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"Disciplining" Women's Studies in the United States and Japan:

Facts, Issues, and Questions[1]

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A Women's Studies major should be able to do the following:
Demonstrate understanding of the social construction of gender and sexuality;
Demonstrate an understanding of the ways that women's lives are shaped by large social structures and conventions of representation;
Demonstrate an understanding of the intersectionality of different dimensions of social organizations as concepts and as lived experience;
Identify mechanisms of oppression and resistance;
Analyze the role of social location and power in the production of ideas, theories and representations;
Understand and appreciate multiple perspectives; and
Make connections between abstract knowledge and social activism
(Zimmerman 2005: 35-36)

By "Women's Studies" we mean the inter-disciplinary study of women and of problems related to women, predicated on a respect for women as human beings and dedicated to a thorough reconsideration from a women's points of view of all preexisting academic disciplines.

Women's Studies has developed amidst the increasing world-wide demand for the recovery and respect of human rights in general, and we hope to see it continue to expand in the future.

(Statement issued by the Inauguration Committee of The Women's Studies Association of Japan in 1979 (http://www.joseigakkai-jp.org/eng/index-e.html))

At the quiet and spacious archives library, laying volume after volume of "Stanford University Bulletin" on a "cradle" to protect "aged

materials," and going through the records of the "Feminist Studies" program, I studied one piece of the history of Women's Studies in the United States, or rather, I relived a history of which I was a part. The Feminist Studies program was established a few years before I started graduate school. When a major was approved, I ran discussion sessions in the interdisciplinary Introduction of Feminist Studies (FS101) for motivated and exceedingly intelligent undergraduates who would do their part in various fields to make American society a more gender-equal society.[2] Stanford University was considered a latecomer, establishing its Feminist Studies program, more commonly called Women's Studies elsewhere, in the 1980s. The first Women's Studies program in the United States was established in San Diego State University in California in 1969, and the "definition" of Women's Studies cited above was by a feminist scholar deeply involved in developing the program there. By the 1990s, there were more than 600 Women's Studies programs and a bachelor's degree was offered in more than 200 institutions. Master's and doctoral degrees also began to be offered. In 1995, about 20 programs had formal departmental status (Boxer 1998).

Two months after my time travel at Stanford, I attended an international conference on women in Seoul, at Ewha Womans University, the pioneer institution in Women's Studies in Asia. There were numerous informative and exciting panels on the development of and issues confronting Women's Studies in various Asian countries. One pan-Asian panel addressed the issues of state intervention and control and the use of gender-mainstreaming to replace feminism in Indonesia; the mobilization of women in the democratic movement in the Philippines the 1970s and the development of women's studies afterwards; professionalization in the context of the institutionalization of Women's Studies in India, and so on. The discussant commented on the issue of government control and intervention. Then, she posed a question to the panelists about "the poststructuralist idea of the discursively constituted fragmentary self" (my paraphrase) in relation to women and feminism in Asia. After the

question was posed, there was silence for what felt like a long time before the moderator stepped in and opened up the floor for comments and questions to give the panelists time to think over the "difficult question." The issues discussed and the question posed at the end reflected back to me the incoherent set of questions occupying my mind ever since searching the Feminist Studies archives at Stanford University, condensing in a single moment two decades of my experience and observation of the development of Women's Studies. Conceptualizing the development of Women's Studies in terms of early or advanced development in the "West" and late or retarded development in Asia does not capture the meaning of the different "languages" spoken by the panelists — languages that have evolved almost in tandem with the development of feminist scholarship over 20 years in the United States and Europe, but spoken at one and the same time in Asia. It is also not only about an opposition between feminist praxis and abstract theorizing, although there is an element of that. It is about the gap and contradictions between feminist theorizing and Women's Studies as an institution on the one hand, and the material contexts in which Women's Studies operate and feminist theories are articulated and circulated on the other. It is my need to understand this gap and resolve the contradictions that motivated me to undertake a project on Women's Studies in Japan, and this paper is a preliminary report of my research so far, and more importantly, an articulation of the questions yet to be answered.

In this paper, I will discuss the development of Women's Studies and tease out the controversial issues that have emerged since the first Women's Studies courses were taught in the United States, providing comparable information on Japan and Asia whenever available. Through this overview, I hope to raise specific research questions for a more comprehensive analysis of Women's Studies in Japan.

The Development of Women's Studies

Scholars have pointed to a few factors that facilitated the development of Women's Studies courses and programs in the United States: the larger contexts of the women's movement, heightened consciousness of gender issues, massive changes in the university where students became active in demanding changes in the curriculum, the increase in women with Ph.D.s and faculty members who initiated changes in their professional organizations and courses, and reactions to incidents of discrimination against women, such as denial of tenure to women faculty members. The factors operated in different combinations on different campuses, but one or more of these factors were apparently instrumental in bringing about the first Women's Studies courses and programs (Boxer 1998; O'Barr 1994; Messer-Davidow 2002; University of Wisconsin Women's Studies Consortium 1999).[3]

However, these narratives were written years after Women's Studies were established. Those written in the midst of the development of Women's Studies have a slightly different story to tell, revealing more conflicts and problems than the retrospective analyses suggest.

Articles written in the 1970s and 1980s delineated the "larger contexts" more concretely, describing the "non-curricular courses" that came before Women's studies (Tobias 1978) and the intellectual pluralism and the lack of structural homogeneity of American universities (Evans 1981). At the same time, they also described the resistance against Women's Studies in the early years (Rowland 1982), warned of the danger of "repressive tolerance" of Women's Studies (Evans 1981), and recognized the resilience of academic institutions against changes (Tobias 1978).[4]

All in all, whatever the specific factors at work, the first Women's Studies courses and programs in the United States were the result of a bottom-up process involving student activism, frequently in a context where questions were raised about the mission and meaning of the

university as an educational institution. In Asia, while feminist academics were directly involved in developing Women's Studies courses and programs, the state and other supra-national agencies as well as grassroots movements played significant roles, frequently in the context of political restiveness, democratization and growing modernization. For example, the modernization project in Korea, the help of the Canadian International Development agency and the Asian and Pacific Development Centre in Malaysia, the Beijing Conference 1995 and Basic Law for Gender Equal Society in 1999 in Japan, and women's mass organizations connected to the state in China, Vietnam, and Laos were all significant in the development of Women's Studies in the respective countries (Resurreccion 2004).

Apparently, many in the first generation of feminist scholars in both the United States and Asia brought with them into the academe experiences in the feminist and other progressive movements in the 1960s and 1970s. However, there are significant differences in the path of development of Women's Studies in the two regions, namely, a bottom-up development that focused first on undergraduate education in the United States and a largely top-down development focusing on research in many Asian countries. In Japan, for example, even though the first Women's Studies courses were actually offered to upper-level undergraduate students in 1974 in Sophia University (Hara 2004), the subsequent development focused not on undergraduate education but research centers and institutes. By the late 1990s, there were research centers and institutes in 13 institutions, according to one study (Hara 2004), and two major Women's Studies Associations were founded in 1977 and 1979. Ochanomizu Women's University (Gender Studies Center) and Tohoku University (Gender Law and Policy Research Center) received the "Center of Excellence" awards from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in 2000 and 2003.[5] Josai International University started offering the first Master's degree in Women's Studies in Japan in 1996, and various institutions now offer Ph.D.s in the Humani-

ties and Social Sciences with a Women's Studies/Gender Research concentration. On the other hand, it was only in 2005 that the first undergraduate concentration in Gender Studies in the country began to be offered at the International Christian University in the Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies under the auspices of the Center for Gender Studies. It is possible that this pattern of development in Japan has limited the infiltration of Women's Studies in higher education, made Women's Studies vulnerable to backlashes, such as the current attack on gender-free education, and steered feminist scholarship in the direction of abstract theorizing dissociated from the material conditions of women.[6]

Sources of Conflicts and Tension in Women's Studies

The institutionalization of Women's Studies in institutions of higher education in the United States saw the emergence of conflicts and tension among feminist scholars and educators over core issues related to the integration of Women's Studies into the core curriculum, the autonomy of Women's Studies, feminist pedagogy, the relationship between politics and scholarship/education, and even the im/possibility of Women's Studies. Many of these issues emerged in the early stages of American Women's Studies and still haunt it today. The lack of comparable debates on most of these issues and the particular form the debates take on the rest in Japan and other Asian countries can explain the current institutionalization of Women's Studies and has important implications for its future in the region.

(A) Academic Feminism: Contradiction in Terms?

Women's Studies in its early years in the United States was often depicted as the "academic arm" of feminism or the feminist movement. Whether Women's Studies is an academic discipline was first discussed in a 1979 NWSA meeting, but it is still an important issue today (Boxer 1998).[7] There was and is a clash not only between activists and scholars

over allegiances to the university or the movement, but also "fracturing" in the academe between those who see Women's Studies as a "potential revolutionary force" and others who see it as an emerging discipline that needs to establish its legitimacy (Messer-Davidow 2002; Showalter 1971, cited in Messer-Davidow 2002: 121).

Regardless of the particular stance taken, feminist scholars generally notice the contradictory position of Women's Studies, as a branch of or at least has its roots in the feminist movement, but now situated in a purportedly apolitical academy. The interpretation of this contradiction, however, varies. Some minimize the import of such contradiction by arguing that Women's Studies, with its roots in activism, provides a counterforce within the university, which is itself is a site of struggle to ensure that knowledge is not produced solely in the interests of the powerful (Kessler-Harris 1992; Evans 1982). Indeed, some consider the tension between the academy and political movement necessary, and argue that Women's Studies should maintain the balance between "women" and "studies" (Stimpson 1996; Edwards 1978). However, looking at the academy more closely, some have questioned the possibility of such a balance. Rowland (1987) points out that the emphasis on individualism in the academy is hostile to the necessary cooperation and connection among feminists in it (see also Gunew 1987; Martin 2000). While it might be true that the success or failure of Women's Studies depends on how much it contributes to the intellectual discourse around which higher education institutions are constructed (Kessler-Harris 1992), de-radicalization, elitism and the development of esoteric scholarship couched in abstract inaccessible language could estrange Women's Studies from its activist roots and create a hierarchy among women (Rowland 1987; Currie and Kazi 1987; see also Johnson 1987; Messer-Davidow 2002). In a recent reassessment of Women's Studies, Weigman explores how Women's Studies could be "too theoretical and not theoretical enough, too politicized or not political enough," and suggests that "the possibility of women's studies resides in generating the analytic perspective necessary for apprehending

the most paradoxical features of U.S. academic feminist discourse today: its struggle with the forms and consequences of *academic feminism* itself" (2005: 42).

Closely connected to the issue of activism and scholarship is the way of teaching in a Women's Studies classroom, or feminist pedagogy. Emphasizing the importance of what is taught and how it is taught, and recognizing the power inequality in the classroom, feminist pedagogy is part of the challenge to mainstream academia (Rowland 1987; Klein 1987). Feminist teachers have used innovative methods such as forming (consciousness-raising) small groups, making students keep journals about their experiences in relation to class materials, drawing on women's experiences as "texts," and so on (Freedman, 1990; Rowland 1987). However, thorny questions remain, including, for example, how open it should be for a student to argue against all feminist positions or to be anti-feminist, what to do with students who have "learned well" enough to repeat feminist rhetoric to satisfy expectations (Rothfield 1987).[8] In addition, there are other "practical issues" regarding academic credibility, the difficulty of feminist evaluation of students, and job markets for graduates (Rowland 1987). Whereas some see the excitement as well as problems in feminist experimentation in teaching and learning, others are concerned about the mainstreaming of Women's Studies. Questions have been raised about whether Women's Studies has become "academicalized" and come to resemble traditional teaching in the academe, killing the "spirit" of Women's Studies in the process (Mies 1990; Ruggiero 1990).

The debates concerning the tension between politics and scholarship show an awareness of the academy as an institution of inequality and a close connection between the feminist movement and Women's Studies, which are in turn connected to the grassroots origin of Women's Studies, the critical number of established women faculty members in the university in the United States, and the institutionalization of Women's Studies in the undergraduate curriculum. In Japan, while a sizeable proportion of the first generation of feminist scholars in the academia were activists in

the *ūman ribu* movement, the number of women faculty members, *let* alone feminist scholars, still does not generally constitute a critical minority that can implement or initiate changes in the University. Further, the top-down development and focus on research rather than undergraduate education might have facilitated the estrangement of Women's Studies from feminist activism, making the issue of politics and scholarship largely irrelevant. The establishment of advanced degrees in Women's Studies or concentrations in gender research at the postgraduate level before that of undergraduate educational programs might also have led to the professionalization of feminist scholars and scholarship, preventing a thorough debate about politics and scholarship. The first sign of a systematic infiltration of Women's Studies into the undergraduate curriculum can be seen in a liberal arts university. Will such effort be replicated in other higher educational institutions? Would the newly credentialed "feminist scholars" be shouldering the education of undergraduates? If so, what type of Women's Studies can we expect to see in the next decade or so? In addition, the funding of feminist scholarship and projects by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology might have turned Women's Studies into a symbol of "corporate excellence" at a time when the academia is being absorbed into the capitalist corporate world, adapting its values of consumerism, efficiency, and productivity.[9] Can such legitimization be seen, at least partially, as cooptation? Could this be the reason why there is no concerted critique from Women's Studies of the academia as an institution of inequality and extant knowledge as perpetuating inequality? Has state legitimization made the project of Women's Studies one of adaptation instead of resistance? More generally, what is the implication of the "corporaticization" of the university for an academic project like Women's Studies that is connected to the elimination of inequality?[10] To answer these questions and to confirm or refute the speculations I made above, we need to first have a solid grasp of details in the development of Women's Studies. To this end, I plan to analyze the content and type of research conducted by young feminist

scholars in graduate programs as well as feminist scholarship published in the major feminist journals in Japan. A good understanding of the state of feminist scholarship in Japan is needed to answer some other questions posed in later sections as well.

(B) Autonomy or Integration? Women's Studies as an independent existence or a basis for mainstreaming gender and feminism into the core curriculum and extant disciplines

Autonomous Women's Studies refers to both the structural independence of Women's Studies as a program or discipline *and* the academic independence of a perspective or approach that consists in "a new framework, a new discourse, conceived of in isolation from the imposed reality of traditional academics" (Kirschner and Arch 1984: 150). In practice, this usually means setting up Women's Studies as a separate program or academic department in the university. "Integration" refers to the transformation of extant curriculum and scholarship in established disciplines through the integration of feminist scholarship. It has been called by many names, including "curriculum transformation," "integration," "mainstreaming," "curriculum balancing," and so on. In practice, it typically involves setting up workshops for existing faculty members to critically re-assess the syllabi of the courses they teach, include materials related to women and integrate a feminist perspective and/or making Women's Studies or gender-focused courses part of the core curriculum or general education requirements. By 1992, 200 curriculum transformation projects were reported in the United States (Boxer 1998). The choice between remaining an independent program and being integrated into the curriculum is in reality determined mostly by practical concerns, but the "choice" continued to be a source of conflict in the 1990s within Women's Studies and between Women's Studies and more mainstream academic departments (see, for example University of Wisconsin System Women's Studies Consortium 1999; also Zmoroczek and Duchen 1991; de Groot and Maynard 1993). It is therefore important to tease out the theo-

retical issues involved.

A popular position is that autonomy and integration are two sides of the same coin but that a strong Women's Studies program is necessary if one were to transform the curriculum successfully (McIntosh and Minnich 1984). In the context where Women's Studies is absent as an independent program, however, integration efforts and required courses may strengthen Women's Studies faculty members by increasing the perceived value and need for Women's Studies courses (Spanier 1984).

The argument against setting up Women's Studies as an independent entity emphasizes the risks of marginalization and ghettoization. For example, the Stanford Feminist Studies program was never envisioned to be a fully autonomous department, the argument being that a new department would be marginalized just because of the concentration of political power in the established departments (Christopher 1995). There is also a risk of being "disciplined" in the process of being established in the university (Messer-Davidow 2002).

The opinions against integration are many. Some write sweeping statements, arguing that integrationist projects are conservative, and that Women's Studies exists as a separate entity in its own right (Bowles and Klein 1983). Others doubt if Women's Studies as a new body of knowledge and theory can be successfully assimilated into extant disciplines since it is not defined just by a subject matter (women), but also by the community of Women's Studies scholars and a shared pattern of thinking and analysis (Rosenfelt 1984; Coyner 1986). There is also the issue of not being able to control, shape and coordinate the dissemination of the new knowledge about women if Women's Studies is not an independent entity (Rosenfelt 1984; see also Childers 1984). Some ponder the effect of integration in connection to the larger issue of disciplinarity. For example, Smith (1992) notes that efforts to integrate must involve acceptance of both the idea of disciplinarity and the reality of the disciplines. To develop Women's Studies separately, on the other hand, involves moving outside and beyond academic disciplines, questioning the validity and value of

disciplinarity and rejecting the capacity of the disciplines to generate the kinds of knowledge that women do or might need and want. Coyner (1986) argues similarly, noting specifically that correcting biases, adding information, or even modifying some key concepts do not necessarily constitute much of a challenge to the basic framework of the traditional disciplines. Empirical cases suggest that this is a legitimate concern. At Stanford University, for example, curriculum transformation consisted in including a Gender Studies distribution requirement, but the results fell short of the goal to "address gender in all its manifestation": many courses that fulfilled the requirement were compensatory in nature, with materials on women added without a critical alteration of the content from a gender perspective (Christopher 1995).

The issue of integration versus autonomy has been core to the development of Women's Studies in the United States. In Japan, while Women's Studies courses are being offered in the university in Japan, most of these courses are offered as electives and taught by part-time instructors (Khor 1996). Further, with the partial exception of the Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies in the International Christian University, which apparently makes use of the flexibility in the liberal arts curriculum for interdisciplinary "concentrations," Women's Studies does not yet exist as an undergraduate program. However, Women's Studies does have an independent existence as research institutes and sites for training (or credentialing) feminist scholars. Research institutes and graduate schools are arguably bases of power in the university, but what does it mean for Women's Studies to be integrated into the university, sanctioned by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in some cases? Does it facilitate the "disciplining" of Women's Studies? Or, does it consolidate the position of Women's Studies in higher education? If it is the latter, will it lead to the creation of a generation of elite feminist scholars and the estrangement of Women's Studies from the "political" concerns of facilitating gender equality? Or, alternatively, will it lead to a power base that can be used to facilitate the

integration of Women's Studies into undergraduate education? At this moment, the first generations of "officially trained" feminist scholars are securing full-time positions in universities, even though opportunities remain limited and the number is still small. An undergraduate concentration in gender and sexuality studies has been established, and feminist research projects and centers are being recognized and funded by the government. All these encouraging signs, however, appear at the same time as a severe backlash against gender-free education, and by extension Women's Studies and feminist scholarship, is underway. There is no better time to closely observe and chart the direction of Women's Studies.

(C) The Impossibility of "Women's Studies"? Gender, Women, and the Subject of Women's Studies

A few issues are embedded here that relate to the naming of Women's Studies, the subject of Women's Studies, and ultimately, the "im/possibility" of Women's Studies.

At the beginning, Women's Studies was the preferred name, although there were alternatives like Feminist Studies at Stanford University and the Program for the Study of Women and Men in Society at the University of Southern California. Perhaps, the ambiguity of the name "Women's Studies" – the indeterminancy of whether it is a study of women or by women or both –was attractive to the pioneers. The controversy surrounding re-naming "Women's Studies" as "Gender Studies" first emerged in the 1980s and early 1990s in the United States, at a time when publishers were also replacing "Women's Studies" by "Gender Studies" in their catalogues (Boxer 1998). At that time "Gender Studies" was seen as a label that could be strategically used to appeal to the academy in its seeming neutrality and inclusiveness—after all, "gender" is an objective, scientific concept and it includes men as well as women (see also Boyd 2005; Evans 1990; Auslander 1997). For the same reasons, however, many have resisted re-naming "Women's Studies" as "Gender Studies." Some are concerned that the term "gender" facilitates an emphasis

on difference rather than inequality and oppression, and that the so-called "inclusiveness" might actually open the door to people who do not identify as feminists or who reject feminist theory and methodology. In its worst instantiation, "Gender Studies" could reflect an explicitly anti-feminist backlash by de-legitimizing the study of women as a group and a category of analysis and making women invisible again (Yee 1997; Evans 1990; Klein 1991; de Groot and Maynard 1993; see also Zmoroczek and Duchen 1991 on the U.K.). In other words, in the early years "Gender Studies" was seen as conservative and de-radicalizing.

"Gender studies" as an alternative to Women's Studies took a "radical" turn later in the mid to late 1990s, aided by the postmodernist challenge to the subject "women." [11] In the postmodern critique, the category of "women" is conceptualized as discursively created, and the assumed homogeneity of "women" in feminist research and Women's Studies is seen as unwarranted (Baithwaite et al. 2004; Brown 1997; de Groot and Maynard 1993; see also Fuss 1991; Butler 1990 and 1991). Indeed, Brown (1997) argues for the "impossibility of Women's Studies," noting how the organization of Women's Studies around a singular identity inhibits its ability to account for the complexities of the subject.

The postmodernist challenge to feminism and Women's Studies was seen by some as suspicious because the call to "decentralize the subject" came at a time when Women's Studies had just begun to widen its concept of women to include historically marginalized groups (Yee 1997; see also hooks, 1990; Morley 1999). Other feminists who respond to the postmodern criticism and recognize the term of "women" as fragmentary and unstable likewise argue strongly in favor of retaining both the subject of "women" and the name "Women's Studies" as a political strategy and for its intellectual value (Weigman 2005; Yee 1997). By retaining "Women's Studies," Yee (1997) argues that "woman" can retain its place on the agenda as a contested, visible, complex category of analysis that validates the existence of women as a group in society and addresses sexism and racism in the production of feminist scholarship (see also Guy-Sheftall

1997). Taking a longer historical perspective, Zimmerman (2005) demonstrates that Women's Studies is and has always been a field in motion: the material basis of women's oppression was emphasized in the 1970s and 1980s, and the notion of "woman" as a discursive category in the late 1980s and 1990s. While acknowledging the importance and contribution of the emphasis on language, discourse, and subjectivity, Zimmerman (2005) reiterates the importance of not losing sight of women's lives, experience, bodies and oppression. She further argues that the subject of Women's Studies is still women, but that these women are "multifaceted, multilingual, and multivalent" (p. 36) (see also Kennedy and Piette 1991; Brimstone 1991). In a similar line of argument, others have emphasized the importance of retaining identity-based analysis of lived experience, given that systems of oppression still exist (see, for example Boyd 2005). Pushing the argument further, Martin (2005) argues that "[q]uestions about women and gender have to become part of larger and less organized mixes in order effectively to identify and distinguish themselves again" (p. 130) (see also Jakobsen 2005). The debates concerning gender, women, and the subject of Women's Studies are still very much alive, and have expanded to include explorations of the tension and connection between Women's Studies and Queer Studies, which has an impact also on the way programs in gender and sexuality are structured (see, for example, Auslander 1997).

Similar issues concerning "gender" and Women's Studies have been raised in Japan as well. Just as in the United States, the issue of "Gender Studies" emerged first. In the mid-1990s, in the process of researching Women's Studies in Japan, I heard at a symposium on Women's Studies in Kyoto[12] a debate about the benefits and problems of naming newly established research centers "Gender Studies" instead of "Women's Studies." The anxiety concerning the cooptation of Women's Studies by the authorities ("it is not right to name it in a way to appease the *ojisan* in the government") and the apparent practicality of adopting Gender Studies as a name parallels the discussion in the United States some 10 years ago.

Just as in the United States, Gender Studies has also taken a radical turn in recent years, but under very different circumstances. I am quite convinced that the backlash against gender-free education and the avoidance of the term "gender-free" by local governments, which had previously championed some of the most thorough gender-free education campaigns in Japan (see, for example, Asai et al. 2003 and Okuyama 2005 for an overview), has inadvertently radicalized the concept of "gender," making its users "feminists," a label that perhaps elicits various radical images and associations in Japan, and creating an opportunity for educators in Women's Studies to re-think the concept of "gender." While some have criticized the use of *katakana* in a key word in feminist scholarship and politics which makes it prone to misunderstanding (see, for example, Funahashi 2003), I think it is precisely because there is no direct Japanese equivalent of the word that allows feminist scholars to inject a radical meaning into it, whether intentional or not.[13]

The "radicalization" of gender through the "gender-free backlash" in Japan appears to me an exemplar of coalition politics, with academics appearing together with schoolteachers in symposiums attended by "ordinary citizens" as well as academics.[14] Happening at almost the same time but exclusively in the academe is the postmodern challenge to Women's Studies, or rather, the growing importance or even "institutionalization" of Judith Butler in the field of gender and sexuality in Japan.[15] Some knowledge of Judith Butler's work has apparently become a "prerequisite" for anyone interested in gender and sexuality (or, indeed, anyone in the academe, from anecdotal evidence) ever since *Gender Trouble* was translated into Japanese in 1999. Indeed, Butler's talk in January 2006 at Ochanomizu Women's University drew a crowd of close to 1000. All this, however, cannot be equated with the postmodern challenge to Women's Studies in the United States some 10 years ago. In the United States, the issues evolved over a few decades, and the postmodern challenge to the category "women" came when Women's Studies was marking its 20th anniversary and was an established "field" or even "discipline" in

major universities, supporting not only feminist research and scholarship but also undergraduate education.[16] Participants in the debates concerning the im/possibility of Women's Studies in the light of the postmodern challenge include feminist scholars of different research areas, disciplinary training[17], as well as undergraduate and graduate teaching experiences. The circumstances in Japan are quite different. As noted above, Women's Studies has its impact mostly in research and scholarship (of established scholars and scholars in training at the graduate level), and its presence in undergraduate education, by comparison, is negligible. My impression is that the introduction of postmodernism or specifically Butler's work in this context has not invited an exchange of ideas that are rooted in scholarship *and* education and politics, but has stayed mostly within scholarship, and one that I would characterize loosely as "modern thought" and philosophy. While the flow of new ideas into Women's Studies should be encouraged, the de-centering of women as a subject, the focus on abstract theorizing, and the growing homogeneity in feminist research defined by a focus on postmodernism are all *possible* developments that could undercut the effectiveness of Women's Studies in Japan as an "academic arm of feminism," especially in the larger context of a society that has a level of gender inequality far higher than that of its counterparts in the industrialized world.[18] Of course, none of these developments are inevitable, and all are empirical questions to be explored and answered. Will the latest development in feminist scholarship in Japan lead to conversations among Women's Studies practitioners from different disciplinary backgrounds and research experiences? Will certain voices dominate and others be silenced? Will Women's Studies find itself increasingly confined within smaller circles of academic specializations? Which books are being translated from the West and become important and which are not and why? Will the latest theories replace the old ones, or will new and *shared* paradigms emerge that show influences of both old and new ideas? I plan to explore these and other questions through overtime analyses of the content of Women's Studies programs, journal

articles, and books translated.

Concluding Thoughts and (More) Questions

In my first research project in Japan about feminist grassroots organizing and Women's Studies (Khor 1996; 1999), the question of whether feminism and Women's Studies in Japan were imported from the West loomed large. The rapid development of Women's Studies in Asia in the past decade and the increase in interactions among Asian feminist scholars and educators prompted me to ask new questions about Women's Studies in Asia. Drawing on my experiences and research on Women's Studies in the United States, I traced the development of and identified the issues of conflicts and debates in Women's Studies in the United States. Using the United States as a basis for comparison, I presented my observations of Women's Studies in Japan and other Asian countries, speculated and posed questions about future developments. Many of the questions I asked and issues I identified are empirical questions to be explored systematically, which include mainly the "content" of Women's Studies research and educational programs, the meaning and implications of the legitimization of Women's Studies or feminist scholarship as "Centers of Excellence," the implications of the rapid development of advanced degrees and slow development of undergraduate programs in Women's Studies for feminist scholarship and education.

Teaching a course on Feminist Theory (my interpretation of *"jendaa ron"*) brought me back to "old" feminist texts, including Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique,* Adrienne Rich's *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,* and many others of that era. I was hesitant in presenting the texts in class — they were old, out of fashion, unsophisticated, limited, and comprehensible (rather than "incomprehensible," as "sophisticated" theories apparently should be). In the class was a young woman with a background in feminist scholarship. Hearing her say that she was moved

to tears reading *The Feminist Mystique,* I felt again strongly that there is much to learn from even old texts with obvious limitations, that Women's Studies will benefit from more rather than less debates within the feminist community, and diversity in rather than homogenization of perspectives.

Notes

1 I could not have launched this research without the one-year sabbatical leave granted by Hosei University, which gave me a much-needed block of time to immerse myself in Women's Studies (again) and freed me to attend overseas and local conferences and symposiums on Women's Studies and gender and sexuality research. I also appreciated the many conversations with Kamano Saori about Women's Studies in Japan, which both clarified and enriched my thinking about various related issues.

2 For a professor's view of the first Feminist Studies classes, see Freedman (1990).

3 Later programs apparently developed differently. They might have been influenced by and received support from established programs and inter-campus cooperation, as on some campuses in the University of Wisconsin system, initiated primarily by established women faculty members with research interests in gender and feminism, such as Stanford University, or even initiated from "above," such as the University of Southern California (University of Wisconsin Women's Studies Consortium 1999; Christopher 1995; Banner 1986).

4 The resilience of academic institutions against changes was identified as one reason why some Women's Studies programs simulated other established programs, such as Ethnic Studies programs (Tobias 1987).

5 Research centers related to gender studies could also benefit from a COE granted to the university or to a "larger" project in the university. For example, symposiums related to gender issues have been co-hosted by the Center for Gender Studies and the COE granted to "Comprehensive Peace Studies" at the International Christian University, the third and most recent one focused on "Human Security and Gender in Asia: Natural Science Perspectives — 'Body Knowledge' and Gender in Asia" (October 6–8, 2006).

6 Japan ranked 14th in the Gender-related Development Index but 44th in the Gender Empowerment Index in 2003. The former measures inequality in education, health and longevity, and income, while the latter measures power inequality. Japan is behind almost all comparable industrialized

nations in GEM ranking (Human Development Indicators 2003).

In making this claim about theory and material conditions of women, I am neither devaluating theory nor suggesting that theory and practice are opposed to each other. Rather, I am thinking along the same line as Adrienne Rich when she declares, poetically: "Theory — the seeing of patterns, showing the forest as well as the trees — theory can be a dew that rises from the earth and collects in the rain cloud and returns to earth over and over. And if it doesn't smell of the earth, it isn't good for the earth" (Rich, 1986: 213-214).

7 The issue here is not just about politics and scholarship, but also about whether Women's Studies should be established as an independent discipline in the university or whether it should be integrated into extant curriculum and disciplines. The latter issue is the focus of the next section.

8 Incidentally, Tajima Yoko also pointed out the same problem with male students in her classes, at the interview I conducted with her on February 9, 1995 (see Khor 1996).

9 Japan is witnessing a similar development of the academia as "the West" in the past two decades or so. For detailed analyses of the "capitalization" of the university, see Mohanty 2003; Etzkowitz, Webster, and Healey 1998; Starr 1987; Readings 1996.

10 I have situated all these questions in the circumstances of the development of Women's Studies because these circumstances can override the intentions of individual feminist scholars.

11 This was not the first time the category of "women" was the target of criticism. In the early 1980s, the term "women" and Women's Studies itself were criticized for being non-inclusive because women actually meant middle class, white, heterosexual women, providing the impetus for the critical integration of race and class into feminist scholarship and Women's Studies (see, for example, Baca Zinn et al. 1986).

12 The symposium was attended by people active in Women's Studies in an academic setting, including a few of the Women's Studies professors and researchers I interviewed for my project (see Khor 1996).

13 Indeed, in a session on Asian feminist theory at the Seoul conference, the discussion after the panel touched on the de-radicalization of Women's Studies by the use of the name Gender Studies. The "consensus" in the room, dominated by participants from the United States and Australia, revealed the difference between the situation in the West and that in Japan. In response, I raised the question that "gender" could be radical in a place where it is an imported term without a clear local translation. And one Japanese feminist scholar seconded my opinion, referring to how the "Gender Studies Center" she established included exploration of lesbians, sexualities and that

there was nothing "conservative" about it. Indeed, my experience in the classroom corroborated it. Students found the term "gender" a lot more radical (or, indeed scarier) than the term "women" or Women's Studies. European scholars have also pointed out the different translations of the word "gender" in Europe (Zmoroczek and Duchen 1991).

14 The symposium on the concept of "gender" is a good example (*Minato-ku danjo byodo suishin senta,* March 25, 2006). The controversy surrounding the replacement of Ueno Chizuko as a lecturer in the Kokubun-ji (city-sponsored) Human Rights Lectures for the reason that she *might* use the term or concept of "gender free" provided further opportunities to dissolve the boundary separating academics and non-academics.

15 The dialogue between Ueno Chizuko and Takemura Kazuko (who translated Butler's *Gender Trouble*) might have captured metaphorically a moment when "old-style feminism," which treats women largely as a material subject, encountered "new style feminism," which treats women as a discursively constructed subject (Takemura and Ueno 1999).

16 I do not want to exaggerate the degree to which Women's Studies is established and legitimized in the United States, and I definitely do not consider it to be in the "mainstream" as established disciplines such as Sociology, Political Science, and Comparative Literature are. However, when compared to Japan, it is beyond doubt that the field is structurally advanced.

17 Inter-disciplinarity has been a concern in Women's Studies in the United States since its inception, with some arguing that Women's Studies is not so much interdisciplinary as multidisciplinary (see, for example, Boxer 1998a; Allen and Kitch 1998). My impression is that while at any one point in time the field is perceived as dominated by the Social Sciences or the Humanities, there is also a clear commitment to the inclusion of all disciplines for *education,* especially at the undergraduate level. In other words, the commitment to undergraduate education encourages a balance of disciplinary perspectives, even if inter-disciplinarity is still unrealizable. The negligible presence of Women's Studies in undergraduate education in Japan, on the other hand, might have made it easier for one discipline or sub-discipline to dominate scholarship and diminish the need for interdisciplinary exchange.

18 There is nothing inevitable about all this, of course. The insights from postmodernism have been combined with the insights of (pre-postmodernist?) feminism to result in sensitive analysis and viable politics under similar circumstances (see, for example, Wong 2006).

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