violence*, *op. cit.*

Changes in society and among men have not matched the changes occurring among women. Though the Constitution guarantees equality of the sexes, a male-dominated society cannot change overnight. Women's anticipated liberation has not become reality. It can change only little by little, and for a number of reasons. Firstly, the number of female policy-makers in government is far smaller than men in that position. This is not surprising when one considers that pre-war women had no rights of suffrage. Secondly, the Constitution guarantees a married couple the right to choose their family name from either of their existing surnames, but in spite of that right, almost all women adopt their husbands' surnames when getting married. It shows us that the traditional patriarchal system has persisted, though some married couples are recently requiring separate surnames within families. Thirdly, the ratio of women's average wages to men's is 63.1 percent⁷ and the majority of women workers are part-timers who work outside the home in addition to their "traditional" housework. Almost all wives are still supposed to do the housework while men are compelled to concentrate on their work in the Japanese industrial structure, so as a consequence, many husbands are indifferent to housework as a woman's chore. This indifference illustrates unchanged systematic discrimination against women as a part of the workforce and also in society. The main family breadwinner is the husband.

It seems that these conditions allow men to maintain the illusion of their superiority over women. It is easy to imagine what may happen between an old-fashioned arrogant husband and an assertive gender-conscious wife who has become aware of her rights. The man resists the disposal of his vested privileges while the newly awakened woman insists on her rights. Arguments between unyielding couples may tend to escalate to DV. Even though women begin to be conscious of their own value, they are still weaker and more powerless physically and financially than men, at least for the present.

With the increasing disclosure of DV cases, more people have begun to realize that this problem is a serious one. Violence against women used to be a hidden epidemic. Now many victims have dared to bring it out into the open and deal with it seriously, and not be daunted. Such women have even sued their own husbands for violence against them. Thanks to the brave actions and efforts of victims and supporters, at last the law against domestic violence was enacted in October 2001. Under this law, violence by a spouse is regarded as a crime for the first time, though the penalty for the crime is minor. For court judgments of DV cases in 2000 involving "seriously injured from long term abuses", the

⁷ Higuchi, Yoichi (2001) *Five Decades of Constitutionalism in Japanese Society*, University of Tokyo Press: Tokyo.

average penalty was only seven to eight months imprisonment.⁸ But it still represents one big step towards preventing DV, for it publicly asserts that those who must be blamed are not battered women but battering men. Revealing a hidden stigma to the public through legitimate intervention initiates awareness that can act as a form of deterrence against DV.

Biological Revolution

Radical feminists argued that the roots of women's oppression are biological and concluded that a "biological revolution"⁹ was needed to liberate women. They claimed that women must seize control of their bodies and thus the means of reproduction in order to eliminate the sexual class system to deconstruct relations between men and women as oppressors and the oppressed. They dissuaded women from being a sex of child-bearers. They thought it was the clearest way to emancipate women from the heavy domestic burden and from the humiliating state of being second-class citizens in society. They argued that women should renounce natural maternity and recommended advanced medical technology such as test-tube babies, egg or sperm banks and artificial placentas to directly control the power of reproduction. Radical feminists assert that the role of females in the reproductive process will become as minor as that of the male. Genital heterosexuality, which institutionalizes sexual intercourse as means of ensuring human reproduction, will disappear. The demise of the heterosexual patriarchal family as a reproductive unit will follow. If these conditions achieved, then more women could enter the workforce without any obstacles. If it were not for distinct reproductive and productive roles, it would be possible to overcome gender discrimination. Biological motherhood is not only the root of oppression but also the vice of possessiveness. To put an end to the divisive hierarchies, it is necessary to discard this biological chain. DV originates from the males' dominance over females, taking advantages of women's sex. So this measure is the first step not to give rise to DV. It might not work as a sovereign remedy, but will have an effect, slowly but surely.

It may seem that this feminist argument is too extreme to immediately implement in reality. Women in general rarely think to use such modern technology and instead, maneuver to give birth naturally, except couples who are suffering infertility but longing for a baby. Young women, however, have indeed begun to notice that marriage and having children constrain them socially. With this realization, besides gaining economic power, women today want to ward off such burdens and postpone the time to marry or reject

⁸ WOM: Japanese Women Now, <<http://wom-jp.org/e/JWOMEN/dv.html>> on Feb./2/2004 at 9:45 p.m., Japan time.

⁹ Tong, Rosemarie (1989) *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction*, Unwin Hyman: London.

marriage or childbirth. It used to be said that marriage was a lifelong job, the only way to survive for women. However, now Chizuko Ueno argues that “the phenomenon of staying unmarried longer and having fewer children is a kind of silent resistance against male-dominated society, refusing to play the submissive role in life.”¹⁰ Now girls have begun to want to live their own lives by not victimizing themselves. Changing attitudes of Japanese women are signs of independence from men and a stand against men’s tyranny, to prevent male dominance.

Conclusion

Japanese women used to be forced to live in a patriarchal and hierarchical society, enduring persistent oppression from men and society until the end of World War II. Society was not at all concerned with the plight of women suffering from DV as it was viewed as private. Many victims had no way to escape from violence at home because they could not survive alone without any economic power. They endured silently, resigning themselves to their fate. However, along with other significant social changes that have taken place in post-war Japan, women have changed gradually, with access to higher education and to the workforce as the Japanese economy developed. They have begun to realize that there is no reason why they must accept unreasonable treatment at home or in the workplace. They have begun to defy their mothers’ precepts of a good mother and a good wife. They understand that they cannot move forward as long as they are confined to a traditional subservient woman’s role obediently in silence. More and more victims have begun to reveal their DV cases, without flinching. More than 10,000 women filed divorce suits on the basis of their husbands’ violence, according to the Annual Statistics of Administration Justice in 1997. Their predicaments have become widely known and society gradually has begun to pay attention to them and perceive that DV is not a private matter but a crime. As more and more women began to confront and deal with this problem bravely, Japanese society finally recognized the need to save the victims. The Domestic Violence Prevention Law was enacted in April 2001. It determined that each local government should run more than one public shelter as a minimum requirement. Shelters were set up nationwide as temporary evacuation centers for victims of DV. There are more than 45 private shelters in 2001, up from only 7 in 1995. These changes show great progress over the past ten years.

More and more young women have begun to choose their own way of living independently and freely, choosing a single life or career life. Women have begun to realize their own power under these movements and efforts. They should decide and choose their

¹⁰ *Chunichi Shinbun* Newspaper, ‘Izon to enjo wa atarimae’ (It is a matter of course to depend and support each other), February 3, 2004.

own lifestyle themselves and place value on their individual dignity. Stephanie Coontz¹¹ said, "This trend is irreversible," in her lecture about the importance of our adjustment to the new living environment at a seminar held on 24th of November in 2002 in Nagoya. Women's decisive attitudes towards such issues as breaking the silence about DV, not enduring irrational treatment and advocating their own rights are necessary in Japan to raise public awareness of the concept of equality of the sexes. Now is a transitional period in a long and painful process toward women's liberation.

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¹¹ Coontz, Stephanie, professor of the Evergreen State College and the author of *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*, Basic Books.

The “Double Surnames” Issue in Japan

Keiko Watanabe

Nagoya Women’s Studies Group

Introduction

In the present Japanese civil code, a “single surname” system is applied to married couples. Under this current law, a woman and a man can choose either surname of the two. The majority of marrying couples choose the husband’s surname. This practice has been criticized as discriminatory against women by many Japanese feminists, and the controversy is now widely known as the “double surnames for a married couple” issue. Many attempts have been made to solve this problem, and even a draft allowing a husband and a wife to have different surnames was prepared and made into a bill, but the bill has not been passed yet.

This essay will begin with a discussion of the Meiji Civil Code of 1898, which was highly patriarchal and heavily limited women’s rights, and then provide an explanation of the revised Civil Code of the post-World War II period. Article 750 of the revised Code is controversial, and will be studied showing the results of surveys and citing *Kindaikazoku no seiritsu to shuen* (*The formation and end of the modern family*), a well-known feminist’s opinion. There will also be a brief account of the revision of the Code in 1976 where the choice of a surname after divorce is stated. The inconveniences as well as disadvantages faced by married or divorced women regarding the change of their surnames will also be discussed.

Lastly, the results of an interview which was conducted in order to elicit women’s views of the importance of keeping their surnames will be analyzed.

The Meiji Civil Code of 1898

The Meiji Civil Code¹ went into effect in 1898. In the Code, each family household was considered a socio-political unit, and all members of a family household were registered in the same *koseki* registration, while the head of each household, who was usually male, was authorized to control his household members and assets. This system was called an *ie*-

¹ As for marriage, the Code stipulated that a woman should marry into her husband’s family and her entry in her parents’ family *koseki*-registration was transferred into her husband’s. Therefore, at the time of marriage, a woman changed her surname to that of her husband. Thus, a woman deserted her birth group and was assimilated into her husband’s and his relatives’ group. Likewise, their children entered their father’s family.

system. Under this system, all the members of a household were required to use the same surname.

The Code made divorce unfairly difficult for women but rather easy for men. Most middle-and-upper-class women thought of marriage as a lifelong commitment. If a woman who had children divorced, she normally had to leave them with her former husband and his family. The social stigma was sometimes unbearable for the woman and her family. In a way, by marrying into her husband's family and taking her husband's name, a woman not only abandoned her own surname, but also gave up the possibility of living her own life. Instead, she resigned herself to living the life she was expected to live by the family she married into.

The New Civil Code and Article 750

The Meiji Civil Code was revised in 1947 in a way that gave women more rights than before the war, and the New Civil Code became effective the following year. The *ie*-system was abolished in the new code, and instead an individual family *koseki*-registration was adopted. In this system, when a man and a woman get married, they each leave their parents' *koseki*-registration and create a new *koseki*-registration for themselves, with the husband as the head of the household. Article 750 in the New Civil Code stipulates that "a married couple shall use either the husband's or the wife's surname in accordance with their agreement at the time of marriage." It gives the husband and wife equal rights in deciding the choice of surname. However, a new problem arises regarding this provision of Article 750 because in reality, 97.5 percent of women change their surnames at the time of marriage, and take their husband's.²

The statement that 'either the husband's or the wife's surname shall be used' is fair enough, but it works unfavorably against women. Takuo Yamada, a scholar of the Civil Code, points out that the choice of a surname should be made by mutual consent, but a woman is usually forced to choose the surname of her husband.³ This expectation is embedded in society by the prevalent view that men are supposed to maintain their lineage, making it a shame for a man to change his surname.

² Koseisho-daijin-kanbo-kyohobu, Jinkodotai-toukeibu, (Minister's Secretariat information Bureau in Health and Welfare Ministry, Vital Statistics Division), 1993.

³ Takahashi, Kikue & Orii, Miyako & Ninomiya Shuuhei (1995) *Fuufu bessei eno shotai* (An invitation to married couples to have separate surnames), p.194. Yuuhikaku sensho: Tokyo.

A public opinion survey⁴ on separate surnames for married couples was conducted in 2001 among 5,000 married people aged 20 to over 70 years of age, of which 2,461 were women (the response rate was 69.7 percent). One question for female participants was how they felt when they changed their surnames. 42.8 percent responded that they felt happiness at this start to their new lives and 26.8 percent felt the joy of togetherness with their spouse.

Among the women surveyed, there were 24.7 percent who felt discomfort about the change in their surnames. Moreover, 7.6 percent of them said they felt their identity had been lost. Generally speaking, such a respondent was an economically independent career woman who had continued working after marriage while rearing her children.

One of the propositions for the amendment of the Civil Code is to abolish the current family *koseki*-registration and to create an individual *koseki*-registration so that each individual is able to keep her or his surname even after marriage. According to the 2001 public opinion survey,⁵ the supporters of the double surnames' bill outnumber the opponents for the first time. Those who agreed with the amendment increased from 32.5 percent in 1996 to 42.1 percent in 2001. One notable change was that nearly 52 percent of men and women in their 20s and 30s agreed with the amendment. This might be a sign of a change towards a more diversified society that welcomes the option of taking double surnames. On the other hand, 53.3 percent of women agreed with the revision of the law, but stated they would not opt for separate surnames even if the law was revised. It is difficult to change the social behavior and consciousness ingrained in their attitude towards the law and the idea of marriage.

The Revision of Civil Code in 1976

In the New Civil Code of 1947, women were obliged to relinquish their married names, that is, their husbands' surnames after divorce, and resume their former surnames. However, women were allowed to retain the use of their married surnames in the 1976 revision of the code, which gave a spouse, in most cases a woman, the right to choose her or his married surname or his or her own family name at the time of divorce. Women acquired the right to choose their surnames at the end of marriage. Next, they must gain the right to choose their own or their husbands' surnames at the time of entry into marriage.

⁴ Sentakuteki fuufu bessei seido (The selective separate surname systems for married couples), <<http://www8.cao.go.jp/survey/h13/fuufu/index.html>> on Aug./13/2004 at 6:25 p.m., Japan time.

⁵ *Sentakuteki fuufu bessei seido*, *op. cit.*

I would like to illustrate why this is important by using the real example of Ms Mori (cited in "Women's and Men's Studies Society" (1997) *Atto odoroku kosekino hanashi*). When a married couple divorces, it is generally the woman who has her name deleted from the family *koseki*-registration. The two options available to her are to keep her married surname or return to her maiden name. In the case of Ms Mori, she chose the latter. First she had to withdraw her name from her ex-husband's family *koseki*-registration and make a new one in which she was listed with her maiden name, Mori, as the head of the family household. Her only son still remained in his father's family registration. However, she obtained the custody of her son, and therefore she had to remove his name from his father's registration in order to list it in her family registration. In order to transfer his entry to her registration, she had to make an application to the family court. A week later, Ms. Mori and her son were registered under the same *koseki*-registration. Next, she had to change the surname on her driver's license, bankbooks, life insurance policies and credit cards. Certainly divorce is not expected at the time of marriage. Nonetheless, if a married couple is legally allowed to retain their respective surnames at the time of marriage, it will definitely save a woman time, money, and energy if divorce should occur, and she will not have to go through any additional psychological torment resulting from complicated procedures related to the change of her surname.

Three Women's Perspectives

Interviews were conducted with three Japanese women who have their own ideas about the surname issue. Tomomi Takahashi, at the age of 50, has used her own surname at work even after marriage. She confesses she does not want to give up her individuality, especially at work. Further, there are two nameplates displayed on the door of the couple's house, one with her husband's surname, and the other bearing her maiden name. Sachiko Kawasaki is 40 years old, and lives with her partner but is not married in order to retain her own surname. She is not interested in marriage as an attempt to guarantee financial support from her spouse. She also says that a patriarchal system exists in society. Many traditionally minded older men do not like different surnames for a married couple because they like to be represented as the boss and the head of the family. The family system invisibly controls these men's attitudes and their way of thinking. In the end, Sachiko Kawasaki predicts, it will take another two generations for the family registration system to be revised as an individual registration system, as most women still think that it is beneficial for them to marry legally and change their surnames. Mariko Okada in her early 40s has a partner, but kept her own surname by first registering her marriage then going through a "paper divorce." Okada decided to register her marriage and placed her own entry in her husband's registration and changed her surname to his, before making an

application to the Public Housing Corporation because only legally married couples could apply for renting an apartment - a de facto relationship would disqualify them from making an application. However, a year later, Okada removed her entry from her husband's family *koseki*-registration and established her own.

These women think that their own surnames are more important to retain in order to nurture and uphold their self-esteem, self-respect, and self-identity rather than simply following a social rule or custom related to marriage by changing their surnames to those of their partners.

Women still appear to believe in the efficacy of their economic dependence on men. Tokyo University professor Chizuko Ueno⁶ argues that the main reason women feel social pressure to marry and change their surnames is to find financial security. A woman easily throw away her maiden name when she cannot expect to inherit property from her destitute parents' home or is deprived of her inheritance rights by her parents.

Separating Surnames

The advantage of separate surnames for a married couple is to allow a couple to build an equal partnership in marriage. Men should share responsibility of household duties and women should continue working equally as men.⁷ Men as well as women should be liberated from a consciousness of the *ie*-family system and the gender division of labor. If the different surnames' bill is passed, more diversified lifestyles of men and women will be seen in Japanese society. The passage of the different surnames' bill will increase the nation's marital options and secure the right to choose.

Conclusion

It is very important for a woman to have a variety of options in society and the right to choose among them. Her surname after marriage should be one of these options. The 2001 public survey showed the supporters of the double surnames bill outnumbered the opponents for the first time. Especially, younger generations support the bill. It might be an optimistic view, but in the near future the number of supporters for the double surnames for a married couple's bill may increase to the extent that they can move voters

⁶ Ueno, Chizuko (1998) *Kindaikazoku no seiritsu to shuen* (The formation and end of the modern family), pp. 245-254, Iwanami-shinsho: Tokyo.

⁷ Tomioka, Emiko & Yoshioka, Mutsuko (2001) *Gendainihon no Jyosei to Jinken* (Women and human rights in modern Japan), p. 270, Akashi shoten: Tokyo.

to raise their voices and pass the bill in the Diet. Then, Japanese women will have more freedom and be able to lead more diversified lifestyles.

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Clothes Culture in Japan:

hard body/soft body, distance/proximity and simulation/hyperreality

Noriko Tada

Nagoya University, Graduate School of Languages and Cultures

Introduction

The term "hard body" evokes the sturdy body of heroes shown in Hollywood movies in the 1980s such as the *Rambo* series starring Sylvester Stallone. The image of the "hard body" was also used as the emblem for the hard-line policy of the fortieth U.S. President, Ronald Reagan (1981~1989).¹ Such a straight image as the "hard body" would hardly have been adopted as a symbol of Japanese policy. However, Japanese politicians also need emblems, but instead of bodies, have harnessed clothing as symbols of national policy since the Meiji period, 1868~1912).² At that time, Western clothes were utilized as a vehicle for modernization and *kimono*, traditional Japanese clothes, as a vehicle for the restoration of traditional culture. This paper will examine the symbolic meaning of clothes in Japan, from the OL in uniform to HG on TV, suggesting they can be analyzed further using key ideas introduced by such theorists as Jean Baudrillard when they analyzed American consumer and simulation culture from the 1970s to 1990s.

Power relationship indicated by company uniform

According to Susan Jeffords (1994), the Reagan administration made the "hard body" hero a symbol of a strong America, the embodiment of a "hard" political viewpoint. The powerful masculine bodies of movie heroes gave shape to national identities, which were said to be the basis of a new relationship between people and the nation:

In the dialectic of reasoning that constituted the Reagan movement, bodies were deployed in two fundamental categories: the errant body containing [...] the 'soft body': and the normative body that enveloped strength, labor, determination, loyalty, and courage – the 'hard body' – the body that was to come to stand as the emblem for the Reagan philosophies, politics and economics. In this system of thought marked by race and gender, the soft body invariably belonged to a female

¹ Jeffords, Susan (1994) "Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era", New Brunswick:Rutgers.

² Wakakuwa, Midori (2001) "*Kogo no shozo* (The portrait of Empress Haruko)", Chikuma-shobo.

and/or a person of color, whereas the hard body was, like Reagan's own, male and white.³

On the other hand, bodies have not been adopted as the medium of political advertisement in Japan. However, a government needs symbols to show political ideology to its people. Uniforms and other clothes have often been used for this purpose in Japan.

Uniforms are an interesting example of a sign that carries ideology. Generally, a uniform carries specific information about the status of the person wearing it. For example, the uniform of civil servants, like that of a police officer, represents authority, credibility and physical power. A school or team uniform distinguishes one group of people from another. People's attitude toward a person may be predicated by the uniform s/he is wearing, suggesting people retain a common ideology that can shape their response to clothing rather than a person.

As for the company uniform, among white-collar workers, they are mainly worn by women. Following Susan Jeffords' somatic division, I would like to divide clothes (uniform) worn in offices into two categories: hard clothes (business suits) symbolizing power and superiority and soft clothes (company uniforms) symbolizing subordination and weaker individuality. This dichotomy might be found in the working environment where female workers in uniform were placed in a lower position than their male counterparts during the period of Japan's high economic growth in the 1970s. At that time, marriage was widely regarded as a social norm and married women were expected to stay at home. In the 1960s and the 1970s, the majority of working women were single and did peripheral work. Since women were expected to retire from the job when they got married, companies regarded women as short-term employees. Consequently, companies hired men and women under different employment conditions. They hired women as *ippan-shoku* (assistant-oriented workers), and marginalized them as second-class workers. Women had to wear company uniforms, while men, *sogo-shoku* (career track workers), wore business suits. Therefore, the uniform became the symbol of *OL* or *office lady* (*ippan-shoku* workers) whose image was that of an easy-going subordinate worker making tea and photocopies for her male coworkers and controlled by male supervisors.

³ *Op. cit.*, Jeffords, Susan (1994).

Clothes as ideological billboard

The frivolous image of an *OL* in uniform prevailed nationwide through the mass media in representations in TV dramas and magazines. Some *OL* were proud of their uniform because it identified them as belonging to a famous company. Most people took it for granted that working women were young and happy with their temporary positions in the workplace. *OL* in uniform was also a sign that could be read as a future housewife, as well as emblematic of the gender division of work in society at the time:

Japanese businesses benefited from the arrangement of workers, a company husband and a full-time housewife, during the period of high growth in the economy. Marriage placed a burden on working women in the 1980s and the 1990s because it forced them to choose between family or work. At that time, more married women started working outside the home because of labor shortages and for personal economic reasons.⁴

Having been partly influenced by pressure from outside Japan, as well as in response to the UN International Year of Women, the Equal Employment Opportunity Law was enacted in 1986. Generally, the law enabled limited numbers of capable women access to jobs on the career track: they could take off their uniforms.

Then, the Japanese government forecast a labor shortage in 1989 when the national average birthrate per woman dropped to 1.56. It launched a new policy, "the reconciliation of work and family," and started encouraging women to continue working after marriage. The government made a new image of working couples to enlighten society: working mothers in stylish business suits and child-caring fathers in casual clothes. These images appeared in the mass media repeatedly just as masculine heroes did in Hollywood movies to help society share an ideology that bolstered the government's new policy. The U.S. government featured a masculine body to show its people the nation's determination, while the Japanese government featured clothes (as an indirect body) for edification. It seems reasonable to say that the basic idea of moral integration of people was the same. Just as the hard body was a sign of "a systematic interdependence between individual and nation as linked through the masculine body,"⁵ clothing was employed to signify policy.

⁴ Tada, Noriko (2005) 'A Government Dilemma: The Declining Birthrate in Japan'.

⁵ *Op.cit.*, Jeffords, Susan (1994).

The gendered uniform was also found outside the office carrying specific social messages. In the 1990s, *okama* (a gay) personalities in feminine clothing joined TV variety shows in Japan. Transvestitism had been regarded as one of the signs of being gay, and thus of sexual perversion, in the past, but TV audiences got used to the regular appearance of *okama*. Actually, it seems that not all of them were actually homosexual, but merely used crossdressing as a trademark. TV audiences relaxed, and came to think that these violators of established dress codes were actually harmless. Gradually, as *okama* were categorized into a group of people who dressed and talked in a feminine fashion, they were accepted as a part of society, on the screen, at least. Then, in 2005, a comedian named Leather Lamon HG appeared on TV variety shows wearing “hard gay” clothing, which included sunglasses, peaked cap, a studded black leather vest and hotpants. He also identified himself as gay. His clothing was a useful medium to name (signify) the group he belonged to. Having a uniform, however outrageous, has allowed *okama* to seemingly be approved by society. However, there is no lesbian uniform worn by TV personalities, which suggests lesbians have yet to gain the cultural currency, or entertainment value, that gay or pseudo-gay men have acquired in Japanese society.

The trend of purchasing famous brand products

Jean Baudrillard's concept of “implosion” can be applied to the Japanese obsession with the consumption of famous brand name goods. After World War II (1939~45), only wealthy people could afford to buy Chanel, Gucci, or Rolex products. However, during the past two decades, ordinary people joined the ranks of consumers of these products and more and more brand name products were introduced in the Japanese market. As a result, the scarcity value of imported clothes and bags dropped. Their prices were still high, but they no more had the iconic value of “exclusive.” They proliferated along with copies for the masses: the “implosion” of culture occurred:

There is no longer any polarity between the one and the other in the mass [the people]. This is what causes that vacuum and inwardly collapsing effect in all those systems which survive on the distinction of poles [good/bad, true/false, alive/dead, up/down and especially left/right (in a political sense)]. This is what

makes the circulation of meaning in the mass impossible: it is instantaneously dispersed, like atoms in a void.⁶

Since the 1980s, a period of high economic growth in Japanese, consumers with a passion for famous brands increased among the younger generation. It seems to indicate the changing value of big-name brand products, such as Chanel, Bulgari, Louis Vuitton, Burberry, which were only for wealthy adults in the 1960s. That is, such products indicated the status of a person more than personal taste at the time. Then both adults and young people got interested in purchasing the products, seeking membership in brand-oriented people's society, or to catch up with their neighbors or friends who already owned such goods. Wearing famous-brand clothes seemed to give people the impression that they were the elite, and hence their acquisition increased confidence or self-satisfaction.

However, the excessive number of big-name brand goods and their imitations accelerated the fall of scarcity value. There is no longer the initial desire/value of owning special articles of which the life of the bourgeoisie consisted. In other words, what once was thought to be original has been imitated and proliferates in popular culture. This has meant a loss of prestige. Faster transition of trends and endless consumption has generated a faster diffusion of trendy gear in society, with consumers looking for the next big-name brands. According to Alan Taylor, an American scholar, "the mass absorbs any ideologies and spectacles one after another, so all 'meaning' is dispersed and rendered meaningless in 'the mass' not because 'the mass' resists bourgeois ideology, but because it consumes it frantically."⁷ He argued that "'the mass' also consumes bourgeois culture with the same cataclysmic fervor,"⁸ and concluded that "when bourgeois culture becomes 'mass' culture, it ceases to be culture at all."⁹ Simulation takes away the bourgeois value of scarcity from the famous brand name goods, but people experience such cultural breakdowns constantly.

⁶ Baudrillard, Jean (1983) 'In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities'

<<http://egs.edu/faculty/ baudrillard.html>> on Jan./2/2006 at 8:17 p.m. Japan time.

⁷ Taylor, Alan <<http://www.uta.edu/english/apt/collab/what.html>> on Dec./28/2005 at 0: 58 a.m., Japan time.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

The "body" was chosen as a political symbol in the USA, while Japan opted for "clothes." The body is difficult to change frequently, but clothing is easy to be replaced occasionally. One might speculate that the body is a symbol of inflexibility and clothes symbolic of expediency, and that the choice of political symbol is indicative of the structure of the political system that fashions it for ideological purposes.

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What is the purpose of the GALE SIG?

The Mission Statement of the Gender Awareness in Language Education National Special Interest Group (GALE SIG) in the Japan Association of Language Teachers (JALT) has the four following points:

- to research gender and its implications for language learning, teaching, and training, such as differences in discourse styles, preferred teaching and learning styles, interests, needs, motivation, aptitude, achievement, classroom interactions, same-sex versus coeducational classrooms and same-sex vs. opposite-sex teaching, and social identity.
- to improve pedagogical practices, develop language teaching materials, and provide a clearinghouse for materials inclusive of gender and gender-related topics in FL subject areas such as communication, history, literature, linguistics, science, sociology, cultural studies, etc.
- to raise awareness of workplace and human rights issues related to gender for language professionals, such as discrimination, harassment, and violence based on gender and sexual orientation, and discrimination on the basis of marital or parental status, and to provide information for countering such discrimination.
- to increase networking opportunities among language professionals interested in teaching, researching, and/or discussing issues related to gender and language education, such as biological sex, gender identity, gendered language, sexual orientation, gender behavior, gender roles, and gender socialization.

Announcement

GALE Annual General Meeting at JALT

We are tentatively scheduled for the GALE SIG AGM on Saturday morning from 9:15 - 10:15 Room: 32B. There is the possibility that this will change so be sure to check your conference handbook when you get it at the site.