The LDP and the Maintenance of Gender Inequality in Japanese Politics

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The LDP and the Maintenance of Gender Inequality in Japanese Politics

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

from

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by

Emma Dalton
BA (Hons), Masters in Japanese Interpreting and Translation

Institute for Social Transformation Research
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2011
I, Emma Dalton, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Social Sciences, Media and Communication, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Emma Dalton
ABSTRACT

The Japanese political system is dominated by men. From local to national level, from the legislature through to the bureaucracy, men outnumber women significantly. Dominant discourses of gender that shape Japanese womanhood as being connected to the home and family have gently steered women away from choosing a career in politics. Gender-role socialisation and gender stereotypes form the cultural barriers to women’s participation in mainstream representative politics. In addition to cultural barriers, institutional barriers, such as the political and electoral systems, have made access to politics difficult for women.

In this thesis, I examine the Liberal Democratic Party’s role in contributing to the obstacles that hinder women from entering politics at the national level in Japan. Having been in power from 1955 until 2009, apart from a nine-month hiatus from July 1993 until April 1994, the LDP has had a strong influence on the content of post-war policies and legislation as well as on the workings of the political system. In this thesis, I consider the ways in which social welfare, employment and gender equity policies have shaped dominant discourses of gender. These discourses, in turn, discourage women from entering politics. I argue that for LDP governments, gender equality has been of marginal concern. Gender equity policies created under LDP governments have been inadequate, primarily because the LDP does not regard gender equality as an important issue.

I also examine whether or not the LDP, as a political party, has maintained the institutional barriers that women face. I argue that the very structures that assisted successive LDP victories also made politics difficult to access for women. I explore the masculinised party culture of the LDP to shed light on the ways that women are made to feel unwelcome. My examination of party culture draws on interviews with LDP women and explores the ways in which LDP women experience the culture and how they negotiate it. In exploring LDP women’s discussions about motivations and their thoughts on the under-representation of women in politics, I also draw attention to the fact that LDP women themselves perpetuate the same discourses of gender that construct women as political outsiders.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must firstly thank my parents, Ann and Hugh, for their selfless investment in my education, without which I would not have pursued an interest in Japan, let alone a higher degree.

I thank the Japan Foundation and the Endeavour Award for enabling me to conduct fieldwork in Tokyo. While I was in Tokyo, I benefited from the tutelage of Professor Igarashi Akio of Rikkyō University. His seminars, which he kindly allowed me to attend, were a wealth of resources and interesting conversations. Professor Igarashi was generous with his advice and put me in touch with several key people, including Yamaguchi Mitsuko, whose kindness and wisdom I also enjoyed whilst in Tokyo. The hard work and determination of Yamaguchi Mitsuko and Kubo Kimiko at the Fusae Ichikawa Center for Women and Governance continues to be an inspiration to me.

While in Tokyo, my partner Andy and I were taken under the wing of ‘Mrs Iwagami’, as we came to call her, whose generosity I will never be able to repay. From buying us slippers and tea to kindly agreeing to ‘practise’ interviews with me in cafés scattered around Tokyo, Mrs Iwagami’s energy and generosity reminded me that I had a true friend.

My partner Andy graciously accompanied me to Japan. He reminded me, when I became despondent, that my project was possible, and worthwhile. I will be eternally grateful to him for this, and for the love, companionship, humour and encouragement he has given me over the years.

I am very grateful to the University of Wollongong for providing me with an APA scholarship. Thanks also to the university for providing me with a space in which to work. This has been important not only for the process of writing my thesis, but for social reasons. I have received fantastic support from other postgraduate students and staff, with whom I have forged a strong community of friends. Special thanks to Jenn Phillips, Charlotte Frew, Yumiko Mizusawa, Nichole Georgiou, Kabita Chakraborty, Yoko Harada, Scott Burrows, Ritsuko Saito and Matt Zingel. Thanks also to my tennis buddies Frances Steel, Rob Carr, Becky Walker and Susan Engel.

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The final word must go to the women and men I interviewed. If it were not for their interest in my project, and their generosity to take time out of their busy schedules to talk to me, this thesis would not have been written.
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## GLOSSARY

### Acronyms

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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LDP</td>
<td>Liberal Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPJ</td>
<td>Democratic Party of Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSP</td>
<td>Japan Socialist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDP</td>
<td>Social Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCP</td>
<td>Japan Communist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWCW</td>
<td>Fourth World Conference on Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEOL</td>
<td>Equal Employment Opportunity Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Proportional representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFER</td>
<td>Alliance of Feminist Representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCTU</td>
<td>Women’s Christian Temperance Union</td>
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### Japanese terminology

<table>
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<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seikatsusha</td>
<td>Someone who is heavily involved in day-to-day activities, such as domestic chores and the local community (literally ‘lifestyle’).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kōenkai</td>
<td>Political support group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daikokubashira</td>
<td>Main supporting pillar; a metaphor for male breadwinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryōsai kenbo</td>
<td>‘Good wife, wise mother’. Official ideology of womanhood as espoused in the education system during the Meiji era (1868–1912).</td>
</tr>
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AUTHOR’S NOTE

Following Japanese custom, Japanese names are written with the family name preceding the given name.

Macrons in transliterated Japanese indicate long vowels.

All English translations of Japanese sources are my own unless otherwise stated.
INTRODUCTION

Almost all legislative assemblies around the world consist of more men than women. Women occupy approximately nineteen percent of national assembly seats worldwide. The spectrum ranges from Rwanda, where women comprise 56 percent of the national legislative assembly, to countries such as Tonga, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and Egypt where women represent on average less than five percent of seats, to countries where there are no women at all in the national parliament, such as Oman, Saudi Arabia and Qatar (IPU website, accessed 20/01/11). In 2005, Rwanda became the first country in the world to have a parliament with more women than men in it. In the same year in Japan, the number of women reached a record nine percent. This was the first time since 1946 that there were more than 39 women in Japan’s Lower House. Since then, the number of women in Japan’s parliament, the Diet, has grown slowly and they now occupy almost fourteen percent of all seats. In the Lower House, out of 480 members, there are 54 women (eleven percent), and in the Upper House, out of 242 members, there are 44 women (eighteen percent) (House of Councillors website, accessed 3/10/10; House of Representatives website, accessed 3/10/10).¹

It has taken over 60 years, since 1946, when women in Japan first voted and stood for election, for Japanese women to comprise nearly fourteen percent of all Diet seats. Nevertheless, the rate of increase since 1993, when electoral reform took place (to be discussed in Chapter Five), has been impressive. The reasons for the increase will be discussed in further detail below, but the introduction of proportional representational seats played a significant role. Rising numbers in the Diet indicate that women are finally making inroads into national political representation. Almost fourteen percent, however, after 64 years of elections, is nowhere near parity, and the reasons for the low representation of women in Japan still need to be explored.

¹ See Appendix 1 for graphs depicting the changes in the number of women in the Lower House and the Upper House since 1946.
Arguing for more women in politics

The quest for gender parity in parliaments, not just in Japan, but around the world, is an enduring one. Before women could vote or take seats in assemblies, women’s groups, feminists and sympathetic male politicians campaigned for female suffrage. Since women gained suffrage and the right to sit in parliaments, these campaigns have been replaced by struggles and arguments for more women to be represented politically.

Before presenting a thesis about the problem of the under-representation of women in Japanese politics, it is important to clarify why this is an issue of importance. Why is it a problem when legislative assemblies are continuously dominated by men? One argument for increased female political representation is the importance of democratic justice between the sexes (Phillips 1995, p. 62; Miller 2001, p. 102). From this point of view, it is argued that women represent half the population and therefore have the right to be present in the same proportion in representative bodies. A second argument is the importance of symbolism (Sapiro 1981, p. 712; Phillips 1995, p. 62). If the vast majority of positions of public power are filled by men this becomes the norm in people’s minds and women are regarded as therefore unsuitable for these roles. If there are more women in public positions of power they become role models to other women and girls.

With regards to the first point, it is generally agreed that women should have their fair share of seats in legislative bodies, and that supplementary arguments for more women in politics support this fundamental claim (Dahlerup 2001, p. 105). Miller (2001, p. 102) states that ‘unequal representation of men and women in parliaments and councils is a symptom of injustice and unethical practice in the operation and construction of society, states and nations’. A democratic legislative body cannot be doing a very good job if it does not represent sexual equality in its own composition.

With regards to the second point concerning symbolic value, many scholars agree that the visibility of women in public positions will have symbolic meaning because those women serve as role models (Sapiro 1981, p. 712; Sawer and Simms 1993, p. 22; Mansbridge 1999, p. 651). For example, Sawer and Simms (1993, p. 22) state that
women’s visibility in positions of power and authority ‘is important for the self-image of women as a group’. Sapiro (1981, p. 712) claims that because politics is still a male domain, people find the presence of women in governance somewhat unusual. It therefore follows that larger numbers of women in public positions will lead to their presence appearing more natural in the eyes of the people.

A third and major argument for increased female political representation is put forth by Phillips (1995) who argues that increased female representation will lead to better representation of women’s interests. Phillips’ theory of the ‘politics of presence’ is based on the notion that women’s increased presence (ideally to the same level as men’s) is important primarily because issues that are more salient for women than men will be neglected if women are not present to represent those interests. The argument for increased female representation for reasons of democratic justice underlies all assertions to increase women in politics, but Phillips (1995, p.65) notes that the call for more women in representative assemblies is not the same thing as calling for more female doctors or more female Chief Executive Officers of companies. She is concerned with representative democracy and not just numbers when she discusses women in politics. For Phillips, arguments about the ‘right’ of women to occupy more positions of power in, for example, corporations cannot be seamlessly transferred to the arena of political representation. The relationship between the public and a democratically elected representative is quite different to the relationship between a patient and a doctor or a company board director and a shareholder. There is the notion of accountability to the public that a political representative must negotiate. Elected members of a legislative assembly must, ideally, represent the interests of the public who elected them. Phillips (1995, p.78) notes, however, that in making final decisions politicians do act autonomously (sometimes contrary to their electoral promises or to their party line) and it is at this point when the gender of the individual politician matters. If there are few women in the decision-making process it is easier when the final decision is made on policy matters for issues concerning women to be neglected. These issues might be discussed in electoral ‘manifestos’ or during campaign speeches, but when the time comes to allocate budgets or prioritise agendas, an assembly comprised mainly of men is more likely than one with gender parity to allow women’s issues to fall to the bottom of the priority list, or to drop off altogether.
Phillips’ theory of a politics of presence does not assume a homogenous characterisation of the group requiring representation, nor does it valorise women’s differences to men. Instead, the theory of the politics of presence depends on ‘establishing a difference between the interests of women and men’ (Phillips, 1995, p.68). While women as a group do not necessarily share the same interests, many women occupy similar positions in society because,

as society is currently constituted they also have particular interests arising from their exposure to sexual harassment and violence, their unequal position in the division of paid and unpaid labour, and their exclusion from most arenas of economic or political power (Phillips 1995, pp.67-68).

In other words, Phillips’ theory is not founded in the belief that women have different values to men, which is what some scholars, such as Carol Gilligan (1993), Sarah Ruddick (1989) and Jean-Bethke Elshtain (1981, p. 336) have argued. Gilligan (1993, p. 2) argues, for example, that women speak in a different voice to men, a voice grounded in their maternal role. In contrast, Phillips’ argument is based on the understanding that women have different priorities because of their life experiences which have been shaped by gendered patterns of socialisation.

Phillips (1995, p. 82) admits that the validity of the theory of the politics of presence cannot be conclusively proven until something like gender parity has been achieved in an assembly. She also warns that the achievement of gender parity in legislative assemblies does not guarantee ‘better’ politics, or even better representation of women’s issues. It is only very recently that Rwanda became the first country to achieve gender parity so it has been impossible to conclusively test the politics of presence, but for Phillips it is a hope for change—a ‘shot in the dark’ (Phillips 1995, p.83). She suggests that even if gender parity does not make much of a ‘difference’ it cannot create a worse political system than the current one that is unbalanced and represents men’s interests.

The politics of presence has been tested by scholars in Great Britain and Sweden. An increase in the number of women in the Swedish national parliament led to an increased
emphasis on social welfare issues, supporting the theory of the politics of presence (Wangnerud 2000, p. 85). Furthermore, in their study of the different values and attitudes between male and female members of the Westminster Parliament towards various areas of policy, Lovenduski and Norris (2003, p. 94) find that there are no significant differences in attitudes on most issues, such as the free market economy and moral traditionalism, but there are significant differences in attitudes regarding gender equality. Women, regardless of party affiliation, are more likely than men to support policies that aim for gender equality. Their study therefore suggests that more women in parliament will enhance the chance of women’s interests being considered more seriously. On the other hand, it also suggests that the difference more women in parliament will make may be limited to areas such as gender equality without extending to issues such as the economy or other social issues. These are academic arguments about the importance of gender equality in politics. In practice, many women’s organisations are committed to making politics more accessible for women, as will be outlined below.

**Acting for more women in politics**

Organisations outside the parliament often play important roles in attempting to increase the number of women in politics. EMILY’s List in the US is an example of this. Founded in 1985 in response to the small number of women in representative politics, EMILY’s List stands for ‘Early Money is Like Yeast’. Its name suggests the importance of financial support for political candidates, particularly in the early stages of their careers. EMILY’s List recruits, trains and supports pro-choice (that is, a woman’s right to choose in matters related to abortion) Democratic female candidates to get elected at every level of office. Specifically, it seeks out women from across the country, convinces them to run, provides them with financial support in electoral campaigns, trains them in a variety of areas ranging from fundraising and campaigning to communicating effectively with the public, and follows them after they have won to ensure they are supported. Of the seventeen women in the current US senate, thirteen of them were supported by EMILY’s List. In the House of Representatives, there are 73 women, 53 of whom EMILY’s List supported. The organisation not only supports and
educates candidates but also attempts to mobilise female voters to vote for EMILY’s List-backed candidates (EMILY’s List website, accessed 29/7/10).

EMILY’s List Australia (ELA) was launched in 1996 and has a similar philosophy to its American counterpart, only backing Labor Party candidates. Its website states that the organisation’s five basic beliefs are equity, diversity, (reproductive) choice, equal pay and childcare. Since its inception, ELA has helped 139 women get elected at every level of politics (EMILY’s List Australia website, accessed 21/8/10). By 2004, almost three-quarters of all female Labor Party members elected in the federal parliament were ELA-supported women (Sawer 2006, p. 107). In Australia, the Labor Party (ALP) has high female representation, relative to the other major political party, the Liberal Party. In the House of Representatives, female ALP members represent 32 percent of all ALP members, while the corresponding number for the Liberal Party is 21 percent. The corresponding figures in the Senate are 43 percent for ALP women and 28 percent for Liberal Party women (The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia website, accessed 28/9/10).

The Women’s Electoral Lobby (WEL) is a feminist organisation in Australia that has also encouraged more women to enter politics. Founded in 1972, WEL is not affiliated to the Labor Party, but has similar core principles to those of EMILY’s List, including equal pay, equal employment opportunity, free contraception, abortion on demand and free child care (McAllister 2006, pp. 40-41). While not specifically pushing for more women in politics per se, WEL calls for more accountability by politicians with respect to women’s issues. A key activity of the organisation is to survey electoral candidates on their views on issues such as childcare and pay equity (Sawer 2008, p. 3). Furthermore, in the organisation’s early years, many of its members went on to enter formal politics (Sawer 2008, p. 234), indicating both the representative and substantive effects that an influential women’s movement can have on female political representation.
In Japan, WIN WIN (Women in New World, International Network) was founded in 1999. Modelled on the US EMILY’s List, WIN WIN provides female political candidates with financial support, education and mentoring. The significant difference between EMILY’s List and WIN WIN is that WIN WIN is not affiliated with a political party. In order to gain support from WIN WIN, a candidate must indicate her commitment to issues deemed important for women, including the environment, women’s health care, aged-care services and securing government funding for childcare services (Jordan 1999, p. 25). In 2006, WIN WIN announced a new approach to supporting female candidates, shifting its focus away from financial support. At the 2005 general election, only ten percent of WIN WIN members donated money, prompting the organisation to shift its focus from fundraising to supporting female candidates in other areas, such as mentoring and education (Akamatsu 2005, n.p).

The Ichikawa Fusae Kinen Kai (Fusae Ichikawa Center for Women and Governance, hereafter the Fusae Ichikawa Center) is another example of an extra-party organisation that attempts to address the gender imbalance in Japan’s Diet. The Fusae Ichikawa Center’s roots can be traced to the prewar suffrage movement led by its namesake, Ichikawa Fusae. In 1946, to commemorate women gaining the right to vote, the Fusen Kaikan (Women’s Suffrage Hall) was built near Shibuya, Tokyo (The Fusae Ichikawa Center website, accessed 20/8/10). It was home to post-war women’s activist groups, including the League of Women’s Voters (Fusen Yūkensha Dōmei) (Mackie 2003, p. 176). An official foundation was formed in 1962, taking the same name as the building, Fusen Kaikan. After Ichikawa died in 1981, the foundation changed its name to Ichikawa Fusae Kinen Kai. The building itself, however, retains the original name Fusen Kaikan. The Fusae Ichikawa Center’s main aim is ‘political education’ via the production and dissemination of data (The Fusae Ichikawa Center website, accessed 20/8/10). It runs politics courses and publishes a monthly journal Josei Tenbō (Women’s Perspective) about domestic and international politics, focusing mainly on women’s involvement in parliamentary politics. A key function of the organisation is the creation and preservation of political archives. Its library, located in Shibuya ward, Tokyo, has over 100,000 documents dating from before the Pacific War (Yamaguchi 2008, pers. comm, 22 Jan).
The Seikatsusha Network, founded in 1977, is another notable Japanese women’s organisation that has encouraged women’s involvement in politics. The network evolved out of the Seikatsu Club, a cooperative consumers’ advocate group that formed in 1965. In 1979, a Seikatsusha Network representative won a seat on the Nerima Ward council in Tokyo. Since then, the network has gained seats in the Tokyo metropolitan council as well as in other Tokyo municipalities. The Seikatsusha Network is not necessarily concerned with increasing the number of women in politics, but has done so nonetheless. Its main objective is to make local politics more accountable to Tokyo citizens. Its activities revolve around ensuring protection of the natural environment and child welfare (Bochel and Bochel 2005, p. 386). It also serves as a critique of the way male-dominated mainstream politics functions. A specific manifestation of this is the organisation’s policy of rotating elected members every two or three terms, in order to avoid entrenching particular individuals in particular seats (Gelb and Estevez-Abe 1998, p. 267).

Organisations such as those outlined above, both in Japan and outside Japan, have had some success in increasing the number of women in representative politics in their countries. For example, the number of ALP women in the Australian parliament compared to the number of Liberal Party women suggests that EMILY’s List has been effective in increasing female political representation. However, other factors also influence the increase of women in parliamentary politics. Political parties themselves can also play a pivotal role in the pursuit of greater female political representation. In the case of the Australian Labor Party, in 1994 an Affirmative Action Rule was passed at an ALP National Conference. This rule required that women be preselected\(^2\) in 35 percent of all winnable seats in all elections by 2002 (Lee-Ack 2002, n.p). In 2002, this quota was raised to 40 percent, to be achieved by 2012 (McCullough 2009, p. 125). Compared to the Liberal Party, which does not have a gender quota, and is not endorsed by Emily’s List it is not entirely surprising that the ALP has a higher representation of women.

\(^2\) In the Australian political system ‘preselection’ refers to the process whereby the party decides which candidate will stand in a particular seat.
International pressure for more women in politics

Affirmative action implemented by a political party can be categorised as either ‘hard’ affirmative action, which includes quotas or targets\(^3\) (such as that implemented by the ALP) or ‘soft’ affirmative action, which includes the assistance that organisations such as those described above provide: financial aid to female candidates, education for potential female candidates, seminars and mentoring (Bacchi 2004, pp. 132-33).

The adoption of a numerical target for women by the ALP reflects similar actions by political parties in many countries in recent years. Some governments have also instituted gender quotas in their electoral systems. As of 2008, half of all countries in the world had adopted some form of electoral quota. Forty-six countries have legislative quotas either as constitutional or electoral law; in a further 60 countries, political parties have implemented them voluntarily (Dahlerup 2008, pp. 322-23). Particularly since the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action was outlined at the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW), electoral quotas have been introduced in an increasing number of countries. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action specifically named institutions as barriers to women’s increased entrance into politics: ‘The traditional working patterns of many political parties and government structures continue to be barriers to women’s participation in public life’ (FWCW 1995, Article 182). States Members of the United Nations are urged to pursue a target of 30 percent for women in decision-making bodies, including legislative bodies. In order to achieve this, governments are encouraged to implement positive action\(^4\) ‘if necessary’ (Article 190). The language used in the Platform for Action indicates a shift away from focusing on the lack of women’s resources or education relative to men’s when considering the problem of women’s political under-representation. The focus is now on institutions as obstacles to women’s increased political participation and one of the consequences of

\(^{3}\) The distinction between targets and quotas is the level of regulation or formality. Targets are informal, and usually take the form of recommendations, whereas quotas are formal regulations (Dahlerup, 2006a, p. 21).

\(^{4}\) ‘Positive action’ appears in many United Nations documents related to CEDAW to indicate special measures that have compensatory, corrective and promotional purposes of increasing women in areas of under-representation (FWCW 1995). Affirmative action is the preferred term in the US and Australia, but the UN, and most European countries use positive action. Official translations of Japanese documents also prefer this term. For this reason, I will be using ‘positive action’ in this thesis.
this new focus has been the introduction of numerical targets and quotas in many countries.

Gender quotas can either be implemented voluntarily by political parties or legally enshrined. To be legally enshrined, either the constitution must be amended to include gender quotas (this has happened in the Philippines and Uganda, among others), or the electoral law must be changed (as in France and many countries in South America) (International IDEA and IPU website, accessed 8/8/10). Gender quota rules have been voluntarily implemented by political parties in several countries, including South Africa, Germany and Norway. Gender quotas can target the first stage of the political process, when political parties look for potential candidates; the second stage, that is, the nomination stage; or the third stage, election.

The increase in the number of women in politics as a result of quotas has been most impressive in South America and Africa. Rwanda, where there are now more women than men in the national assembly, created a new constitution in 2003 which includes reserve seat quotas. This means that 30 percent of all seats in legislative councils are reserved for women (Tripp, Konaté et al. 2006, p. 121). This is an example of a quota at the third stage of the political process. Rwanda is an example of the development of a new post-conflict political system that prioritised gender equality as part of its democratic reconstruction (Dahlerup 2006b, p. 22).

Eleven out of the nineteen countries in South America have introduced legal quotas and political parties in many of the remaining eight countries have adopted positive action measures (Araújo and García 2006, p. 83). Apart from Argentina, where quotas have been in place since 1991, most of the countries implemented quotas after the 1995 Beijing Conference. In Costa Rica, the introduction of a quota system into the electoral law meant that at the nomination stage women must be listed in at least 40 percent of electable positions on party lists. Before the implementation of this quota system, women constituted sixteen percent of seats in the national assembly, a figure which has since grown to 35.5 percent (Araújo and García 2006, p. 99). Similar growth after the
introduction of quotas was witnessed in Mexico, Panama and Argentina. Conversely, the deleterious effect on female political representation of the sudden removal of gender quotas was witnessed in post-Communist countries. In the Ukraine, for example, the proportion of women in the national parliament dropped from just over 30 percent to under five percent in the late 1980s when the electoral process was opened up to competition (Montgomery 2003, p. 123). Twenty years later, the number has risen only slightly to eight percent (IPU website, accessed 20/1/11).

Quotas are not the silver bullet to solving the problem of female under-representation in politics. Some countries’ experiences demonstrate that quotas do not always have the effect of increasing the numbers of women in politics. Unless they are implemented effectively, and unless sanctions are in place for when they are not implemented effectively, quotas may have little success. The French experience in 2002, after the implementation of the parité rule is an example of this. The parité electoral law stipulates that men and women must represent half the members nominated by a political party with a two percent margin permissible. The only sanction in Lower House elections against a political party that did not comply to the new legislated parité rule was financial. This meant that the state funding allocated to the party on the basis of votes would be reduced by 75 percent of the difference between the percentage of men and women represented (International IDEA and IPU website, accessed 8/8/10). For example, if women represented only 40 percent, the difference between men and women would be 20 percent. The political party funding would be reduced by 75 percent of 20—that is, fifteen percent. This financial penalty was not enough to deter political parties from flaunting the rules, and consequently, the percentage of women in the national parliament rose less than two percent, to 12.3 percent (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005, p. 40).

Quotas appealing for some, but not Japan

The global trend of introducing electoral gender quotas has not reached Japan. The Alliance of Feminist Representatives (Zenkoku Feminisuto Giin Renmei AFER) is the lone organised voice pushing for gender quotas in politics in Japan. AFER was founded in 1992 by Mitsui Mariko, a former Socialist representative in the Tokyo Metropolitan
government (Kaya 1995, p. 124). Mitsui has advocated gender quotas in politics for almost two decades. Her calls would appear to have largely fallen on deaf ears, as there has been very little public debate on the possibility of gender quotas to increase the numbers of women in politics in Japan. The term ‘positive action’ (sekkyokuteki kaizen sochi) has appeared frequently in official documents since 1999 when the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society was enacted, but not in relation to women in politics (Gender Equality Bureau 2007, p. 18; 20; Cabinet Office 2009, p. 1; 19; 22; 42).

The Basic Plan for a Gender Equal Society, launched by the Japanese government in 2000, sets out numerical targets to ‘expand women’s participation in policy decision-making processes’ (Gender Equality Bureau 2007, p. 20). The policy framework for the Basic Plan is vague and makes the promising but nebulous claim that ‘[i]n all fields of society we can expect to see the proportion of women occupying positions of leadership increase to at least around 30% by 2020’ (Gender Equality Bureau 2007, p. 20). There are nevertheless signs that suggest that some areas of society have acted on the Basic Plan’s targets. A specific target outlined in the Basic Plan concerns female academics in national universities. Universities are encouraged to reach a target of 20 percent female teaching staff by 2010 (from 6.6 percent in 1998) (Gender Equality Bureau 2007, p. 20). According to 2008 figures, this target had not been reached for the positions of university president, professor or assistant professor, but 27.1 percent of lecturers and 23.2 percent of associate professors were female (Cabinet Office 2009, p. 39). As of 2008, the percentage of national universities that had implemented targets had increased to 32.2 percent from 17.4 percent in 2006 (Cabinet Office 2009, p. 5).

Japanese political parties have preferred ‘soft’ affirmative action. The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) provides financial assistance for female candidates running for the first time. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has a Women’s Bureau that provides a ‘mentoring’ service for female candidates. The first and last appearance of gender quotas in Japanese politics was in the early 1990s. The New Japan Party, which formed in 1992, introduced a gender quota for party management: the ratio of one sex in the party executive could not fall below 20 percent. This number was to be raised to 40 percent by 2000 but the party dissolved in 1994 (Etō 2007, p. 41).
Earthquakes and infertility: changing political and social landscapes

As the number of women in the Diet slowly increases, Japanese politics in the meantime has undergone significant changes in terms of who rules. In 2009, the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lost control of the Lower House for only the second time in 54 years. The first time was for only nine months between July 1993 and April 1994. The LDP’s loss was not a surprise; it was like an ‘earthquake’—a huge jolt after years of simmering public discontent with the management of the country (Stockwin, 2009). The election loss of the LDP is of interest to me because of its socio-economic underpinnings. As I will discuss in further detail, the LDP was punished by voters for failing to support a rapidly changing Japanese society; changes to the gendered status quo were part of this. An introduction to Japan’s political and party system will facilitate a more thorough understanding of the background to this political earthquake.

Japan has a bicameral parliamentary system based on the Westminster system. The Upper House (Sangiin) has 242 seats, and the Lower House (Shugiin) has 480 seats. Upper House terms of office are six years with elections held every three years when half the members run for election. Lower House elections are held every four years, unless the Diet is dissolved, in which case an election date is set by the Prime Minister. The prime minister is designated by members of both houses by an open ballot. In practice, the prime minister is usually the leader of the majority party. Like most bicameral systems, the Lower House has more power than the Upper House. Once a bill passes through the Lower House, it has to be accepted by the Upper House before it is enacted as law. If the Upper House rejects the bill, the Lower House has the power to push the bill through nevertheless, so long as two thirds of the chamber votes for it.

The Japanese party system is a two-party system with several smaller parties. The LDP (Jiyu Minshuto) and the Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto, hereafter DPJ) are the major political parties and the Japan Communist Party (JCP), the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the Komeito are the three main smaller parties. The remaining parties consist of relatively small and unstable political parties that form and disband quite frequently. The LDP formed in 1955. The party was the result of the merging of the two
conservative political parties, the Liberal Party and the Democratic Party in response to the growing threat of the ‘progressives’, and specifically, the Socialist Party. The conservative/progressive (*hoshu/kakushin*) ideological battle which characterised post-war Japanese politics definitively came to an end when the LDP formed a coalition with its former foes, the Japan Socialist Party in 1994 (Curtis 1999, p. 28). The LDP is still generally known as the party which represents ‘conservative’ interests in the English language literature (Christenson 2000, p. 10; Kabashima and Steel 2007a), and LDP lawmakers themselves regard themselves as more conservative than members from other parties (Kabashima and Steel 2006, n.p). The DPJ—founded in 1998—is very similar to the centrist elements of the LDP in its political ideology (Takenaka 2008, p. 26), and also includes some centrist former members of the SDP. The LDP lost power to the DPJ in 2009. The SDP and the JCP have come to represent relatively powerless, yet nonetheless dissenting voices in what has become a two-party system where both the LDP and the DPJ would appear to support somewhat similar ideologies. The JCP is really the only party that stands out as having firm beliefs. The LDP and the DPJ both contain members who hold a diverse range of political ideologies. As Curtis (1999, p. 226) notes,

> Party affiliation in Japan is determined more than ever before by pragmatic considerations of electoral success rather than by a belief that a particular party represents a community of shared values and policy goals that distinguish it from other parties.

The LDP’s loss to the DPJ in the Lower House election of September 2009 was comprehensive. The number of seats held by the LDP more than halved from 327 to 119. In contrast, the DPJ won 308 seats. The DPJ now had a majority in both houses. Some suggest that the DPJ won the election not because of a surge in popularity for its policies, but because of a swing against the LDP (McDonald 2009, p. 3; Stockwin 2009). Stockwin (2009) calls the 2009 election result a ‘political earthquake’, suggesting that, like an earthquake, Japanese voters’ disenchantment had developed gradually over the years, and in September 2009, materialised as a destructive swing against the ruling party. There were many reasons for the LDP’s loss, but an important factor is that the LDP’s legitimacy as a ruling political party had been built on its ability to keep the economy strong. As of the 1990s, however, LDP governments had failed to cope with
the repercussions of the economic recession. In the 1980s, after the peak of the ‘miraculous’ post-war economic growth, Japan’s urban land prices soared, particularly between 1986 and 1991. This, along with high stock prices and irresponsible bank credit loaning, resulted in what is known as the bubble economy. When this bubble burst, the disparities between the rich and the poor became more apparent. Unemployment more than doubled from two percent to almost six percent in the late 1990s, and lifetime employment became a thing of the past (Kingston 2004, pp. 30-31). This reflected poorly on the LDP because until then a long string of LDP governments had played a major role in maintaining minimum wealth inequalities in society. This approximately ten years in which this economic and social upheaval occurred came to be known as the ‘lost decade’.

Having never recovered fully from the ‘lost decade’ of the 1990s, the Japanese economy took a heavy blow when the global financial crisis arrived, and unemployment and poverty levels rose. Increasing visibility of inequalities in class forced people to question LDP policies that had sustained the economy for so long. The LDP government was too slow to adapt to rapid changing socioeconomic circumstances. Kingston (2004, p. 2) has commented on the transformation Japanese society underwent in the wake of the 1990s.

Perhaps one of the most profound changes has occurred in the way that citizens view their government, as a series of scandals and exposés of negligence, incompetence, and mismanagement have undermined the credibility of the ruling elite.

A major factor in the increased public discontent was the disappearance of 50 million pension records under the LDP government (Krauss and Pekkanen 2010, p. 9). Apart from this, a string of unpopular prime ministers following Koizumi Jun’ichirō (one of the longest serving of recent prime ministers) also contributed to ill-will towards the party amongst voters. The next prime ministers, Abe Shinzō (September 2006–07), Fukuda Yasuo (September 2007–08) and Aso Tarō (September 2008–09), were unable to sustain support from the electorate or the party.
The 2009 election also occurred against a backdrop of major demographic and social issues, including the aging of the population and the declining fertility rate. Japan has one of the fastest growing aged populations in the world. In 2007, 21.5 percent of the population was aged 65 or older. By 2050, it is predicted that 27 percent of the population will be 75 or over. Japan’s fertility rate hit a record low in 2005, falling to 1.26 births per woman. It has risen marginally since then, but remains one of the lowest in the world, behind only Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Singapore. The combination of a low fertility rate and a rapidly aging society has resulted in a situation whereby Japan’s population has started to shrink. In 2005 it dropped by about 20 thousand people, readjusted in 2006 and is now predicted to decline steadily. The population as of 2006 was almost 128 million; by 2055, it is predicted to have dropped to 89 million (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2008b, p. 5).

This situation, with its potentially devastating economic repercussions, has raised grave concerns for the authorities who have consequently introduced policies to encourage married couples to have more children. Specifically, LDP governments have targeted the difficulties couples face in combining work with family, and the expenses incurred in raising children. This has meant the emergence of a plethora of policies and campaigns, including increased childcare facilities (Gelb 2003, p. 116; Suzuki 2006, p. 9), campaigns to encourage men to take parental leave (Ishii-Kuntz 2003, p. 20) and increased childcare allowances (Suzuki 2006, p. 9). The Japanese economy, however, continues to stagnate, and Japanese women continue to delay having children, having fewer when they finally do. The average age for a woman to give birth in 2009 was 29.7, compared to 26.4 in 1980 (Statistics Bureau and Statistical Research and Training Institute 2010, p. 14).

The DPJ officially took over the government on September 17, 2009, in coalition with the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the People’s New Party (Kokumin Shintō). The 2009 Lower House election saw the percentage of women increase to a new record. As a total, there are 54 women in the Lower House out of a total of 480 members. Of the 307 DPJ members elected to the Lower House, 39 were women. The LDP’s proportion of women, by contrast, depleted to an abysmal number. Of the 116 LDP Lower House
members elected, only eight are women. Some of the LDP women who lost their Lower House seats, however, gained seats in the Upper House election held in 2010. The proportion of LDP women in the Upper House rose from eleven out of 81 to fifteen out of 83.\(^5\)

The reasons for the LDP’s recent loss in the Lower House election are varied and complicated. The ‘earthquake’ took a very long time to strike, and this chapter has introduced only some of the concerns that led to the party’s fall from power. However, the significance of the party’s failure to address the changing needs of Japanese society is central to the argument I present in this thesis. I am concerned primarily with the LDP’s approach to gender equality and, more specifically, gender equality in political representation. LDP governments led Japan to economic success, and while this benefited the Japanese people by raising living standards and keeping unemployment low, economy-centric politics were often pursued to the detriment of social issues, including gender equality. What effect, if any, has this had on the representation of women in politics? In order to explore this question, in this thesis, I examine the LDP’s approach to gender equality in post-war Japan and hypothesise that its ambivalent position on the importance of gender equality played a role in maintaining low numbers of women in politics.

To fully comprehend the contemporary situation of female political under-representation and the LDP’s role in the issue, it will be important to elucidate the historical development of gender discourses and practices in Japan. By tracing the way that social constructs of femininity and masculinity developed in Japan, I will show continuity and change in gender discourses and practices. To show how gender discourses and practices have changed, and how they have stayed the same, I analyse dominant notions of gender from the Meiji period onwards, paying particular attention to possibilities for men’s and women’s involvement in politics. I evaluate gender-related policy and legislation created in postwar Japan by largely LDP-led governments to illuminate the way that gender-related issues have been defined. The purpose of

\(^5\) See Appendix 2 for numbers and percentages of women in each political party.
tracing the development of gender discourses through policy and legislation is to argue that policy has significantly shaped those discourses, which have then had material effects on the lived realities of women and men, including the way they engage in political activity.

**Thesis structure**

The next two chapters outline how I will present my argument. The chapter immediately following this is a critical review of literature concerned with women in politics. Chapter Two, which follows the literature review, explains the theoretical tools I adopt to examine the relationship between the LDP and gender equality and female political representation.

In Chapter Three, I explore the construction of dominant discourses of masculinity and femininity in Japan, with particular focus on discourses surrounding politically active women, from Imperial Japan (1890–1945) until the creation of the LDP in 1955. I draw from critical discourse analysis to explore how ‘politics’ is discursively constructed and how female politicians are talked about and why we know what we know about them. Analysing the implications of discourses about male and female politicians in Japan and how they have developed since the late nineteenth century will help to determine how discourses of gender and politics affect the real lives of female politicians today.

In Chapter Four, I examine the evolution of the LDP as a powerful political structure from 1955 until it lost control of government in 1993. I argue that the LDP’s vested interests in business and the growing economy served to exclude women from politics in two major ways: through party and political structures that were élitist and discriminatory against women, and through policies that consolidated women’s place in the home. In this chapter I suggest that in addition to the structural and institutional barriers that the LDP posed for women, gender discourses that constructed women as housewives and mothers and thus inappropriate for politics were supported and consolidated by LDP governments during this era.
Chapter Five builds on Chapter Four by demonstrating that the shift in government policy in the early to mid-1990s towards the pursuit of gender equality was fuelled by the declining birth rate and economic recession rather than an epiphany on the part of LDP governments that gender equality was a positive thing. By analysing policies such as the Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society and family-friendly workplace initiatives, I suggest that while dominant gender discourses have shifted in recent years, neither practices nor LDP policy have caught up, partially because of the party’s ambivalence regarding any transformation of the gendered status quo that has served the party well so far. This ambivalence is evidenced in the LDP’s insistence on ‘equal opportunity’ over ‘equality of results’, as indicated in post-war policy formulation. I argue that this ambivalence is linked to the negligible increase of women in politics since 1946. I demonstrate the potential benefits of positive action by analysing the success of former Prime Minister Koizumi’s deployment of positive action in the 2005 Lower House election.

Chapter Six draws from interviews with LDP women to examine their motivations—motivations for entering politics, what drives them once they have succeeded in becoming politicians, and their motivations, if any, to address the gender imbalance in the Diet. I analyse LDP women’s stories of political motivations and show that motivation is often framed within discourses of femininity in order to mitigate the disruption that women cause when entering the masculinised space of the LDP. In this chapter, I also examine LDP women’s opinions on the under-representation of women in politics and their ideas about why women are important for politics. This helps to explore the potential of LDP women to be activists for bringing more women into politics. I also consider the ways in which LDP women reinforce dominant discourses of femininity in politics when articulating why women are necessary in politics. They thus somewhat paradoxically affirm the very gender binary that constructs men as the bearers of political authority and knowledge and women as not entirely suited to politics.

In Chapter Seven, I explore further the notion of the masculinised culture of the LDP. I argue that a result of the culture is the inability of women to create a discourse that enables them to complain about sexist treatment in the Diet. I highlight how LDP
women negotiate the masculinised space of the Diet by adopting strategies such as emulating masculine norms. More obviously, in negotiating potential sexism, in order to avoid being labelled as grumbling victims, they deploy the discourse of the individual. In doing so, LDP women perpetuate the same individualising discourse that the LDP uses to justify its ambivalence towards the issue of gender inequality in politics. The party culture also makes discussion about positive action for the purpose of increasing the number of women in politics difficult. I demonstrate this by examining LDP women’s opinions of Koizumi’s positive action strategy. Some LDP women wholeheartedly endorse positive action and gender quotas while the official party stance opposes quotas. The fact that electoral quotas are not on the party agenda for debate suggests that there is no space for women who endorse them to voice their opinions, underlining the difficulties LDP women face in the male-dominated culture.
CHAPTER 1: FEMINIST INVESTIGATIONS OF FEMALE POLITICAL UNDER-REPRESENTATION

The literature concerned with uncovering obstacles to women’s political representation is typically framed within feminist discourses. The *raison d’être* for this literature is the belief that shedding light on impediments that women face in entering politics may make those impediments easier to understand. This then may facilitate the formulation of strategies for achieving gender parity in politics. Feminist researchers concerned with the lack of women in politics have identified many obstructions preventing women from entering politics. These include cultural and social obstacles, such as widespread gender-stereotyping and gender-role socialisation in particular societies, and institutional barriers, such as political systems that are inhospitable to women and others who are outsiders to mainstream politics. Scholars focusing on Japan have identified similar obstacles to increased female representation in the Diet, including cultural, institutional and structural obstacles. Yet, as this critical review of the literature will demonstrate, neither the literature concerned with women in politics outside Japan, nor the literature concerned with women in politics in Japan gives sufficient attention to the role that political parties play as gatekeepers to women’s participation in politics.

What follows is a critical review of literature concerned with women’s political under-representation and a discussion of the significance of my approach to the issue. The first section of this chapter critically reviews literature about women in politics and barriers to their participation outside Japan, and the second section reviews literature about obstacles facing women in politics in Japan.

1.1 Literature from outside Japan on Female Politicians and Barriers to Participation

Literature outside Japan concerned with obstacles to women’s participation in politics can be described as taking two approaches: one approach looks at cultural and social obstacles; the other looks at institutional obstacles. Cultural and social obstacles include factors such as gender stereotyping, which might affect how people perceive women in
politics, and socially ingrained gender roles which might affect women’s ability or
desire to participate in politics. Institutional obstacles include the electoral system and
political parties, which can function in ways that limit access for women and other
socially excluded groups.

1.1.1 Cultural obstacles

Today, cultural ideas about women can affect women’s levels of representation
throughout the political process, from an individual woman’s decision to enter politics,
to party selection of candidates, to the decisions made by voters on election day (Paxton,
Kunovich et al. 2007, p. 271).

Ever since Duverger’s (1955) groundbreaking research into women and politics, a key
element of common-sense wisdom surrounding the under-representation of women in
politics has been that public perceptions towards women in politics are a significant
factor in determining the number of women in office. Another key argument is that the
prevalence of gender-role socialisation in some cultures has meant that the pool of
politically eligible women is shallow and that this is a major reason for the lack of
female political representatives. In other words, in cultures where men and women have
deply segregated gender roles, women are socialised to be less interested in politics
and less ambitious than men. The negative effects on female political representation of
gender-stereotypes and gender-role socialisation are common themes running through
the literature concerned with cultural hurdles facing women (Bledsoe and Herring 1990,
p. 214; Sanbonmatsu 2002, p. 142; Inglehart and Norris 2003, pp. 29-48). This literature
serves an important function as it reminds us of the potentially damaging and oppressive
power of cultural norms. I will argue that this literature could be improved with a
stronger emphasis on the role that political parties—which are typically dealt with in the
literature as institutional barriers—play in shaping those cultural barriers. In other
words, there are also cultural dimensions to the functioning of institutions.
Gender stereotypes

According to literature that questions the lack of women in politics, gender stereotyping constitutes one of the major roadblocks to increased female political representation. Scholars (Paxton 1997, p. 446; Norris and Inglehart 2000, p. 13; Dahlerup 2006a, p. 297; Paxton, Kunovich et al. 2007, p. 271) argue that in many societies there is a lingering belief that politics is a man’s job. Some (Bystydzienksi 1995, p. 6; Paxton 1997, p. 460; Inglehart and Norris 2003, p. 4) refer to the Scandinavian countries as examples where high numbers of women in politics reflect gender equity in other areas of society, including secondary schooling, extensive parental rights and ample childcare facilities. Bystydzienksi (1995, p. 6), for example, points to the strong normative understanding in Norway that the government’s role is to equalise inequalities and bring about social change. She argues that the problem of the scarcity of women in politics has been regarded as a significant problem that needs a solution. The result of this is that women’s demands for better political representation have been taken seriously by political parties. In this way, norms in Norway construct the issue of political under-representation of women as a serious problem that requires a solution. These norms run counter to the notion that politics is a man’s job and have been a significant factor in ensuring high representation of women in Norway’s legislative assemblies (Bystydzienksi 1995, pp. 28-30).

Not only do norms and stereotypes affect the way that that society regards politics as a job, they also potentially affect the way people vote. Sanbonmatsu (2002, p. 31) suggests that gender stereotypes certainly affect people’s votes, but not necessarily in a way that is discriminatory against women. Based on telephone surveys of 455 residents in Ohio, America, in 2000, her data suggests that people have a ‘baseline gender preference’ when voting and that this preference is largely based on voter gender and popular gender stereotypes about beliefs and political issue competency. Gender stereotypes therefore can have a direct impact on whether a person votes for a female or male candidate. Her survey respondents believed that women were more competent than men at handling social security and men were more competent than women at handling crime and foreign affairs. Positive stereotypes affected voters’ baseline preference for both male and female candidates. Yet, the author noted, if women did not capitalise on
voters’ stereotypical gendered expectations of candidates by championing, for example, social security, they would probably not benefit from those stereotypes (Sanbonmatsu 2002, p. 30). This is a significant point in understanding the power of gender stereotypes: it would appear that ‘positive gender stereotypes’ are only positive when candidates adhere to them when campaigning. The notion of positive gender stereotypes is only tenable within particular discourses of gender and politics that construct politicians as competent in certain areas depending on their sex. For women, this means appearing to voters as interested and competent in stereotypically feminine areas, such as social welfare and education.

Others stress the negative effects of gender stereotypes on the political representation of women (Paxton and Kunovich 2003, pp. 90-91, 103; Kunovich and Paxton 2005, pp. 518-19). Paxton and Kunovich (2003, p. 91), for example, claim that the ideology that women are politically inferior is widespread and prevalent in many countries: ‘Ideology is not diffuse or abstract. Ideologies and arguments against women’s right to participate in politics have created substantial barriers to women’s political participation for many years.’ Paxton (1997, p. 446) argues that in Western political thought, women’s non-rational nature has been an assumption for centuries, since political thinkers, such as Aristotle, Rousseau, Hobbes and Locke justified the exclusion of women from politics. She suggests that if the prevailing ideology of society is that women are not suitable for politics because of their perceived inferiority to men, it is difficult for women to increase their numbers in politics (Paxton 1997, pp. 460-61). Like Bystydzienski (1995, pp. 28-30), Paxton points to the Scandinavian countries to support this argument. Sweden and Norway, in comparison to many other advanced democratic countries, have more gender equity in areas such as parental leave, and also high levels of women in politics.

A key factor to emerge from literature that emphasises gender stereotypes is the significance of public acceptance of and desire for women in politics. The literature reviewed above stresses the negative impact on women in politics of gender stereotypes that contribute to the belief that politics is men’s business. By pointing to cultures where gender stereotypes are not rigid and where female political representation is high, such
as those in Scandinavian countries, scholars suggest that culture is a key determining factor in the representation of women.

Despite several scholars’ arguments, such as those above, that culture is a determining factor in female political representation, systematic evidence to support this claim is rare. Measuring the willingness of the public to vote for a woman is extremely difficult and not many scholars have attempted it. Political scientists Inglehart and Norris’ (2000; 2002; 2003) research into cultural attitudes towards gender equality in 70 countries is one of the few that attempts to do this. Their broad project of research into attitudes towards gender equality across the world included surveys on attitudes to women in politics.

The authors compared data from 70 countries that participated in the World Values Survey, the largest investigation in the world of attitudes, beliefs and values (Inglehart and Norris 2003, p. 10). Based in modernisation theory which argues that the level of gender equality in a country improves as that country modernises (Inglehart and Norris 2003, p. 9), they assert that there is a ‘rising tide’ of gender equality across the world, albeit an extremely slow one. Traditional values with regards to gender roles are slowly being replaced by egalitarian values in countries as they go through a process of modernisation and industrialisation. In particular, they argue, the rise of capitalism in many countries has brought values that have challenged rigid gender roles, such as individualism over community, and family and secularism over tradition and religion (Inglehart and Norris 2003, pp. 16-17). This has enabled women to diverge from traditional and oppressive life courses which have typically meant being dependent on the men in their lives. Inglehart and Norris suggest that this is because women in democratic and modern countries gain more education, enter the workforce at a higher rate and gain political influence. Such a broad-scale and systematic study is an extremely valuable contribution to cross-cultural studies of gender equality.

With regards to their contribution to the literature on female political under-representation, Inglehart and Norris draw from the World Value Survey and European
Value Survey to determine which kinds of values are common in countries which have high female political representation. Arguing that the lack of women in political leadership is a problem for the process of democratisation, they suggest that the level of democratisation and socio-economic development of a country is related to egalitarian attitudes in the public regarding women’s ability to govern (Norris and Inglehart 2000, pp. 6-7). They compare responses found in the 1995-1999 World Values Survey with the number of women in a nation’s parliament, and find that political culture is a significant determinant of the number of elected women in a country’s parliament. Inglehart et al. (2002, p. 330) note that of the ‘stable democracies’ in the sample, which represents 80 percent of the world’s population, a clear majority of the population rejects the belief that men make better political leaders than women.

Post-industrial societies thus demonstrate a clear cultural shift towards acceptance of gender equality, demonstrated in the decrease in the number of people who believe that men make better politicians than women. By contrast, societies in post-Communist countries have not experienced the same shift in cultural attitude. The younger generation’s views on gender roles are not significantly different compared to the older generation’s views. Norris and Inglehart (2000, p. 13) note post-Communist societies retain un-egalitarian views regarding gender roles and politics.6

While Inglehart et al. (2002, p. 329) note that a clear majority of the population in stable democracies rejects the belief that men make better political leaders than women, their research also reveals that Japan is the only country where this is not the case. Between 1981 and 1998, approximately 40 percent of respondents disagreed with the statement ‘men make better politicians than women’. Closer scrutiny of later survey results reveals that for the 1995 and 2000 surveys in Japan, 36 percent disagreed, approximately the same percentage agreed and almost 29 percent of respondents

6 Post-Communist countries, such as Bulgaria, Albania and the Ukraine, present an interesting example of the effect of effect of culture as well as the effect of quotas on female political representation. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, when Communist states abandoned quotas for women in politics as part of their democratisation process, the proportion of women in politics plummeted in those countries from an average of 30 percent to below ten percent (Montgomery 2003, p. 1).
answered ‘don’t know’. The figures for those who disagreed with the statement in Australia and Sweden were approximately 75 and 80 percent respectively (Inglehart, Norris et al. 2002, p. 330). Japan also has one of the lowest levels of female political representation amongst industrialised countries. Of 186 countries, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU website, accessed 20/1/11) ranks Japan 94th for its percentage of women in the national assembly.\(^7\) Only fourteen percent of Japan’s Diet is made up of women, compared to 28 percent in Australia and 20 percent in the United Kingdom. The average percentage of women in national assemblies in Asia is nineteen percent. Yet Japan is one of the most modern and industrialised democratic nations in the world, thus somewhat deflating Norris and Inglehart’s argument that socio-economic development and modernity in a country correlates with a comparatively high number of women in representative politics. This highlights the importance of country contextualisation of research into female political under-representation. While large-scale cross-cultural studies such as Inglehart’s and Norris’ are important for painting a big picture of gender-equality progress in the world, country-level studies are more likely to provide details about certain contexts as well as enabling an examination of particular stakeholders in politics, such as political parties.

**Gender-role socialisation**

It is often argued that a primary reason for the under-representation of women in politics is women’s socialisation into roles that do not include political careers. While the scholars above have examined the effect of gender stereotypes on the number of women in politics, other studies have argued that people *are* in fact willing to vote for a woman and that women fare just as well as men in elections (Darcy, Welch et al. 1994, p. 175; Matland and Studlar 1996, p. 712). In the US, it has been argued that female political candidates are just as likely to win an election as male candidates and that the main reason for the under-representation of women in politics is that women do not run as often as men. Elder (2004, pp. 27-56), for example, conducted a study in a New York county to demonstrate this. Based on the results of surveys of junior high school students, high school students, college students and the general population in one New York county, she suggests that gender-role socialisation drives the lack of ambition

\(^7\) The IPU ranks countries according to the percentage of women in a country’s lower or single house.
amongst women to become politicians. The gendered gap in political ambition, she suggests, begins at around the age of sixteen, indicating that young women are socialised from a young age to believe that politics is not for them.

In the UK, Paxton et al. (2007, pp. 266-67) argue that

> [t]he supply of women available for political office is therefore determined partly by gender socialization, which influences women’s interest, knowledge and ambition regarding politics, and partly by large-scale social structures, which enhance or limit women’s opportunities for education and employment.

In other words, gender socialisation affects the number of women that can be plucked by political parties from what is known as the ‘eligibility pool’. Darcy and Welch (1994, p. 108) argue that the eligibility pool argument is significant in the US. They note that this is a structural problem, and ‘changing the occupational distribution of women would influence their recruitment to public office’. To be sure, this would probably influence positively the number of women in office, but this proposal emphasises changing women to fit into existing structures without questioning the structures themselves. Given the strength of gender-role socialisation of women to the roles of mothers and wives, and men as breadwinners, it is difficult to imagine how women could abandon these roles for careers in law or business. As Phillips (2004, p. 7) notes,

> [t]here is nothing particularly mysterious about the under-representation of women in politics, for in societies still shaped by a male breadwinner model and still requiring women to shoulder the bulk of care responsibilities, it is entirely predictable that more men will be available for a full-time political career.

Placing the onus on women to enter typically male-dominated workplaces fails to consider many important questions, the least of which is, who will do the parenting and housework when they do? Not only do such suggestions fail to interrogate the political structures that women are supposed to enter to gain equality, they fail to consider social structures that are based on the unequal division of labour between men and women.
Indeed, socially ingrained gender-roles have led to the material reality that women do not have time to engage in time-heavy careers, such as politics. Gender-role socialisation occurs to an extent that women shoulder the burden of household and childcare responsibilities in the majority of households in societies as different as those of Canada, South Korea, India and Vietnam (Bulbeck 2009, p. 117). Many scholars argue that balancing family life with a political career is a bigger problem for women than it is for men because of the way that men and women are socialised into masculine and feminine social roles, which carry with them different responsibilities. For example, in analysing and comparing comments of women politicians from a variety of countries, Shvedova (1998, pp. 31-32) points to the reality of women’s ‘dual burden’ of shouldering the majority of household responsibility and being in paid employment—something women in most countries experience. Darcy et al. (1994, p. 179) demonstrate that women tend to enter office after their children have grown up and they are more likely to be elected to local elections because a position in a local council entails less time away from home than positions in state or national governments. They point to this as indirect evidence that women’s socialisation into the primary care-giver role in the family hinders women’s progress into politics.

The literature discussed so far deploys notions of gender stereotypes and gender-role socialisation to show how women are prevented from making inroads into politics. This literature focuses a little bit too heavily, I would argue, on the inability of women to counter gender-role socialisation and break free from the straitjacket of gender stereotypes that construct them as politically unambitious or unqualified. An analysis of where gender stereotypes come from and how they are upheld in particular contexts would complement this research. Specifically, my later examination of how political systems affect cultural ideas about women and gender socialisation will provide an insight into how and by whom cultural ideas about gender are created, supported and challenged. This will highlight the interrelationship of cultural and institutional barriers.

The literature discussed above, which claims that cultural and social obstacles are instrumental in women’s political under-representation, would benefit from an examination into the roles political parties play in upholding or reinforcing cultural
barriers. More specifically, the question of how political parties help perpetuate dominant gender discourses has been largely neglected. What follows below is a review of literature concerned with how political parties play a role in hindering women’s progress into politics, by, for example, failing to recruit women for elections. While this literature identifies obvious hurdles put in place by political parties, it falls short of interrogating the more subtle ways that political parties may operate to obstruct women’s participation.

1.1.2 Institutional barriers

Political parties have been called the ‘gatekeepers’ of women in politics (Norris 1993, pp. 320-30; Norris and Lovenduski 1995; Caul 1999, p. 11; Kunovich and Paxton 2005, p. 505; Dahlerup 2006b, p. 10; Paxton, Kunovich et al. 2007, p. 270). They control how candidates are recruited, how much support each individual candidate receives and the location of the candidate’s name on the party list in certain types of electoral systems. Specifically, ‘[t]he stage at which the party gatekeepers actually choose the candidates is perhaps the most crucial stage for getting women into office’ (Shvedova 1998, p. 66). Political parties represent the first ‘filter’ through which women pass on their way to becoming a representative (the second filter is being elected by the electorate) (Kunovich and Paxton 2005, p. 507).

Political parties play an important role because, apart from when they run as independents, women are only elected when political parties make the choice to select and run women. As Matland (2006, p. 280) notes, ‘a primary concern throughout the process of selecting candidates is a party’s beliefs as to what sort of candidates are likely to help them win votes’. This would suggest that, when examining the absence of women in representative politics, it is important to analyse political parties’ recruitment channels and party beliefs about the potential value of female candidates.

A lot of the literature, however, largely neglects the stance of parties on gender equity in politics and emphasises the electoral system. Some argue that a political party’s decision to run a particular candidate relies heavily on the type of electoral system in
that country (Matland 2006, p. 276; Norris 2006, p. 206). In a single-member district, political parties have to choose one candidate to win and this requires nominating a candidate they believe will have the broadest appeal and be most likely to win (Matland, 1998, p. 76). Typically, a candidate reflecting the characteristics and qualifications of the previous successful representative, who in most places is usually a man, will be selected to run by the party (Norris 2006, p. 206).

Scholars have demonstrated that proportional representation (hereafter PR) electoral systems are more likely than any other system to have a larger number of successful women (Matland and Studlar 1996, p. 707; Matland 1998, p. 75; Freidenvall, Dahlerup et al. 2006, p. 59; Norris 2006, p. 201). Countries with PR electoral systems are also more likely to have some form of gender quotas in place. Dahlerup (2008, p. 326) notes that gender quotas have been introduced in 72 percent of countries with PR electoral systems as opposed to 29 percent of countries with single-member constituencies. Aside from being more likely to have gender quotas in place, Matland (1998, p. 76) notes that PR systems are beneficial for women because of a tendency in this system for parties to place more women on the list to broaden their appeal and balance the ticket. PR systems are often found to have higher district magnitudes (more seats per district) and this means that political parties will have a chance of winning more seats in this district. A higher district magnitude should ensure that political parties select multiple MPs and as a result have a more balanced outcome. By contrast, in other electoral systems, such as those whereby a candidate must run as a sole candidate, a woman is often regarded by political parties as an ‘electoral risk’, showing the persistence of ingrained cultural attitudes. This risk decreases in PR systems because she is part of a group of candidates (Paxton 1997, p. 460; Caul 1999, p. 84).

Studies have demonstrated, however, that voters are willing to vote for women (Darcy, Welch et al. 1994, p. 175). This raises the question of why political parties should regard a female candidate as an electoral risk and why some political parties might be less willing to recruit or field women. Party ideology is a factor to consider when examining the under-representation of women in politics. This includes whether the party culture is welcoming to women and whether the party regards the under-
representation of women in politics as a serious concern or not. Caul (1999, p. 94) found that political parties that value social equality and minority representation are more likely than other political parties to regard the under-representation of women as a problem. Leftist political parties are also more likely to have connections with women’s movements, and this connection has been identified as one of the factors that leads to increased numbers of women in politics (Caul 1999, p. 82).

**The role of conservative parties in women’s political under-representation**

There is very little research on how conservative political parties actually operate in ways that hinder or promote increased female representation, other than studies which point out that conservative parties are likely to adopt positive, or affirmative action measures only after a political party on the left side of the political spectrum has done so (Matland 2006, p. 282).

Feminist political science examining the under-representation of women does not often focus on individual political parties. Conservative political parties have been identified by scholars as less likely to recruit women and more likely to have smaller numbers of female elected representatives, but there has been little interrogation as to why this is so. While there is very little research into the relationship between conservative political parties and women, there is a growing interest in women involved in right-wing politics. The little existing research on right-wing women uses feminist lenses to critique right-wing women (Probyn 1999, pp. 161-71; Winter 2002, pp. 197-210) and also explores women’s experiences inside patriarchal and male-dominated institutions (Campbell 1987; Karam 2002; Fitzherbert 2009). Much of this literature plays an important part in illuminating how some women appropriate feminist gains to support anti-feminist ideology. For example, right-wing women often oppose divorce despite being divorced themselves (Karam 2002, p. 205), or argue the centrality of motherhood for women despite being childless (Karam 2002, p. 230). This sort of research is important because it contributes to evolving definitions of feminism by complicating assumptions of who can and cannot be a feminist.
Campbell’s (1987) study of female supporters of and participants within the British Conservative Party, written during Margaret Thatcher’s reign, is a comprehensive consideration of the development of the Tory Party in relation to the role women play in the party and a thorough insight into what type of women endorse the party. She examines how women find places for themselves inside the male-dominated and conservative party, and how they create meaning for themselves in the feminised roles they play. Female members of the Conservative Party gain legitimacy through their social roles as mothers and wives, for the family unit is regarded as central to a functioning and healthy society (Campbell, 1987, p. 155). Campbell (1987, p. 2) suggests that conservatism appears to help women ‘make sense of themselves and the world around them’ and become part of a world they do not control. Margaret Thatcher was an exception to the rule—she was a lone woman surrounded by men—and the Conservative Party today is still heavily populated with men.

In Campbell’s study, it is brought to light through interviews with Tory women that the Conservative party apparently allows women to be feminine and gives them purpose because it needs their support, whereas women in other parties are compelled to behave in a masculine way. At least this is what the Tory women interviewed believed (Campbell 1987, pp. 275-76). Campbell argues that the feminine identity that the Conservative party allows women to maintain is in fact imposed upon them and the support roles they are allocated are exactly that—support of the men, and there is little opportunity of gaining the social power that the men at the top of the party wield. However, she points to a possible generational shift in noting that younger women in the party are not so interested in joining overtly feminine organisations such as women’s committees as they see them as ‘prescribed subordination’ (Campbell, 1987, p. 275). A more recent article in Spectator by Conservative party member Baroness Buscombe (2001) suggests that not a lot has changed in the party, and that this has led to a dearth of young women interested in becoming members. It would appear that women interested in volunteering for the party are still relegated to stereotypically feminine tasks, such as making boiled sweets for raffles, and this steers them away from potential ambition to run for election (Buscombe 2001, p. 10).
By contrast, Fitzherbert’s (2009) research into women in Australia’s Liberal Party does not include analysis of what conservatism means for women in the party. Fitzherbert argues that women in the Liberal Party have been ‘pioneers’ for women in politics and that the Liberal Party is a party in which women flourish and are able to work for other Australian women in the areas of childcare and education. The Liberal Party boasts many firsts for women in politics. For example, Enid Lyons was the first woman elected to the House of Representatives (Fitzherbert 2009, p. 3), Margaret Guilfoyle was the first female cabinet minister with portfolio (Fitzherbert 2009, p. 5) and Helen Coonan was the first female Assistant Treasurer (Fitzherbert 2009, p. 224). Fitzherbert’s argument is constructed within a liberal feminist framework that assumes that ‘equality for women’ involves women ‘catching up’ to men. Fitzherbert congratulates Liberal Party women for making it in a man’s world. She recognises that the Liberal Party is ‘frequently uncomfortable with discussions about the need for more women in parliament’ (Fitzherbert 2009, p. 226) yet does not question this discomfort until the second last page of the book and does not engage with this point.

Making visible the achievements of individual women, and in this case, individual women from the Liberal Party, is significant because women’s achievements are too often overlooked, so in this respect Fitzherbert’s research contributes positively to the body of feminist research that takes women and their work seriously. This work could be complemented with further work, for example, on the difficulties that the Liberal Party poses for women trying to get into politics, or for women already there. In other words, a more balanced approach is needed to better understand the relationship between the Liberal Party and women. Interrogation of the party’s recruitment channels and the party culture might provide a clearer picture of the obstacles facing women.

Research which considers how women exercise agency inside conservative institutions has the potential to provide an insight into the machinations of those institutions as much as into the possibilities of empowerment for women. Yet much of this literature stops short of doing so and focuses instead on women’s putative empowerment. This work, and Campbell’s, makes little headway in trying to understand the role conservative parties play in inhibiting or facilitating women’s political careers.
1.1.3 Gaps in literature on women in politics outside Japan

The study of the role of political parties in obstructing women’s political representation should not necessarily be separate from the study of cultural obstacles which, as outlined in the previous section of this chapter, concerns gender stereotypes and gender-role socialisation. Investigation of the way that political parties shape gender discourses through policy and legislation is largely absent in studies of how cultural factors limit women’s increased political representation. In other words, largely absent from the literature reviewed above is the role political parties play in supporting discourses of gender that result in the maintenance of an unbalanced and unequal gendered status-quo in politics. While it is important to elucidate the visible and overt ways in which political parties act as gatekeepers (such as their manipulation of electoral systems or their failure to recruit women candidates), a political party’s role as gatekeeper can be better understood if its support for dominant gender discourses is also examined, and also if its stance on gender equality is studied.

Moreover, much of the literature on women in politics is Eurocentric. There is very little work available in English about women in politics in Asia. There is some literature available on women in politics in developing nations but I have chosen not to include much of this in this literature review. Developing countries which have produced women leaders, such as India, Bangladesh and Burma, represent interesting case studies for research into women in politics. Yet, women leaders in these countries are often ‘deviants’ because of their political pedigree, dynastic connections, and elite education—their positions are not representative of the generally poor representation of women in politics (Fleschenberg 2008, pp. 30; 49). A major gap in the literature discussed in the previous section is that it lacks substantial information on women in politics outside the West. Nevertheless, there is a growing body of literature that looks at women in politics in Japan.

1.2 Literature on Female Politicians and Barriers to Participation in Japan

Literature about obstacles facing women in politics in Japan typically note similar features to the international literature reviewed above, namely that the obstacles women face are cultural, social and institutional. Cultural obstacles include women’s lower
levels of education, family pressures to refrain from running for office, and gender stereotyping. Institutional barriers include, as in the international literature, the electoral system and political parties. There are some crucial differences between the international and Japanese literature: in the Japanese literature, the ‘gendered division of labour’ is frequently deployed as an overarching framework to discuss cultural barriers, and the electoral system is identified as both a cultural and institutional obstacle because of the high costs involved in election campaigns. There is even less research in Japan (than internationally) that considers the role that political parties play in hindering women’s representation.

Since Susan Pharr’s 1981 landmark study, Political Women in Japan, the political activity of Japanese women has become a popular area of research, particularly since the so-called ‘Madonna Boom’ in the late 1980s. Specifically, the way that some Japanese women pursue women-centric politics has been of interest to scholars from inside Japan (Shindō 2004; Ōgai 2005) and outside Japan (Pharr 1981; LeBlanc 1999). More than the obstacles facing politically ambitious women, such research explores how Japanese women work within the constraints that patriarchal society places on them to carve out political spaces for themselves.

Accordingly, I will divide the Japanese literature about obstacles facing female politicians into two approaches. The first one I discuss is concerned with how women create new models of political activism in a male-dominated society. The second approach I review considers the relationship between the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and women.

1.2.1 Women-centric politics in Japan

Pharr’s (1981) study of the type of women who become politically active is an excellent insight into what drives certain women into politics and activism in Japan, even though it is quite dated (conducted in the 1970s). She limited her subjects to women up to the age of 33 because her study focused on women’s routes to activism rather than their experiences in political organisations. Furthermore, she made the distinction between
women educated before and after the post-war reforms, arguing that those under the age of 33—all educated after the reforms—grew up ‘taking women’s political rights for granted’ (Pharr 1981, p. 9). In addition to this, interviewing women between the ages of 18 and 33 took into account pertinent life stages of women in Japan. This was the time that personal political stances would be solidified and inter-related decisions made about family, marriage and career. Pharr pointed out that most women in Japan had finished their heaviest childrearing responsibilities by their late thirties. This is no longer the case, with women in Japan now having children much later (the average age at first birth in 2009 was 29.7) (Statistics Bureau and Statistical Research and Training Institute 2010, p. 14). Women tend to enter politics after they have raised a family, and childrearing is now happening much later. Kubo and Gelb (1994, p. 134) noted in their 1994 study of Japanese women’s political participation, that the average age of a female (local) political office holder was 50.4, suggesting that many women do not pursue political office while their children are young. To omit women over the age of 33 in any kind of study of politics today would be unthinkable, particularly in a study of élite-level politics, where most women are well over the age of 40.

It might be useful at this juncture to define more clearly the term ‘politics’, as used in this thesis. Unlike Pharr, who was interested in women involved in voluntary politics and activism, my research is concerned with women who enter mainstream parliamentary politics. This definition depends on a demarcation between political activism and mainstream representative politics. While men have dominated mainstream politics in Japan, women have dominated volunteerism and grass-roots activism (Ueno, Inoue et al. 1994, p. 18; LeBlanc 1999; Shindō 2004). This gender divide has been explored by scholars interested in gender-specific political activity in Japan. LeBlanc’s (1999) research into housewife activists sheds light on the work of the housewife-driven Seikatsusha Club, and its political arm, the Seikatsusha Network. As ‘bicycle citizens’, the Japanese women in LeBlanc’s landmark research eschew the taxis and limousines that MPs are seen riding and shun the world of mainstream politics which they regard as élite, dirty and corrupt. Specifically, LeBlanc demonstrates how the women in her research actively avoid identifying with politics because they are more interested in the human relations they cultivate in their activism than the power and vested interests of mainstream politics. Many women, LeBlanc argues, are
uninterested in pursuing a career in politics because they believe they would have to
give up their ‘housewife’ ethic of care and obligation.

The words of the women who described their apathy toward or disinterest in politics
were laden with dissatisfaction about the choices available in political society … the
implication in these women’s discussions of politics is that the political system itself
requires distance, murkiness, and organizational wrangling. Eventually no participant is
exempt (LeBlanc 1999, p. 87, italics in original).

LeBlanc (1999, p. 197) notes that when her research subjects leave the grassroots
organisation to run in elections, it is difficult for them to maintain the housewife ethos
of care: ‘[A]s they acquire higher political positions, housewife politicians look less like
housewives and more like male politicians’.

Similarly, Ōgai (2005, pp. 120-24), who also follows the activities of women involved
in Seikatsusha Club and Seikatsusha Network, explores the history and contemporary
activities of the groups. She demonstrates how the women in these organisations
politicised issues that typical male-driven politics would probably not have, such as
assuring the quality of detergent and soap. These activities follow a tradition in post-war
Japan of women organising around issues to do with the home and local community.
Shufuren (the Housewives Association) founded during the Occupation period and still
operating today, is emblematic of this tradition (Mackie, 1988, p. 60).

For LeBlanc, Ōgai, and others, Japanese women have created a specific ‘type’ of
politics that differs from the mainstream realm of politics which is heavily populated by
(2006, p. 189) argues that women in Japan ‘make use of their socially condoned gender
roles to advance or achieve their political roles’. She refers to this as a ‘gender-specific
pattern of political activity’ (Takeda 2006, p. 185) and explores this activity by
examining the way women have engaged in campaigns for birth control, family
planning, and they ways they have constructed issues such as water protection, and the
abolition of nuclear power as women’s issues. She asserts that women in Japan involved
in these political movements are able to draw strength from the fact that they are women.
Mackie (2000, p. 248) raises the question of whether women who participate in local activism can be thought of as conservatives who maintain the status quo by ‘reinforcing gendered spheres of activity’ or as radicals because they are challenging the male-centric model of traditional politics by creating a new brand of politics. Takeda (2006, p. 185) also suggests that the ‘gender-specific pattern’ of women’s political activity is a double-edged sword. While this pattern empowers women politically, it also reinforces the notion that women’s political strengths lie in stereotypically feminine areas, such as the local community, and consequently ‘ghettoize[s] their political participation’ (Takeda 2006, p. 195).

Researchers interested in the women-centric politics that Japanese women engage in point out how the politics of these women serve as a critique of male-dominated politics (LeBlanc 1999, pp. 142-150; Shindō 2004, pp. 19-32; Ōgai 2005, pp. 191-192). Shindō (2004, pp. 19-20), for example, argues that Japan’s ‘conservative political culture’ was created by men and as a result is infused with androcentric political values. These values include self-interest and power over others. Shindō suggests that because of women’s social roles as mothers and wives concerned with grass-roots issues, women have the potential to change Japanese politics because their approach will change the masculine political culture. The power battles that characterise Japanese politics will be replaced by a culture of ‘co-existence’ and peace (Shindō 2004, p. 27). Shindō’s argument reinforces the idea of essentialist gender differences. Her argument that women will bring pacifism to politics is based on deterministic assumptions about the qualities of men and women.

The rich body of literature, reviewed above, that draws on feminism and illuminates the way that women carve out space for themselves in male-dominated politics is important as it outlines women’s agency in the androcentric political system. It paints politically active women as challengers to a male-dominated political system. The function of this literature in critiquing male-dominated politics for its gender imbalance is significant because it is argued that women can be agents of change and it also broadly suggests that the male-dominated political system in Japan is unfriendly to women. As Mackie (2000, p. 248) observes, women have created ‘new models of political activism’
precisely because they are marginalised in mainstream politics which remains a bastion of masculine style of citizenship. The focus on women-centric political activity in Japan contributes positively to the field of political science that can sometimes perpetuate women’s political outsider status by regarding them as outsiders to politics entirely.

Nevertheless this literature fails to adequately shine a spotlight on political parties, or specifically, the LDP. This neglect sidelines the important job of interrogating the gatekeepers to increased female participation in mainstream politics. This research could be supplemented by research into the specific nature of the male-dominated political system that the abovementioned Japanese women reject. That is, the specifics of how and why mainstream politics is male-dominated, apart from numbers, still need to be addressed.

Questioning whether or not political parties act as gatekeepers through their recruitment channels and their support for dominant gender discourses will supplement the literature discussed above and provide an insight into a neglected area. Exploring the LDP’s recruitment channels, party culture and approach to gender equality is important to examine the role of the LDP as gatekeeper. This is a gap in the research which this thesis aims to fill by building on the existing literature which critiques the LDP’s poor record with women and its ambivalent approach to gender equality, as reviewed below.

1.2.2 The LDP and women
As a large and powerful political party, the LDP has been of great interest to political scientists both inside and outside Japan. It has been of interest because of Japan’s position in the global economy and the LDP’s role in situating Japan in that position in the post-war era (Curtis 1999, pp. 28-30). It has been of interest also because of its unusual longevity as a governing party. Research on the LDP has tended to focus on its factions (Satō and Matsuzaki 1986, p. 54; Wolferen 1990, p. 139; Inoguchi 2005, p. 65), its leaders (Curtis 1999), and its corruption and scandals (Curtis 1999; George Mulgan 2006). The reason I am interested in the LDP and its relationship to women’s political representation is that, apart from the LDP having been in power for so long, the LDP
has also consistently had a smaller percentage of women in the Diet compared to other political parties. As of December 2010, 11.4 percent of all LDP Diet members are women. The comparable figure for the DPJ is 14.5 percent; the SDP 27 percent; the JCP 20 percent and the Kōmeitō 15 percent (House of Councillors website, accessed 3/10/10; House of Representatives website, accessed 3/10/10).8

The vast majority of research on the LDP is gender-blind. Among the plethora of literature on LDP factions, for example, I have found almost no mention of women. Some of the leading scholars on the Japanese political system, and in particular the LDP, have written on the history and function of factions, but have failed to take into account the absence of women (Satō and Matsuzaki 1986; Cox and Rosenbluth 1995; Kishimoto 1997; Cox and Thies 1998; Cox, Rosenbluth et al. 1999; Christenson 2000; Cox, Rosenbluth et al. 2000; Krauss and Pekkanen 2004). Cox et al (1999, p. 35) comment on the importance of factional affiliation for electoral success. They note that in elections held between 1958 and 1990, only twelve percent of conservative non-incumbents running without known factional backing succeeded, compared with 65 percent of their faction-backed competitors. Apart from this clear incentive for party members to join a faction for successful election, faction members are also more likely to be given coveted ministerial posts (Hayes 2005, p. 76; Krauss and Pekkanen 2008, p. 13). Such research confirms that factional affiliation is very important in a political career. Scholars rarely note, however, that a faction has never been headed by a woman, and that women are less likely than men to join a faction in the LDP (to be discussed in Chapter Seven).

While Cox et al. (1999), and most other political scientists working on Japan remain gender-blind in their analysis of factions, and the LDP more generally, Kubo and Gelb (1994, p. 128) argue that women have traditionally been excluded from the networks that lead to factional support. This, they argue, can lead to a failure to get elected because connections to factions are crucial for gaining high-ranking positions on the party lists for proportional representation system elections, particularly within the LDP.

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8 See Appendix 2 for the numbers and percentages of women in each political party.
In this way, Kubo and Gelb’s work offers a critique of the faction system for its exclusion of women. Factions, they argue, constitute one element of the exclusionary and élitist electoral system which is difficult for women to participate in. Other elements include the importance of money, networking and publicity.

**The electoral structure and voting system**

The electoral system has benefitted the LDP and facilitated the party’s successive election wins for a number of reasons. First of all, the way the seats were apportioned across the country, at least until 1993, has benefited the LDP as the largest political party with the strongest rural support base (Kabashima and Steel 2006, n.p; Krauss and Pekkanen 2008, p. 15). Secondly, after establishing itself as the largest and wealthiest political party in Japan, the LDP took advantage of an electoral structure which is driven by money (Christensen 1996, p. 7; Kishimoto 1997, p. 112; Krauss and Pekkanen 2008, p. 15) and favours incumbents due to its single-non-transferable multimember voting system (Iwanaga 2008, p. 119; Taniguchi 2008, p. 71).\(^9\) In addition to the voting system which has facilitated successive victories for the LDP, the system for funding and campaigning for elections has also served the LDP well. This will be discussed further in Chapters Four and Five.

**Party recruitment, funding and campaigning**

The political system that has developed in post-war Japan is one in which typically only those with good networks and strong fundraising capabilities are electorally successful. Kubo and Gelb and many other scholars concerned with the under-representation of women in politics in Japan argue that a crucial obstacle facing women attempting to run for political office is the way the electoral system is structured (Kubo and Gelb 1994, p. 133; Ōgai 2001, pp. 207-08; Yamaguchi 2002, p. 12; Tsujimura 2007, pp. 28-29), and in doing so critique the very system that has supported long-term LDP electoral success.

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\(^9\) Under the single-non-transferable multimember system, voters cast one vote for a candidate, but multiple candidates (usually between three and four, depending on the population of the district) win seats (Krauss and Pekkanen, 2010, pp. 6-7). Under this system, political parties have minimal impact on candidate nomination, so incumbents are unlikely to give up their seat (Iwanaga, 2008, p. 119).
Some scholars therefore make an explicit link between the electoral system, the lack of women in politics and the LDP (Kubo and Gelb 1994, p. 121; LeBlanc 1999, pp. 190-91; Ōgai 2001, p. 208). They argue that the very conditions that are crucial to running in and winning elections are extremely difficult for women in Japan to attain. With regards to finance in particular, in the LDP the burden of raising funds falls on the individual candidate. A candidate who does not have strong connections with faction leaders will find it extremely difficult to raise funds to maintain a support group. More than any other political party in Japan, the LDP is decentralised, which means that communication and networking is difficult for newcomers (LeBlanc 1999, pp. 190-91). When running for a seat as an LDP candidate, it is difficult to establish a strong support base because of the lack of central organisation of the party. Compared to other parties, the LDP expects those seeking endorsement to already have their own support organisations and to prove to the party that they are likely to be elected. Scholars have thus identified the LDP as unfriendly to women because of its seeming unwillingness to adapt institutional structures, such as the party’s organisation, in a manner that would assist women (and arguably, anyone else who is an outsider to the LDP) to be elected more easily (Kubo and Gelb 1994; Martin 2008).

In general, political parties have escaped interrogation in much of the literature concerned with the under-representation of women in politics in Japan. However, the length of time that the LDP has dominated politics is sometimes mentioned, albeit briefly, as having been unconducive to increasing the number of women in politics. Iwanaga (2008, pp. 116-17) argues, for example, that the increase of women in the Diet after 1993 highlights the connection between LDP rule and female political under-representation. 1993 was the last year of LDP one-party rule and it was also the year that the electoral system changed. Having been below three percent since 1949, the proportion of women in the Lower House jumped to 4.6 percent in 1996. Iwanaga argues that this is the result of the proliferation of smaller political parties that represented competition to LDP-dominance. Drawing from international studies that demonstrate that robust inter-party competition facilitates women’s increased entrance into politics (Norris 1993, p. 319), Iwanaga argues that the long reign of the LDP disadvantaged women.
The studies outlined above are embedded within broader studies of ‘Japanese women in politics’ and for the most part fail to interrogate adequately the gendered structures of the LDP and more specifically, how this affects women in politics. As a political party, the LDP has been concerned with maintaining power, and therefore worthy of more scrutiny than it has thus far received from a gendered perspective.

**The LDP’s maintenance of male dominance through interest politics**

Interest politics have driven the LDP’s success, but at the same time have consistently excluded women from politics (Ōgai, 2001, p. 209).

The interest politics Ōgai refers to is the LDP’s collusive relationship with business. By pointing to the LDP’s reliance on interest politics, Ōgai suggests a connection between the LDP’s support for dominant gender discourses—discourses that construct women as mothers and wives, and men as breadwinners—and the exclusion of women from politics. The LDP’s reliance on business support has meant that it has supported employment and welfare policies based on the male-breadwinner model of society. The male-breadwinner model of society benefits business because it provides employers with male workers who can devote most of their energies to their work while their housewife partners take care of home life (Osawa, 2000, pp. 63-66). The male breadwinner model thus also excludes women from decision-making roles in the public sphere by encouraging women to stay at home and care for the family. Unfortunately, Ōgai fails to specify how the LDP has done this.

Many other scholars are similarly critical of the LDP’s approach to gender equality and social welfare policies concerning women and families. This criticism is often informed by an understanding of widespread inequalities in the gendered division of labour. LDP-led governments are criticised for perpetuating the gendered division of labour (Mikanagi 2000, pp. 124-25; Ōsawa 2002, pp. 80-91; Huen 2007, p. 374). Mikanagi, (2000, p. 125) for example, asserts that the LDP’s post-war social policies reinforced the gendered division of labour and that this served two main functions: consolidating women’s role as carers to children and the elderly, and ensuring business support of the
LDP by maintaining the current form of capitalism which included the gender-biased labour market structure. Similarly, Ōsawa (2002, p. 86) argues that during the 1970s, social welfare policies devised by LDP governments were based on the male-breadwinner household model whereby men were regarded as fulfilling the full-time worker role and women the role of caregiver to families and part-time participants in the labour force.

The party’s interest politics supported business and the economy but neglected gender equality. By analysing social welfare policy throughout the post-war decades, and arguing that successive LDP governments utilised women’s labour force potential according to the economic climate, Lambert (2007, p. 25) asserts that LDP governments have shown scant regard for the concept of gender equality. Huen (2007, p. 374) and Weathers (2006, p. 34) are similarly critical. Political economist Weathers cites the prevalence of indirect and invisible discrimination against women in employment practices in Japan and suggests that the LDP’s pro-business stance has hindered the implementation of more progressive equal employment opportunity policies. Focusing similarly on employment policy, Huen claims that women have been and continue to be used by employers as a temporary work force, and that the political environment has contributed to this. Both argue that it is the LDP’s support of the business community to the neglect of social issues that has allowed gender inequality in the workplace, at least, to flourish.

Common to these critiques is the belief that the LDP’s interest politics obstructed any potential attempt to create meaningful gender equity policies. The research discussed above criticises policy and legislation created during LDP governments and criticises the party for failing to show an interest in furthering women’s rights and gender equality. This work is inadequate, however, both in scope and in quantity. Arguments mentioned above are literally brief mentions in individual articles, or sometimes smaller arguments in a book. By and large, the focus of these scholars is elsewhere, so they fail to incorporate a broader critique of the party’s approach to the concept of gender equality or to interrogate the party culture. The repercussions of the LDP’s ambivalent
approach to gender equality on the numbers of women in politics have not been explored. Nor has the male-dominated party culture of the LDP been interrogated.

*Party culture*

The only study that interrogates the male-domination of the LDP, and of Japanese politics more broadly, surprisingly argues that Japanese politics is more impenetrable for men than women (LeBlanc 2010, pp. 41-42). According to this argument, while women can appeal to voters by emphasising their roles as ‘outsiders’ to politics, non-élite men cannot, and furthermore, men’s role as breadwinners constrains their abilities to participate fully in public life. Despite this assertion, LeBlanc’s case study of an LDP Tokyo municipal councillor demonstrates the way in which some LDP men overtly endorse the view that women are not suited to politics. According to this councillor, it is women’s fault that they cannot enter the world of politics, for they are ‘unwilling to cultivate the sorts of interested relationships that make it easier to win supporters and thus elections’ (LeBlanc 2010, pp. 125-26).

LeBlanc’s study is a compelling enquiry into political masculinities in Japan and illuminates the extent to which politics in Japan is a masculine activity. The ‘art of the gut’ that LeBlanc articulates is an art practised by male politicians—a required skill, it would seem, to succeed in politics. The emotional ties between male politicians are based on gut feelings that guide political deal-making. These gut feelings are inextricably linked to notions of masculinity, including the status of breadwinner, which create an unspoken bond between political men. The suggestion that men find it more difficult than women to penetrate the LDP seems to be based on the assumption that women are only interested in being involved in the ‘gender-specific political’ activity discussed previously. LeBlanc’s (1999, pp. 61-68) previous work suggests that to an extent this is valid. Her 2010 study is also one of the few to consider how political party cultures are gendered in Japan. Yet, like most work carried out that considers the LDP and gender to any extent, there is scant analysis of how women experience the party culture, or whether the party culture and approach to gender equality affect women’s representation negatively.
1.3 Conclusion

In this review of the literature, I have revealed that insufficient attention has been paid to the multiple ways that political parties act as gatekeepers to women’s political representation. Feminist political science literature on women in politics outside Japan is often empirical and rich in raw data. The heavy focus on gender stereotypes, gender-role socialisation and electoral systems needs to be complemented with research into the role of political parties in maintaining hurdles to women. Furthermore, the connection between political parties and gender stereotypes and gender-role socialisation is a neglected area. In this thesis, I aim to fill this gap by connecting the cultural and the institutional approaches to researching the reasons for the lack of women in politics. I do this by considering the active role of political parties in perpetuating gender stereotypes and gender-role socialisation.

The literature in Japan has contributed to international literature on women in politics by pointing out that politics might be perceived in a different way. The ‘gender-specific political activity’ that some Japanese women participate in opens up new ways of interpreting how politics can be carried out. By shining a light on women’s political activity, this literature critiques mainstream politics for its male dominance. There is an absence, however, of interrogation of the role the LDP plays in the continuing male dominance of mainstream politics. Most scholars concerned with women in politics only mention the LDP in passing, and usually allude vaguely to the party’s lack of desire to increase women in its ranks. This has not been taken any further than vague references and no-one has tested the hypothesis that the LDP plays a role as gatekeeper to increased female political representation. The one study that includes a gender-based analysis of the LDP shows more concern for the difficulties facing political men than women (LeBlanc 2010).

In this thesis, I aim to fill a gap in the body of research concerned with women’s political under-representation by investigating the role of the LDP as a party organisation in obstructing women from entering mainstream politics. My hypothesis, as outlined in the Introduction, is that the LDP’s ambivalent position on the importance of gender equality in society has played a role in maintaining low numbers of women in
politics. In order to test this hypothesis, I examine whether the LDP has supported dominant discourses of gender that define women as bound to the home and hence outsiders to Diet politics. Notions of gender stereotypes and gender-role socialisation, which are drawn from in much of the literature reviewed in this chapter, are helpful but limited approaches to the question of female political under-representation. As already mentioned, these approaches have contributed greatly to the literature on female under-representation in politics. My thesis represents a complementary approach that focuses on institutions and is informed by gender discourse theory. The following chapter outlines the theoretical tools I use in my approach.
CHAPTER 2: GENDERING THE LDP AS MASCULINE

This chapter consists of two parts: a discussion of theories that inform this thesis and why I have chosen them, and a methodology section explaining research methods and how I plan to apply theories to data. I first explore gender theories, which form the basis of my analysis. These theories will facilitate a critical evaluation of the LDP as a masculinised space, and also shed light on how particular masculinities and femininities are produced in this space. Following this, I explain how I deploy discourse theories to critically analyse LDP governments’ support for dominant discourses of gender. I then examine feminist approaches to gender equality in politics, with particular emphasis given to critical analyses of the concept of ‘equal opportunity’. This will include explanation of how I will draw from equality theories to critically examine the LDP’s stance on gender equality. In the second part, the methodology section, I focus on fieldwork, outlining my method of data collection.

2.1 Gender Theories

Margaret Mead (1963 [1935]) is credited for being the founder of the notion of gender as we know it today (Delphy 1993, p. 1). After researching three different societies in New Guinea, Mead (1963 [1935], p. 221) concluded that rather than being innate, the differences between men and women were a result of cultural conditioning. Her development of the notion of cultural conditioning paved the way for gender studies to grow. While the idea that men’s and women’s behaviours are not necessarily ‘natural’ spread after Mead’s study, the use of the word ‘gender’ to refer to socially and culturally constructed differences between men and women did not emerge until later. The concept of gender was used in the 1960s to distinguish culturally and socially prescribed roles and behaviour for men and women from their biological sex as males or females. It was first used widely in this way by psychiatrists working with intersex and transsexual patients (Moi 1999, p. 21). Feminists then deployed this distinction to argue against biological determinism which had, for centuries, curtailed women’s activities in the public sphere on the basis of their apparently inherent and natural inferiority to men (Moi 1999, p. 5). Gayle Rubin (1975) was particularly influential in developing a theory of gender that made the distinction between sex as biology and gender as social norms.
Rubin’s utopia was a gender-less, but not sex-less world, where ‘one’s anatomy is irrelevant to who one is, what one does and with whom one makes love’ (Rubin 1975, p. 204).

Gender theories shed light on the way that the behaviours, preferences, and choices made by women and men are moulded by the culture within which individuals live. Constructions of gender determine what is seen to be ‘true’ about men and women. For example, according to dominant gender constructions, men are aggressive, rational, tough-minded and promiscuous, while women are nurturing, emotional and sexually-loyal (Connell 2002b, p. 40). These characteristics are repeatedly brought up in conversation, for example, to explain a person’s behaviour. They are produced and reproduced by various media, including popular culture sources, such as magazines and television. Feminists like Rubin argued that gender was not merely distinct from sex, but oppressive for women (Moi 1999, pp. 28-29). Distinguishing gender from sex in order to defeat sexism based on biological determinism became a major goal of feminists. The social norms that derived from the system of gender favoured men and subjugated women. For example, social norms regarding sexuality that enable men to be sexually aggressive and promiscuous are not applicable to women, who by contrast are constricted by social norms that define women’s sexuality as passive and faithful. Gender is thus ‘ideological in the precise sense that it tries to pass social arrangements off as natural’ (Moi 1999, p. 29). Feminist scholars also used the concept of gender to reveal the way that social practices, policies and institutions are not gender neutral, but are shaped by gender norms and thus usually favour either feminine or masculine practices (Gatens 1999, pp. 230-31). This includes political institutions.

2.1.1 Gendering politics as masculine

Men are of course just as much gendered beings as women, and the fact that political power is often constructed as a male attribute is consequently as much a gendered phenomenon as is the political powerlessness of women. Yet, this fact has seldom been acknowledged, and men are hardly ever named ‘men’ in the same way that women are named ‘women’ (Bjarnegård 2010, p. 230).
As Bjarnegård (2010, p. 230) notes in her critical study of male dominance in Thai politics, we often forget that political parties are ‘in fact male-dominated institutions, systematically excluding women’. Critical studies of men and masculinities like hers expose that what is often assumed to be ‘normal’ and gender-neutral in fact involves male domination. Specifically, studies of masculinity make masculinity visible and problematise the position of men (Connell, Hearn et al. 2005, p. 1). Critical studies on men evolved from the feminist tradition of pointing out that much of what appears as neutral is in fact based on masculine norms. Hearn (2004, p. 49) notes that the disciplines of “Sociology” and "History", or whatever’ are in fact studies of men. Men have been studying men for a long time but not calling it men’s studies.

Gatens (1996; 1998; 1999) critiques the ‘body politic’ as being based on masculine norms. She argues that while male bodies have an automatic right to participate in politics, women’s bodies are inscribed with meanings and values that mark them as being unsuitable for politics. A woman’s embodiment precludes her involvement in representative politics. It is not simply her gender, but her female body that is problematic in an institution dominated by male bodies and governed by masculine norms. In arguing this, she critiques the sex/gender distinction. The dominance of men in politics is not a coincidence—men dominate in numbers, as they dominate in numbers in most other socially powerful areas because of structural power differences. Governments in democracies, including Japan, often placed legal prohibitions on women’s participation. These legal prohibitions were lifted in the early to mid twentieth century, yet women continue to appear in legislative assemblies in very small numbers. By defining the body politic as masculine, Gatens (1999, p. 231) argues that men bring to politics cultural values that are inscribed on them because they are men. The male body carries cultural values that the female body does not and vice versa. The body politic, imbued with power and authority is defined by and defines the males who populate it as powerful and authoritative. Women have traditionally been placed outside this political sphere and have thus not been inscribed with political power and authority. In this sense, cultural norms that define the male as powerful and knowledgeable in the arena of politics normalise the relative scarcity of women and the dominance of men.
The result of the exclusion of women from politics has contributed to the perpetuation of dominant discourses of gender that define women as better equipped for duties in the home and family, and men as better suited for politics. Male politicians are the unmarked norm and women’s exclusion is normalised. The body politic that is gendered as masculine is a key determinant in upholding dominant discourses of masculinity and femininity because men are discursively constructed as authoritative. Maintaining this construct is important for men to maintain their positions of privilege. One of the results of the body politic being gendered male is that the gendered status quo goes unchallenged.

Puwar (2004) draws from Gatens and introduces the notion of space. Westminster, Puwar (2004, p. 85) argues, is a masculinised space whereby men not only dominate in numbers, but masculine ways of ‘doing politics’, such as a boys club mentality and aggressive ‘yabooing’ during question time, prevail. These practices point to a masculinised culture of politics, but there are also more visibly obstructive elements of a masculinised body politic. These include, for example, the small number of women’s toilets, and meetings scheduled outside working hours which imply that the ideal British politician is one without home or family responsibilities. Because women are seen as ‘out of place’ in Westminster, Puwar refers to them as ‘space invaders’ (Puwar 2004, p. 8).

I draw from the gender theories discussed to explore the characteristics of the LDP as a male-dominated institution and to examine whether or not it acts as a gatekeeper to women’s increased representation. As discussed above, the LDP has been of great interest to political scientists both inside Japan and internationally. The party has been the subject of research into its leaders, its scandals, its longevity, and so forth (for example, Curtis 1999; George Mulgan 2006). Certainly much of this research has been critical, but very little of it has interrogated the fact that it is an institution run by men. Critical men’s studies scholars Collinson and Hearn (2005, p. 293) note with regard to studies about management, that researchers ‘rarely attend to the continued predominance of men in managerial positions and the gendered processes, networks, and assumptions through which women are intentionally and unintentionally excluded,
subordinated, or both.’ The same can be said about studies about the LDP. By analysing
gendered processes in the LDP, including the electoral system, which it helped to
maintain and also benefited from, its recruitment patterns, and structures such as
factions, the LDP can be examined as a gendered institution. I explore the ways in
which the LDP, as a gendered institution, may disadvantage women and uphold male
privilege.

The LDP has escaped exposure as a masculinised institution that excludes women. This
is a testament to the strength of the normalising power of discourses surrounding gender
and politics in Japan—discourses that construct politics as men’s business and women
as outsiders to mainstream politics.

2.2 Discourse, Politics and Gender
Mainstream politics in Japan, and in most countries, is male-dominated. It is also
discursively constructed as something that men do, and that women are situated outside
of. I use the concept of discourse in the Foucauldian sense.

Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth; that is, the types of
discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances
which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is
sanctioned (Foucault 1980, p. 131)

According to Foucault, what a society understands as knowledge develops not because
of a ‘truth’ that can be known, but because of discourses that produce ‘truth’. Some
things are worth knowing and others are not. Discourse is not imposed on the masses
from above but is produced through the actions and speech of individuals who
constitute society. Discourse is how we see the world, but more importantly, it is how
we think the world ought to be. In line with this theory, in the realm of gender and
politics, what we know about men and women and what we know about politics is
discursively produced. What we know about who makes an appropriate politician is
discursively produced.
Knowledge about something only becomes ‘real’ through the discourse that produces it. Discourse is culturally and historically specific. The cultural norms of an area and time define ‘truth’. For the purpose of discussing gender and politics in Japan, it is important to clarify what is meant specifically by discourses of femininity or masculinity. Discourses of masculinity, for example, determine what is ‘true’ about masculinity and, usually what is ‘true’ of men and likewise for ‘femininity’ and women. As mentioned previously, in some times and places, men are discursively constructed as aggressive, rational, tough-minded and promiscuous, whereas women are nurturing, emotional and sexually-loyal. These are some of the discursive truths of masculine and feminine character traits (Connell 2002a, p.40). What is true, and what is worth knowing about femininity and masculinity, is formed within various avenues of information creation and dissemination. It is important to interrogate why certain things are worth knowing in order to determine whose interests are being served and whose are not. Who, for example, decides what is worth knowing about masculinity? Who decides what constitutes discourses of femininity? According to Foucault (1971, pp. 10-11), it is not individual people who decide. Rather, cultural and historical forces determine what is worth knowing at that particular place and time, and discourse is therefore produced. In 100 years, the ‘fact’ that men are more aggressive than women might have become irrelevant, and therefore it might even become ‘untrue’.

In this thesis, Foucault’s theory of discourse will be useful to expose how gender inequality in politics is enacted through ‘knowledge’ about men, women and politics. Gender stereotypes and gender-role socialisation, for example, are the products of discourse. Gender stereotypes and gender-role socialisation are key factors in hindering the participation of women in politics. An exploration of the various avenues that information about men and women takes en route to becoming gender stereotypes and shaping role-socialisation will assist in exposing how discourses are produced and how they contribute to gender inequality.

Government policies and legislation contribute to shaping social norms and patterns. While ostensibly neutral, government policies affect people in unequal ways. Policies can have the power to challenge or uphold the status quo and are instrumental in
shaping society: ‘Not only do policies codify social norms and values, and articulate fundamental organizing principles of society, they also contain implicit (and sometimes explicit) models of society’ (Shore and Wright 1997, p. 7). Analysis of post-war policy and legislation will show how LDP governments contributed to the discursive formation of dominant gender norms. Discourse theory will also enable me to examine whether the LDP as a political party consolidates dominant discourses of gender and politics that construct women as politically inept and men as the bearers of political knowledge. Foucault’s theory of discourse, combined with gender theories that shed light on the gendering of institutions, will enable me to analyse the workings of gender in the LDP and explore the ways in which constructions of masculinity and femininity shape normative understandings of what it means to be a politician.

Discourse analysis and gender theories, however, are of limited use in suggesting how structural change might be possible, and the importance of change. It is feminist political scientists such as Pateman (1988; 1989) and Phillips (1995) that I must draw on to argue for possible structural change that will enable an increase of women in politics. Theories of gender equality will enable me to critically analyse the LDP’s stance on gender equality, consider how this stance has affected the representation of women in Japanese politics, and explore possible structural changes that will increase the number of women in politics.

2.3 Feminist Criticisms of ‘Equal Opportunity’ for Political Representation

A central tenet of modern mainstream political theory is that individuals are born equal. This tenet emerged during the Enlightenment era when the political theories of Rousseau, Locke and Hobbes emerged (Pateman 1989, p. 18). These theories, although they referred to individuals, were implicitly about men being equal. The concept of equality in these theories nevertheless allowed women to challenge the logic and claim that women were equal too. This concept of equality has enabled women to achieve legal equality so that women gained rights that had been the exclusive domain of men, such as the right to own property, and the right to vote. In liberal democracies, such as the UK, the US and Japan, the theory of equal opportunity is the foundation from which gender equality measures have been typically pursued (Mackie 1995a, pp. 97-98; Caul
Historically, it has resulted in positive gains for women, such as the concept of equal pay for equal work and the introduction of legislation outlawing sex discrimination. What feminists face now is the problem that despite legal and institutional equality, women remain under-represented in almost all positions of social and political power—de facto equality remains elusive.

Pateman (1986, p. 3-4; 1988, pp. 14-18; 1989, p. 14) argues that for a more gender equal political theory, simply incorporating women into existing liberal theories will not work because those theories are predicated on the exclusion of women. She asserts that it is incorrect to assume that women were merely overlooked by political theorists such as Rousseau, Locke and Mill (Pateman 1989, pp. 47-48). Existing theories were in fact predicated on the universal human being a man. As Pateman explains, the political theories that developed in the Enlightenment era, which are the foundation upon which modern politics is practiced, did not ignore women. Rather, they excluded them from politics on the basis of what they believed was the biological and psychological inferiority of women to men. More specifically, political theory was developed in opposition to what is taken to be feminine: ‘women’s intuition and deficiency in rationality have been presented as the antithesis of the logic, order and reason required of theorists’ (Pateman 1986, p. 3). For Pateman (1986, p. 3), simply adding women to theories fails to take into account embodied differences and relies on a notion of gender-neutrality. The ‘man’ in liberal theory is taken to be gender-neutral, when in fact, it is gender-specific.

The ‘add women and stir’ (Bunch 1986, p. 140) approach in politics believes that adding women into existing political theories will solve the issue of gender inequality. That is, if all women and men are allowed to have the same opportunities, then inequalities between them should eventually disappear. Inequalities that remain after equal opportunities have been provided are the result of individual choice and ability. Some feminists critique the notion of equal opportunity, however, questioning how women can be included into a system that is based on the male as norm and the female as Other. Without changing assumptions inherent in the system, the inclusion of women as equals is impossible. As Gatens (1996, p. 71) argues, granting women access to
institutions that have been created for the purpose of ‘enhance[ing] and intensify[ing] the powers and capacities of specifically male bodies’ is pointless unless women learn to emulate men. It is men that that occupy those institutions and who have created the culture and structure of those institutions. Equality, under this model, is something that women must strive for, rather than something that ought to be created by changing existing structures. Providing women with ‘equal opportunity’ allows women to become equal to men. According to this common-sense logic, men’s achievements and work patterns are the benchmark to measure women against; man is the universal citizen and it is up to women to become like them (Kimmel, 2000, p.7, Puwar, 2004, p.56, Weedon, 1999, p.6). When women are doing what men are doing, women will, apparently, have equality. It is women who must become equal, not men.

The problem with aiming for equality of opportunity is that the result is often similar to when there was no equality of opportunity: men come out better off than women.

If the result of all our disparate choices and opportunities is that men nonetheless congregate in the higher echelons of the economy, predominate in positions of political influence, sweep up all the literary prizes, and never collect the children from school, the presumption must be that the opportunities were not so equal. We can judge, that is, the extent of the equality by checking on the results, and should be reluctant to credit an initial equality of opportunity if the outcomes prove so dissimilar (Phillips, 2004, p.6).

The equal opportunity approach to gender equality is based on the presumption that everyone is at the same starting line and that the pursuit of a fair society involves treating everyone the same. Yet society is structured such that the norm is male, so when women attempt to participate in that society, they come across hurdles that men do not. The call for equal opportunity neglects existing patriarchal social structures that favour the masculine over the feminine.

The equal opportunity model has failed women in politics. Despite women and men receiving the same opportunities to participate in representative politics, the political landscape is still overwhelmingly dominated by men. The argument for equality of results, or equality of outcome, acknowledges ‘invisible power structures’ (Ōgai 2005, p.
16) and recognises that women face deeply embedded institutionalised discrimination, so that in order to combat that discrimination, action must be taken to ensure the results for women and men can be equal. The argument that equal opportunity is flawed and has failed women in the realm of political representation is the theoretical basis from which feminist political scientists such as Dahlerup advocate gender quotas and positive action measures in politics. Supporters of positive action argue that the existing system, while appearing gender-neutral, discriminates against women.

2.3.1 Gender quotas represent a shift in discourses of equality

In recent years, shifts in discourses of gender equality have emerged internationally. A catalyst for changing discourses of equality in the realm of politics specifically was the 1995 United Nations Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing (hereafter the FWCW), the culmination of a series of UN world conferences on women which started in 1975. The ‘Platform for Action’ that emerged from this conference specifically addressed gender inequality in politics (FWCW 1995, Article 190a). The focus of the problem of the under-representation of women in politics has moved from the (lack of) effort, qualifications and volition of women to institutional or cultural mechanisms that are discriminatory and exclusionary. In other words, the common justification for the gender imbalance in politics given by political parties and other leaders that there are not enough ‘qualified’ women is no longer acceptable as the only valid reason for the lack of women in politics. The ‘Platform for Action’ places responsibility on institutions to proactively address gender imbalance. In politics this means positive action, and is spelled out specifically in Article 190a in the FWCW, which instructs governments to

Commit themselves to establishing the goal of gender balance in governmental bodies and committees, as well as in public administrative entities, and in the judiciary, including, inter alia, setting specific targets and implementing measures to substantially increase the number of women with a view to achieving equal representation of women and men, if necessary through positive action, in all governmental and public administration positions.

The promotion of positive action by the UN can be interpreted as a shift away from the notion of ‘equal opportunity’. Instead, governments are urged to pursue ‘gender
balance’—which is closer to the concept of ‘equal results’—implementing targets to do so if necessary.

The increase in the uptake of gender quotas around the world suggests that political authorities are acknowledging the inadequacy of an equal opportunity model for raising female representation. Almost three quarters of all countries that have proportional representation electoral systems have adopted gender quotas. Half of all countries in the world have introduced some form of gender quota for public elections (Dahlerup 2008, p. 326). Gender quotas can be adopted voluntarily by political parties, or established through legislation or the Constitution of the country. Several countries in Asia, such as South Korea and Taiwan, have incorporated gender quotas into their constitution or as law. In South Korea’s case, female representation in the National Assembly rose from 5.9 percent to 14.3 percent after the Act on Elections for Public Office was amended to ensure that 50 percent of party candidates nominated for proportional representation in National Assembly or local council elections are women (United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women 2007, n.p).

Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2005, p. 29) call the introduction of gender quotas the ‘fast track’ to increased female representation as opposed to the ‘incremental track’. They describe the incremental track as the discourse whereby it is generally believed that increased female representation is simply a matter of time—as a nation develops, a more equal representation of men and women in that nation’s legislative body can be expected. Dahlerup (2003, n.p) argues that, while there have typically been high levels of female political representation in Scandinavia, the Scandinavian countries’ experiences of female political representation in the 1960 and 1970s represented the incremental track. The experience in these countries is unusual, and the incremental track has not seen such success anywhere else. As a result of several socio-political factors, including secularisation, the strength of social-democratic parties, and women’s increased entrance into the labour market in the 1960s, female political representation in the Nordic countries was, at between 20 and 30 percent, relatively high by the time political parties in those countries adopted quotas in the 1980s (Freidenvall, Dahlerup et al. 2006, p. 56).
While both the incremental track and the fast track discourses regard the under-representation of women as a problem, they see the reasons for this and the solutions to the problem very differently. Compared to the incremental track discourse, fast track discourse believes that the number of women in politics will not necessarily rise with the passing of time, and even if it was simply a matter of time, it is too slow. In fact, if the rate of increase of women in politics globally remains the same as it is now, women will reach parity with men in politics at the turn of the 22nd century (Norris 2006, p. 199). The fast track discourse argues that measures such as quota systems are necessary. They are necessary as ‘compensation for structural barriers’ (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005, p. 31) and are not discriminatory. The implementation of gender quotas is recognition by the political parties, or the government enforcing them, that providing equal opportunity to men and women is insufficient for achieving gender parity in legislative assemblies. It represents a shift in the concept of equality in the sense that it shifts from providing equal opportunity to pursuing equal results (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005, p. 30).

Apart from the immediate increase in numbers of women in parliament, Sacchet (2008, p. 370) suggests that quotas can lead to broader positive impacts on society with regards to gender equality. The introduction in 1997 of legislated quotas in Brazil, for example, led to public debate about women’s political under-representation, something that often remains an unquestioned norm. It also highlighted women’s struggles against social inequalities. As Sacchet (2008, p. 381) suggests, gender quotas in Brazil made inequality visible. More than that, they represent a concrete attempt to abolish gender inequality in politics. In the case of Brazil, public reaction to quotas was generally positive, and this is probably one of the reasons implementation was smooth and successful.

Debates in other countries demonstrate that quotas can be very controversial and can stir up strong emotions in those who oppose them. Even in countries where gender quotas

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10 The decrease of women in politics in Eastern Europe after the decline of Communism and the subsequent dismantling of gender quotas in many countries, demonstrates that the equation of increasing numbers of women in politics with the passing of time cannot be assumed (Paxton 1997, p. 461).
have been successfully implemented, they do not necessarily have the broader social and cultural effects that were seen in Brazil. In Belgium, where electoral quotas have been in place since electoral law enforcing quotas was enacted in 1994, many male MPs continue to resent them (Meier 2008, pp. 337-38). Gender quotas have resulted in more women in politics, but this has been a change on a ‘macro-level’, and has not resulted in what Meier (2008, p. 332) and Sgier (2004, p. 2) call a renegotiation of the public sphere. The renegotiation of the public sphere involves substantive changes to ideas about who belongs in the public sphere. Sgier (2004, p. 2) suggests that quotas ‘challenge the public sphere as a normative space that privileges men over women’. The public sphere is falsely assumed to be gender neutral and debates over gender quotas can be understood as recognition of this falsity and an attempt to ‘re-negotiate the public sphere in more egalitarian terms’ (Sgier 2004, p. 2). As Meier (2008, p. 330) argues,

The inclusion of quotas on the political agenda, and their adoption, require the reframing of concepts like citizenship, representation and equality in such a way as to make the lack of gender equality in politics become defined as a problem and quotas an acceptable means to solve it.

In Belgium, despite the existence of quotas, the public sphere has not been renegotiated. On the basis of a survey of 99 Flemish MPs regarding opinions on the legitimacy of quotas, Meier discovered a conspicuous gender gap. For example, 88 percent of surveyed female MPs support quotas, as opposed to only 34 percent of male MPs. The surveyed male MPs believe the lack of women in politics comes down to individual choice: women are not as interested as men in politics and choose to prioritise their family more than a political career. In contrast, the surveyed female MPs see structural barriers, such as the preference for male candidates by political parties (Meier 2008, pp. 337-38). The Belgian experience illuminates the way that gender quotas in politics—even when they ‘work’, in the sense that numbers of women in politics rise—may only be a superficial solution to the more serious and deep-rooted problem of gender inequality in society.
Despite the ‘contagion’ of gender quotas, opposition to them has thwarted debate altogether in some countries. In Switzerland, for example, despite the low representation of women in politics and the existence of legislated quotas for protection of regional interests and informal party quotas for linguistic groups, the debate in the late 1990s about gender quotas did not develop at all due to strong opposition to quotas on the basis that they were ‘totally out of place’, ‘backward’, ‘absurd’ and ‘perverse’ (Sgier 2004, p. 16).

While many political parties in most countries give lip service to the abstract notion of gender equality, not all are prepared to do anything concrete about it in the realm of representation. Sgier (2004, p. 5) argues that ‘[a]lthough the principle of gender equality […] is widely shared and recognised, it rarely manifests itself in a commitment to assuring women half of the seats in important political bodies’. This is because the concept of gender equality as understood by political parties in general is embedded within discourses of liberal notions of equality as outlined above. Meier (2008, p. 340) argues that the implementation of gender quotas by political parties does not necessarily mean ‘recognition, in the eyes of the dominant group, of gender inequality as an issue legitimizing political action’. Squires (2003, p. 3), however, suggests that in the UK, where quotas are not legislated, political parties that have adopted quotas voluntarily have embraced the notion of equality of results, whereas those who choose not to adopt quotas adhere to the concept of equal opportunity. The willingness of a political party to adopt positive action style measures to increase women’s representation might indicate recognition by the party that women and men are not at the same starting line with regards to politics. That is, it represents an acknowledgment that the lack of women in politics is partially the result of structural inequalities between men and women, and that the equal opportunity model has not succeeded in abolishing those inequalities.

In summary, equal opportunity as a concept has not facilitated gender equality in politics. As a concept, it emerged from political theories created by male theorists of the Enlightenment era who excluded women from their theories on the basis of the supposed intellectual inferiority of women to men. Current political theory developed out of Enlightenment ideas but failed to recognise the significance of the absence of
women’s voice or experience from those theories. As a result, the fact that the individuals central to these theories, who are supposedly equal, are in fact men has been ignored. Scholars such as Pateman (1986, 1988) and Gatens (1996) have argued that providing equal opportunity to women and men in the realm of politics is problematic because the political system is based on the individual being a man. Equal opportunity therefore is an inadequate concept on which to base the argument for sex equality in political representation. Quotas, which are gaining popularity around the world, represent a specific attempt to redress gender inequality based on an alternative model of equality, that of equal results. Until 2010, there had been almost no debate in Japan about gender quotas or positive action for women in politics.

I am interested in analysing data on the LDP’s pursuit of gender equality in politics to determine which model of equality it follows and why. Drawing from feminist political scientists, such as Pateman (1988; 1989) and Phillips (2004; 2006), who argue that the liberal notion of equal opportunity is inadequate for increasing women’s political representation, I will critically evaluate the LDP’s stance on gender equality in order to test my hypothesis that the LDP has been a gatekeeper to women’s political representation through its ambivalent pursuit of gender equality. In the following section, I discuss the methods I adopt to do this. These include discourse analysis of written material for the purpose of seeking evidence of the gendering of political processes in the LDP, and interviews with female LDP Diet members.

2.4 Methodology
Primary data for this thesis includes official government documents pertaining to gender equality policy and legislation, statistics on women’s political representation, the LDP publication Gekkan Jiyūminshu (Monthly LDP), and interviews with female LDP Diet members. I read legislation and policy created under LDP governments for evidence of the gendering of social welfare and employment policies. The processes of creating gender equity policy and the content of those policies are analysed to find indications of gendered processes. Furthermore, I conduct discourse analysis of the LDP publication Gekkan Jiyūminshu and writings by LDP politicians, including articles and memoirs, to gain evidence of the gendering of politics. Discourse analysis of these sources is meant
in the Foucauldian sense in that I interpret not just the content of the sources, but the various meaning-making processes inherent in them (Shore and Wright 1997, pp. 18-19).

Interview data forms the basis for the analysis in the final two chapters and informs my interpretation of the abovementioned sources. When analysing the interviews, I search for key themes, such as political motivations, opinions on the lack of women in the LDP and attitudes towards positive action for the purpose of increasing the number of women in politics. Discourse analysis in this case means I look for meaning in the text of the interviews that may be ‘conferred by social structures beyond their utterances’ (Bulbeck 2009, p. 28). I thus conduct discourse analysis of interview data not only to ascertain what LDP women are saying, but also how they are creating, maintaining or challenging various discourses.

The opinions of élite politicians about broad political issues are readily and regularly available, but we rarely hear about their personal experiences in politics. Politicians themselves are the only people who can tell us what happens in the backrooms of a political party. Talking to them can potentially shed light on the workings of the organisation they belong to. Gubrium and Holstein (2001, p. 8), promote the interview as an important research method, arguing that ‘the category of “the person” now identifies the self-reflective constituents of society […] if we want to know what the social world is like, we now ask its individual inhabitants’. Extending this idea to the LDP, to know what the LDP is like, I need to ask the individual members of the LDP. Specifically, to know what the LDP is like for women, I must ask women in the LDP. In choosing to interview LDP women, I assume that LDP women have knowledge and stories to tell about their experiences in the LDP.

Finding out about the motivations of LDP women was important to form a picture of the way LDP women construct their own identity with regards to their political career. Hearing LDP women’s thoughts about being a woman in a male-dominated career would also, I hoped, add layers to this picture. I was also interested in their opinions on
the under-representation of women in the LDP. Furthermore, in order to examine whether and in what way the party culture of the LDP acts as a gatekeeper to more women in politics, it is necessary to find out about their experiences in their careers as women in a male-dominated field, whether these experiences were positive or negative.

My fieldwork consisted of interviews with eighteen current members of the Diet and one former member. Of these, thirteen were current LDP women, two were current LDP men and three were current DPJ women. The former female member was also from the LDP. I conducted the interviews over the period of September 2007 to February 2008. Interviews were semi-structured/open-ended and lasted from 29 to 65 minutes. I conducted all interviews personally in Japanese without the aid of an interpreter. The interviews with current Diet members were conducted in the member’s office in the political precinct of Nagata-chō in Tokyo. All interviews were recorded. The interview with the former LDP (female) member was conducted in the office of her current place of employment. Most informants consented to my naming them and using their words in my thesis and publications. A significant number, however, gave consent with the provision that if I publish findings from the interview in journals that I should show them what I had written before publication. Two women consented to my using information gained from interviewing them on the condition that they remain unidentified. This makes identifying informants somewhat complicated. However, as they are individuals with unique personal and professional histories that shape their opinions, identifying them in this thesis allows for a depth of narrative. For this reason, in general, I have used informants’ names unless they have asked me not to, and unless doing so would indirectly identify others who wish to remain anonymous.

2.4.1 Data sampling and gaining access
I realised at the outset that gaining access to Diet members would be difficult so I aimed to gain as many interviews as possible. Over the eight months I spent in Tokyo between 2007 and 2008 I contacted all 41 women who were LDP Diet members at the time. My

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11 See Appendix 3 for the profiles of the women interviewed.
12 See Appendix 4 for the interview schedule
approach to contacting potential informants was to send a letter to their Diet office\textsuperscript{13} and telephone the office some days later. To my surprise and delight, the first two women I contacted responded positively. These first two informants, however, turned out to be exceptions to the rule, and my success rate was low. I was only able to interview thirteen LDP women out of the total 41 requests.

It has been suggested by many that the primary difficulty in interviewing élite people is gaining access to them (Hertz and Imber, 1995, p. xiii, Odendahl and Shaw, 2001, p. 299). Élite people tend to be very busy and also have a ‘wall’ that divides them from the broader public. This wall is made up of secretaries and other staff. In my experience, getting past the secretaries was often a major hurdle. One particular secretary told me when I called the office to ask whether the member could spare some time for an interview that he had not shown her the letter I had sent because, he explained, ‘frankly, I don’t understand what it is you want’. The purpose of interviewing a female politician because she was a female politician in the LDP seemed meaningless for this secretary. I explained what I wanted over the phone but he remained unconvinced, saying that the MP only did ‘that sort of thing’ when it was for the ‘public good’. My interview would apparently not serve that purpose.

My advisor in Japan, Professor Igarashi, provided a ‘letter of introduction’ to include with my letter when I contacted the Diet members.\textsuperscript{14} This is how I approached all the Diet members that I contacted. I also took advantage of a personal acquaintance as an intermediary. The first three months of fieldwork yielded very few acceptances to my request for meetings. I decided then to begin a political internship with a local LDP councillor. This proved to be more successful and I gained two very productive interviews with female LDP Diet members whom the local councillor introduced me to, and I also had the educational experience of spending time with a very conservative LDP local councillor, Motohashi Hirotaka. Upon learning whom I had interviewed to date, Motohashi became perplexed and said that he would put me in contact with people

\textsuperscript{13}See Appendix 5 for the approach letter I sent to all informants, Appendix 6 for the consent form, and Appendix 7 for the participant information sheet.
\textsuperscript{14}See Appendix 8 for Professor Igarashi’s letter of introduction.
who knew the ‘real LDP’ which, for him, was the element of the party which is more right of the centre. By attempting a variety of approaches to gaining access to informants, I was thus able to conduct interviews with women of different philosophical stances within the LDP. The interviews form the data for the last two chapters of this thesis. They will be analysed to explore how LDP women experience the party culture and how they challenge or perpetuate dominant discourses of gender. I do this by discussing their political motivations, their experiences of being a woman in a male-dominated career, and their opinions on the under-representation of women in the LDP.

2.5 Conclusion

Gender theories that developed from the 1960s were deployed by feminists to argue against biological determinism and essentialism which has been used to justify women’s apparent inferiority to men. These theories have been developed to expose the way that certain organisations and institutions are gendered. The body politic, which is based on the notion of universalism and liberal notions of equality, has been shown by feminist scholars to be based on masculine norms. In this thesis I will draw on the work of these scholars to shed light on the LDP as a gendered organisation. I will build on this analysis to examine whether or not this has had an effect on female political representation. Apart from examining its masculinist party structures, I will consider the policies and legislation created by LDP governments to evaluate the effect they had on the creation and the perpetuation of dominant discourses of gender that construct women as belonging outside the political sphere.

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action was a turning point in discourses about female political under-representation. The ‘equal opportunity’ approach that assumes that gender equality will eventuate if men and women receive the same opportunities has seen very slow progress. Accordingly, the need for a new approach became evident. The words ‘equal opportunity’ are mentioned only twice in the Platform, whereas ‘positive action’ appears six times (FWCW 1995). The spotlight has moved away from women towards the body politic (including government and political parties) that feminist scholars have identified as governed by masculine norms. Pressure is now on political parties and governments to proactively pursue gender balance in political representation.
Countries that have legislated gender quotas or political parties that have adopted quotas or targets to increase the number of women in representative politics demonstrate an acknowledgement of the existence of structural gender inequalities, an acknowledgment of the importance of more women in politics, and a desire for gender equality in politics.

The following chapters of this thesis map out how the LDP not only taps into dominant gender discourses in Japan but also contributes to their construction. Illuminating the characteristics of gender discourses is meaningless, however, unless discursive formation is linked to practice. In other words, talking about discourse is not enough: how those discourses affect material realities must be analysed. In this thesis the purpose of linking discourse and practice is to expose how dominant discourses of gender support patriarchal structures that inhibit increased female political representation.

In the next chapter I set the context for critical analysis of gender discourses in Japan. Weedon (1999, p. 103) explains that to draw on Foucault’s discourse theory is to assume that discourse ‘is material in the sense that it is located in institutions and practices which define difference and shape the material world’. Using discourse analysis, in Chapter Three, I aim to explore how ‘politics’ came to be discursively constructed as a masculine activity in both pre- and post-1945 Japan, how female politicians are talked about and why we ‘know’ what we know about them.
CHAPTER 3: THE GENDERING OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE AND WOMEN’S POLITICAL ACTIVISM TO 1955

In this chapter, I consider the gendering of politics in Imperial Japan (1890–1945) and in the Occupation period. The prohibition of women’s engagement in politics in the late nineteenth century did not entirely preclude women’s involvement in public life. Women actively opposed their exclusion from political activity and campaigned for political rights, but they also participated in state-sanctioned forms of public life, including patriotic activities. After the Asia Pacific War, women gained political rights, but discourses of femininity developed during the Occupation in a way that limited female political activity to that which supported their roles as mothers, wives and pacifists. In this chapter, I consider the way in which discourses about female politicians have developed since the late nineteenth century. In doing so, I lay the groundwork for discussion in later chapters about how gender discourses can impact female representation in Japanese politics even today.

Providing background information about Japanese women’s political activity and the ways that politically active women have been discursively constructed historically helps to situate contemporary debates about female political representation in a broader context. In the first section of this chapter, I examine the way in which the emerging notion of public space came to be gendered masculine. I then dissect arguments for women’s political rights to explore the origins of discursive constructions of the female politician and to trace how this has changed. Some, but not all, of the early struggles for women’s suffrage were supported by the assumption that women bring to politics qualities different from men such as charity, integrity and morality. These themes continued into post-war Japan, as will be revealed in later chapters.

3.1 State-Sanctioned Discourses of Gender

Japanese feminists’ struggle for political inclusion occurred during the Meiji era (1868–1912) against a backdrop of industrialisation and militarism when the official discourse on womanhood was the ideology of ‘good wife, wise mother’ (ryōsai kenbo). Under the
Meiji Constitution of 1890 Japanese people were subjects of the Emperor rather than citizens (Mackie 2003, p. 5). The Meiji Civil Code was completed in 1898, legally instituting the household (ie) system. The household system, which was one of the family forms that had evolved during the Tokugawa era (1600–1868) under the influence of Confucianism, consisted of a (usually) male head, his wife, his first son and daughter-in-law, and their children. In the Tokugawa era this system was found in samurai households but was not the dominant form in other status groups (Mackie 1997, p. 34). The institutionalisation of the ie system during the Meiji era, therefore, was a top-down imposition of samurai values onto the entire population which, until then, had experienced great variety in marriage and inheritance practices (Mackie 1988, p. 55).

Under the household system, family relations were dictated by filial piety, and women came under the authority of men. The most important thing for this family system was the continuation of the family line. The welfare of the family as an entity was valued over the welfare of the individual. Ancestors were revered, and filial piety was the most important rule to be followed (Uno 1991, p. 24).

According to this system, filial piety was more important than gender relations, so respect was usually earned according to age, not just sex. On this basis women gained respect with age and elderly women were often greatly revered, even if they were not the heads of the household (Uno 1991, p. 24). Nevertheless, the legal enforcement of the household system during the Meiji era had negative effects on women. Under the law, the father was automatically head of the household. He assumed full legal authority for all family members. Adultery constituted legal grounds for divorce only if committed by the wife (but if she was committing adultery with a married man, the married man could also be charged with adultery), and the father retained custody of the children in cases of divorce (Bernstein 1991, p. 8). When a woman married, she adopted her husband’s name, left her own family and became part of her husband’s family. If a male heir was not produced, the family often adopted a son or a son-in-law to become heir (Mackie 1997, p. 36).

It was during the Meiji era that women’s roles were defined by the state as ‘good wives, wise mothers’ (ryōsai kenbo). In 1875, an influential article by Nakamura Masanao
(1832–1891) called ‘Creating Good Mothers’ was published in the journal *Meiroku Zasshi* encouraging women to follow the classic model of upper-middle class European women.

[W]e must invariably have fine mothers if we want effectively to advance the people to the area of enlightenment and to alter their customs and conditions for the good. If the mothers are superb, they can have superb children, and Japan can become a splendid country in later generations (cited in Braisted 1976, pp. 401-02).

Nakamura was an influential writer and thinker who discussed the differences between Japan and the Western world. A late-Tokugawa Confucian who converted to Christianity after spending many years in Europe, he wrote this speech after returning to Japan. Nakamura’s ideas about the ideal Japanese woman were strongly influenced by European Enlightenment thought which constructed women as educators of children and household managers (Garon 1993, pp. 11-12).

Official exhortations of the good wife and wise mother model of womanhood initially appeared in the realm of education for girls. Influenced by journalists and others who had studied Enlightenment ideas, authorities from the Home Ministry and Ministry of Education disseminated official ideology that women should strive to be good wives and wise mothers. For example, a Meiji era Education minister, Kikuchi Dairoku wrote that the objective of girls’ education should be to instruct girls to become ‘good wives and wise mothers’.

The question naturally arises what constitutes a good wife and wise mother, and the answer requires a knowledge of the position of the wife and mother in the household and the standing of women in society and her status in the State. ... [The] man goes outside to work to earn his living, to fulfill his duties to the State; it is the wife’s part to help him, for the common interests of the house, and as her share of duty to the State, by sympathy and encouragement, by relieving him of anxieties at home, managing household affairs, looking after the household economy, and, above all, tending the old people and bringing up the children in a fit and proper manner (Kikuchi 2008 [1909], p. 256).

15 The *Meiroku Zasshi* was published in the early 1870s by a group of intellectuals who ‘debated the future of Japan’ (Patessio 2006, p. 161). This included interpreting Western ideas and communicating them to the public (Sievers 1983, p. 17; Braisted 1976).
The education system firmly positioned women in the home and out of public spaces. Education was gender-segregated so that boys were educated in politics, arts and economics while girls were educated in household management and childrearing (Uno 1993, p. 299). Until the early 1900s, however, this image of the ideal woman was impractical for the people in the lower classes who could not afford to live on one income. The state did not expect ryōsai kenbo aspirations from working-class women (Nolte and Hastings 1991, p. 158). Instead, the labour of working-class women in the textile factories was essential to Japan’s industrialisation. Women came to represent 60 percent of Japan’s industrial labour force (Mackie 1997, p. 13). Working-class women’s national duty initially lay not necessarily in becoming good wives and wise mothers, but in being productive and efficient workers first. Nevertheless, women workers—those in the textile factories, specifically—were expected to eventually become wives and mothers after they had worked for a short period of time.

There were some attributes that were expected of women regardless of class, such as self-sacrifice, modesty and thrift, all linked to state interest. Some of these attributes were expected of all subjects regardless of sex. The state encouraged people to exhibit endurance, submission, sacrifice, industriousness and self-reliance in working towards the modernisation of the country (Nolte and Hastings 1991, p. 165). In an increasingly militarist state, however, state-prescribed roles for men and women differed, and while men served in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05) women came to be constructed as ‘helpmates’ to the state (Mackie 1997, p. 43). Their activities were understood as extensions of their roles as good wives and wise mothers not only to their own families, but to the state.

Women and girls who grew up in the late 1800s and early 1900s in Japan lived through the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95, the annexation of Taiwan in 1895, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05, and the annexation of Korea in 1910. In this wartime climate, women from the upper-classes were constructed as helpmates to the state by participating in patriotic women’s organisations. They were also encouraged to educate their children—considered the future of the nation—to become ‘loyal and obedient subjects’ (Uno 1993, p. 297), and to aid their husbands in work.
Working-class women were not exempt from official and nationalist gender ideologies. Women’s work in textile factories was constructed as a gendered form of patriotic activity; while men participated in military service, women’s work in factories was regarded as the feminine version of patriotic work (Mackie 1997, p. 116). In this way, both working-class women and upper-class women were discursively constructed as assistants to men and to the state.

While women were encouraged to fit into the ryōsai kenbo model of womanhood, on the other side of the coin, state-sanctioned discourses of masculinity involved industriousness and, increasingly, military aggression. As Dasgupta (2003, p. 120) argues, in its attempt to create a Japan that could defend itself against Western colonial powers in East Asia, the new Meiji state, ‘needed compliant, productive workers of its male citizens and “Good Wives, Wise Mothers” (ryōsai kenbo) of its female citizens’ (emphasis in original). State-sanctioned masculinity therefore involved notions of self-sacrifice via hard work for the nation, of military aggression and of heterosexual marriage.

A useful way of understanding Meiji masculinities is through the conceptual framework of the co-existence of culture and emotion with martial valour—bushidō (Roden 1995, p. 134; Low 2003, p. 84). The combination of the increased impact of Western culture after 1868 with rising industrialisation and modernisation led to the transformation of dominant discourses of Japanese masculinity (Low 2003, pp. 84-85). The samurai values of loyalty, duty, self-sacrifice and mental and physical endurance continued to inform Meiji discourses of masculinity, but these became intertwined with discourses of masculinity that were supported and encouraged by the state for the purposes of modernity, such as the ideal of the heterosexual, monogamous husband (Dasgupta 2003, p. 120).

The contributions required by the state for war and for industrial growth were therefore different for men and women. Although women’s efforts, via productive labour and reproductive labour, were encouraged by authorities and thus their public activities as
mothers, wives and workers sanctioned, their participation in formal politics was, as outlined below, formally prohibited.

### 3.1.1 The gendered public sphere

Although *ryōsai kenbo* ideology was primarily meant to be a model for the upper-classes, by the early 1910s it had spread to the other classes (Nolte and Hastings 1991, p. 158). Nolte and Hastings argue that the discourse of *ryōsai kenbo* was adopted by the state to limit women’s activity in the public sphere. Women’s primary role was considered to be inside the home. It was in this context that prohibitions against women participating in political activities were enforced. The active prohibition of political activity for women which occurred during the Meiji period is an example of the state’s attempt at controlling women’s movements and keeping them out of the public sphere (Nolte and Hastings 1991, p. 152).

Mackie (2003, p. 20) notes that it was in the 1880s, before the first Diet was established in 1890, that the emerging public space began to be perceived as ‘masculine space’. The practice of public lectures was introduced by the *Meirokusha* in the 1870s and by the movement for Liberty and People’s Rights. Before women’s political activity was prohibited, women gave some lectures in the Liberty and People’s Rights movement. Their lectures, however, were sensationalised because women were constructed as the ‘other’ in comparison to men who had rightful places in the public sphere. Men’s place in the public sphere was naturalised, while women’s place was ‘othered’ in this space because they had become increasingly linked to the home and the domestic sphere (Mackie 2002, pp. 44, 52). Kusunose Kita, in 1878, was the first woman to argue for political rights. Kusunose owned property and demanded that her rights match her tax-paying responsibilities (Mackie 2003, p. 19). Some women and men involved in the liberal movement also discussed women’s political rights.

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When the Meiji Constitution was promulgated in 1889, and the first parliament held in 1890, women were comprehensively excluded. Tax-paying male Japanese subjects over the age of 25 gained the right to vote in 1889 (Mackie 2003, p. 19; Hayes 2005, p. 22). Because of such limitations, only approximately five percent of the male population were eligible to vote. The Diet, patterned after European parliamentary bodies, was created in 1890 with upper and lower houses. Lower House members were elected by those eligible to vote, and the Upper House comprised the nobility and imperial appointees. The cabinet could include non-elected members, and also included representatives of the army and navy (Hayes 2005, pp. 22-23).

In 1900, Article Five of the Public Peace Police Law prohibited women from joining political organisations or attending or speaking at meetings on politics in public spaces (Mackie 2003, p. 5). Instead, the Home Ministry encouraged women to participate in charitable and patriotic organisations and suggested that women’s political participation would have a negative effect on home management and education. According to this bureaucratic discourse, Japan’s industrialisation required women to contribute to the national economy by managing household savings efficiently and educating and socialising the young (Nolte 1986, p. 694). Women were therefore excluded from the political part of the public sphere but not from the broader public sphere itself, as evident in the authorities’ encouragement of women to participate in charitable and patriotic activities.

If women were discursively constructed as not belonging in the political sphere, it can also be argued that the political sphere was discursively constructed as masculine. As already mentioned, the emerging public space of the 1880s was understood as a masculine space. Politics as an activity developed as something that men, and not women, participated in. This of course does not mean that women disappeared from public. Rather, women were discursively constructed as being out of place when they appeared in public, particularly if that public space was overtly political. Women challenging the official discourse of femininity were out of place in a public sphere that was gendered masculine. Increasingly, the space where women ‘belonged’ came to be limited to the domestic sphere of home and family (Mackie 2002, p. 44). Yet in the face
of the legal exclusion of women from political activity, some women edged their way into the public sphere by writing petitions, publishing articles and participating in debating societies, thereby ‘enter[ing] and enlarg[ing] the Japanese public sphere’ (Patessio 2006, p. 160).

Furthermore, there was active resistance to the prohibition on female political activity which took the form of the struggle for political rights—initially the repeal of Article Five of the Public Peace Police Law, and then the the rise of the suffrage movement—as well as the activities of socialist women who participated in socialist meetings. The activities of these political women represent protests by women against the state’s positioning of them as ‘helpmates’ (Mackie, 1997, p.157).

3.2 Wartime Mobilisation and the Struggle for Political Rights
After the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05) the Japanese authorities had gained an insight into the way women’s public activities could work for the betterment of society in terms of patriotism, public hygiene, charity and general ‘moral suasion’ (Garon 1993, p. 15). The Patriotic Women’s Association (Aikoku Fujinkai), which formed in 1901, was a platform from which women’s public activities served state interests. This organisation was formed with the assistance of the Home Ministry and Army Ministry and its purpose was to support fallen soldiers and their families, educate women about society and perform charity work for the state (Garon 1993, p. 15). Its initial membership of 45,000 had surged to 816,609 by 1912, making it the largest women’s group in the Meiji era. The importance of women’s service to the state for nationalistic purposes has been described by Mackie.

Women could prove their femininity by crying for their lost husbands and sons, by supporting the war effort through charitable activities, and by travelling to the front as nurses, in the same way as men proved their masculinity on the battlefield (Mackie 2003, p. 31).

While self-sacrifice was encouraged in women and men, the discursive location of nurturing as a feminine characteristic was linked to notions of nationalism during this
era. The authorities were enthusiastic about women’s increased participation in public life so long as it benefited the Japanese state, but they became concerned when women stepped outside the boundaries of normative womanhood—that of wife and mother—and were therefore ambivalent about granting women political rights (Garon 1993, p. 14).

Socialist women remained outside the discursive construction of women as ‘helpmates’ to the state by being critical of women who were complicit with the state through their participation in pro-militarist women’s organisations, such as the Patriotic Women’s Organisation (Mackie 1997, p. 58). Socialist women were politically active from the 1900s by belonging to the Heiminsha (Commoners’ Society). By taking part in the socialist movement, these women challenged the prohibition of political activities imposed on women. Later, socialist women were politically active in campaigning for female workers’ rights. Despite their numbers, however, they struggled to be taken seriously as workers. They were instead constructed as wives, sisters, daughters, lovers or potential wives (Mackie 1997, pp. 116-17). In particular, they were constructed as ‘helpmates’ to male activists in left-wing organisations (Mackie 1997, p. 43). Their activities in the Heiminsha were gendered: not only were socialist women constructed as lovers, mothers, wives, and so on, the day-to-day running of the organisation was arranged according to a gendered division of labour (Mackie 1997, p. 160). Despite rejecting the discourse of helpmate to the state, socialist women nevertheless were unable to avoid being constructed as helpmates to a male-led movement.

In a state that was becoming progressively more militaristic, women were constructed as helpmates either to the state through patriotic organisations, or to their male counterparts in other spheres of life. The formal prohibition of women from participating in politics made the role of ‘helpmate’ the most appropriate for women, yet women actively resisted this construction by formally campaigning to change the law that prohibited them from engaging in political activities, to be discussed below. Socialist women initially resisted joining the suffrage movement because they viewed it as bourgeois and distracting from their main aim of social reform for workers (Mackie 1997, p. 141). They were also critical of the approach by the authorities to incorporate
women into politics on their self-serving terms. Yet they also realised that gaining political rights would give them more scope to argue their case, and by the early 1920s, the suffrage movement became a cause that united liberal feminists and socialist women (Mackie 1997, p. 141).

3.2.1 Revision of the Public Peace Police Law

One of the leaders of the suffrage movement, Ichikawa Fusae (1893–1980) joined forces with writer and feminist, Hiratsuka Raichō (1886–1971), to campaign for the revision of Article Five of the Public Peace Police Law. They realised it was imperative in their campaign for political rights for women. Together, they organised the New Women’s Association (Shin Fujin Kyōkai) with Oku Mumeo in 1919 (Vavich 1967, p. 411). In 1922, Article Five of the legislation was amended and women gained the right to participate in political meetings but remained unable to join political organisations (Mackie 2003, p. 5).  

Hiratsuka initially opposed Ichikawa’s argument for women’s voting rights on the basis that women should not have to emulate men to achieve emancipation (Tachi 1995, p. 22). Her reasoning was that, in becoming like men, women too would have to forfeit their human rights for the sake of industrialisation. This approach to the issue was a precursor of some postwar strands of feminism that emphasised difference. Hiratsuka’s argument was based on the understanding that women do not need to be like men and in fact are better off for not attempting to be. Hiratsuka gradually, however, came to see the importance of suffrage for women and joined Ichikawa in her campaign. After having a child in 1915, she began to campaign for the rights of mothers and her attitude towards voting rights for women gradually changed as she came to see that gaining the vote would be important if society were to be changed from a woman’s standpoint (Tachi 1995, p. 22). As we have seen above, she began working with Ichikawa in 1919.

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17 The Universal Suffrage Act was passed in 1925. ‘Universal’ suffrage, however, did not include women, but only removed property qualifications for all adult men (Mackie 2003, p. 5). The first elections held under universal male suffrage were in 1928.
to campaign for a change to Article Five so that women could engage in political meetings.

While the New Women’s Association contributed to the successful passage of the bill to amend Article Five of the Public Peace Police Law, the government at the time was also increasingly interested in mobilising women’s support (Mackie 2003, p. 60). Women’s participation in public life was gaining recognition by the government, and revision of the Public Peace Police Law was motivated in part by the state’s desire to mobilise women’s activities for its interests (Nolte 1986; Garon 1993, p. 18). State ideology was partly informed by the international climate. The US extended suffrage to women in 1920, and in the UK, women over the age of 30 could vote after 1918, with the age limit lowered to 21—the same for men—in 1928. The Japanese government was informed by the Anglophone powers that had looked favourably on women’s mobilisation in favour of the war effort during the First World War (Garon 1993, p. 18). In many cases, these governments also assumed that women would be a conservative force.

3.2.2 Pure women: The discursive construction of political women

Although women had gained the right to attend political meetings, they were still prohibited from voting or joining political parties. In 1924, the League for the Attainment of Women’s Political Rights (Fujin Sanseiken Kakutoku Kisei Dōmeikai) was formed under the lead of Ichikawa and Kubushiro Ochimi. In 1925, it changed its name to the Women’s Suffrage League (Fusen Kakutoku Dōmei) (Mackie 2003, p. 61). Although Ichikawa was accused by some women outside the movement of lacking sensitivity and womanly virtue (Vavich 1967, p. 45), the suffrage movement often framed its arguments in terms of those very womanly virtues. The Women’s Suffrage League campaigned on the basis that ‘women’s political participation was necessary to improve elections and politics’ (Shindō 2004, p. 128). Ichikawa’s argument and those of the broader movement for political rights was that female virtue would eliminate corruption. She campaigned against electoral corruption and she was particularly active in attempting to purge corrupt politicians from the Tokyo metropolitan government (Tachi 1995, p. 24). She also promoted the idea of connecting ‘politics and the kitchen’ (Tachi 1995, p. 24), which meant connecting politics to the everyday lives of citizens.
She argued that the populace could be well represented by women because it was women, more so than men, who were involved in every-day life because of their roles as mothers and wives.

Corruption was widespread in electoral politics in Japan during the 1920s and 1930s. Vote-buying was prevalent and the dominant discourse of those arguing for women’s political participation was that women’s votes could not be bought because women were more ‘pure’. The July 1932 edition of Fusen (Women’s Suffrage), published by the Women’s Suffrage League, featured an article by Ichikawa who argued that the reason elections were corrupt was that votes were being bought and that women’s votes ‘are by nature honest and incorruptible and have minimal party affiliation’ (cited in Shindō 2004, p. 128). Suffragist and feminist poet Yosano Akiko penned a song that called for women as mothers and sisters to ‘scrub away the age-old corruption of a politics run by men and for men’ (cited in Mackie 2003, p. 63). Suffragists thus discursively constructed themselves as the potential moral gatekeepers against electoral corruption. Adhering to dominant discourses of femininity by arguing that women would purify elections also, however, represented a legitimate method of participating in public debate for women.

The claims of the suffrage movement were simultaneously conservative and radical. By arguing for the right to participate in politics so that they could ‘fulfil their duties as Japanese subjects’ the suffragists were supportive of the state and failed to challenge existing patriarchal gender norms. At the same time, they challenged the existing political system and demanded it change ‘according to feminine virtues of domesticity’ (Nolte 1986, p. 700). The development of positive roles for women by the Japan chapter of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) also embodied this clashing of the conservative and the progressive. Christianity was influential in education and social welfare by the 1890s and the Christian ethos of social service had an impact on Japanese feminism, including the suffrage movement. The WCTU campaigned against prostitution, urged men to reform their sexual behaviour (Mackie 2003, pp. 29-30), provided welfare for textile workers, and participated in the suffrage movement (Mackie 1997, p. 38). The activities of the women in the WCTU were nevertheless constructed as those of wives and mothers.
These activities provided women with a positive role, but ultimately women were positioned in the domestic sphere, and any public activities could only be legitimated as extensions of the role of ‘good wives and wise mothers’ (Mackie 1997, p. 38).

In the early 1930s, women came very close to gaining the right to vote. In 1930, and again in 1931, bills to enfranchise women were passed by the Lower House, but blocked by the Upper House. The 1931 bill was not in the form that most suffragists had requested. Suffragists generally opposed the limited bill for its lack of equality (Nolte 1986, p. 691; Garon 1993, p. 33). It limited political participation at the local level and, on the advice of the Home Ministry, contained the provision that if a woman won an election she must gain permission from her husband before taking up the position. This was nevertheless the closest women in pre-war Japan came to gaining the franchise and the right to run for election.

Garon (1993, pp. 30-32) suggests that the reason many of those in the bureaucracy and politics had started leaning towards extending political rights to women, to the extent that a bill was proposed in the 1930s, was not that they regarded women as equal to men, but that they recognised the social benefits, such as increased public awareness of frugality and hygiene that women’s public participation could generate. In particular, local politics came to represent for the authorities ‘an extension of the kitchen’, an idea espoused also by Ichikawa (Garon 1993, p. 34). Some politicians also believed that women would vote conservatively and therefore help to curtail radicalism, that they were pure in thought and therefore would assist in keeping corruption in check, and they would help in generating thrifty household habits (Garon 1993, pp. 30-32). As with the revision of the Public Peace Police Law, the passing by the Upper House of this limited suffrage bill represented more of an indication of the state’s growing understanding of the utility of women’s support for government-led programs than acceptance of the idea of more rights for women.

The Women’s Suffrage League continued to push the authorities for female suffrage until 1940, when all such groups were forced to disband. By then all women’s groups
had been mobilised for military or patriotic purposes. The Women’s Suffrage League was subsumed into the larger Women’s Association for Research on the Emergency Situation (*Fujin Jikyoku Kenkyūkai*) which, in 1942, was amalgamated with all other women’s groups into the Greater Japan Women’s Association (*Dai Nihon Fujinkai*) (Mackie 2003, p. 109). This organisation mobilised all women over the age of 20 and took part in activities such as creating care packages (*imonbukuro*) for soldiers containing letters, gifts and photographs. In this way, women in patriotic organisations continued to assume the maternal role as nurturer, as they had in the Patriotic Women’s Organisation in the early 1900s, while men took on the masculine role of the soldier—both roles self-sacrificing for the nation (Mackie 2003, p. 110). These constructions of masculinity and femininity were dominant until the end of the Second World War.

### 3.3 Peaceful Victims: Constructions of Womanhood in the Occupation

The Japanese emperor announced Japan’s surrender on August 15, 1945 and the US forces arrived in Japan on August 30 (Mackie 2003, p. 121), leaving seven years later in 1952. The occupying forces, led by General Douglas MacArthur, arrived with the purpose of ‘democratising’ a society they regarded as militaristic and feudalistic. One of the pillars of the democratisation policies of the Allied Occupation was the extension of civil rights to women. Suffragist Ichikawa was determined that her and her colleagues’ efforts towards suffrage should not be overlooked and requested the Japanese government, now headed by Shidehara Kijūrō, to grant women suffrage before the occupation authorities could. On 10 October, 1945, the entire Shidehara cabinet agreed with the proposal drawn up by Ichikawa and the newly formed Women’s Committee on Postwar Policy (**Sengo Taisaku Fujin Inkai**) calling for, among other things, voting rights to be extended to women over the age of 20 and the right to run for election to be extended to women over the age of 25 (Shindō 2004, pp. 165-67). On 11 October, the occupying forces announced the five pillars of the democratisation policy for Japan, the first of which was to extend full political rights to women. The Electoral Law was revised in December 1945. It is important to note, however, that while ‘Japanese women’ were enfranchised at this time, this enfranchisement did not include women from the former colonies of Korea and Taiwan who were living in Japan (Yoneyama

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18 The Occupation of Okinawa formally lasted until 1972, and US forces remain a presence in Japan today.
and furthermore, men from the former colonies were disenfranchised in 1952 (Lam 2005, p. 227) when all former colonial subjects lost their Japanese nationality.

The question of who exactly bestowed political rights on Japanese women has been an area of historical debate (Pharr 1987, pp. 227-28; Shindō 2004, p. 168). Clearly the pre-war Japanese suffrage movement laid the groundwork for the Japanese government to extend voting rights to women. This point is often lost in discussions about Douglas MacArthur’s determined goal of ‘raising the status’ of Japanese women. One of the first things the occupation forces did was create a new Constitution that, among other things, contained two clauses relating to gender equality. Article Fourteen is the sex equality clause and reads: ‘All of the people are equal under the law and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin’ (cited in Mackie 2003, p. 127), while Article 24 provides for the ‘essential equality of the sexes’ with regards to marriage. In addition to this, the education system was revised so that boys and girls were given the basic right to education and adults were obliged to see that children received this education. A common curriculum was developed for boys and girls and nine years of education for both girls and boys became compulsory (Hara 1995, p. 103). Equal rights to political participation were also enshrined by Article 44 of the Constitution: ‘The qualifications of members of both Houses and their electors shall be fixed by law. However, there shall be no discrimination because of race, creed, sex, social status, family origin, education, property or income’ (cited in Mackie 2007, p. 52).

The Allied occupiers believed that women’s participation in civil life was vital for the Japanese state to become more peaceful. The forces perceived Japanese women as peaceful, passive and kind, in stark contrast to Japanese men who were viewed as evil, aggressive and militaristic (Yoneyama 2005, p. 892). In addition to being painted as passive, Japanese women were also believed to be heavily oppressed by feudalism, and not able to enjoy the ‘gender equality’ that American women had (Koikari 2002, p. 28). For the occupying forces, Japanese women therefore had to be rescued from the subjugation they had suffered at the hands of Japanese men (Koikari 2002, p. 28). The
occupying forces saw the ‘emancipation’ of Japanese women as one of their top priorities, and consequently the level of female public participation became a barometer of the success of the democratisation of Japan (Koikari 2002, p. 37; Yoneyama 2005, p. 887). Furthermore, the occupying forces believed that the undemocratic family system was the foundation for the militarism and fascism that had led to the War (Pharr 1987, p. 222). Therefore, raising the status of women within marriage and encouraging women’s political participation would contribute to a more peaceful and less ‘feudalistic’ Japan.

The emphasis on the democratic reforms that took place during the Occupation and that raised women’s status draws ‘a line of discontinuity’ (Shindō 2004, p. 168) between the efforts of the pre-war Japanese feminist movement and the rapid and sudden changes that occurred in the decade following Japan’s defeat in the war. Such emphasis on ‘what the Occupation did for Japanese women’ can incorrectly indicate that the pre-war Japanese feminist movement ended when the war began and the benefits women gained after the war derived entirely from the Allied Occupation.

3.3.1 Flowers on the old red carpet: Political women as Other

After a decades-long battle for political rights, women took advantage of their newly obtained rights and 79 female candidates ran in the first Lower House national election in 1946. The election results saw 39 of the 79 female candidates gain seats in the Lower House. Several reasons have been cited for such a large number of women winning seats in this election: the new large district, multi-member election system where voters could vote for multiple candidates was favourable to women because women were less likely than men to have electoral resources to gain a large number of votes (Ōgai 2005, pp. 30-31); there was confusion with regards to the new electoral system and many voters may have thought they had to circle one woman’s name and one man’s name (Ōgai 2001, p. 207); after decades of militarism and years of war, voters had high hopes for women to uphold peace (Ōgai 2005, pp. 31-32); and the lack of male candidates due to the Occupation purges of wartime authorities proved advantageous for women candidates (Hastings 1996, p. 274; Ōgai 2005, p. 32). Mackie (2003, p. 125) notes that regardless of the reasons, the women elected had largely come from professional backgrounds, such as teaching or the medical profession—some of the few professions
open to women until then—and furthermore, many of them had been active in political organisatons or the union movement prior to the war.

Despite the education and activist experience of the elected women, due to deeply embedded assumptions about women’s social roles, which were further entrenched under the Occupation (to be discussed below), they were often not taken as seriously as male politicians. Labels attached to them at the time included ‘flowers on the red carpet’ by one newspaper (borrowing from a commonly-used metaphor for femininity) and ‘Joan of Arc’ (Mackie 2003, p. 125). Mackie (2003, p. 125) notes that the reappearance of the name ‘Joan of Arc’ after it was initially used to describe the prominent socialist Fukuda Hideko in the 1880s demonstrates that a model of the politically active woman in Japan had not yet been established. Given that women’s participation in politics was severely curtailed in pre-1945 Japan, this is not inconceivable. The very act of attaching a gendered label to women in politics distinguishes them from the mainstream male politician (Iwamoto 2003, p. 30; Shindō 2004, p. 16) and serves to reinforce woman as the Other to the unmarked male. This practice continues today in both Japan and other countries, and will be discussed in later chapters to analyse how discourses of women in politics continue to construct women as marked gendered beings and male politicians as the unmarked norm. It is also important to note, nonetheless, that politicians like Ichikawa Fusae, elected to the Diet in 1952, and Katō Shidzue, in 1946, were highly respected by the electorate and served as Diet members for decades.

3.3.2 Becoming housewives
During the Occupation period, Japanese women were viewed in a dichotomous, even contradictory, way. On the one hand, women were granted full political rights and therefore rights to fully participate in public life, but on the other, they were encouraged to be primarily active within the home. General MacArthur congratulated the newly elected women MPs with a caveat: they were to contribute to post-war Japan ‘without sacrifice of the important position of women in the home’ (cited in Koikari 2002, p. 29). Further, when discussing the importance of the female vote, he hoped that women would use their new rights to exert ‘the noble influence of womanhood and the home, which has done so much to further American stability and progress’ (cited in Koikari
He also strongly advised the elected women against forming a women’s bloc, implying that women’s right to vote and participate in politics should not be used to challenge male domination or assert women’s needs, but instead should be used for the betterment of the Japanese people (Pharr 1987, p. 238; Koikari 2002, p. 29).

The new female Diet members formed a non-partisan group, the Female Diet Members’ Club (Fujin Giin Kurabu). This club’s goals were conservative and can be interpreted as an extension of women’s roles as nurturers. For example, some of their first efforts included finding a solution to food shortages and improving the quality of infants’ milk (Shindō 2004, p. 189). Although I have interpreted this as a conservative goal in the sense that it can be seen as an extension as women’s roles as nurturers, it might also be regarded as one way that the group turned their domestic concerns into a political issue, as extreme food shortage was a serious issue at the time. Interest in food gradually developed into a broader interest in consumer affairs (Mackie 2003, p. 122), something numerous women’s groups have been involved with in the post-war period. In this way, the Female Diet Members’ Club’s activities were within the realm of acceptable women’s roles as prescribed by the Occupying forces. The political activities of these Japanese women in the immediate post-war era thus had links to pre-war official discourses of femininity that had defined women as ‘helpmates’ to the state, and as mothers and wives.

During the war many women’s groups had accepted the state’s roles for them, assisting in patriotic organisations and fulfilling their duties as efficient producers by performing paid work, as well as providing emotional support to their families and to soldiers as feminine nurturers. This was in exchange for the right to a public voice, something they had been denied for decades. After the war, many women’s groups, such as the Housewives Association (Shufuren), discussed below, maintained a general conservative stance by absorbing and internalising the occupying forces’ gender ideology whereby women’s primary responsibility was in the home. Despite their newly acquired political rights, women were still encouraged to identify with the ‘private’ sphere of home. This ideology was disseminated systematically as part of the democratising process, as outlined below. Of course the Occupation was not solely responsible for the development in Japan of nuclear family values and their concomitant
gender discourses. As I will discuss in Chapter Four, in the immediate postwar period business and government were also instrumental in shaping the dominant form of the heterosexual nuclear family with the salaryman-housewife partnership at its centre. The modernisation and industrialisation process propelled discourses about femininity and masculinity to align with economic progress.

[I]t is one of the paradoxes of that period that the forces of political economy and familial ideology increasingly pushed women into an identification with the domestic sphere as housewives, while the legal changes of that time removed official obstacles to their activities as citizens in the public, political sphere (Mackie 2003, pp. 122-23).

As the pre-war Japanese family was regarded by the occupation authorities as feudalistic (Mackie 2003, p. 129), democratising the family system was a priority for the occupation forces. Article 24 of the newly-created Constitution states,

> Marriage shall be based on the mutual consent of both sexes and it shall be maintained through mutual co-operation with the equal rights of husband and wife as a basis. With regards to choice of spouse, property rights, inheritance, choice of domicile, divorce and other matters pertaining to marriage and the family, laws shall be enacted from the standpoint of individual dignity and the essential equality of the sexes (cited in Mackie 2003, p. 129).

The Civil Information and Education Unit (CI&E) of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP) was in charge of educating women about how ‘democratic’ families functioned. The family that was presented as the democratic norm was the American middle-class family (Koikari 2002, p. 36). Women’s organisations that had been mobilised during the war for nationalist indoctrination were ‘democratised’ by a group of women in the CI&E who travelled the country visiting local areas and educating the women. In this way, SCAP encouraged women’s public activity, but only on the assumption that it was carried out within the framework of the idealised roles of mother and wife, thus giving no legitimacy to radical and/or working-class women from the discourse of emancipation.
With regards to political education for women, the CI&E presented the US League of Women Voters to the women’s organisations they visited as a prototype on how to exercise political rights. Specifically, the women were taught that the League shows women how to use their voting power in obtaining better schools for their children, better distribution of food for their families, better housing, better care for the needy, and all the other matters in which women have a great deal of interest because they are wives and mothers (US League of Women Voters pamphlet cited in Koikari 2002, p. 35).

The Japanese League of Women Voters (Fujin Yūkensha Dōmei), established in 1950, was one of several women’s organisations formed around this time. Not all were overtly political, however. Shufuren, the Housewives’ Association, which was active throughout the post-war period and remains so today, was, for example, not concerned with electoral or representative politics but was political in the way it organised around consumer issues, such as food safety and quality, on behalf of the community.

The sustained efforts of Japanese women leaders, such as Katō Shidzue, as a member of the Female Diet Members’ Club, who collaborated with women in the CI&E, resulted in the establishment of the Women and Minor’s Bureau in 1947. A small group of occupier women and Japanese women leaders joined forces to urge the government to create a women’s bureau within the Home Ministry or as an autonomous body within the Cabinet. The Japanese authorities were adamantly opposed to any inclusion of a women’s bureau and fought against its creation (Pharr 1987, p. 245; Kobayashi 2004, p. 37). Highly ranked SCAP authorities generally agreed with lower-ranked members of SCAP, including those in the CI&E about creating some sort of women’s bureau but were hostile towards the idea of a powerful, separate and autonomous body dedicated to women’s issues. While the higher-ranked men in SCAP were apparently in favour of legalising gender equality, they were anti-feminist in the sense that they opposed any collective organisation of women against men (Pharr 1987, pp. 237-38). During the months long process of establishing a bureau to deal with women’s issues, Commander Alfred R Hussey, Jr., Special Assistant to the Chief of Government Section wrote in a memo,
True as it is that women in Japan have always been and are now in an inferior and completely dependent position, the solution is not to be achieved by direct assault on the male position, or the male (cited in Pharr 1987, p. 237).

High-ranking male leaders in the occupying forces, such as Hussey and General MacArthur, were happy to grant women rights as an oppressed group through ‘cooperation and coordination’ but were opposed to women’s ‘independent social action’ (Pharr 1987, pp. 237-38).

The Japanese government denied the groups of Japanese and occupying women this claim to power and instead set up the Women and Minors Bureau within the Ministry of Labor rather than allowing it an autonomous role in the Cabinet. It was during the Socialist government, in 1947, that the Women and Minor’s Bureau was set up. Socialist activist Yamakawa Kikue became the first head of the Bureau.

Until its dissolution along party lines in 1946, the Female Diet Members’ Club normally limited its activities to those that identified it with dominant discourses of femininity—that is, activities associated with the domestic realm. However, when the club overstepped the boundary, as it did when pushing its claims for an autonomous women’s bureau, it was pulled into line by the occupying forces and reminded that organising as women rather than as ‘responsible representatives’ would be inappropriate because such organisation was understood as a feminist assault on men (Pharr 1987, p. 237).

1947 is regarded by many as the end of the first phase of the Occupation, with the second phase representing the ‘reverse course’ taken by US authorities (Hayes 2005, p. 36). Most social and political reforms, such as the establishment of the Women and Minor’s Bureau, were completed by 1947 and after this the US became more concerned with Japan’s role in Asia’s economic expansion. The ‘reverse course’ signalled a reinterpretation by the US of the post-war situation. The occupation shifted its focus
from discouraging re-militarisation to discouraging left-wing politics and encouraging economic growth and entry into the ‘free world’ (Kishimoto 1997, p. 26; Hayes 2005, p. 36). In particular, the rising influence of communism as apparent in the lead-up to the communist revolution in China and the increasing power of the Soviet Union worried the US. Utilising Japan as a bulwark against communism and socialism became a driving policy for authorities in Washington. Consequently, the Occupation came to view the ‘progressives’ (kakushin), or the Socialist Party, as a threat. The Occupation now lent its full support to those in the conservative camp in Japan (hoshu), represented by the Liberal Party and the Democratic Party, both which had previously been adversaries to the Occupation authorities (Hayes 2005, p. 36).

Until 1955, party politics was complicated, with several coalition governments forming, and frequent government changes. In 1951, Japan signed the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the Japan-US Security Treaty, both of which became effective in 1952. These treaties were a point of division in Japanese politics. The conservatives sided with the Americans and supported both treaties. The progressives were split in two: the left-wing faction supported neither treaty, while the right-wing faction supported the Peace Treaty but opposed the Security Treaty. This disagreement eventuated in the Socialist Party splitting into two separate parties. There were now several political parties in Japan.

In 1955, the former left and right factions of the Socialist Party reunited after gaining a great deal of support in elections to form the Japan Socialist Party (JSP). The reunification of the JSP and the surge in socialism and communism in neighbouring countries prompted the two conservative parties, the Democratic Party and the Liberal Party to take action. Two months after the reunification of the JSP, the two parties merged, forming the Liberal Democratic Party. In addition to the threat of a more united socialism, another key factor in the formation of the LDP at this time was business support. The Japanese authorities were now focused on encouraging Japan’s role in Asia’s economic expansion, and leaders of big business were united in their desire for political stability, which they regarded as essential to economic growth (Hrebenar 1992,
Big businesses bankrolled the LDP into successive victories and since then have remained major fundraising sources for the LDP.

The political system that emerged in 1955 is known as the ‘1955 system’ (55nen taisei) and symbolises what people then thought would be a two-party system characterised by robust competition between the conservative LDP and the progressive JSP. Robust competition did not emerge, however, and the LDP maintained its hold on government for more than fifty years. The relationship between the LDP, business and other structures that have contributed to the LDP’s long-term success are central themes of the next chapter, where I consider the manner in which these relationships make access to politics difficult for women.

3.4 Conclusion
Modern gendered roles and dominant discourses were intrinsically linked to the (changing) interests of the nation-state. Discourses about Japanese femininity and women’s roles in the public sphere that emerged in the late 1800s in Japan were set against a backdrop of the beginnings of modernisation and industrialisation. From 1890 women’s political participation was formally prohibited. Women were prohibited from joining political organisations or attending political lectures not because of a belief that women were weak or inferior to men, but more because of the state’s desire to limit women’s activities to within the home and family. Women’s reproductive and productive activities served the state’s interests by (re)producing forces for labour and military and engaging in economic labour, encouraging thrifty consumer habits to drive the economy, and fostering morals within the population. In the early twentieth century, the authorities began to realise that these activities could benefit society more if women were able to conduct them in public spaces. Mobilising women in patriotic organisations became increasingly attractive as Japan became progressively more militaristic.

While the industrialising and increasingly militaristic state attempted to appropriate women’s roles for state interests, women themselves organised and fought for the right
to participate in civic life. Socialist women protested the prohibition on women’s political activity by joining such organisations as the Heiminsha, writing articles in socialist publications and contributing to the developing labour movement. Early socialist Fukuda Hideko invoked Joan of Arc as a role model in her quest for a model of female political activism. The repression of women’s political activity by the state until after the Asia Pacific War meant that when women were elected to the Diet for the first time, there was difficulty in imagining them as anything other than ‘Joan of Arc’ figures.

Although socialist women criticised the feminist movement, including the suffrage movement, for being bourgeois, they eventually joined them to campaign for political rights. Many women’s groups that campaigned for political rights, with the exception of some socialist women, based their arguments primarily on those that supported state interests. For the WCTU and for many of the suffragists, women’s vote would ‘clean up’ electoral corruption and make a better Japan. Theirs was an argument based on what they could do for Japan rather than one based on a sex-equality philosophy. In this way, many women’s groups fed from and supported state-sanctioned images of Japanese womanhood. Women were connected to notions of charity, integrity and the home. With the outbreak of war, all women’s groups were mobilised into patriotic organisations and the fight for political rights was subsumed under obligations to serve one’s country.

The civil rights that Japanese women gained during the Occupation put them in a better position from which to pursue political goals. Women were still, however, constructed as the political Other, in the sense that their appropriate role was in the domestic sphere rather than the public, political sphere. The occupying forces held conservative beliefs about gender roles that kept ‘women in their place’ within the patriarchal order by discouraging women’s collective action against male domination, and explicitly and implicitly encouraging women’s political activities as an extension of their roles as wives and mothers. While women were in a better political position after the war, the occupation forces nevertheless encouraged Japanese women to aspire to a certain type of womanhood that was situated within the home. The Occupation period saw the
extension and solidification of a dominant gender discourse of femininity that tied women to the home and nurturing tasks.

The second phase of the Occupation witnessed the realignment of political forces in Japan which culminated in the ‘1955-system’ which was then believed to be a competitive two-party system between the conservatives and the progressives. What eventuated, however, was a ‘one and a half party system’ (Hayes 2005, p. 123) with the LDP dominating Japanese politics for the next half-decade, with minimal opposition from those on the other side of the political spectrum, such as the Japan Communist Party and the LDP’s main, but weak opposition, the Japan Socialist Party.

The next chapter examines the political and party structures that enabled the LDP to stay in power for so long. This will involve analysis of where women fit into those structures and how women have negotiated these political and party structures. In addition to examining political and party structures, I will also examine post-war policies rolled out under LDP governments regarding welfare, employment and gender-equality to consider the ways in which dominant gender discourses were created, reinforced or challenged.
CHAPTER 4: WOMEN, POWER AND THE LDP—GENDER EQUITY DISCOURSES AND PRACTICES PRE-1994

Under Imperial Japan (1890–1945), the public sphere developed as a gendered sphere. By the time the Occupation began in 1945 politics had been gendered as a masculine activity. Despite the official prohibition of women’s political activity from 1890 to the early 1920s, the value of women’s activities in the public was recognised by authorities when it was conducted within the framework of dominant and official discourses of femininity that constructed women as mothers and wives. As a result, women’s public activities were co-opted by the authorities for patriotic purposes. This legitimisation of women’s public activities as extensions of their social roles as mothers and wives continued throughout the Occupation period. Women formally gained equal political rights to men, yet activities that were officially and socially sanctioned for women remained limited to those concerning the home, community and family. By 1946, some of the members of the Diet were women. Despite this, the dominant discursive category of womanhood remained the mother and wife.

The LDP formed during the tumultuous political period that ensued in the immediate post-war period. In the early 1950s, the contest between the political conservatives and progressives intensified. The formation of the LDP in 1955, however, signalled the beginning of the demise of this close competition and the commencement of long-term conservative rule. The LDP lost its Upper House majority for the first time in 1989, but it was not until 1993 that the LDP suffered its first loss of control of the Lower House and consequent defeat of government control. Only nine months later, the party regained control of government after going into coalition with two small parties, the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) and the New Party Harbinger (NPH). Since then, the LDP was consistently in coalition governments until its loss in the 2009 general election.

The question of how the LDP managed to stay in power for so long has been of great interest to researchers of Japanese politics. Japan’s largely healthy economy partly explains why voters repeatedly re-elected the LDP (Hayes 2005, pp. 74-75). In addition to this are the structural elements of the party itself, such as factions and candidate
support groups (*kōenkai*), that have aided the LDP in its near-monopoly over
government control. Various political scientists have demonstrated that major political
structures, such as the electoral system, have greatly assisted the LDP in repeatedly
winning successive elections (Kabashima and Steel 2006, pp. 4-5; 2007a, n.p; Krauss
and Pekkanen 2008, p. 17). Specifically, the multi-member single-vote district system
has been criticised for being difficult for newcomers to break through and for being
dominated by money. As the largest and richest political party, the LDP has benefited
from these structures, as will be outlined below. Feminist scholars in Japan have pointed
out how these very structures have also operated as obstacles to more women entering

In the first section of this chapter I will give a brief outline of the evolution of the LDP
that will take into account the importance and changing roles of certain power structures,
including factions and support groups (*kōenkai*). After briefly discussing LDP structures,
I will then explore how women fit into these structures and in doing so illuminate the
historical and comprehensive absence of women’s involvement in and impact on major
decision-making processes within the LDP. This discussion will shed light on the
masculinist nature of the LDP. It will reveal that the political system created by the LDP
has been exclusionary and elitist and that this has affected women’s representation in
the Diet.

In addition to structural barriers, such as the electoral system, dominant discourses of
femininity that link women to the home and family and which contribute to gender
stereotypes and gender-role socialisation shape men’s and women’s decisions to enter
politics. For this reason, parallel to the examination of the post-war political system’s
impact on women’s political representation, I will, in the second section, interrogate
gender-equity and social welfare policies rolled out by successive LDP governments
that assisted in shaping dominant gender discourses.

The electoral system underwent significant reforms in 1993. For this reason, the
arguments in this chapter are about events that took place and policies that existed prior
to 1993. I begin this chapter by outlining the development of the ‘LDP system’. The ‘LDP system’ refers to the combination of interest-based relationships that the LDP had with rural and middle-class voters and its political focus on the economy (Kabashima and Steel 2007a, n.p). This system, as will be discussed below, assisted the LDP in maintaining control of the government for so long.

4.1 LDP Power Structures Pre-1994

The Japanese parliament, the Diet, is a bicameral legislature consisting of the Lower House, which has 480 seats, and the Upper House with 242 seats. From 1947 to 1994, the Lower House elections ran on a multi-member/single vote district system, whereby each electorate was represented by two to six representatives but voters only cast one vote. A party would have a better chance to win a majority if it ran more than one candidate. As the LDP is large, it ran more than one candidate for each district, thus fostering competition between members of the same party. The electoral districts were disproportionately arranged to favour the rural vote (Hrebenar 1992, pp. 38-39). In immediate post-war Japan, the LDP set out to redistribute the national income gained during the rapid economic growth period of the 1960s. This was done by rewarding the rural population with budget allocations for public works projects and protectionist farming policies. In return, the rural areas of Japan became LDP strongholds and had disproportionate access to a political voice due to the malapportionment of electoral districts (Kabashima and Steel 2006, n.p; 2007a, n.p). Despite mass migration from rural areas to urban areas during the post-war period, electoral districts were not altered adequately to reflect the change in population distribution until 1994. This contributed to the LDP’s continuous rule for most of the post-war period.

This electoral structure benefited the conservatives: large electoral districts were easier for the LDP to win because it could field more than one candidate whereas a smaller party would not have the ability to do so (Krauss and Pekkanen 2004, p. 5). As voters could only select one candidate, the LDP had a higher chance of winning that seat. The interparty competition that derived largely from the large multi-member district voting system was a main reason for the formation of candidate support groups, the kōenkai.
Another reason for the development of the kōenkai was that electoral laws prohibited electoral campaigning outside a minimal timeframe prior to the election (Krauss and Pekkanen 2008, p. 13). Candidates therefore faced difficulty gaining access to potential voters, and they were also unable to use the party as a drawcard because they had to compete with members of their own party. Consequently, candidates created informal networks—sometimes numbering in the hundreds—of family, friends, former school and university classmates, business associates, interest group representatives and others (Stockwin 2008, p. 189). A kōenkai did not support the LDP as such, but the individual candidate. As conservative voters must choose between two or more candidates, instead of emphasising ideology or policies, candidates focused on local rather than broader national issues (Kabashima and Steel 2006, n.p). Voters also came to consider the characteristics of the individual over those of the party, leading to what is referred to as personality voting (Stockwin 2008, p. 193).

Competition between co-party members contributed to the emergence of money politics and corruption for which the LDP has become infamous (Kishimoto 1997, pp. 112-13; Cox and Thies 1998, pp. 288-89). Candidates did not sell themselves on their policies or ideologies but on their personalities or promises of particular services for the region. Running in an election is very expensive, as is the establishment and maintenance of a kōenkai. Candidates were thus more interested in sourcing funding to maintain close and friendly ties with their electorate than making policy or focusing on party platforms or ideologies. Stockwin (2008, p. 190) notes that in this respect, the activities of the kōenkai were more overtly social than political.

Vote-winning for LDP candidates therefore was the responsibility of the individual candidate. The LDP thus became a decentralised party with little organisation for candidates. The kōenkai maintained strong connections not to the party as a whole, but to factions within the party. Factions supported an individual candidate’s kōenkai by providing the candidate with funding to maintain the group and assisting with networking (Stockwin 2008, p. 190). Therefore, in addition to the creation of the
kōenkai, this electoral system also encouraged and came to rely on the continuation of factions because factions played an important role in fundraising for the kōenkai.

4.1.2 Factions

Factions developed soon after the party was created in 1955. They were significant power-brokering groups, particularly for career progression within the party. The party decided upon a system to elect a leader whereby ballot voting was conducted at a party convention. Diet members made up the majority of the voters so the candidates running had to gain loyalty with as many members as possible. The main function of the faction in this process was to help their leader become party leader and thus Prime Minister (Krauss and Pekkanen 2008, p. 13). In return, followers (faction members) gained assistance in accessing party, legislative and government posts, and funding to mobilise votes as well as the party’s endorsement when running in the election. Ministerial positions were and still are generally determined through inter-factional bargaining (Hayes 2005, p. 114).

As mentioned, another major function of factions was to raise funds for its members who were running in elections. In fact, the power that faction leaders enjoy has more to do with their ability to raise money than their expertise in policy or administration (Hayes 2005, p. 76). The distribution of money to candidates made possible the day-to-day maintenance of the kōenkai, and also allowed the candidate to reward his or her supporters by, for example, taking them on hot spring holidays or holding dinners and events (Stockwin 2008, pp. 189-90).

It would appear that joining a faction is important for electoral success for those in the LDP. Between 1958 and 1990, only twelve percent of conservative non-incumbents running without known factional backing succeeded, compared to 65 percent for their faction-backed competitors (Cox, Rosenbluth et al. 1999, p. 35). Reasons for this include less access to money (candidates not affiliated to a faction spent on average about 77 percent of the total spent by those with factional affiliation spent), and less chance of gaining endorsement from the LDP. The success rate for those seeking LDP
endorsement without known factional backing was low: 41 percent, as opposed to 75 percent for faction-backed candidates (Cox, Rosenbluth et al. 1999, p. 35). Factional affiliation is also regarded as very significant in the career progression of LDP politicians.

If a Diet member wished to advance in his party and legislative career and attain important positions in terms of influence over policy and prestige, he or she had to belong to a faction. Those who did not were given the dregs of the party and legislative assignments after faction members were catered to (Krauss and Pekkanen 2008, p. 26).

This faction / kōenkai system has engendered an election system that supports incumbents. The strength of the constituency base that the system has perpetuated has meant that it is very difficult for new candidates to beat an incumbent. If the faction funds the kōenkai adequately and the kōenkai woos the constituency with promises of funding for local public works and social events, voters would be unlikely to elect an unknown. Furthermore, when an incumbent passes away or retires, he or she often passes their kōenkai and seat to a relative or a secretary (Stockwin 2008, p. 190). The resulting system has been one where LDP incumbents have dominated their electorates for generations—an exclusionary and exclusive system that discourages change or competition. The faction / kōenkai system combined with the electoral system based on large districts that favoured political parties that were able to field multiple candidates benefited the LDP. This combination allowed the LDP to repeatedly consolidate its success at Lower House elections until the electoral system was revised in 1993 and became effective the following year. The faction / kōenkai system also contributed to the lack of power held by the prime minister. In combination with the power of the bureaucracy, the functions of the factions and koenkai meant that the head of the party had minimal substantive power.

4.1.3 Money politics and connections

Expenses involved in elections encouraged corruption (Krauss and Pekkanen 2008, p. 15). The LDP came to be known for its vested interests with businesses and corrupt dealings with businesses in return for financial and voting favours. Business favoured
long-term LDP rule because of the continuing post-war economic success under successive LDP governments. The LDP ensured that the bureaucrats created pro-business policies and those bureaucrats were often rewarded with positions in the party. Businesses, including banks, rewarded the LDP by making political donations to the party, factions and individual politicians and buying blocks of tickets to political fundraisers (Kishimoto 1997, pp. 112, 133). In this way, the interlocking web of interests facilitated long-term stable LDP rule, and a system prone to corruption. In order to become the head of a faction a politician needs strong connections with business and the bureaucracy. The candidate must to be able to raise funds to support the faction’s followers (Hayes 2005, p. 74). The link between the LDP, business and the bureaucracy came to be known as the iron triangle (Kishimoto 1997, p. 133; Hayes 2005, p. 75; Kabashima and Steel 2006, n.p).

A large proportion of Diet members come from local politics, the bureaucracy or political families. The majority also come from four of the top Japanese universities—Tokyo, Kyoto, Waseda and Keio. This has led to criticism of Japanese politics for failing to pursue a more democratic representation of the population (Steel and Martin 2008, p. 5). The LDP, in particular has been guilty of drawing from a shallow pool of the population (Lam 2006, p. 534; Stockwin 2008, p. 188). After the 2005 election, the percentage of total LDP Diet members to have come from the four élite universities was almost 68 percent. The figure for the opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) was 59 percent (Stockwin 2008, p. 186).

The exclusivity of Diet membership is also reflected in the number of hereditary members in the LDP. In the 1990 Lower House elections, almost 40 percent of LDP male and female candidates were children of Diet members (Hayes 2005, p. 49). The figure may be declining slightly (Taniguchi 2008, p. 67), but even recent data shows that at least one third of LDP Diet members are second or third generation politicians, and have often inherited kōenkai (Lam 2006, p. 558). In the 2000 general election, one third of all LDP candidates compared to twelve percent of all candidates had a father, father-in-law or grandfather who had served as a Diet member (Taniguchi 2008, p. 65).
The lack of diversity in Diet members, or more specifically, as Lam (2006, pp. 534-35) puts it, ‘the failure of political parties, especially the LDP, to recruit and nurture candidates from broader social backgrounds beyond political dynasties, the bureaucracy and narrow interest groups’, has resulted in the emergence of political schools that educate and train people interested in running in elections. These schools have surfaced as a new avenue for politically ambitious young people who are not inside the more common pipelines to political power—that is, people who do not come from political families and do not have political connections to the bureaucracy or business world (Lam 2006, p. 559). The schools are not usually affiliated with a particular political party. These political schools have had limited success, however, in producing many Diet members and in allowing those who are elected to challenge entrenched power systems. The biggest hurdle for graduates of one of the largest schools, the *Matsushita Seikei Juku* (Matsushita Institute of Government and Management), is ‘the longevity of the corrupt LDP, its factions and policy-making divisions, powerful interest groups, an entrenched bureaucracy and voters who are averse to political change’ (Lam 2006, p. 554).

Persual of the profiles of *Matsushita Seikei Juku* graduates suggestes that the DPJ is more open to recruiting candidates from outside typical conduits for politicians. Since its inception in 1979, as of May 2010, the *Matsushita Seikei Juku* has produced 70 graduates who have become politicians out of a total of 242 graduates (Matsushita Seikei Juku website, accessed 7/11/10). With regards to the other graduates, 34 have pursued careers in political administration or activism; 68 are employed in the field of finance; 40 in research and media, and 30 in ‘other’ industries. Of the 70 graduates to become politicians, two were women. Thirty-eight of the 70 graduates entered Diet politics. Of these 38, ten joined the LDP and the remaining 28 joined the DPJ. There was one woman in the LDP’s ten compared to none in the DPJ’s Diet intake. Overall, of the 70 people to have taken this route to politics (local as well as national), thirteen joined the LDP and 36 joined the DPJ. While it appears that DPJ is more willing to recruiting candidates from outside typical pathways for politicians, they are perhaps no more enthusiastic about recruiting women through this route than the LDP.
Lam (2006, p. 554) suggests that a fundamental failure of these schools is to produce truly diverse candidates. He claims that many of the political school graduates come from the élite private universities Waseda and Keio, and most come straight from university and thus have little experience or knowledge outside politics and élite education. Perhaps this used to be the case, but upon inspection of the *Matsushita Seikei Juku* website (accessed 7/11/10), current students come from a variety of universities, and almost all of them have been in the labour force between university graduation and entering the political school. Nevertheless, Lam is correct to point out the lack of diversity in gender intake. Female intake remains very low, and none of the current fourteen students are women.

The electoral system, the *kōenkai* and factions helped to shape the LDP. The party became decentralised because faction leaders had vested interests in seeing their followers win elections which were usually competitions with other faction members. The Prime Minister had little power over the key functions of the political party because the *kōenkai* took care of vote-seeking, the factions controlled position allocation, and the bureaucracy made policy (Krauss and Pekkanen 2008, p. 14). Japan, and more specifically the LDP, has been criticised for this system which created a ‘leadership deficit’ (Mulgan 2000), and fostered political corruption (Hayes 2005, p. 75; Krauss and Pekkanen 2008, p. 15; Stockwin 2008, p. 190).

The political and party structures I have discussed facilitated the LDP’s grip on power. These structures were expensive, exclusivist and prone to corruption. A result of the impenetrability of such political structures has been a shallow pool of recruits for political office, and a certain amount of predictability regarding winning candidates. The result of this is not just a corrupt, expensive and predictable political system, but a *gendered* political system as well, as will be revealed below, for the electoral, *kōenkai* and faction systems have developed in a way that has made access to them extremely

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19 While Japan has often been criticised for its policy-making system in which bureaucrats make the policy and legislators only pass the bills, opinion is divided on how undemocratic this is and to what extent the policy-making is in the hands of bureaucrats. This thesis is premised on the understanding that legislators in fact have a critical responsibility in creating and passing bills that become legislation. While bureaucrats and legislators both participate in the creation of policy, legislators are responsible for making the final decision in the legislature (Kawabata 2008, p. 106).
difficult for women, who typically lack the resources or connections necessary to participate.

4.1.4 The electoral system and female representation

The Japanese electoral system is often decried by scholars as being one of the main obstacles to increased female political participation (Kubo and Gelb 1994, pp. 126-27; Yamaguchi 2002, p. 12) and was also brought up by most interview informants in my research as being the biggest hurdle to more women in the Diet. As outlined in the literature review, many scholars have demonstrated that a country’s electoral system plays a significant part in female political representation (Phillips 1995, p. 51; Ōgai 2005, p. 62; Paxton, Kunovich et al. 2007, p. 269). Proportional representation systems are more likely than other systems to yield success for female candidates (Paxton 1997, pp. 445, 460). In Japan, the size of the electoral district is also significant: the larger the district, the more favourable to female candidates. Ōgai (2005, p. 31) claims the reason that large multi-member district systems tend to be more favourable to women candidates is that in electoral systems where voters can select more than one candidate, a candidate still has a chance of winning even without obtaining a large number of votes. When it comes to garnering a lot of votes, this kind of system is more advantageous than electoral systems where voters can only select one candidate (Ōgai 2005, p. 31) as Japanese women are in general at a disadvantage in acquiring resources such as networks and finances (Funabashi 2004, pp. 28, 30).

The effect of the size of the electoral district on the number of women elected is evident in Lower House election results from the late 1940s. The very first election that women were permitted to compete and vote in was held in 1946—the first democratically held elections after the Asia Pacific War. The electoral system at this time was a large-constituency system whereby voters chose between two and fourteen candidates, depending on the population of the district. This system favoured candidates who were not backed by large party machinery (Mackie 2003, p. 126). In this election, 39 women, accounting for 8.4 percent of total members, were elected to the Lower House. The following year the electoral system was altered to medium-sized electoral districts where voters cast a single vote for a single candidate, a system that favoured candidates
who had the backing of a large party (Mackie 2003, p. 126). The Lower House election held in 1947 following the revisions saw the number of women plummet to 3.2 percent—a figure that barely changed for over half a decade. The 1946 figure of 8.4 percent was only surpassed nearly sixty years later in 2005, when it rose to nine percent. Furthermore, there was no increase in the number of women in the Lower House until after the 1993 electoral reform when it rose from 2.7 percent to 4.6 percent in 1996.

Apart from the electoral system, the campaigning system in Japan is also critiqued as an obstacle to women’s participation. It has often been claimed that the high costs involved in running for Diet seats in elections (and by association maintaining a kōenkai in the case of the LDP) is one of the obstacles facing women who want to become Diet members (Kubo and Gelb 1994, pp. 133, 147; Yamaguchi 2002, p. 12). The LDP in particular has made it difficult for women to run in elections by preferring to give priority to incumbents and by requesting long lists of names of faction members and new recruits into the party (Kubo and Gelb 1994, p. 126). This is an area where connections and finances become very important for candidates. Scholars have claimed that to win an election in Japan you need the ‘3 ban’—kaban (money), jiban (organisation) and kanban (publicity) (Kubo and Gelb 1994, p. 133; Yamaguchi 2002, p. 12; Ōgai 2005, p. 98). Kaban—the purse—is a metaphor for finances. Women typically have less access to funds than men because of their tendency to occupy social roles such as unpaid mothers and wives (Yamaguchi 2002, p. 12) and be concentrated in low-paid and often part-time work. Women are also less likely than men to be associated with organisations such as business groups or agricultural co-ops that have large fund-raising capacities (Steel 2004, p. 231). These kinds of organisations are more likely to be connected to a major political party than organisations that women typically belong to, such as PTAs and volunteer groups.

In the case of the decentralised LDP, women find the areas of finance (kaban) and organisation (jiban) particularly difficult (LeBlanc 1999, pp. 190-91). One informant told me that the LDP has traditionally been a ‘do-it-yourself’ party with a lack of organisation for candidates and that this was, she believed, one of the main reasons for the lack of women in the party, particularly before the electoral law amendment in 1993.
(Interview with Nishikawa, 2008). Up until the mid-1990s, the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) was the main opposition to the LDP. Where the LDP relied on business for its fundraising, the JSP relied on public sector unions. In contrast to the LDP, which does not provide financial assistance to female candidates, the DPJ set up the DPJ Women’s Support Fund (Minshutō WS Kikin Water & Seed / Tane to Mizu) in 1999 to assist new female candidates running for Diet seats. The fund provides new female candidates with two million yen (approximately 24,000 AUD20), as well as support from other Diet members during the campaign (email communication with DPJ Diet member Komiyama Yōko’s office, July 1, 2008).

By maintaining an exclusionary and extremely costly campaigning system, LDP governments systematically remained hostile to women and others who could not compete on equal footing with LDP incumbents, who were usually male. The maintenance and long-standing nature of the electoral and faction / kōenkai systems served to consolidate the normative understanding of how politics is carried out, and what a successful election involves. Specifically, the style of campaign that relies on typically masculinised networks and substantial fundraising abilities has proved more accessible to men than women. It has created a system whereby a candidate is compelled, if they want to win, to follow the expectations of the system. The expectations are not gender neutral, but demand certain choices and sacrifices from the candidate, many of which are more difficult for women to make due to their gendered social roles. The political system that developed after 1955 under the LDP in Japan has been exclusionary to women because it revolves around a campaign system that is masculinist. Specifically, political campaigning usually requires connections to big business and political incumbents, and financial backing, all of which men are more likely than women to have. This political system has also excluded those who had difficulties finding connections to the LDP more generally.

The gendered political system that is unwelcoming to women only functions as such if women are socialised into female roles that make choices about entering a political

20 At an exchange rate of 1 AUD = 82.8 yen current as of 14/3/11.
career very difficult and highly unlikely. This is the point at which institutional barriers intersect with cultural barriers. In addition to the structural and institutional exclusion of women in politics outlined above, women have been discouraged from entering Diet-level politics as a result of the consolidation in post-war Japan of dominant gender discourses that define women as nurturers and caregivers, and men as breadwinners. The power of gender discourses means that regardless of the reality of the ability of mothers to become politicians, there is a strong public perception that it is difficult for them to do so. Women contemplating running for political office are often discouraged by their families, including their husbands (Iwai 1993, p. 111; Kubo and Gelb 1994, p. 133; Funabashi 2004, p. 31; Iwanaga 2008, p. 122). According to Yamaguchi Mitsuko, from the Fusae Ichikawa Center for Women and Governance, among women who take part in seminars held by the Center to Promote Women’s Involvement in Politics, the foremost obstacle they believe prevents them from running in or winning elections is opposition from their husbands (Yamaguchi 2002, p. 12). Funabashi suggests that the lack of support women get from their husbands stems from the perceived difficulties entailing a change in the concept of ‘family’ (Funabashi 2004, p. 31). According to dominant gender discourses in Japan, a married woman’s central role is to care for her home and family, while a man’s is to be the breadwinner. If a woman becomes an MP, her husband must learn to rely on himself for cooking and cleaning (Funabashi 2004, p. 31). The gendered division of labour at home thus discourages women from seeking to play a role in politics (Mackie 2000, p. 248).

The transformation of this normative family structure is inconceivable for many young men and women in Japan (Bulbeck 2009, p. 173-74). For example, even if a woman gains nominal support from her husband to run in an election, this does not necessarily free her from what are perceived to be her household duties. A major obstacle to women becoming politicians is the material reality that in most households women are responsible for childcare and housework. Dominant gender discourses in Japan strongly

21 The extent to which men are also discouraged by their family, including their wives, to run for politics has not, as far as I am aware, been documented. Given the over-representation of men in politics, this is arguably not a question requiring immediate attention. LeBlanc’s (2010) study on masculinities in Japanese politics suggests that men’s social role as breadwinner constrains their political activity. According to this analysis, family responsibilities do place limitations on men’s political engagement, but these limitations are different to those that face women (LeBlanc 2010, p. 42).
suggest that housework and family are the responsibility of women and this generally means that women do not have as much time as men to pursue political careers (Kubo and Gelb 1994, p. 134; Mikanagi 1999, p. 91). Where a male candidate typically has a wife at home, female candidates rarely receive the same support from partners and thus are forced to juggle a demanding career with a home life (Mikanagi 1999, p. 93). Many women struggle particularly with the decision to run for office and what it means for their children. They also struggle with knowing how to uphold the image of the perfect mother and wife while pursuing political office. As JCP member Takasaki notes in Iwai’s study of female members of the Diet, ‘If you’re going to ignore your own children while promising to work hard for all the district’s children, you lose your credibility as a Diet member’ (cited in Iwai 1993, p. 112). Because of the importance placed on a women’s role as mother, especially when their children are young, married female politicians are in a double bind wherein they must appear to be model homemakers as well as competent and dedicated politicians.

In the next section, I will argue that these dominant gender discourses have been encouraged by policies created under LDP governments. Specifically, I will analyse the extent to which post-war policies created under mainly LDP governments have affected the dominant discourses of femininity and masculinity that existed at the conclusion of the Occupation of Japan. The encouragement of dominant gender discourses through the shaping of certain economic, welfare and labour policies has repercussions on gender practices. According to Foucault (1998, p. 284), ‘There is nothing to be gained from describing this autonomous layer of discourses unless one can relate it to other layers, practices, institutions, social relations, political relations, and so on’. In the following section, by relating dominant discourses of gender in Japan to social institutions and political policies, I will argue that post-war policies have assisted in keeping women out of politics. Specifically, I will suggest that post-war social, economic and labour policies enacted by LDP governments reinforced dominant gender discourses that constructed women as existing outside politics. These policies, combined with the political structures outlined above, have been instrumental in keeping the representation of women in the Diet extremely low.
4.2 Dominant Discourses of Gender in the Post-War Period

During the Occupation, the model of the American middle-class wife was presented to the Japanese as the ideal model of modern womanhood. In using the term ‘model’, I acknowledge a certain degree of generalisation. ‘Model’ here connotes the idealised form in this particular era. It does not claim conformity or universality across the Japanese (or American) population, nor does it convey the subtleties of individual women or families: ‘While particular models (and ideals) may be promulgated and propagated by media, folklore, state policy and legislation, the adoption, adaptation and rejection of models occurs on a daily basis in the lived experiences of individuals’ (Dales 2009, p. 13). The dominant discursive category of woman that emerged out of Japan’s post-war occupation was tightly connected with the home. The education system had been democratised—boys and girls were now educated together and expectations to be ‘good wives and wise mothers’ (ryōsai kenbo) had been removed from the curriculum—and women had gained political rights. The idea that women’s priorities were in the home was nevertheless firmly tied to normative constructions of femininity. The official discourse of womanhood as ryōsai kenbo served the Meiji authorities’ interests by constructing women as ‘helpmates’. Discourses of femininity in post-war Japan that continued to construct women as connected primarily to the home and family were beneficial for industrialisation and rapid economic growth, for they created an environment where male breadwinners could devote their energies to paid work.

4.2.1 The backbone of industrial growth: The post-war family model

By the end of the Occupation period, the US was encouraging Japan to adapt its social and political structures in order to enable it to enter the ‘free world’ and eschew communism. Japan began a rapid industrialisation process in the late 1950s which involved changing its economy from agriculture to manufacturing and, later, services. This brought with it increased urbanisation and the normalisation of the nuclear family. Three-generation families, which were the norm prior to industrialisation did not disappear, but the proportion of nuclear families increased (Ochiai 1997, p. 59). As men and women moved to the cities to work, the roles they took on became more and more differentiated. The burgeoning economy developed in a manner dependent on the support from the housewife/salaryman unit (Ueno 1988, p. 167; Meguro 2004, p. 12).
The increasingly normalised post-war nuclear family model consisted of a husband who engaged in productive labour outside the home and a wife who engaged in reproductive labour by having children, raising them and providing support to her husband at home. For men and boys the state-sanctioned ‘corporate warrior’ was the dominant model of masculinity (Dasgupta 2000, p. 193). The male middle-class life cycle from student to white collar worker was linked directly to the industrial economy. Dedication to one’s work in an era of increased industrialisation became an important element of dominant discourses of masculinity. These discourses of masculinity increasingly constructed men as belonging outside the private sphere, where women were discursively located as wives and mothers. Despite his physical estrangement from the home, as head of a household the salaryman’s motivation to work was based on his role as family provider or daikokubashira (mainstay) (Roberson and Suzuki 2003, p. 6; Dasgupta 2005, p. 168). The daikokubashira is the central supporting pillar in traditional Japanese homes. The continued use of this word to describe the Japanese family man indicates the discursive construction of the father and husband as the central support figure in the household.

In order to be able to dedicate himself to his job, the salaryman required support at home. The model of Japanese womanhood became the housewife supportive to a salaryman husband and mother to the future generation. By the 1960s, the housewife model of womanhood, which had formerly been the domain of the élite, had become the norm (Ueno 1988, p. 173). Ochiai identifies what she calls the ‘postwar turn to the home’ in the generation of women born between 1936 and 1950 (Ochiai 1997, p. 13). Women born in this era became housewives at a much higher rate than those before them. In particular, more women born in the late 1940s dropped out of the workforce after marrying or having children than any other generation. The 1960s can be regarded as the years when the housewife became firmly entrenched as the dominant model of femininity in Japan. Being a housewife became so normative that it was ‘practically synonymous with womanhood’ (Ochiai 1997, p. 35). The crucial difference between the situation of housewives in the Taishō era (1912–26) and the post-war era was that while being a housewife had been limited to the upper-classes, in post-war Japan being a housewife was first a cherished ideal, and later the overwhelming majority status for women.
It is important to note that being a housewife in Japanese does not preclude being engaged in part-time work. Women who work part-time are nonetheless regarded as housewives and are also likely to identify as housewives (Ochiai 1997, pp. 13-14). Indeed, while becoming a housewife may certainly have been an idealised lifestyle for women, Ōsawa (2002, p. 72) points out that the number of salaryman/full-time housewife couples as a percentage of all couples peaked in 1972 when it reached 37 percent, indicating that it was never in fact the majority. Most women worked outside the home, at least on a part-time basis.

As living standards improved and the housewife became the cherished feminine ideal, being a good mother became a central tenet of the emerging model of womanhood. Emphasis had shifted from being an efficient wife and homemaker in pre-war to Japan to being a wise mother in post-war Japan (White 1987, p. 270; Uno 1993, p. 304). Uno (1993, p. 304) suggests several reasons for this transition: the nuclear family now meant that women no longer served their in-laws to the same extent, the increase in electrical appliances allowed women more time to spend on child-rearing, and women were less likely to be working in family industry because of increased urbanisation. The style of mothering also changed. In the context of rapid urbanisation, women invested increasing amounts of time and emotion into mothering a smaller number of children. Children were viewed as investments rather than sources of labour (Ochiai 1997, pp. 45-47; Borovoy 2005, p. 75). As families became more affluent, mothering came to be described in discourses of love and intimacy rather than discipline. A mother’s intimate love for and devotion to her child came to be regarded as the most important ingredient in childrearing. Motherhood thus came to be a central tenet of culturally dominant femininity in Japan (Uno 1993, p. 304; Borovoy 2005, p. 79).

Japan’s relentless pursuit of firstly economic recovery and later economic greatness relied on the gendered division of labour: the housewife and the salaryman became the backbone of economic growth. Prime Minister Ikeda introduced the National Income Doubling Plan in 1960. This signalled a subtle shift in the Japanese government’s approach to economic growth. Rather than being central to the pursuit of national power, economic growth was now important for the Japanese people. The state promoted the
idea of economic growth as something that would benefit every individual (Chiavacci 2007, p. 38). This plan helped pave the way for Japan to become an increasingly competitive society and strengthened the division of labour between full-time housewives and full-time male workers.

The state and business both encouraged this post-war family model. For example, in 1961, the government introduced spousal tax exemption for spouses who earned less than one million yen a year (Sechiyama 2000, p. 135). This was an effort to recognise the work housewives did inside the house, as ‘helpers’ to their salaryman husbands (naijo no kō) (Higuchi 1997, p. 106; Sechiyama 2000, p. 135). The exemption created a ‘ceiling’ whereby spouses who earned more than one million yen were taxed, thus providing an incentive for married women to limit their income. Meanwhile corporations encouraged the post-war family model by offering family wages, sometimes including a ‘marriage bonus’, healthcare, housing subsidies and bonuses for each child born (Borovoy 2005, p. 74). The salaryman/housewife couple was regarded by companies as an important element in the smooth functioning of both corporations and households. Large corporations employing salarymen joined forces with the government in the 1950s and 1960s in the New Life Movement. One of the purposes of the movement was to encourage women’s domesticity so that male employees could dedicate themselves to their company without worrying about domestic life (Gordon 1997, pp. 246-47). This movement included education programs targeting housewives to increase frugality, morality and domestic hygiene. In 1955, the New Life Movement received government endorsement when Prime Minister Hatoyama created and funded the New Life Movement Association to coordinate and promote activities that, among other things, encouraged the housewife/salaryman household (Gordon 1997, p. 246).

Rapid economic growth brought with it middle-class realities to families. The LDP government took credit for making possible a mass middle-class and became the ‘champions of economic affluence’ (Chiavacci 2007, p. 39), transforming a devastated country to one of the most stable democracies in the world. The post-war family model developed partly as a result of Japan’s industrial and economic growth, but it also served as a prop for it. Chiavacci argues that the pursuit of economic growth by the
government and by business from the 1950s involved a *prescription* of family and life models to the Japanese people by the government. Men’s contribution to the economy was through productive labour, while women contributed through different, less visible means. They supported their salaryman husbands at home; they constituted the bulk of the peripheral labour force which employers could deploy when necessary; and finally, they provided care to the elderly and the children in the absence of an adequate welfare state (Chiavacci 2007, pp. 40-41). With discourses of femininity bound up with the home and family, the divide between mainstream ‘politics’ and ‘woman’ was wide. Women’s groups that were active in the immediate post-war period, as discussed in Chapter Three, typically limited their activities to those related to family, the community and the environment. Mainstream politics, with its expensive and élitist obstacles, was a world far removed from the housewives of the post-war family model.

In the next section, I look more closely at employment and welfare policies enacted under LDP governments to find evidence of their effects on the gender discourses discussed here.

### 4.3 Support of Dominant Discourses of Gender through Social Welfare and Employment Policies

Many policies created by the government in post-war Japan reinforced dominant notions of femininity and masculinity. Specifically, support for the salaryman/housewife post-war family model was on the political agenda for the LDP at least until the 1990s. In the following section, I will examine social welfare policies and employment legislation in the post-war era, with particular emphasis on the 1980s. Focusing on this era will demonstrate that despite an appearance of both change (equal employment opportunity legislation) and continuity (gender-role reinforcing taxation laws), until the 1990s the LDP supported what widely published feminist writer and activist Higuchi Keiko (1985, p. 27) has called the ‘neo-division of labour’. This refers to the gendered division of labour whereby men work outside the home and women work inside the home with some part-time labour. I argue that their policies were based more on continuity than change. Analysing the objectives and outcomes of social welfare cutbacks, tax regulations that support the gendered division of labour and a flawed equal employment opportunity legislation will shed light on the LDP’s conservative approach to gender issues up until the early 1990s.
4.3.1 Social welfare

Until the 1970s, government-implemented social welfare in Japan had been minimal. In the ten years after the completion of the Asia Pacific War, it was negligible because of the government focus on economic recovery (Peng 2000, p. 97). The national pension and health care schemes were introduced during the 1950s. Following this, legislation concerning the mentally disabled, elderly, lone mothers, children, public assistance and the handicapped was included in the Six Basic Welfare Laws that were established in the 1960s (Peng 2000, p. 97). This was not enough for the growing urban middle-class, which began to demand better living conditions and increased welfare. These demands, combined with increasing competition from opposition political parties at the local level, prompted the LDP government to expand social welfare. 1973 was declared the First Year of Welfare (*Fukushi no Gannen*) (Peng 2000, p. 98).

However, the oil crisis of the same year prompted the government to reverse its course and instead begin implementing cuts in welfare. As a result of the oil crisis, the Japanese economy suffered its first downturn since the Asia Pacific War. This prompted the government to initiate ‘Japanese-style welfare’ (*Nihongata fukushi*) in an attempt to cut social welfare spending (Mikanagi 1998, pp. 189-90; Peng 2002, p. 419). The cuts in welfare spending over the next decade involved replacement of free medical care services for the elderly that had been introduced in 1973 with a system of user fees by 1982, rationalisation of the income assistance program by tightening the means test during the 1980s, another tighter means test for the child-allowance programme which had started in 1971, and cutbacks to financial assistance for single mothers. Despite Japan officially becoming an aging society in 1971, social security expenditures increased by a mere one percent in the decade from 1980 to 1990 (Peng 2002, p. 419).

To compensate for the cut in welfare spending, the government began a campaign that posited elderly care as the responsibility of the family. This involved ‘consolidation of the family base’ (*katei kiban no jūjitsu*) by lending support to multi-generational households with an emphasis on self-help. The rhetoric of the LDP concerning ‘consolidation of the family’ generally meant persuading women to remain at home to care for the sick and elderly (Mikanagi 1998, pp. 181-82; 2000, p. 125; Meguro 2004, p.
According to a 1979 LDP campaign policy statement, Japanese-style welfare involved ‘the realisation of a relaxed home connected by family love’. To achieve this, the elderly must be looked after by the ‘family’ and working women must be enabled to take more time off work to care for their children (LDP 1979, p. 199). The measures implemented by the government to consolidate the family included the provision of low-interest mortgages to three-generation households, creating a national ‘family day’, and establishing preferential taxation for families (Meguro 2004, p. 20). Further measures included a special dependant tax exemption for live-in elderly parents, introduced in 1979 to encourage a family member to stay at home should the need for care arise. Several tax measures were introduced from 1984 onwards, including reduced tax cuts for incomes that derived from part-time employment, and, in 1985, spouses of salaried workers gained the right to their own pension (Mikanagi 1998, p. 185).

These policies consolidated women’s role in the home and family. The policies were based on the assumption that Japanese families were self-sufficient and that this made social welfare unnecessary. This assumption relied on the company paternalism that characterised the corporate-centred society. Employers played a paternal role with regards to social welfare. An employee of a corporation was viewed as someone on a particular life course—that of the salaryman—and was remunerated accordingly. On top of his core salary, a worker would receive dependant allowances, accommodation and transport costs. The regulated labour market of post-war Japan that drove the economy guaranteed stable and secure employment for men between their mid-20s and mid-40s, thus enabling them to earn a family wage. Ōsawa (2002, p. 10) calls this the ‘male-breadwinner’ welfare model. Because of the stability and security of a male employee’s income, which was the bulk of a household’s income, the burden on the welfare system was minimal. Japan developed into a ‘corporate-centred society’ (Ōsawa 2002, p. 111; Meguro 2004, p. 11) where the imposition of corporate values on individual workers and their families became normal. The employment system that many company policies were based on, as outlined above, was in fact not applicable to most of the workforce. It was typically only large companies that were able to provide their workers with stable jobs and the concomitant allowances and bonuses. This employment system nevertheless is central to the way that gender discourses developed in post-war Japan because of its prevalence in official discourses.
The male-breadwinner welfare model enabled the state to neglect welfare. The ‘family’ that the LDP referred to in their attempt to consolidate its importance was actually ‘women’, and more specifically, ‘wives’ (Ochiai 1997, p. 69; Ōsawa 2002, pp. 86-87). Just as the normative Japanese citizen is the salaryman (Mackie 2000, p. 246) the ‘individual’ in the 1970s was implicitly male (Ōsawa 2002, p. 86). Women, on the other hand, especially wives of male workers, secured the lifestyle of the ‘individual’ by remaining outside the mainstream workforce and instead working inside the home while engaging in peripheral economic labour according to market demand. The female ‘individual’ thus only produced/worked in a supplementary capacity.

Meguro (2004, p. 21) suggests that measures introduced in the early 1980s had the effect of raising the status of housewives and giving them credit for work that had often been unrecognised. She also argues, however, that while housewives received credit, other women did not. On the contrary, tax regulations punished women who were not housewives. In fact, the new measures to consolidate the family provided incentives to women to limit their work outside the home. Working singles (both women and men) and couples who both worked full-time thus supported housewives through these tax breaks, but received no rewards themselves.

The placing of elderly and child care within the ‘family’ did not go unnoticed by women’s groups. In particular, the Women’s Committee for the Betterment of the Ageing Society (Kōrei Shakai o Yokusuru Josei no Kai) began campaigning in 1983 against government policy by pointing out the disjuncture between policy ideals (women at home caring for those who require it) and the reality of families, where an increasing number of women engaged in either full-time or part-time economic labour. They also called attention to the situation in which women constituted 85 percent of carers yet also accounted for 80 percent of those institutionalised in health facilities (Peng 2002, p. 421). Women were therefore administering a lot of care in private but receiving very little themselves.
In 1973, as a result of the oil crisis, the LDP government made a deal with the corporate sector and labour unions to limit unemployment rates. For the LDP, it was crucial to deter further economic recession and to circumvent the need to pay welfare to the unemployed by avoiding high unemployment rates. Corporations agreed to undergo radical restructuring that involved, among other things, re-hiring older staff at lower rates. The strategy was successful, with the official unemployment rate remaining below two percent during these years (Peng 2000, pp. 98-99). The LDP government thus avoided social welfare expansion by striking a deal with business to avoid unemployment and by espousing the ‘consolidation of the family’.

In 1985, the same government that had initiated social welfare policies that were based on profoundly conservative ideas of family and the role of women as caregivers enacted an anti-discrimination law, the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL). In the next section, I examine how and why the LDP government enacted legislation that had as its objective the elimination of sexual discrimination in the workplace. This consideration of the EEOL will sketch the theoretical debates that surrounded the creation of the law to show how, during the 1980s, the LDP demonstrated ambivalence towards women’s increased activity outside the socially prescribed roles of nurturer and wife.

4.3.2 Employment legislation: Maintaining the gendered division of labour

In 1980, the Japanese government became a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In order to ratify this convention, the government needed to create an equal employment opportunity law, amend the education curriculum so that the content and amount of home economics studied by both boys and girls was consistent, and revise the Nationality Law so that children born with Japanese mothers (and not just fathers, as the law currently stood) could gain Japanese citizenship (Mikanagi 1998, p. 182). The government initially resisted signing CEDAW, claiming it would be impossible to ratify due to conflicts between the convention and existing Japanese laws (Kobayashi, 2004, p. 104). Business and government were finally persuaded by women’s groups and women in the Bureau of Women and Minors (BWM), who utilised a ‘discourse of shame’ to
argue that Japan would appear backward on the international stage (Kobayashi 2004, p. 105).

The Law Concerning Promotion of Equal Opportunity and Treatment between Men and Women Workers (Koyō no Bunya ni Okeru Danjo no Kintō na Kikai Oyobi Taigū no Kakuhō Nado ni Kansuru Hōritsu) was enacted on May 17, 1985 and came into effect on April 1, 1986. It was fundamentally a revision of the 1972 Working Women’s Welfare Law and the 1947 Labor Standards Law (hereafter LSL). Creating the law involved the gradual removal of some of the so-called ‘protection’ measures for working women stipulated in the LSL, to be discussed below. Under the new legislation, sexually-discriminatory treatment in the areas of education and training, employee benefits, mandatory retirement age, retirement and dismissal was prohibited, but employers were under no obligation to provide women and men with the same opportunities when it came to recruitment and promoting. For these two areas, employers were urged to ‘endeavour’ to extend equal opportunity to men and women (Parkinson 1989, p. 606). The lead up to the introduction of the EEOL, discussed below, will provide a backdrop to explore theoretical issues and debates concerning the legislation.

In the 1960s and 1970s, several court cases ruled against employers who had acted in a sexually discriminatory manner against women, usually with reference to the LSL in cases of pay discrimination, or to the Civil Code and Constitution for cases concerning other discrimination (Lam 1992, p. 91). These cases helped to make illegal certain things such as firing a woman because of her age or marital status. They also assisted in changing societal attitudes towards sexual discrimination at work so that it was no longer perceived as a ‘natural part of Japanese society, but as sexual discrimination to be condemned’ (Kobayashi 2004, p. 63). In 1972, the Working Women’s Welfare Law was enacted to ‘further the welfare and improve the status of working women’, but did not enforce any obligations on employers. Instead, it required that employers ‘endeavour’ to follow provisions to treat female workers equally with male workers

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22 See Appendix 9 for post-war legislation concerning employment and gender equity.
(Bergeson and Yamamoto Oba 1994, pp. 359-61). Apart from this, until the implementation of the EEOL in 1986, the LSL was the only legislation dealing with the treatment of men and women at work. Article Four of the LSL stipulated equal pay for equal work regardless of sex. Article Three was the anti-discrimination clause that prohibited discrimination on the basis of nationality, faith or class (but not sex) (Ōsawa 2002, p. 97). Article Fourteen of the Constitution, which provided for the ‘essential equality of the sexes’, was the only other protection for women against unfair treatment at work. These legal provisions did not satisfy the requirements stated in the CEDAW, specifically those outlined in Article Two of the Convention concerning the adoption of legislation that prohibited discrimination against women (Ōsawa 2002, p. 97).

Partially as a result of so many legal suits, the Ministry of Labor had already started deliberations into the creation of an equal opportunity law prior to Japan signing CEDAW. A private consulting group for the Labor Minister—the Study Group on the Labor Standards Law—issued a report to the government in 1978 calling for the introduction of an equal employment law (Mikanagi 2000, p. 119). In 1983, the Subcommittee on Women’s Employment of the Ministry of Labor’s Women and Minor’s Issues Deliberation Council began discussing how to create a law that would enable ratification of CEDAW by 1985 (Kobayashi 2004, pp. 100, 109). This Subcommittee comprised representatives from three main groups—the public, business and labour unions. Women’s groups were represented by labour. Employers and business representatives were opposed to the introduction of an anti-discrimination act mainly because they believed that women would not be able to work like ‘corporate warriors’, and ‘traditional’ employment systems would founder if men and women were to be treated equally (Fan 1999-2000, p. 116). If a law was to be enforced, they demanded the complete abolition of the ‘protection’ measures in the LSL and they opposed strict bans on discrimination. Women’s groups and labour unions, on the other hand, demanded strict bans on discrimination and the maintenance of ‘protection’ measures. The Subcommittee could not agree on the terms of the law; the only thing they could agree on was to define ‘equality’ as ‘equal opportunity’ (Mikanagi 2000, p. 120).
4.3.3 ‘Protection’ for women workers or guarantees for all workers?

‘Protection’ of women workers was a site of fierce contention in the lead up to establishing the EEOL. The LSL contained clauses that provided for the ‘protection’ of female workers including restrictions on excessive overtime and night-time work for women and the provision of maternity leave. Protection clauses for women workers in the 1947 LSL included: restrictions on the number of hours women could work per day; prohibition of holiday work, dangerous work including underground work, and night-work for some industries; the provision of menstrual leave, and maternity leave for six weeks before and six weeks after birth (Kobayashi 2004, p. 43). These measures were based on pro-natalist assumptions about women’s bodies. They were in place to protect not only pregnant women, but the bodies of all women who were potential reproducers. These clauses also revealed the state’s understanding of women as those who need protection and therefore not full citizens who demand their own rights (Mackie 1995b, p. 6). Women were first and foremost seen as (potential) mothers. Mackie (2003, p. 181) divides the LSL protection measures into maternal provisions and protective provisions. The former, which include maternity and nursing leave, are intended to protect the ‘biological mother’, while the latter, which include restrictions on working overtime, late at night or in dangerous industries such as mining, are intended to protect the ‘potential mother’.

In the EEOL debate, employers argued that the protection clauses prevented women from advancing their careers and must be relinquished if ‘equality of the sexes’ was to be achieved (Molony 1995, p. 274). As already outlined, motherhood had become the central discursive category for women in post-war Japan (White 1987, p. 154; Uno 1993, p. 304), and this lent influence to arguments by women’s groups about the importance of ‘protection’ for working women and mothers. Molony argues that, although adopting maternal discourses may have been an effective strategy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for women to gain power under male dominance, its efficacy was limited to that historical juncture.

The emphasis on motherhood has served an important function in gaining workplace rights for women, but that function should be historicized. If at one time the glorification of motherhood was a strategy for power, at another juncture it might
produce a cultural feminism that could be subverted by antiwoman interests to less positive ends (Molony 1995, p. 296).

Nevertheless, women’s groups, such as the Group for Making Our Own Equal Employment Opportunity Law (Tsukurukai),\(^{23}\) argued that protection and equality were not necessarily incompatible. Tsukurukai actually worked towards changing the key term of debate from ‘protection’ to ‘guarantees’. They argued that all female and male workers should receive ‘guarantees’ of more humane working conditions (Mackie 2003, pp. 182-83). Female politicians, such as former head of the Social Democratic Party, Doi Takako, pro-labour lawyers and women’s groups, such as the Tsukurukai, argued that the repeal of the protection clauses would, rather than create equality in the workplace, have the effect of worsening women’s working conditions (Takagi 1986, p. 53). They argued that these measures were not only necessary but were also compatible with sex equality in the workplace (Ueno 1988, p. 180; Molony 1995, p. 274). These women were supported in this belief by CEDAW, which stated that ‘special measures aiming at protecting motherhood shall not be regarded as discrimination’ (Kaji 1986, p. 35).

Many feminists did not want to sell themselves to capitalism, as they witnessed Japanese men doing, so, when bargaining for employment rights, women did not necessarily want the same ‘opportunities’ that men had to work inhumanely long hours, or away from their families (Ueno 1988, pp. 180-83; Mackie 1995a, p. 100; Molony 1995, p. 285). For Japanese women’s groups who opposed the versions of the EEOL bill that the business representatives formulated in the early 1980s, equality with men under existing labour conditions was impossible due to the home and family responsibilities women shouldered. It was also undesirable because women did not want to work to the detriment of their private lives, as many male employees were compelled to do. In 1983, two years before the enactment of the EEOL, the Japanese worked 2147 hours a year, which was over 200 hours more than the Americans, and over 400 hours more than the Germans (Saitama Women Against War 1984, p. 14). Companies in

\(^{23}\) Watashitachi no Danjo Koyō Byōdō Hō o Tsukuru Kai (hereafter Tsurukai) formed in 1979. Its aim was to mobilise a wide range of people to argue for an appropriate equal opportunity law (Takagi 1986, p. 52).
Japan expected their full-time workers to transfer when necessary, work overtime and prioritise work over private life, including family. Japanese women’s groups argued that it was not women who needed to change to fit into existing workplace norms, but workplace practices that needed transformation in order to accommodate women. This is how Japanese women argued not for ‘equality with men’ but for a transformation of work culture. Feminists demanded that measures like prohibition on overtime be extended to all workers, including men.

Business and labour union representatives could not come to an agreement in the Subcommittee, so the Bureau of Women and Minors requested a tentative proposal for the bill from the public interest representatives. The public interest representatives’ proposal satisfied neither business nor labour so the Subcommittee submitted a report outlining three divided opinions, thus leaving the drafting of the bill in the hands of the BWM. The bill drafted by the BWM and approved by the Cabinet in 1984 leant heavily in favour of business, but still retained some ‘protection’ measures. In addition, statutory maternity leave was extended from six to eight weeks (Kobayashi 2004, p. 113).

4.3.4 The LDP’s contribution to the 1986 EEOL
The LDP-government was more sympathetic to business, who would not consider equality without removing the ‘protection’ clauses. Business and the LDP had formed a collusive relationship over decades of consecutive LDP governments and, as a result, the LDP was reluctant to displease the business community (Huen 2007, p. 374). When the bill was finally drafted by the Ministry of Labor and submitted to the Diet in 1984, the LDP was the only political party to support it. The Socialist Party, the Kōmeitō, the Democratic Socialist Party and the Social Democratic Federation initially opposed it in its submitted form because it was too weak (Fan 1999-2000, p. 117). Opposition parties submitted their own bill for a gender equality law, but ultimately, apart from the JCP, who continued to oppose the government bill, all parties were obliged to endorse the Ministry of Labor bill because of the limited time remaining to ratify CEDAW, and also because they did not want to be blamed for sabotaging Japan’s first attempt at creating an equal employment law (Kobayashi 2004, p. 114). The argument that international
pressure was the main impetus for the Japanese government to implement a law at this time, and the nature of the opposition to the bill in its then form from other political parties, would suggest that the LDP government may have been more interested in rushing through a law that appeased the international community than creating effective legislation.

LDP Diet member, Hamada Takujirō, who was deputy secretary general of the LDP at the time and who had been a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, which had been instrumental in ratifying the CEDAW, expressed his views in an article he wrote for a 1986 LDP publication. He argued that because of the Japanese ‘tradition’ whereby women look after the household as a result of their child-bearing capacity and men work outside, the imposition of a law that eliminated all the ‘protection’ measures for women and ‘automatically made men and women the same’ would not work (Hamada 1986, pp. 96-97). The LDP’s approach, he argued, demonstrated the party’s pragmatism and its role as the party of ‘responsibility’ compared to the other parties that called for a different, more radical and impractical law. For Hamada, not only would the imposition of a ‘radical’ equal employment law have been ineffective because of Japan’s long history and tradition of gender segregation, it would have undermined men as they would have become ‘spineless’ and would ‘appear to be unreliable’ (Hamada 1986, p. 97). The LDP’s rationale for passing the EEOL in a format that displeased the opposition parties, as represented in Hamada’s words, was thus grounded in discourses of nationalism and patriarchy. The preservation of Japan’s ‘traditional’ and ‘historical’ gendered division of labour and men’s roles as authority figures was elevated to a status above the pursuit of gender equality.

4.3.5 Effects of the EEOL and criticisms
The 1986 EEOL was a disappointment for many of the women who had fought for it. Beginning in the late 1960s, sexual discrimination at work had been dealt with judicially. Numerous cases against employers had ruled certain practices, such as unfair dismissal, as discriminatory (Molony 1995, p. 281). By the time the EEOL was implemented in 1986, many discriminatory practices had already been ruled against in the courts (Kobayashi 2004, p. 63; Weathers 2005, p. 74), so the new law had achieved
very little. The eventual legislation was ‘toothless’ because it was a compromise between employers and the government (who had been under international and domestic pressure) that leaned heavily in favour of protecting the interests of the employers (Mikanagi 2000, p. 121). Furthermore, there were no punitive measures against those who violated the law.

After the implementation of the EEOL, many companies—mostly large ones of 5,000 employees or more—introduced a ‘two-track’ employment system. This involved placing employees on either a management track (sōgōshoku) or a standard/general track (ippanshoku) (Knapp 1995, p. 123). The management track requires overtime work and transfers, while the general track involves menial tasks, such as photocopying, and does not involve transfers or career promotion. This simply meant that now women had the option of entering the management track which men were already automatically placed on. The purpose was to provide women with more employment opportunities. The effect of this, however, was that women’s over-representation in menial and clerical jobs was now their ‘choice’ (Molony 1995, pp. 292-92). Those companies who employed the system have been criticised for attempting to circumvent the intent of the law while appearing to comply with it (Molony 1995, p. 292; Gelb 2000, p. 391). The Women’s Rights Committee of the Japan Federation of Bar Associations called the two-track system ‘indirect discrimination’ (Molony 1995, p. 292).

The implementation of the EEOL proved significant for shining a spotlight on indirect discrimination against female workers, particularly in the ever-increasing ranks of non-regular female workers (Seiyama 2004, p. 8; Weathers 2005, pp. 82-83). The labour market underwent deregulation in the 1980s and 1990s, with an increase in the number of ‘non-regular’ workers (hiseiki shain), who differ from regular employees in many ways, but significantly, are not entitled to employment benefits, such as leave, and are typically employed on a short-term basis. Laws were implemented to deal with the changing structure of the workforce. For example, the 1985 Workers Dispatch Law (Rōdōsha Haken Hō) (WDL) attempted to regulate temporary work. Until 1985, agency temporary employment, or ‘dispatch work’ (haken) as it is called in Japan, had been prohibited. Dispatch work refers to work that a person sent by a temporary agency does
for a client company (Araki 1994, n.p). The ban on this work was lifted with the passage of the WDL on sixteen occupations, including computer programming, tour conducting, interpreting and translating, and secretarial work.

While framed in gender neutral language, the lifting of the ban affected women workers disproportionately because the sixteen occupations were mostly female-dominated areas (Gottfried 2008, p. 189). While the casualisation of the labour force has influenced both men and women in Japan, women have been more affected. This is clear from the increase in numbers of ‘non-regular’ female workers in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the decade from 1986 to 1996, part-time employment accounted for 97 percent of the growth in women’s employment (Gottfried 2008, p. 184). Prior to 1984, 78.4 percent of women workers were ‘regular’ workers; by 2002, this figure had dropped to 50.9 percent. Virtually half of all women workers, therefore, are ‘non-regular’ employees. By contrast, 93.4 percent of male workers were ‘regular workers’ in 1984, and this figure dropped less than ten percent by 2002 to 85.1 percent (Statistics Bureau, cited in Seiyama 2004, p. 7).

LDP-government intervention in this era, through policy such as the Workers Dispatch Law, tax regulations that encouraged a male breadwinner model and encouragement of the Japanese-style welfare model provided legitimacy to an employment system that relied heavily on women’s peripheral labour. Labour deregulation in the 1990s encouraged a skewed gender-segmented labour force whereby jobs and industries typically populated by women became increasingly deregulated, while work that was typically done by men were not affected to the same degree, at least at this stage (Gottfried 2008, pp. 188-90). The job security of regular workers is underwritten by the inferior working conditions of those working down the employment hierarchy. Regular workers, most of whom are men, have contractually guaranteed security, something non-regular workers do not have. In addition to the casualisation of the female labour force, the bursting of the economic bubble in the early 1990s and the ensuing recession saw a great number of women lose their jobs and demonstrated that despite the enactment of the EEOL, women’s employment is largely dependent on the state of the economy. The years 1994 and 1995 were known as the ‘ice age for job hunters’
(Fukuzawa 1995, p. 155). It was, to some extent, a gendered ice age: in October 1994, only 61.5 percent of female graduates had received official notices of employment compared to 78.5 percent of males (Nakano 1995, p. 36).

The working conditions of non-regular workers brought to light the way that women were often at the receiving end of indirect discrimination. In the decade following the implementation of the EEOL, it became clear that the concept of equal opportunity, which the law was based on, did little to prevent indirect discrimination. In the years after 1986, discrimination became invisible. Molony (1995, p. 297) notes that,

> [g]ender balance was never the EEOL’s goal; equal treatment of the individual was the explicit aim, albeit according to unmodified gendered notions of the character of the workplace. In that climate, plain old sexism could flourish under the guise of arguments about employee loyalty as required by the male model of the workplace.

The 1986 EEOL was a good example of how equality of opportunity does not lead to equality of results (Seiyama 2004, p. 2). The increase in women becoming non-regular workers who are paid less than regular workers and are entitled to fewer employment benefits demonstrates how indirect discrimination works in the aftermath of a legislation that aims at providing workers with equal opportunities but does not follow up with any attempt to achieve equality of results.

The enactment of the EEOL helped to make it possible for Japan to ratify CEDAW, but it failed to challenge the gendered division of labour whereby men engaged in economic labour and women supported them by taking on the burden of household duties in addition to working outside the home for extra income. This did little to change the dominant discursive construction of women as mothers. Employment legislation discussed in this section helped to shape women’s life courses as wives and mothers by firstly discouraging women from engaging in full-time labour and secondly failing to change employment practices that compelled male full-time workers to work to the detriment of their family lives.
4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have highlighted the significance of both structural and cultural barriers to women’s political representation. I have argued that the electoral system and the campaign system that assisted the LDP in winning consecutive elections were systems that were difficult for women to succeed in, and that until 1993, at least, the LDP benefited from a political system that privileges men. At the same time, I have suggested that consecutive LDP governments have both tapped into and contributed to the reinforcement of dominant gender discourses by creating certain labour, welfare and gender equity policies which encourage and depend on the gendered division of labour whereby a woman’s primary social role is constructed as mother, wife and peripheral economic worker and a man’s primary social role is constructed as economic worker. Specifically, successive LDP government deregulation of the employment industry consolidated dominant gender discourses which implied a woman’s participation in the labour force was secondary to her primary role of supporter to her breadwinner husband and supporter to the state through the role of caregiver. The Working Women’s Welfare Law (1972) and the 1986 EEOL were enacted as part of the government’s policies at that time to use women’s labour as much as possible while keeping women on the periphery of the labour force. This had the effect of making it difficult for women to gain access to power. LDP-led governments have adjusted labour policies to suit market demand, and women have been excluded from the mainstream labour force, instead fulfilling the dominant discourses of femininity of helpmate and caregiver—discourses that propped up the government’s ability to neglect welfare.

The apparent contradiction of enacting the EEOL soon after implementing welfare policies based on the conservative notions of family and gender roles was not really a contradiction as the 1986 EEOL did not discourage those notions. The pursuit of gender equality in employment by LDP governments was half-hearted because it was deemed incompatible with pleasing the business community and keeping the economy strong, which the LDP needed to continue doing to stay in power. Despite urgings from labour and women’s groups, during the deliberations over the EEOL, for a stronger law that protected all workers from exploitation, government sided with business in being unable to see how gender equality could be compatible with continued economic and business growth.
The government’s insistence on Japanese-style welfare, in combination with the EEOL, encouraged dominant discourses of femininity and masculinity that continued to fulfil the needs of national production and reproduction. The Japanese economy experienced a severe downturn in the 1990s—the decade that came to be known as the ‘lost decade’ (ushinawareta jūnen)—which had profound socio-economic effects. LDP governments set out on reforms to halt the downturn and this involved rethinking gender equity policies—including revision of the EEOL in 1999—as will be discussed in the next chapter.

In the next chapter, gender equity policies introduced after the economic downturn will be examined alongside analysis of how LDP party structures changed after electoral reform in 1993. The purpose of exploring these two developments in tandem is to demonstrate how interest politics determined the motivations of the LDP with regards to gender equality policy. An analysis of the LDP’s approach to gender equality will help determine whether or not the LDP has vested interests in maintaining dominant gender discourses which position women in the home. This will facilitate a better understanding of whether or not these vested interests have hindered women’s increased representation in the Diet.
CHAPTER 5: POST-1993 LDP POWER STRUCTURES AND GENDER EQUITY POLICIES

I have chosen 1993 as the year from which to begin this chapter’s argument about the LDP’s approach to gender equality for two reasons. The first reason is that it was the year of electoral reform, significant for changing Japan’s Lower House electoral system to a hybrid system that included proportional representation (PR) seats. Many political scientists have demonstrated that countries with PR electoral systems are more likely to have higher female representation in their national assemblies. This would suggest that the introduction of PR seats to the Lower House of Japan’s Diet should have positive repercussions for the number of women elected since 1993. The first part of this chapter describes this electoral reform and explores the effect it had on women.

The second reason for choosing 1993 is that it was the year the LDP was out of government for the first time since 1955. This allowed for a window of opportunity during which measures were put in place to pursue policies concerning gender equality and family-friendly employment legislation. In the second part of the chapter, I suggest that despite the measures put in place in 1994 to pursue gender equality, and despite the LDP retaining and adding to those measures upon regaining control of the government in the same year, gender equality is not a goal of LDP governments.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, LDP governments rolled out several government campaigns and enacted legislation that appeared to aim at providing a better ‘work-life balance’ to workers. These included several increases to the number of childcare facilities and improved childcare leave for both women and men. For example, the Childcare and Family Leave Law (Ikuji Kaigo Kyūgyō Hō) was enacted in 1992, and revised in 2001. In addition to these initiatives, several policies also came into effect that seemed to show a greater concern for women’s rights. For example, the contraceptive pill was legalised in 1999, the Anti-Stalking Law (Sutōkā Kisei Hō) was enacted and became effective in 2000 and the Domestic Violence Law (DV Bōshi Hō) was enacted and put into effect in 2001. The emergence of these laws and campaigns were arguably the result of the acceptance by the broader public, the government and
policy-makers of ideas from feminism and academia about gender being a social and cultural construct. In addition to this, however, the introduction of so many laws in this period must be understood in the context of the broader picture of the bursting of the economic bubble and the perceived crises of a labour shortage and other negative consequences of the declining fertility rate and aging population.

In this chapter, I trace the path of gender equity policy taken by LDP governments and interrogate the rationale for embarking on what seems to be a progressive path to establishing a ‘gender-equal society’. In doing so, I reveal motivations that point towards economic rationalism rather than genuine concern for amending gender inequities. LDP governments’ ambivalence concerning the pursuit of gender equality, in particular, is raised as a problem that requires further interrogation with regards to uncovering the reasons for female under-representation in the Diet.

Towards the end of the chapter, I introduce former Prime Minister Koizumi’s deployment of a form of positive action in the 2005 Lower House election, in what would appear to be a transgression of the party’s lack of concern about gender equality in politics. The purpose of exploring this is to illustrate both the potential benefits of positive action for women in politics and LDP governments’ reluctance to consider a notion of equality that acknowledges the structural disadvantages that face women generally, and women in politics more specifically.

5.1 LDP Power Structures Post-1993
The purpose of the 1993 electoral reform was to eradicate the corruption that the electoral system had encouraged, to address malapportionment of voting by revising electoral districts, and to abolish personality voting in favour of policy-based voting (Stockwin 2008, p. 79). These revisions occurred under an eight-party (non-LDP) coalition government. The Lower House electoral system was changed firstly by increasing the number of electoral districts from 130 to 480, and secondly, in moving from a system of multi-member district electorates to a hybrid system that comprises both single-member constituencies and proportional representation districts. Under this
electoral reform 300 seats became single-member districts (where voters vote for one candidate in each district, and there is only one winner) and 200 (later revised to 180) became proportional representation (hereafter PR) seats in eleven regional blocks (Krauss and Pekkanen 2004, p. 6). In PR districts voters elect multiple representatives by voting for a political party which then has seats allocated to it according to the share of the vote in that district.

In addition to revisions of districts and the voting system, the electoral campaign laws were also revised to curtail the private donations political parties could receive. The law provided that each candidate could have only one official fundraising organisation. There is a limit of 500,000 yen (approximately 6000 AUD\(^{24}\)) that one corporation or other organisation can contribute to a politician’s official fundraising organisation. In addition, a new law was enacted to introduce public funding of elections. This money is allocated directly to political parties (Stockwin 2008, p. 177). Each party receives a certain amount depending on Diet member numbers and votes gained in the most recent election (Kishimoto 1997, p. 115). In order to prevent factions from providing vast financial support to their followers, the changes also stipulated that only political parties could give money directly to candidates (Christensen 1996, p. 53).

According to some commentators, the significance of the kōenkai (support group) system has not changed a great deal since the revisions because of the ‘dual nomination’ system that was introduced with the revisions (Etō, 2010, p. 181). Under this system, if a candidate loses in the single member district elections s/he can still run for a PR seat (Hayes 2005, p. 71; Stockwin 2008, p. 191). To win this seat s/he must be either positioned high on the list or have won a lot of votes in the single member district election. In this way, s/he might still be competing with another member from his or her party, so the need for a kōenkai remains. Furthermore, personality voting has not disappeared because of the continuation of restrictive electoral rules that do not allow candidates to start formally campaigning until an election has been called. The

\(^{24}\) At an exchange rate of 1 AUD = 82.8 yen current as of 14/3/11.
importance of creating personal bonds with voters has therefore contributed to the continued significance of the kōenkai.

With regards to the changing characteristics of factions, the amount of money permitted for use during elections has been cut, and as a result factions have lost the ability to donate large amounts of money to candidates. The power that factions once had because of their role as financial supporters has thus diminished because of changes made to election campaign laws in 1993 (Hayes 2005, p. 75). As previously outlined, another major role of factions has been the allocation of cabinet posts and the position of president of the party. The electoral system reform did not have an effect on this. However, when the Hashimoto administration (1996–98) began to make efforts in 1998 to transfer power from the bureaucracy and factions to the prime minister and the Cabinet the power of factions to determine leaders waned slightly (Stockwin 2008, p. 192). A prime minister with more power was technically able to pay less attention to factions. Nevertheless, a cursory reading of any Japanese newspaper in the lead up to or aftermath of LDP presidential selection reveals that factional affiliation remains an important component in this process (Nabeshima 2006, n.p). For example, the last president of the LDP while it was still in power was Asō Taro, head of the faction bearing his name. The other four LDP Lower House members who competed with him were also faction members, although at least one of them did not seek or receive endorsement from their factions. Former Prime Minister Koizumi (2001–06), on the other hand, demonstrated that it is now possible to be elected as head of the party and form a Cabinet without being heavily influenced by factions. The changing significance of factions was promoted by Koizumi, who encouraged his party colleagues to remain unaffiliated. Attempting to remove some of the power of factions was just one element of Koizumi’s plan to ‘smash the LDP’ (Kabashima and Steel 2007a, n.p). While not ignoring factions completely, his first Cabinet in 2001 was not formed entirely on the basis of factional demands. Koizumi thus illustrated that it was possible to create a Cabinet relatively independent of factional pressures.

Nevertheless, it would appear as though most other LDP leaders are not interested in following Koizumi’s path to decreasing the power of factions. The overt quest to wrest
power away from factions only lasted as long as Koizumi was leader of the party. Of the 83 new Diet members elected at the 2005 Lower House elections—the so-called ‘Koizumi Children’—almost half had joined a faction even before Koizumi’s term had expired (Itō 2006, n.p).

5.1.1 The impact of the 1993 electoral system reforms on women

If the dominance of money politics in combination with the electoral system based on medium-sized multi-member districts has hindered women’s entrance to politics, this then leads to the obvious question of whether female representation has increased since the reforms of 1993. The electoral system changed to one that includes proportional representation seats, which researchers have argued have a higher success rate for female candidates (Phillips 1995, p. 51; Paxton 1997, p. 445, 460; Ōgai 2001, p. 208; Iwamoto 2007b, p. 191). This would lead to the expectation that female political representation would increase.

In the Lower House elections in 1996 and 2000, there was a marked increase in female representation, supporting scholars’ claims that seats in PR systems are easier for women to win. The percentage of women in the Lower House increased from 2.7 percent in 1993 to 4.6 percent in 1996, and higher still to 7.3 percent in the 2000 election. In the 2003 election, the number of women in the Lower House declined slightly to 7.1 percent. The next election in 2005 saw another significant increase, particularly in the number of LDP women (Hastings 2009, p. 229). This cannot be entirely attributed to the electoral system and, as I will discuss below, Koizumi’s strategy to place women at the top of the PR lists in 2005 was influential in the increase in women in the 2005 Lower House election.

Since the 1993 reform, women have consistently been at least as successful as men in getting elected in the PR seats. Female candidates are far less likely to win elections overall, but more likely to win in PR districts than men. For example, in the PR districts of the 2003 election, female candidates’ success rate was 26.7 percent compared to 23.9 percent for male candidates. This is despite the overall imbalance in success rates for
women and men when PR and non-PR seats are combined: just fewer than 23 percent of all female candidates won, whereas the respective figure for men was 44 percent (Iwanaga 2008, p. 118). Overall success rates for male and female candidates have been similar in other election years.

Competition in single-member districts is fierce. There can only be one winner, so parties are reluctant to support or field newcomers, especially those without political connections. Instead, political parties prefer to endorse incumbents or their successors (Etō 2010, p. 181). Compounding this is the risk-averse nature of the voting public, particularly conservative voters. As Stockwin (2008, p. 86) notes, the appeal of the LDP had rested heavily on being able to convince a rather parochial electorate that it was more advantageous to support a party that was at the centre of government, and could therefore deliver material benefits, than to support opposition parties that were only capable of delivering empty rhetoric.

Ōgai (2001, p. 208) notes that, ‘[a]s anticipated from data in other democratic countries, Japan’s voters tend to vote for men for these lone seats, but to maintain a less conservative attitude toward the nationwide, proportionally-elected representatives.’ While voting for a woman might not necessarily demonstrate a less conservative political stance, what can be taken from Ōgai’s comment is that the act of voting for a male over a female is conservative because it does not challenge the status quo. Furthermore, female candidates, unless they are incumbents, typically do not have the political networks or resources that many male candidates have. In the 2005 election, the LDP endorsed 22 female candidates for single-member districts. Of these, twelve were newcomers, eight were incumbents and two were former Diet members running again. The incumbents and former Diet members were successful, while only four of the twelve newcomers succeeded. The eight who were unsuccessful in the single-member districts were successfully elected via the PR districts under the dual nomination system (Etō 2010, p. 181).
The experience of the LDP at the 2009 Lower House election supports the argument that PR electoral systems are more conducive to female success, as does the overall outcome, taking into account all parties’ results. Of 184 female candidates across all parties in the single-member districts, 24, or thirteen percent, were successful, compared to a 23 percent success rate for female candidates in the PR districts. The corresponding success rate of male candidates was 29 percent in the single-member districts and 20 percent in the PR districts, as indicated in the table below (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication 2009, p. 18).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single-member districts</th>
<th>PR districts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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In summary, the benefits for women of the revised electoral system are evident in the gradual increase of women in Lower House elections since 1993. However, while factions have lost their power to distribute massive amounts of money to candidates, election campaigns have not necessarily become less expensive to run. Apart from the maintenance of the kōenkai, the ‘nomination deposit’ fee every candidate must pay puts most ordinary citizens out of the race from the beginning. For instance, the fee to nominate for a single-seat constituency in the Lower House is approximately three million yen (36,000 AUD) (Senkyo Navi (Election Navigator) website accessed, 30/3/09). Despite the revised electoral system that has allowed for higher success rates of female candidates in the PR system, the financial barrier to women entering politics remains.

25 These figures also reveal that men are far more likely than women to run as electoral candidates in both systems: women comprised only 14 percent of all candidates in the PR districts and 16 percent in the single-member districts (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication 2009, p. 3).

26 At an exchange rate of 1 AUD = 82.8 yen current as of 14/3/11.
In addition to the revision of the electoral system, 1993 was also politically significant because the LDP lost power for the first time since 1955. It was during the only time the LDP has not been in government that the creation of a ‘gender-equal society’ (danjo kyōdō sankaku shakai) first appeared as a government priority. During the nine months that the LDP was not a government party, the governing Japan Socialist Party (JSP) created the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality, headed by the Prime Minister (Gender Equality Bureau website, accessed 25/11/10). In addition, the Office for Gender Equality and the Council for Gender Equality were established by Cabinet orders in the Prime Minister’s Office.

The decline in LDP power and the brief window of Socialist rule significantly influenced the elevation of gender equality as an essential policy issue. The JSP formed a coalition with the LDP and the Sakigake (New Party Harbinger) in June, 1994, and in August the prime minister, Murayama Tomiichi (JSP) (1994–96), ordered the Council for Gender Equality to create a blueprint for Japan to become a ‘gender-equal society’ for the 21st century (Shindō 2004, p. 251). The decline of LDP power for this brief nine-month period must be regarded as a major factor for the increased interest in gender equality during this period (Shindō 2004, p. 253).

The LDP came into government again in 1994, when it formed a coalition government with the JSP. In 1996, it formed an accord which stipulated out-of-cabinet support from its two former coalition partners, the Sakigake and the JSP. This meant that the two junior partners would not contribute cabinet members to the administration but would provide support outside the cabinet. The Sakigake and the JSP were both headed by women—Dōmoto Akiko and Doi Takako respectively. It has been noted by several commentators, including Dōmoto herself (cited in Shindō 2004, p. 253), that if it were not for the influence of the female leaders of the JSP and the Sakigake and their insistence on prioritising gender equality policies, the passage of the Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society in 1999 (hereafter the Basic Law, to be discussed below) would not have been so smooth nor the content as progressive (Ōsawa 2000, p. 5; Takao 2007, p. 155).
5.2 The Road to a Gender-Equal Society

An advisory council for gender equality was set up under the non-LDP Hata government (April–June 1994). This council wrote a report on the ‘Vision’ for a gender-equal society which was handed over to the Prime Minister’s Office in 1996 (Ōsawa 2000, p. 3). By this stage, the LDP had returned to power and Hashimoto Ryūtarō (1996–98), who made gender equality one of the pillars of his reform agenda, was prime minister.

The Vision was an official document created by an advisory council, comprising academics, bureaucrats and policy experts, that provided guidelines to achieve a gender-equal society. The 1986 EEOL, while promoting ‘equal opportunity and treatment between men and women in employment’, was explicitly concerned with promoting measures to ‘ensure the health of women workers with regard to employment during pregnancy and after childbirth’ (Article One). In contrast to this focus on women’s rights, feminists on the advisory council for gender equality, such as Ōsawa Mari, in writing up the Vision refused to see their goal as that of ‘improving the status of women’ or ‘women’s rights’ (Ōsawa 2000, p. 7). Instead, they argued that gender equality must be about ‘abolish[ing] gender as a paradigm dividing Japanese society’ (Ōsawa 2000, p. 7). They were influenced by international feminist movements, especially the discourses of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action.

The Vision called for a society with no strict gender divisions. The wording of the Vision indicated a shift from abolishing gender inequalities within legal and political institutions to focusing also on social institutions such as the family. The Vision states that the policy aims are

not only to correct from a perspective of gender equality the systems and customs that have been premised on fixed role divisions between women and men but also to shift the household-based thinking remaining in the systems and customs to individual-based thinking, establishing a social framework that will function neutrally whichever way of life the individual chooses (cited in Ōsawa 2000, p. 8).
Pledging to work towards the creation of a society not divided by strict gender divisions seemed on the surface to be an extremely progressive idea. The abolition of gender roles, however, was not a new notion because it is precisely what the women’s liberation movement (ūman ribu) in the early 1970s had argued for (Yamaguchi 2006b, p. 255). The Vision statement that was the bedrock of the original legislation was thus based on philosophies that derived from the ideas of women’s studies academics who had found a place in the ‘state machinery’ through serving as members of the Council for Gender Equality. The Basic Law is an example of how feminist ideas took hold in state machinery.

The Basic Law was enacted in 1999. Its preamble features language influenced by international feminist discourses, such as ‘human rights’ and emphasis on ‘respect’ for the equality of men and women (Gelb 2003, p. 119). It also reflects international shifts in policy development on women’s issues over the last 30 years (Dales forthcoming). Article Three states,

[the] formation of a Gender-equal Society shall be promoted based on respect for the human rights of women and men, including: respect for the dignity of men and women as individuals; no gender-based discriminatory treatment of women or men; and the securing of opportunities for men and women to exercise their abilities as individuals (Gender Equality Bureau website, accessed 25/11/10).

The law encourages local councils to establish guidelines for creating a ‘gender-equal society’. The law, like other ‘basic’ laws (kihonhō) enforces nothing per se, but, ‘provid[es] a basic guideline within which bureaucrats and Diet members may formulate new policies and laws and judges will be asked to hand down decisions’ (Gelb 2003, p. 118). Article Fourteen of the Basic Law stipulates that local councils should formulate their own Basic Plans (‘Prefectural Plans for Gender Equality’ and ‘Municipal Plans for Gender Equality’) in order to pursue the ‘formation of a Gender-equal Society’ within their specific municipalities (Gender Equality Bureau website, accessed 25/11/10). Although the legislation is vague and lacks real strength, it is also symbolic and can be regarded as a starting point for the enactment of more concrete legal measures to follow. In 1999, the year the Basic Law was enacted, the EEOL was
revised and the contraceptive pill was legalised. The Anti-Stalking Law (*Sutōkā Kisei Hō*) and the Domestic Violence Law (*DV Bōshi Hō*) came into effect in 2000 and 2001 respectively.

5.2.1 Dominant gender discourses in transition

The enactment of the Basic Law was indicative of a broader shift in government policy that, since the early 1990s, had started to emphasise improving people’s lifestyles and not just the economy (Ōsawa 2002, pp. 110-11). Social and employment policies emerged that aimed to provide greater flexibility for women and men in balancing work and family. The expansion of childcare leave for example, has been on the political agenda since the early 1990s. In 1992, the Childcare Leave Law was enacted to allow employed mothers and fathers one-year job protection leave. This law was renamed the Childcare and Family Leave Law (*Ikuji Kaigo Kyūgyō Hō*) to reflect its 1999 revisions, which included three months of nursing care leave to care for a close relative. In 2001, it became paid leave with 40 percent wage replacement (Suzuki 2006, p. 9; Lambert 2007, p. 27). The number of childcare facilities increased under the 1994 Angel Plan and further still with the New Angel Plan in 1999, which also outlined preparations to extend day care hours and increase after-school care (Gelb 2003, p. 116). The New-new Angel Plan was rolled out in 2004 and laid out a five-year plan for more input from local government and companies towards childcare support and gender equality (Suzuki 2006, p. 9).

The state’s efforts to promote childcare and family involvement as an important element in men’s lives was conspicuous in policies and campaigns. In addition to the extension of childcare leave to fathers in 1992, the government also set out to change people’s attitudes by promoting a stronger link between fathering and masculinity. In 1999, the government conducted a campaign calling on fathers to shoulder more childcare responsibility. The Ministry of Health Labor and Welfare issued posters that featured a picture of the dancer known as ‘Sam’, who was then married to the highly successful female pop singer Amuro Namie, holding their baby with the caption, ‘A man who doesn’t raise his children can't be called a father’ (Ishii-Kuntz 2003, p. 200).
These efforts reflect an attempt by LDP governments to support changing discourses and practices of gender in Japan. For example, the dominant discourse of masculinity in Japan, the salaryman, which entails being an ‘absent father’, is beginning to be replaced by a masculinity that involves being a ‘good father.’ (Ishii-Kuntz 2003, p. 201; 1996, p. 91; Matthews 2003, p. 118). This displacement is occurring due to pressure from the public and the state. In a climate of economic downturn, Japanese men are questioning their roles as ‘corporate warriors’ (kigyō senshi) who devote their lives to work to the neglect of their personal lives. The sons of the salarymen of Japan’s economic ‘miracle’ have witnessed in their fathers the minimal rewards received from devotion to an employee and are disillusioned with the idea of working so hard for national growth but receiving little individual reward (Ishii-Kuntz 1996, pp. 91-94).

With regards to the public discourses of masculinity, the emergence of the field of Men’s Studies (Danseigaku) has given rise to an outpouring of literature on Japanese masculinities which began over ten years ago (Itō 1993; 1996; 2003). The emergence of men’s groups that organise around issues concerned with fathering (Ishii-Kuntz 1996) and domestic violence (Nakamura 2003) demonstrate that many Japanese men are exploring new discourses of masculinity. The personal costs involved in maintaining the dichotomy of male breadwinner and female housewife have emerged for many men as undesirable (Dasgupta 2000, p. 199).

The newly emerging discourse of masculinity in contemporary Japan includes spending a lot of time with family, but structural and cultural obstacles to this ideal remain high (Matthews 2003, p.118), meaning that in practice, shifts in how men live their lives have been minimal and slow. It has been noted that due to hostility from employers, a minority of men have taken the childcare leave entitled to them since 1992 (Ishii-Kuntz 2003, p. 203). There is also a financial disincentive, as in most families men earn more than women. Men still face pressure to work long hours for their employers and are sometimes castigated for applying for childcare leave (Ishii-Kuntz 2003, p. 209). Furthermore, it seems that the view that the man should be the main breadwinner in a couple remains deeply embedded in the minds of many (Dasgupta 2000, p. 194; Meguro 2004, p. 18; Suzuki 2007, pp. 441-42). According to the 2009 White Paper on Gender
Equality, approximately 50 percent of all people surveyed in a Cabinet Office opinion poll agree with the statement ‘A husband should work, a wife should stay at home’. Men are slightly more likely than women to agree (Cabinet Office 2009, accessed 3/9/10).

So, while discourses about Japanese masculinity have changed, practices, at least in domestic situations, have changed little. This reflects international patterns where discourses of masculinity have diversified to include domesticity, but practices have changed little, with domestic work remaining the responsibility of women (Bulbeck 2009, pp. 160-64). By contrast, women’s participation in the workforce continues to increase, fewer women are leaving the workforce after having children, and they are having children later in life. In 1995, women’s rate of participation in the labour force started dropping when women were in their early 20s, bottoming out at 53.7 percent in their early to mid-30s. In contrast, in 2008, the participation rate dropped when women were in their late 20s, falling to 64.7 percent in their mid-30s (Gender Equality Bureau 2009a, accessed 10/2/09). Japanese women’s life courses, as observed by their workforce participation rate, therefore have changed significantly in practice. Discourses about femininity have also changed even more, as derogatory labels such as ‘Christmas cakes’, referring to women still unmarried after the age of 25 (Brinton, 1993, p. 80), have given way to labels such as ‘parasite singles’ for young adults who live with their parents (Yamada, 1999, pp. 11-12), and a brief media fad in the mid-2000s for phrases such as ‘loser dogs’, for unmarried women in their thirties and older (Sakai, 2003, pp, 8-9). While these labels remain negative and sexist, they reflect at least an understanding that women are marrying much later.

In contemporary Japan, where the fertility rate has reached a historic low and is one of the lowest in the world, late marriage by women has become a topic for national debate. Dominant discourses of femininity that bind women to the home and family are under threat because of what Mikanagi (1998, p. 192) calls women’s ‘silent rebellion’ against reproduction. The plethora of legislation and policy in recent years reflects the LDP’s desire to stem the decline in the fertility rate.
5.2.2 The declining fertility rate

Since the end of the second ‘baby boom’ (1971–74), Japan’s fertility rate\(^{27}\) has been decreasing steadily. The fertility rate in 2006, however, was 1.32, a small increase on the previous year’s figure of 1.26, which was the lowest ever recorded. Since then it has increased marginally every year to 2008 when it was 1.37 (Cabinet Office 2010, p. 31). Japan recorded its first population decline since the Asia Pacific War in 2005 (Suzuki 2006, p. 2), but readjusted in 2006 as a result of the slightly higher fertility rate (Inoguchi and Katsuma 2007, p. 18). Japan is similar to other countries such as Singapore and Hong Kong, which also have very low fertility rates at 1.28 and 1.06 respectively. However, compared to other industrialised countries, such as the USA, France and Sweden, who have ‘restored’ their fertility rates to replacement levels (2.12 in the US, 2.00 in France and 1.91 in Sweden), Japan’s fertility rate remains very low (Cabinet Office 2010, p. 33).

Most married couples claim to want more children than the current average of less than two (Cabinet Office 2010, p. 53).\(^{28}\) This then raises the question of what causes the gap between desire and reality. Contemporary research on reasons behind the low fertility rate in Japan often uncovers later marriages and more pointedly the phenomenon of women refusing or postponing marriage. Women’s refusal or postponement of marriage is often interpreted as deriving in part from women’s refusal to accept their fate as ‘married women’ whose lifestyles and living standards often change after marriage (Kamano 2004, p. 102) and whose employment opportunities decrease after childbirth (Ōsawa 2002, p. 26; McCall Rosenbluth 2007, pp. 4–6). Nemoto (2008, p. 226) suggests, based on interviews with women and men about their marriage expectations and desires, that ‘[m]arriage emerges, therefore, as the antithesis to women’s financial and individual autonomy and to career ambition’. The burden on married women to bear the majority of household responsibilities in addition to maintaining their career has been identified as a major factor in Japan’s depressed fertility rate (Inoguchi and Katsuma 2007, p. 51; McCall Rosenbluth 2007, p. 4). According to a 2006 survey of couples with children up to the age of six, carried out by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Japanese

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\(^{27}\) The fertility rate is the average number of children a woman bears in her lifetime.

\(^{28}\) The low fertility rate is lower in urban areas. The fertility rate in Tokyo is about 1, whereas in rural areas, it is closer to 1.8 (Rosenbluth, 2007, p. 13).
husbands on average spend an hour on housework and 33 minutes on childcare per week (Cabinet Office 2008, p. 15).

Ueno (1998, p. 116) observes that the gap in what women and men want from a marriage in Japan is vast; women are more interested in ‘partnership’ marriages based on egalitarianism, whereas men want marriages based on a gendered division of labour. Although women claim to want ‘partnership marriages’, research reveals contradictory desires; many Japanese women seem also to expect their husband to be the main breadwinner (Ueno 1998, p. 120; Meguro 2004, p. 18). Nevertheless, despite the delay, most people still marry. By the age of 39, 30 percent of men and less than 20 percent of women are unmarried (Cabinet Office 2010, p. 32).

These arguments point to declining and late marriage as one reason for the diminishing fertility rate. However, although a key factor, the declining fertility rate cannot be attributed solely to delayed marriage. Couples who want to have children are faced with structural barriers as well. Focusing on socioeconomic factors, McDonald (2008, pp. 22-23) suggests that low or late marriage should be regarded as a symptom and not a cause of the low fertility rate. He suggests that most women are married by the time they are 30 and this gives them time to have at least two children, so the reasons for rejection of childbirth by married couples need to be analysed. McDonald (2008, pp. 22-23) claims that economic and social institutions that are unfriendly to families with children are the cause of the declining fertility rate. A major factor in the low fertility rate is the failure of the Japanese government to provide adequate childcare policies that will allow mothers to continue working and that will not discourage women from having children. McCall Rosenbluth (2007, pp. 4-5) argues that the main reason for Japan’s depressed birth rate is the difficulties women have in combining work with family responsibilities. Japan generally has better childcare support services most other developed countries, including the US, Great Britain and Germany. They are, nevertheless, inadequate because of the lack of after-school care, the lack of care available for babies under the age of one, and shortages in care for pre-school-aged children (Ueno 1998, p. 124).
In addition to these inadequacies in childcare support, cultural norms about mothers’ connections to their children remain common. The ‘maternal myth’ (Ueno 1998, p. 119) that children must be raised by their mothers and that this should be done on a full-time basis while the children are young (or more specifically, until the child is three, as conventional knowledge dictates), is prevalent in Japan (Jolivet 1997, p. 55; McCall Rosenbluth 2007, pp. 6-7). In the 2008 National Survey on Family (p. 30), over 85 percent of all women agreed with the statement ‘until her child is about three, a mother should not have a job but should concentrate on childcare’.29 The maternal myth is supported by the pressure on parents (mothers) to produce ‘high quality’ children who are born within the institution of marriage and gain advanced education qualifications (Hirao 2007, p. 54; Ishibushi 2007, pp. 14-17). Costs involved in seeing a child through the competitive and expensive Japanese education system are cited as a major reason for couples having fewer children (Ueno 1998, p. 112; Suzuki 2006, p. 6).

Hirao (2007, pp. 52, 55) points out that despite the recent boom in ‘family-friendly’ policies directed particularly at mothers, these policies will not be effective in their goal of increasing the fertility rate unless gender inequities deeply embedded in social relations, particularly within the family, are addressed. Until recently, most ‘family-friendly’ policies targeted women, revealing deep-seated assumptions within the government about children’s interests being better served when cared for by their mothers rather than their fathers. This could be because LDP government efforts to assist women to combine work with family are not in response to feminist demands for greater gender equality. Rather, they are an attempt to bolster the present and future labour force by creating better working conditions for women so they can continue working and having children (Gelb 2003, p. 114; Taga 2005, p. 156; Lambert 2007, p. 3).

The declining fertility rate is an indication of and a propeller for emergent discourses about Japanese femininity and masculinity. For Mikanagi (1998, p. 192), women’s

29 The National Survey on Family is based on a sample of households in which women with experience of marriage reside. The households are drawn from 300 randomly selected census divisions which are drawn up from the large and systematic National Livelihood Survey (of 1088 divisions) (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2008a, p. 1).
‘silent rebellion’ against reproduction indicates their resistance to the *ryōsai kenbo* (good wives and wise mothers) discourse of femininity. However, many women, as demonstrated in public surveys as discussed above, also yearn to fulfill the normative housewife and mother role. This contradiction indicates that many contemporary women challenge this idealised life cycle while accepting its inevitability: ‘There is only one set of tracks you can follow as a woman in Japan, and once you jump the tracks, you can’t get back on’ (anonymous informant, cited in Kelsky 1999, p. 241).

These shifting notions about appropriate life courses for men and women in Japan are important background factors to the LDP-led government’s decision in recent years to implement family-friendly policies. In particular, the government realised that both women and men want to be able to combine having a family and a career, and that for women particularly, failure to be able to do so has had the effect of lowering the birth rate. Rather than gender equity *per se*, it is the workforce that the LDP government is mainly concerned with. This concern about the dwindling workforce was also a major impetus in the revision of the EEOL in 1997 (put into effect in 1999).

### 5.2.3 Revisions to the EEOL

The revisions to the EEOL in 1997 saw the repeal of the so-called ‘protection’ clauses that remained for women of certain professions concerning overtime and holiday work (Takenobu 2003, p. 13). In what can be interpreted as a win for Ueno’s (1988, p. 183) call to ‘feminise’ workplace practices and extend protections to all workers, the amount of overtime work that companies can demand from both men and women has been further regulated (Takenobu 2003, p. 13). Revisions were also made so that it was now illegal for employers to sexually discriminate in recruitment and promotion (Article Six) (Rōdōsho Joseikyoku (Women’s Bureau MOL) 1999, p. 130).

The legislation also changed so that employers were now encouraged to ‘take into consideration’ measures that would prevent women’s working lives being ‘disadvantaged’ because of sexual harassment (Article 21) (Rōdōsho Joseikyoku (Women’s Bureau MOL) 1999, p. 132). Although the wording in the legislation
regarding sexual harassment was vague, it was a major change from nothing at all.
There was a large increase in the number of enquiries and complaints made to the Equal
Employment Offices regarding sexual harassment between the early 1990s and 1998.
Despite this encouraging development, it has been suggested that women who lodge
complaints against their employers often lose their jobs (Weathers 2005, p. 79). It has
also been suggested that sexual harassment remains deeply rooted in workplace culture
and that employers adopt anti-sexual harassment campaigns to protect their image rather
than because of a deep commitment to gender equity (Weathers 2001, p. 79).

Despite the revisions to the EEOL in 1999, the law has been criticised for failing to
prevent the indirect discrimination that occurs because of the increasing number of non-
regular workers, most of whom are female (Ishida 2004, pp. 11-12; Seiyama 2004, p. 8).
Non-regularisation (hiseikika) of workers emerged as a serious concern for women in
the late 1990s. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, by the late 1990s, half of
all working women were non-regular workers, most of whom are not eligible for regular
worker benefits such as leave entitlements. While the EEOL was improved in 1999 in
terms of preventing sexual harassment and overt discrimination, the revisions failed to
take into account the problems of the growing number of female non-regular workers.

Other laws, however, were introduced to protect non-regular workers. The Workers
Dispatch Law (Rōdōsha Haken Hō), which was implemented in 1985, was also revised
in 1999. The revision meant that temporary workers were now able to work in all
industries (instead of the sixteen stipulated in the original law, as outlined above) apart
from dockyards, construction, security, nursing and other medical fields, and
manufacturing (Weathers 2001, p. 203). The revision also included stronger rules to
protect temporary workers. For example, it stipulated one-year time limits on the use of
agency temporary workers in industries that had been unable to utilise temporary staff
under the original legislation (Gottfried 2008, p. 189). It also required the dispatching
company and client company to clarify various aspects of the dispatching contract,
including the content of work to be performed by dispatched workers, the location of
the workplace, conditions for overtime and length of contract (Article 26).
In further recognition of the increase in non-regular workers and their precarious position in the labour market, the Law Concerning the Improvement of Working Conditions for Part-Time Workers (Pāto Taimu Rōdō Hō) was introduced in 1993. Despite the title of the law, it lacks punitive measures and is vague. In language reminiscent of the 1986 EEOL, the legislation urges employers to ‘make efforts to ensure that short-hour workers can work to their full capacity, while taking into account the balance between them and full-time workers’ (Article Three). Social welfare and labour policy expert Ōsawa Mari (2001a, p. 189) notes with regards to the guidelines in this law, ‘With their vague exhortations to ‘effort’, and their total absence of penalties for non-compliance, these are about the weakest types of regulation imaginable’. The law does, however, make provision for the establishment of Part-Time Workers’ Centres, which would give advice, guidance and assistance to part-time workers (Mackie 2003, p. 188).

The plight of non-regular employees in the late 1990s brought to light the importance of taking into account indirect discrimination. The increasing significance of indirect discrimination was also partly a result of pressure from the international women’s movement. In 2003, the United Nations Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women commented on Japan’s progress in the area of gender equality. The report pointed out the ineffectiveness of current legislation in eliminating indirect discrimination and recommended ‘a definition of discrimination against women, encompassing both direct and indirect discrimination […] be included in domestic legislation’ (United Nations 2003, paragraph 358). The following year, an EEOL policy research group in the Ministry for Health, Labor and Welfare published a report that noted that the prohibition of indirect discrimination was a key issue that future legislation must address (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare 2004, accessed 13/11/10).

In 2006, the EEOL was revised again (effective 2007) to include prohibition of discrimination against men as well as women, reflecting a shift of focus away from ‘women’s status’ to ‘gender equality’. It also contained a clause that, for the first time, forbids indirect discrimination, or literally, ‘discrimination that amounts to substantive
discrimination based on sex’ (Chapter Two, Article Seven). In this way, the law has progressed from one that focused on women’s dual roles at work and at home and encourages employers to treat men and women equally in 1986, to one that prohibits sexual discrimination against women in 1999, to a law that now prohibits discrimination against both women and men and forbids ‘indirect discrimination’ (Asakura 2005, p. 3).

The phrase used in the 2007 legislation is in fact not ‘indirect discrimination’ (kansetsu sabetsu), but ‘substantive discrimination’ (jisshitsuteki na sabetsu). The reason for this word choice is unclear, but the meaning seems to remain the same—different treatment on the basis of elements other than sex that leads to invisible discrimination against women. In an outline of the 2007 EEOL, indirect discrimination is defined by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (2007, p. 2) as measures that stipulate conditions other than sex that: a) afford one sex disproportionate negative effects compared to the other sex, and that b) cannot be justified as being based on rational reasons. Where the philosophy behind the original 1986 EEOL was based on an understanding that a woman’s primary role was in the home and that her maternal capabilities must be ‘protected’, the revisions of the legislation indicate a new philosophy on female workers that at least had progressed beyond viewing them as bodies that required protection. Article Two of the original EEOL stated,

The true intent behind the provisions of this law is to promote the welfare of female workers by assuring that they can reach their full potential and enjoy fulfilling careers in an environment in which their role as mothers or potential mothers is respected and in which they are not discriminated against on the basis of their sex; and to promote a harmonization of women’s dual role in the workplace and in the family (cited in Parkinson 1989, p. 634).

In the revised law, Article Two states that the basic philosophy of the law is to enable workers to ‘engage in full working lives without sex-based discrimination, and with respect for maternity in the case of women workers’. The focus is no longer on women’s role in the family and the home.
The revisions to the EEOL and the implementation of family-friendly work policies and public campaigns culminated in the enactment of the Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society in 1999, discussed earlier in this chapter. The Basic Law is regarded as one of the most significant laws to emerge in recent years from the LDP government with regards to gender equity because it is based on progressive notions about gender being a social construct rather than based on biology (Ōsawa 2002, p. 43; Shindō 2004, pp. 4-5). It also reflects debates occurring internationally about the importance of women’s voices in decision-making roles.

5.2.4 The influence of international feminist discourses
In the tradition of international feminism, which, especially since the Beijing Platform of Action in 1995, has developed new discourses of gender equality that emphasise the responsibility of institutions to pursue structural changes, the Basic Law explicitly encourages the use of positive action (sekkyokuteki kaizen sochi) to increase women’s participation in areas where they are under-represented. Article Two of the Basic Law defines positive action as ‘Positive provision of the opportunities stipulated in the preceding item to either women or men within the necessary limits in order to redress gender disparities in terms of such opportunities’.

Article Eight of the Basic Law explicitly specifies the state’s responsibility in implementing ‘policies related to promotion of formation [sic] of a Gender-equal Society (including positive action)’ (Gender Equality Bureau website, accessed 25/11/10). It also encourages businesses and local councils to establish gender targets in decision-making bodies. The Basic Plan for Gender Equality (hereafter Basic Plan) was created in December 2000 and sets out actions to support the law. One of the main goals of the Basic Plan is to increase the number of women in decision-making positions. Consequently, in order to raise the number of women holding ‘leadership positions’ to 30 percent by 2020, “‘Positive Action’/Temporary Special Measures” and other approaches will be promoted’ (Gender Equality Bureau 2007, p. 27). Item Three of the Basic Plan, which is concerned with ‘equal opportunities and treatment between women

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30 This and other excerpts from the Basic Law are the official English translations (Gender Equality Bureau website, accessed 25/11/10).
and men in the field of employment’, states that ‘the ratio of companies engaged in positive action will be raised to 40 percent by Fiscal Year 2009 (29.5 percent in 2003)’ (Gender Equality Bureau 2007, p. 20). It would appear therefore, that official discourse surrounding the Basic Plan supports the argument for the necessity of positive action to increase women’s participation in public positions of power. The pledges of targets set out in the plan are, nevertheless, quite vague. It is difficult to find mention of concrete steps in place to create or enforce institutions to create those targets.

Although these exhortations to implement positive action are certainly vague and lack enforcing measures—they ‘encourage’ or ‘hope’ rather than stipulate—some companies as well as local municipalities have established targets for women as a result of the Basic Plan (Gelb 2003, p. 125). By fiscal 2003, approximately 30 percent of all businesses in Japan had adopted positive action measures to increase the number of female employees. Large companies were more likely than smaller companies to do so (Suzuki 2007, p. 22). The public service and universities have also taken measures. In 2000, The Japan Association of National Universities announced a target to increase the number of full-time female teachers to 20 percent by 2010. In 2001, the National Personnel Authority laid down measures to increase female public servants. It instructed the government ministries to ‘systematically increase’ the number of women who passed the public service exam and to establish numerical targets and ‘enact concrete steps’ to reach those targets (Ōsawa 2001b, p. 82).

Yet there has been no discussion of numerical targets or electoral quotas at the level of national politics. There are no measures in place on a national level to increase women in the Diet. Political parties, including the LDP who had control of the government at the time, and the national Diet have not accepted the advice of the Gender Equality Bureau, which operates through the Cabinet Office, to establish positive action mechanisms to increase female political representation. The Japan Accountability Caucus for the Beijing Conference (a non-governmental lobbying group formed in 1995 after the Beijing Conference, hereafter JAC) surveyed each political party in 2007 to ascertain their opinion on electoral quotas (which fall under the category of positive
action) for women in politics (JAC 2007, accessed 9/9/10). The LDP’s response was systematic in its rejection of the idea.

Our party selects the best candidates regardless of sex. We have pro-actively introduced an open recruitment system, and, as we select candidates by taking into account their desire to run and their ability, we are not considering introducing a quota system at this point.

Although no political party currently uses quotas, the responses by the other parties suggest that they are willing to consider quotas. For example, the DPJ responded that they are ‘considering the promotion of gender quotas to increase women’s participation in [the party’s] policy decision-making processes’ (JAC 2007, accessed 9/9/10).

Despite the LDP’s refusal to consider quotas, and its support for the notion of merit-only based candidate selection, in 2005, then LDP president and Prime Minister Koizumi deployed a form of positive action for female LDP candidates in the Lower House election, to be explored in the next section, which the LDP won convincingly. His use of positive action to ensure the election of female LDP candidates was successful and demonstrates the potential of positive action in Japanese politics.31 As a result of his success at increasing numbers of women in the Diet, Koizumi came to represent a somewhat progressive Prime Minister, in the realm of gender equality at any rate. Koizumi’s first Cabinet in 2001 contained five women—another unprecedented move for a prime minister.32 The five women appointed to Koizumi’s first Cabinet of seventeen were: Moriyama Mayumi to Minister for Justice; Ōgi Chikage to Minister for Land, Infrastructure and Transport; Kawaguchi Yoriko to Minister for the Environment; Tanaka Makiko to Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Toyama Atsuko to Minister for Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Given that women constituted less

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31 The consequent drop in the number of LDP women in the 2009 election, to be discussed further, also demonstrates the weakness of positive action measures when adequate support structures are not in place to maintain higher female political representation.

32 Previous cabinets had contained a maximum of two women. The first female minister was Nakayama Masa, in 1960, in the first Ikeda cabinet. The next woman to be included in the cabinet was Kondō Tsuruyo in 1962, in the second reshuffled Ikeda cabinet. There was then a long period of successive cabinets without women until 1984, when Kishimoto Shigeru was posted to the second reshuffled Nakasone cabinet. In 1989, Moriyama Mayumi and Takahara Sumiko were posted to the Kaifu cabinet. After this, most cabinets contained at least one, but never more than two, women (Shushō Kantei (Prime Minister of Japan and his Cabinet) website, accessed 14/3/11).
than ten percent of Diet members at the time, a Cabinet with almost a third of its members female was a striking statement, and five women in the cabinet remains an unsurpassed record. Until then cabinets had contained only one or two women. The current DPJ cabinet, as of January 2011, has only one woman. In the tradition of what appeared to be an enthusiasm for gender equality in politics, Koizumi’s government also created the position Minister of State for Gender Equality and Social Affairs after the 2005 LDP election success. Koizumi’s progressiveness was an element of his broader appeal which rested on promises of transformation and reform.

5.3 Koizumi’s Positive Action
The 2001 LDP presidential selection was the third time Koizumi had run for the position. He was regarded as a maverick with neo-liberal economic reform policies, and a persistent desire to privatise the postal system and postal savings system (Stockwin 2008, p. 105). His predecessor was Mori Yoshirō, who started his tenure as LDP leader with very high public support rates. Later, however, Mori came to be known publicly as the gaffe-prone prime minister (Kabashima and Steel 2006, n.p). Mori’s popularity rating in February 2001 had plummeted to nine percent (Stockwin 2008, p. 105) and as the Lower House elections approached, the LDP realised it must produce a leader to revive the party, or at least its image. Koizumi was selected from five candidates. As Stockwin (2008, p. 105) notes, ‘it might not be too much of an exaggeration to say that the party was looking for a saviour’ in Koizumi. They were successful. Koizumi’s popularity ratings were extraordinary. A month after being elected to LDP president they were as high as 78 percent and rose to an unprecedented 84 percent a month after that (Stockwin 2008, p. 106). Koizumi led the party and the country for five and half years (2001–2006), a long time for a Japanese head of government.

33 I got the impression that Koizumi was regarded as a leader concerned about gender equality in politics from interviews with LDP women. Tokashiki Naomi mentioned that compared to Koizumi, the leaders who had succeeded him did not have a very good ‘awareness’ that measures were required to increase the number of women in politics (Interview with Tokashiki, 2007). Inoguchi Kuniko, who was elected in 2005, told me that she and Koizumi were of the same mindset in terms of understanding the importance of helping female candidates win their seats in the 2005 election (Interview with Inoguchi, 2007).
One of Koizumi’s election promises was to ‘change the LDP’, or failing that to ‘destroy it’ (Christenson 2006, p. 502), which meant destroying electoral corruption, the reliance on factions and the connections to the business world. The transferral and consolidation of power to the prime minister from other power structures was, as mentioned, something the Hashimoto administration had started in 1998. Koizumi was partially successful in his quest to destroy the LDP because he was able to weaken the so-called ‘iron triangle’ by removing some of the policy-making power held by the union of bureaucracy, politicians and big business, and placing it in the hands of the Prime Minister’s Office (Kabashima and Steel 2007b, p. 83).

In 2005, Koizumi called a Lower House election that captured enormous media and public attention, particularly for the manner in which Koizumi recruited people to run for LDP seats. Koizumi’s successful recruitment of a large number of women (compared to previous elections) during this election campaign is significant, as is the rationale behind it. Koizumi had been determined for years to privatise Japan’s postal system. In 2005, after a series of bills carving the way for postal privatisation had failed to pass the Upper House, Koizumi dissolved the Lower House and called a snap election. He refused to grant party support to the LDP Diet members who had opposed postal reform. Koizumi filled the spaces vacated by these so-called ‘postal rebels’ by hand-picking new candidates who would support his postal privatisation agenda.

The manner of recruitment of candidates in the 2005 election reflects an attempt by Koizumi to bolster his reform image that had begun to wane in the eyes of the public. In a continuation and intensification of his push for a more diverse LDP, Koizumi personally selected many of the new candidates to ensure they were not typical of former LDP candidates, but that they came from diverse backgrounds and areas of employment. The employment and education backgrounds of LDP Diet members have typically been quite predictable. As already mentioned in Chapter Four, the bureaucracy and local politics are very common backgrounds for LDP Diet members. Koizumi’s strategy of fielding candidates from a variety of backgrounds was a challenge to this typically narrow pool of potential LDP Diet members. This was part of his popularity strategy to appear to be ‘anti-entrenched power, anti-wealth and anti-elite’ (Kabashima
and Steel 2007b, p. 80). A specific example of this strategy is the ‘Koizumi School’ which was established in 2003 to attract a more diverse range of candidates. This school was founded partly as a response to the increased threat from the opposition DPJ. In the 2003 Lower House election, the DPJ had increased their number of seats by 40 to a total of 177. The LDP’s majority was reduced to 237 (down from 247). It was a symbolic initiative to inject new blood into the party and a recognition that old-style power structures, such as factions and kōenkai, had created political corruption and led to discontent in the eyes of the voting public (Lam 2006, p. 557).

In the 2005 election, the 83 candidates who successfully filled the seats left vacant by the so-called ‘postal rebels’ were dubbed the ‘Koizumi Children’ by the media. In a display of loyalty to Koizumi’s reform agenda and to show that factions were no longer important, these 83 candidates pledged to Koizumi that they would not join a faction until his term of office ended. Some candidates who were running for the vacant seats were dubbed ‘assassins’ (shikyaku) by the media. Kabashima and Steel (2006, n.p) define the assassins as ‘high-profile women, other celebrities, and relatively young, successful nonpoliticians’.

Of the 83 new LDP members elected in the 2005 election, sixteen were women. This was an historical increase of women in the Diet for the LDP. It did not happen by chance, but was a strategic initiative of Koizumi’s. He deployed positive action by ensuring that the female candidates running in Tokyo would win by placing them at the top of the party lists in a joseiwaku (women’s bloc). Compared to the 2003 election, when the LDP had elected only eleven women, in 2005 the number more than doubled when the party elected 26 women.

One of the women Koizumi personally selected in 2005 as one of his ‘children’ was Inoguchi Kuniko, a political scientist from Sophia University in Tokyo. Inoguchi has a high profile, having served as Japanese ambassador to the UN Conference on Disarmament, after which she became the president of the same conference. She was a board member of the International Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance
(IDEA), an intergovernmental body that aims to create and support sustainable democracy internationally. She also served on several committees, including, in 2003, a role as chairperson of the United Nations First Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms and Light Weapons. A little after a month after being elected to the Lower House she became a Cabinet member when given the newly created position of Minister of State for Gender Equality and Social Affairs. To give a newly elected Diet member a ministerial post was unprecedented. To call Inoguchi politically inexperienced is not entirely accurate given her field of employment. Nevertheless, Cabinet positions had traditionally been given to people as rewards or repayment for long careers in the LDP, or as a result of inter-factional bargaining. Cabinet posts were usually allocated to faction leaders, or at least senior members of certain factions. Appointing Inoguchi to the position of minister was therefore a provocative move and one that gained much attention, including jealousy towards Inoguchi by other LDP Diet members (Yamaguchi 2008, pers. comm, 22 Jan). Inoguchi was one of the ‘Koizumi Children’ so she had not joined a faction, and of course, Koizumi was not affiliated with a faction either, so his Cabinet did not reflect earlier Cabinets which had often comprised powerful faction members. In this respect, Koizumi’s posting of Inoguchi to the new post could be interpreted as symbolic of his efforts to transform the party.

Iwamoto (2007b, pp. 202-03) categorises the female LDP members newly elected in 2005 into four groups: those who are anti-gender equality (Inada Tomomi, Yamatani Eriko, Nishikawa Kyōko and Takaichi Sanae), glamorous women with successful corporate or bureaucratic careers (Koike Yuriko, Satō Yukari and Katayama Satsuki), the remainder who are relatively pro-gender equality but not sufficiently so as to support Inoguchi, and the sole proactive gender-equity member, Inoguchi. Inoguchi, unlike subsequent ministers for Gender Equality and Social Affairs was vocal about the importance of gender equality. She has published in the area and demonstrates a strong commitment to pursuing gender equality in Japan (Inoguchi 2006; Inoguchi and Katsuma 2007; Inoguchi 2009). Inoguchi stands out from other LDP members for her proactive stance on gender equality. However, no one was willing to offer Inoguchi strong support and she was isolated within the party.
While the establishment of the Ministry for Gender Equality and Social Affairs was a positive step for women, Koizumi did not provide the ministry with strong financial support. When the next LDP president, Abe Shinzō, appointed right-leaning nationalist Takaichi Sanae to the post (one of the anti-gender equity members, according to Iwamoto (2007b, p. 203)), she was also assigned the portfolios of Okinawa and Northern Territories, and Science and Technology, effectively doing away with gender equality as a ministerial concern without officially abolishing it (Iwamoto 2007b, p. 203). On the one hand, Koizumi’s posting of Inoguchi, the most actively pro-gender equity person in the party, to the post would suggest an authentic desire in Koizumi to see substantive changes in the area of gender equality policies. On the other, his failure to provide the ministry adequate financial and follow-up support contradicts this.

5.3.1 The ‘utilisation’ of women candidates

Koizumi’s successful attempt to increase the number of female MPs in 2005 can be understood as a way of demonstrating that he represented change. Whether or not it can also be understood as an attempt by Koizumi to address the gender imbalance of the Diet is debatable. This was one of the results, but a closer analysis suggests that his strategy might have had more to do with his reform image than genuine concern with having more women in the Diet for the sake of democratic justice or to ensure women’s interests were better represented.

Iwamoto (2007b, pp. 203-04) argues that while Koizumi’s actions constituted a reform, and a step away from the LDP-system, it was a conservative reform in line with the patriarchal system. For example, she suggests that Tanaka Makiko, daughter of former Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei and first female Minister for Foreign Affairs, who, in the lead-up to the 2001 election, was the most popular politician in Japan, was used as an intermediary when Koizumi became prime minister in 2001. For Iwamoto (2007b, p. 202), Koizumi recognised the importance of the middle-aged female vote and utilised Tanaka as a channel. Koizumi’s initiative to ensure the success of the female candidates in 2005 might also best be interpreted as a case where women were utilised by a party head to consolidate and supplement his image of reform.
The phenomenon of political parties fielding women in times of crisis has been documented in Japan and in other countries. In Bulgaria, for instance, women members of parliament have noted that more women are included among candidates in times of electoral crisis in an attempt to maximise votes (Galligan and Clavero 2008, p. 162). Similarly, in Japan, Iwamoto (2007b, p. 202) claims that if, in 2005, Koizumi had not utilised the ‘assassins’ in the electorates represented by anti-postal reform members, he would have been unable to maintain his image of reform because voters would have been faced with choosing from a selection of unappealing ‘old men’. Kabashima and Steel (2007b, p. 83) also suggest that Koizumi used the ‘assassins’ to regain some of the popularity he had lost since becoming prime minister four years previously.

Apart from Iwamoto (2007b, pp. 202-04) and Hastings (2009, pp. 229-39), there is scant analysis of Koizumi’s reform actions with regards to gender. His legacy seems to be tightly bound to the privatisation of the postal system and neo-liberal economic policies, but his conspicuous utilisation of women in politics is strangely untouched in academic literature. The phrase ‘utilise’34 with regards to the way Koizumi made strategic use of female politicians appears frequently in media, academic literature (Iwamoto 2007b, p. 202; Kabashima and Steel 2007b, p. 83), public discourse (it was also often uttered during the ‘Women and Politics’ class I attended at Rikkyō University) and in interviews with informants. This suggests that many regard his initiative as an image strategy. All but one informant used the term unquestioningly. When prompted, one woman from the DPJ expressed discomfort with the word utilise. She said that she did not think it was Koizumi, but the party who manipulates women to its own advantage (Interview, name withheld).

Another LDP informant pointed out that the DPJ had utilised women in a similar way in an earlier election. The Japan Socialist Party had also taken similar measures in the mid-1980s when it had struggled to find candidates for local council elections. The JSP had typically relied on members of public company trade unions to also act as council

members, but regulations were introduced to prohibit that practice. Union members were now required to resign from their companies before running for election. This meant that the number of male candidates dropped, forcing the party to look elsewhere. JSP leader Ishibashi recruited women from the peace movement, daughters of previous councillors and trade union members’ wives. He called this the ‘Madonna Strategy’ (Iwamoto 2003, p. 30). Koizumi’s utilisation of female candidates therefore is not a new phenomenon. Nevertheless it is worthy of analysis because the conservative LDP has consistently lagged behind other political parties when it comes to implementing measures to field female candidates (Iwanaga 2008, p. 115).

Christenson (2006, pp. 508-10) notes more generally that Koizumi’s attempt to change the party by picking comparatively young and unorthodox candidates for the 2005 election had a limited effect because the candidates selected were in fact only superficially different to the typical LDP political candidate. Aside from the 32 ‘assassins’ focused on by the media, the other candidates differed little from, for example, those of the 2003 election in terms of background and career prior to running for politics. For example, the average age of LDP candidates dropped by 1.8 years—a drop which can partly be attributed to the younger ‘assassins’—and there were only six fewer candidates with bureaucratic backgrounds compared to the 2003 candidate selection (Christenson 2006, p. 509). Of the 36 newly elected LDP candidates to the districts, only four were women (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication 2005, accessed 18/11/10), and only one of the 36 was well-known outside the realm of politics, business and the bureaucracy (Christenson 2006, p. 510). The recruitment practices of the LDP, therefore, only changed at the margins because of Koizumi’s selection of the assassins. Furthermore, high-profile candidates are listed at the top of party lists to bring positive attention to the party, but after they have been utilised in one election, those candidates may find it difficult to garner support at the next election (Christenson 2006, p. 514). This happened for LDP women in 2009, when many of them lost their seats, as will be discussed shortly.

Whether or not Koizumi’s interest lay more in furthering his ‘reform’ image than in addressing the gender imbalance in the Diet, his initiative did have the effect of
increasing the number of women. Just as Koizumi’s motives for utilising women were probably not based in a strong desire to pursue a greater gender balance in the Diet, one could argue that the LDP government’s motivations behind legislation and policies during this era, such as the Basic Law, did not derive from an acknowledgement that gender inequity is a bad thing (Ōsawa 2000, p. 4; Huen 2007, p. 376; Lambert 2007, p. 3). The preamble of the Basic Law does not conceal the fact that one of its primary goals is to counter the declining fertility rate:

\[ \text{To respond to the rapid changes occurring in Japan’s socioeconomic situation, such as the trend toward fewer children, the aging of the population, and the maturation of domestic economic activities, it has become a matter of urgent importance to realize a Gender-equal Society in which men and women respect the other’s human rights and share their responsibilities, and every citizen is able to fully exercise their individuality and abilities regardless of gender (Gender Equality Bureau website, accessed 25/11/10).} \]

The pursuit of gender equality, according to this philosophy, is important in order to curb the socio-economic problems that a declining fertility rate and greying population will engender. The link between the declining fertility rate and the pursuit of gender equality is problematic. The debate about a gender-equal society that takes place within discourses of population and fertility is based on a narrow definition of family and has the effect of pressuring women to have more children (Sugimoto 2010, pp. 185-86). LDP governments’ motivations for implementing gender-equality policies would appear to have been based on attempts to raise the declining fertility rate and boost the flagging economy by adjusting employment laws. Huen (2007, pp. 374-75) suggests that because LDP governments’ motives are largely unrelated to a desire to abolish gender inequality, the policies implemented in this era have had inadequate impact.

5.4 Terminology and Backlash: The Diluted Spirit of the Basic Law

The Vision for a Gender Equal Society, handed to the Prime Minister in 1996, was much more progressive than the Basic Law which developed from it (Gelb 2004, p. 7). The terminology chosen for the legislation, compared with that of the Vision, revealed fear within the LDP government of radical changes to patriarchal power structures. Although the official English translation of the law (Danjo Kyōdō Sankaku Kihon Hō) is Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society, the literal translation is the ‘Basic Law for a
Society with Joint Participation of Men and Women’. Men and women already participate ‘jointly’ in society, but that does not necessarily mean they are treated equally. For example, in a gender-segregated workforce where women occupy the lower rungs of the corporate ladder and perform menial tasks such as making tea and photocopying while men manage them, men and women are ‘participating jointly’ in this situation but are not necessarily ‘equal’.

Ōsawa (2000, p. 6) notes that during debate over the title in the Council for Gender Equality, some suggested that ‘joint participation’ was a good choice because it does not assume that women will have to ‘adopt masculine lifestyles’. Masculinities expert Itō (2003, p. 84) claims that the title is appropriate because it is only a ‘basic law’ and therefore cannot attempt to outline concrete definitions which the inclusion of the specific phrase danjobyōdō (sex equality) in the title would entail. Many feminists (Takahashi 2004, p. 13; Sugimoto 2010, p. 180), however, have expressed disappointment in the choice of terms, particularly because the Vision contained the more radical term byōdō (equal), which disappeared when the legislation was created (Ōsawa 2002, p. 41). In a deliberate choice to avoid the true word for equal, byōdō, the terms for ‘equal’ that appeared in the legislation were kintō, or taitō, which have weaker connotations of equality (Ōsawa 2000, p. 6). The title of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (Danjo Koyō Kikai Kintōhō) also contains the term kintō and not byōdō. The term byōdō carries nuances of equality of results and affirmative action, which LDP governments have typically resisted (Ōsawa 2000, p. 6; Shindō 2004, p. 256; Takahashi 2004, p. 13). Takahashi (2004, p. 13) suggests that the English translation of the law containing the actual word ‘equal’ was for the benefit of United Nations reports.

Much of the criticism surrounding the discrepancy between the ‘Vision’ and the Basic Law hinged upon the term ‘gender free’ (jendā furii). The aim of the Vision was, in fact, to create a ‘gender free society’ (jendā furii shakai). Ōsawa Mari (2000, p. 6), a social policy researcher who served on the original Council for Gender Equality that wrote the Vision report, defines a gender free society as a ‘society where the fact of being a man or woman has no effect on the options available to people as they make their way
through life. It is equality of opportunity, but carried to its logical conclusion’. Many others see it differently, however, and the term has become a source of contention in the context of debates over gender equality, especially since the Basic Law was enacted in 1999.

5.4.1 Jendā furii and the backlash against gender equality
The term *jendā furii* first appeared in Japan in 1995 in a document about ‘gender free’ education published by a Tokyo women’s organisation, the *Tokyo Josei Zaidan* (Itō 2003, p. 128; Koyama and Chiki 2006, p. 155). This article asked educators whether their education style was ‘gender free’. The choice of this phrasing was triggered by an article written by American academic, Barbara Houston. In her 1985 article ‘Should Public Education be Gender Free?’, Houston considered the pros and cons of a ‘gender free’ education in America to eliminate a gender bias that disadvantaged girl students. She began the article by giving three definitions of ‘gender free’ possible within the education realm: 1) the abolition of gender differentiations; 2) gender-blindness—that is, the approach that pays no attention to gender differences, and 3) freedom from gender bias. Her article proposed the third strategy. The title of her piece, however, was misleading because she was more concerned with the question of how to create an educational environment free from gender bias, rather than the question of whether or not it was important. Houston (1994 [1985], pp. 130-32) ultimately suggested that ‘gender sensitive’ education was preferred to the phrase ‘gender free’. The introduction of the katakana phrase *jendā furii* occurred also in the context of the use of the word ‘barrier-free’, which is used in Japan, and in other countries, to describe environments that do not disadvantage people with disabilities (Itō 2003, p. 129).

Houston’s argument is largely insignificant here, but the derivation of the term is important because it helps to explain the confusion surrounding the term in Japan today. The term ‘gender free’ in Japan has come to mean various things for different people. The conservatives, including many in the LDP, typically oppose anything to do with ‘gender free’ because they define it as the abolition of sex differences—unisex, in other words. Many feminists and social commentators support the concept because it argues for the elimination of strict gender boundaries which have typically placed women in
subordinate positions to men, and have also limited the lifestyles of both women and
men (Itō 2003, pp. 13, 130-31; Takahashi 2004, pp. 8-9; Kaneko and Mizushima 2005,
p. 90; Tandō 2005, pp. 112-13). Nevertheless, reaction to *jendā furii* is not clearly
divided down conservative/progressive lines. Some feminists have opposed the term,
claiming that it focuses on dealing with sexism through personal and psychological
means rather than tackling the bigger picture of systemic and institutionalised sexism
(Koyama and Chiki 2006, p. 155; Yamaguchi 2006b, p. 263). These feminists suggest
that the more accessible *danjo byōdō* (sex equality) is more appropriate.

There has been a strong backlash against the term *jendā furii*, played out in conservative
media and other organisations. The term *jendā furii* is criticised for being ‘extreme’
because it is said to deny the difference between men and women which, according to
critics, means the creation of ‘sexless’ human beings (Gelb 2004, p. 15). In particular,
the criticism is directed at the proposals to introduce ‘gender-free’ education into
schools, including sex education (Gelb 2004, p. 16). Conservatives argue that the sex
education proposed was ‘extreme’ and would encourage promiscuity and therefore

The backlash has not been confined to the term gender-free, but is directed against
gender equality more generally. The movement has been spearheaded by conservative
and right-wing news publications including the *Sankei Shinbun* and the *Yomiuri
Shinbun* which are both daily broadsheets, and their respective weekly or monthly
publications, such as *Shokun* and *Voice* (Hosoya 2005, p. 98). These publications have
featured articles that attack the philosophy of the Basic Law and feminism which, for
the backlashers, aims to destroy Japanese culture (Hayashi 2000, pp. 95-97) and
obliterate the differences between men and women (Okamoto 2006, p. 105). The
appearance of these articles has been accompanied by a mobilisation of backlashers in
organisations such as the *Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho o Tsukurukai* (Japanese Society
for History Textbook Reform), the *Nippon Kaigi* (Japan Conference) and the
Association of Shinto Shrines (*Jinja Honchō*). The Association of Shinto Shrines is
supported by LDP Diet members Arimura Haruko, Abe Shinzō, Yamatani Eriko and
Nishikawa Kyōko (Hardacre 2005, pp. 241-43). Hardacre notes that in the early 2000s,
the LDP alienated itself from other political parties, including the DPJ and its coalition partner the Kōmeitō, when, in the context of a broader discussion of Constitutional reform, it embarked on discussions about revising Article 24 of the Constitution which stipulates the ‘essential equality’ of the sexes. The LDP suggested changes to the article that would place less emphasis on ‘individualism’ and more emphasis on ‘family and community values’ (Hardacre 2005, pp. 243-44). These revisions did not go ahead.

‘Gender-free’, feminism and the general concept of gender equality that does not explicitly mean ‘equality of opportunity’ are often conceptualised collectively in the backlash literature (see Hayashi 2000, pp. 88-89). ‘Gender-free’ is condemned for engendering the destruction of the Japanese family (Gelb 2003, p. 125), a criticism deployed to condemn feminism and the idea of gender equality (Hayashi 2000, p. 98; Gelb 2004, pp. 5-6). The feminist movement in Japan, as in other countries, argued for expanded opportunities for women beyond the roles of wife and mother, which is often taken to mean the ‘destruction of the family’.

The backlashers’ presence is also felt in national level government policy. The backlashers were successful in their attempts to stamp out efforts by authorities to increase awareness about reproductive health rights. In the first Basic Plan for a Gender-Equal Society in 2000, the government commented on the importance of raising awareness of reproductive health rights and self-determination about sexuality, and included in the report some measures to achieve this goal, but these programs were dropped in the second Basic Plan published in 2005 (Huen 2007, p. 376). Article One of Part Nine in the original Basic Plan stressed the importance of ‘raising awareness’ of reproductive health rights and set out ‘concrete measures’ to ‘enhance opportunities for sex education’ for school children. This article disappeared from the second plan, which contained no mention of reproductive health rights. In the Third Basic Plan, approved by the Cabinet on 17 December, 2010, under a new DPJ government, reproductive health rights have returned under the same category of ‘Supporting Life-long Health for Women’ (Gender Equality Bureau website, accessed 19/3/11).
The backlash has made for a political climate not conducive to pursuing gender equality. In this climate, the Vision was watered down and the spirit of the Basic Law has been easily circumvented by authorities. The strength of the backlash against gender equality is an indication of fear from conservatives in a time of flux regarding gender roles. Dominant discourses of masculinity and femininity are in transition and this involves changes to the ‘gendered division of labour’ that has served the Japanese economy thus far. When a dominant discourse is unstable, very aggressive counter-efforts to maintain it will emerge (Dasgupta 2000, p. 199).

The LDP government’s failure to create a Basic Law that was faithful to the original Vision can be interpreted as the government’s capitulation to conservative forces, including those in the backlash. From the adoption of ‘joint-participation’ over ‘gender-equality’ and the consistent rejection of the term *byōdō* (equality) to the disappearance of the term *jendā furii* because of backlash forces, the LDP has continued to be hostile to the demands of feminists for gender equality. The LDP’s decades-long support for the gendered division of labour which has until now supported the Japanese economy underpins the LDP’s lack of enthusiasm for pursuing gender equality.

**5.5 Conclusion**

By examining post-war policy and legislation created under successive LDP governments, I have demonstrated in this and the previous chapter the LDP’s ambivalence towards gender equality because of vested interests. I have pinpointed adjustments in LDP gender-equity philosophy and the reasons for these adjustments. The recent increase in legislation aimed at pursuing gender equality and establishing family-friendly employment conditions for workers might be reason for hope that the LDP’s conservative stance on gender equality has taken a progressive turn.

The development of these laws, however, has less to do with LDP concern for gender equality and more to do with concern over the declining fertility rate. It was not until the 1990s that LDP governments began to address deeply-embedded gender inequities that hindered women from participating fully in the workforce and men from engaging more
fully with family life. This took place only when the declining fertility rate, aging population and stagnant economy began to pose threats to Japan’s future. It is no coincidence that the government’s enthusiasm for increased female labour force participation and the subsequent policies aimed at making it easier for women with children to work appeared at a time when the fertility rate had dropped to an historical low. Peng (2002, p. 435) sums it up when she observes that the Japanese state ‘continues to define the problem of gender relations in terms of their adverse effects on fertility and the aging of the society—not that gender inequality is a problem in itself’. The rush of gender-related legislation, including the Basic Law and the revision of the EEOL, and ‘family-friendly’ policies from the late 1990s onwards is better interpreted as the government’s concern over a dwindling labour force caused by a low fertility rate and an aging population than concern over gender inequalities (Ehara 2005, p. 9; Taga 2005, p. 156; Hirao 2007, pp. 52-55).

The content of the Basic Law is vague and it has little binding power. Similarly, while the revisions of the EEOL in 1999 and 2007 demonstrated the LDP’s shift from prioritising women’s welfare to focusing on gender equality, the revisions failed to abolish indirect discrimination against many women who could not gain full workers’ entitlements because of their low status as non-regular workers. Nevertheless, the enactment of the Basic Law and Basic Plan, in particular, represents significant change in approaches to gender equality. These policies heralded a shift in LDP understanding of the pursuit of gender equality from a matter of ‘raising women’s status’ to a focus on abolishing rigid gender categories. Specific elements of recent policies have been directly influenced by evolving international norms on gender equality. These include the acknowledgement in the EEOL revision of the need for a solution to indirect discrimination, and the advice in the Basic Plan to local councils and the business sector to establish gender targets for decision-making posts.

The encouragement of gender targets in the Basic Plan reflects international debates surrounding the importance of women’s voices in decision-making processes, and the efficacy of positive action-style measures to make that possible. Despite this, the notion of introducing gender quotas or positive action for increasing women in politics has not
emerged as a topic for debate for the LDP itself. Unlike the other major political party, the DPJ, the LDP has no permanent measures to assist female candidates. Koizumi’s strategy of placing women high on the party lists to ensure their success in the 2005 election was a form of positive action but did not result in any meaningful transformation of party structures and policies. Considering the LDP’s demonstrated opposition to positive action, unless another like-minded party head appears, the likelihood of a rapid increase in LDP women in the Diet, such as that which positive action can bring about, remains low. In discussions of gender equality, the LDP has always been careful to stress that ‘equality’ means equality of opportunity or equality of treatment. With regards to gender-related legislation such as the EEOL and the Basic Law, the LDP-government engaged in and ultimately won battles with feminist and women’s groups who urged the government to realise that the concept of ‘equal opportunity’ would not be sufficient because women were at a disadvantaged starting point (Kaji 1986, p. 35; Ōgai 2005, p. 16). The party’s adherence to the discourse of equal opportunity underpins its refusal to do anything specific or long-lasting about the lack of women in politics, including considering debating electoral quotas.

Electoral reform in 1994 facilitated an increase in the number of women elected to the Diet, particularly because of the introduction of proportional representation seats. A more significant increase of women, however, occurred in 2005, when Koizumi deployed positive action. After Koizumi stepped down from leading the LDP, the number of female representatives dropped in subsequent elections. The women elected in 2005 could no longer count on his support. LDP authorities declared that the party would not create a women’s bloc on the party list for the 2009 election, as Koizumi had done in 2005 (Jimin, jikishūsenkyo joseiwaku de kuryo: Hosoda kanjicho kentō, dansei hanpatsu 2009). Of the sixteen new women elected in 2005, thirteen ran in the 2009 election, and only four retained their seats. The LDP’s female contingent dropped from 26 out of 327 to eight out of 119, representing a drop from 12.6 percent to 6.7 percent of

35 The DPJ established the Women Support Fund in 1999 as part of their efforts towards a ‘gender equal society’. Female candidates running for the first time for the DPJ in national elections receive two million yen (approximately 24,000 AUD, at an exchange rate of 1 AUD = 82.8 yen current as of 14/3/11.)
total LDP members of the Lower House. Positive action was successful in 2005 for LDP women, but its success was short-lived because it was not followed up. Koizumi was not concerned about the long-term benefits of increased female representation in the Diet. He was only concerned with his reform image and utilised female candidates, including Inoguchi Kuniko, to his advantage.

In the next two chapters, I turn to the interviews with female LDP Diet members. In Chapter Six, I discuss LDP women’s motivations for becoming politicians and for joining the LDP. I also examine the ways that LDP women talk about the problem of female political under-representation. These two themes reveal a pattern among LDP women of upholding dominant discourses of gender that construct women as wives and mothers. In Chapter Seven, I focus on how LDP women negotiate a masculinised party culture, and what they think of Koizumi’s strategy of placing women on top of the party lists in the 2005 Lower House election.

36 It seems that when a party loses an election badly, the women in the party do particularly badly. The negative result for LDP women in the 2009 election echoed DPJ election results in 2005. In that election, the DPJ suffered a crushing defeat, and the number of female DPJ representatives fell from fifteen to seven.
CHAPTER 6: LDP WOMEN PROBLEMATISE THE SCARCITY OF WOMEN IN POLITICS

In this chapter, I analyse LDP women’s responses to questions centred on two main themes: their motivations for becoming politicians, and their opinions on the problem of female political under-representation. I start by discussing their political motivations. By motivations I mean why they entered politics, why they joined the LDP specifically, and what drives them—that is, what they hope to achieve as politicians. I analyse their motivations through a gender lens to illustrate the manner in which many women articulate political motivations and ambitions in ways that ensure they uphold dominant discourses of femininity. Specifically, I shed light on how women speak about motivations in a male-dominated career in ways that make their entrance into the masculinised space less threatening.

In addition to analysing their motivations for joining politics, and their aspirations now that they are politicians, I interrogate LDP female politicians’ desire to increase the number of women in politics. In order to determine LDP women’s desire to bring about such change, I first have to ascertain whether or not LDP women think that the under-representation of women in politics is a problem. Studies have shown that the existence of activist women in political parties can be a determining factor in the increase of women in politics (Caul 1999, p. 94; Kunovich and Paxton 2005, p. 521), and that, for example, women activists can advocate for gender quotas if they believe they are necessary.

When talking with LDP women about their thoughts on the political under-representation of women, the role of women in politics was a common topic to emerge. I analyse informants’ comments about the importance of having more women in politics to shed light on the ways that LDP women think about their roles as women in politics. Do they perceive any specific benefits of having more women in politics and what are those benefits? What are these perceptions based on? As we shall see, conversations with LDP women about the importance of women in politics indicate a perpetuation of
discourses of femininity that mark women as different from the normative male politician.

6.1 Feminine Motivations in a Masculinised Space

Women may be socialized to disavow ambition because ambitious women are seen as “pushy” even though this trait may be admired in males. Hence, women deny that pursuit of elected office is to further their careers and claim they desire only to serve the community (Bledsoe and Herring 1990, p. 218).

Ambition in a woman is viewed as unattractive. When women exhibit political ambition they become threatening. They threaten the ‘taken-for-granted privilege’ of men who, because of scripts and practices embedded into the political structures through repeated performances, are the ‘normative figures of authority’ (Puwar 2004, p. 81). In British politics, Puwar (2004, p. 54) suggests that women who enter politics become ‘space invaders’ and create what she calls ‘terror’ in the eyes of the incumbent men. This terror derives from a place of privilege—the deeply entrenched privilege that men have in the sphere of politics. This privilege is possible because the legislative assembly is a gendered space—a masculine space.

A male-dominated space is typically one where there are few women present. That space might be filled with men who embody dominant discourses of masculinity, as well as men who contest them (for example, homosexual men). Such space privileges males. Gatens (1996, pp. 25-26) suggests that women have difficulty entering male-dominated public spaces, such as legislative assemblies, because it is the male body and not the female body that is afforded value in that particular space. Regardless of whether a man adheres to dominant discourses of masculinity or not, being a man privileges him in a space that is defined as masculine.

The normative Diet member is male. Specifically, he embodies the dominant discourse of masculinity, the salaryman (Mackie 2000, p. 247). Yet the word ‘politician’ (seijika) connotes not only a masculine image, but to some people is associated with an image of
lying, the abuse of power and corruption (Iwai 1993, p. 104). Politics is a world most
Japanese women do not identify with because of its image of corruption (Iwai 1993, p.
104; LeBlanc 1999, p. 83). As discussed in Chapter Three, women’s political
participation has been constructed as counter to dominant male-run politics because of
women’s apparent ‘pure’ approach to politics. Female politicians have been discursively
constructed as untainted and unconcerned with power. Women entering national-level
politics, therefore, are seen as an anomaly.

The ‘sedimentation of acts and gender norms’ (Butler 1997, p. 407) that have produced
the naturalness of the salaryman and housewife ideal is well established in the Diet
context. Here, the heterosexual Diet member, who embodies the salaryman, with only
financial responsibilities to his family and home, and his supportive wife have come to
represent the ‘natural configuration of bodies into sexes which exist in a binary to one
another’ (Butler 1997, p. 407). Because they exist in a binary they depend on each other
for survival. Thus, when that binary is disrupted and women enter the Diet, female
politicians are rendered highly visible in a role that is defined as masculine. The fact
that they are out-of-place is manifest in their labelling by the media: Joan of Arc
(Mackie 2003, p. 125), Madonnas, shikyaku (assassins), kunoichi (female ninjas)
(McLaren 2005, p. 32). Female politicians are marked as other, and male politicians
require no labelling because they are the norm.

Puwar (2004, p. 10) has noted in the British context that because the bodies of women
and non-white members of parliament differ from those of the long-incumbent men they
are inherently foreign and invasive—they are ‘space invaders’. Utilising Butler’s (1999,
p. 190) theory of performativity, Puwar (2004, p. 81) argues that repeated masculine
performances by male MPs have made Westminster a space where white men are the
‘somatic norm’ (Puwar 2004, p. 8) and those who fall outside the normative framework
of the middle-aged white male are outsiders. Due to their status as outsiders, ‘space
invaders’ are subject to the ‘burden of doubt, the burden of representation,
infantilisation and super-surveillance’ by the public, the media and other MPs (Puwar
2004, p. 11). Although there are no formal barriers to women’s participation in
Westminster politics, their relative rarity leads to doubts over and scepticism towards their suitability or indeed their capabilities for the traditionally-male role of MP.

Women who enter politics disrupt the gendered status quo. This is a major disruption as it involves the redistribution of power. With the entrance of more women into politics, the notion that only men can be the bearers of political knowledge becomes less tenable. The space, which has been seen as belonging exclusively to men, is thus disrupted. As we shall see below, talking about one’s political motivations in ways that demonstrate an adherence to norms of femininity can help to cushion that disruption.

6.1.1 ‘Because I was asked to’
The most common response of informants to the question, ‘Why did you become a politician?’ was: ‘Because I was asked to’. Only three of fourteen female LDP informants entered politics without being invited to. The remaining eleven claimed to have become politicians because they were asked to run in an election by an acquaintance, colleague or family member. Four of those respondents were members of the so-called ‘Koizumi Children’ of the 2005 general election, who were recruited to assist Koizumi in ‘smashing the LDP’ (Kabashima and Steel 2007a, n.p). The motivation for Koizumi was change and, as will be outlined below, these four ‘Koizumi Children’ also explained their motivations in terms of ‘change’. The contradiction of the active-sounding ‘change’ with the passive ‘because I was asked to’ indicates a less-than straightforward ambition to enter politics and multiple possible reasons for entering politics.

Political scientist Inoguchi Kuniko was one of the four ‘Koizumi Children’ interviewed. In speaking about her motivations to enter politics, she said that although she had an academic interest in politics she had never thought of becoming a politician. She accepted the invitation from the LDP because she wanted to assist Koizumi in his

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37 According to a survey carried out from 2006 to 2008 by the Inter-Parliamentary Union of 272 parliamentarians from 110 countries, being asked to run by a political party or being encouraged by family or acquaintances were the lowest scoring motivational factors for both male and female politicians (IPU 2008, p. 16).
Another of the ‘Koizumi Children’, Fujino Makiko, was married to an LDP Diet member. Fujino was initially hesitant to accept her husband’s suggestion to run in the Lower House election because she had always been sceptical of what are known as talent (tarento), or celebrity, politicians. This is what she would effectively become due to her status as a quasi-‘celebrity chef’. Fujino owns a cooking school that has regular enrolments of 400–500 people (mostly women). The women’s apparent ignorance about politics, and specifically the privatisation of the postal system, worried her. This also served as a motivating factor. She thought that it was ‘not ok’ to be ignorant of such important issues and hoped that she could make politics easier to understand for people like the women in her cooking classes (Interview with Fujino, 2007). Fujino’s motivation could be interpreted as an internalisation of the cultural norm that people should involve themselves in politics because it affects everybody (McCulloch 1990, p. 503). It could also be interpreted as a reflection of her stated desire to make politics more accessible to women. A politics that has been created by and for a narrow pool of men is not easily accessible to the general voting public. Furthermore, the corrupt image of the LDP over the previous decades had alienated voters who no longer trusted politicians (Steel and Martin 2008, pp. 1–2). Fujino’s articulation of her motivation to

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38 It is difficult to know why LDP men enter politics as I only interviewed one man and the motivation of politicians is a relatively uncovered area of research. The one man I interviewed, Kōno Taro, did not mention being ‘asked to’ when telling me why he entered politics. After studying at Georgetown University in Washington in the early 1980s, he came to the conclusion that US-Japan diplomatic relations were ‘not quite right’ and this was his first impetus for entering politics (Interview with Kōno, 2007).

39 Fujino lost her Lower House seat in the 2009 election. During her time in office, she did not teach cooking. She did, however, have a blog linked to her cookery website containing relatively light-hearted discussions about recent political topics, such as the consumption tax and revision of the nationality law (http://ameblo.jp/makiko-fujino/). This blog no longer exists.
make politics easier to understand for women, such as her cooking students, reveals an empathy with them and a desire to encourage their involvement in politics.

It is unlikely that the three ‘Koizumi Children’ discussed here would have entered politics had they not been asked to by then Prime Minister Koizumi. The pattern of being asked to run in an election emerged in many other informants’ discussions about why they ran for office. In addition to the four ‘Koizumi Children’, seven other informants also became politicians upon request by friends, family or colleagues. Former LDP Upper House member Ono Kiyoko explained that the Prime Minister at the time, Nakasone Yasuhiro (1982–87), had asked her to run because he wanted someone to represent mothers and housewives in the areas of education, child-rearing and health. Ono was a mother of five and a former Olympic medallist (also a ‘talent’ politician) employed in the area of health and sport and was thus deemed suitable for the role.

The two women who had come from the bureaucracy also followed this path to politics. Moriyama Mayumi, who had been a bureaucrat for approximately thirty years before entering politics, told me that she was asked by her incumbent LDP husband to run because they ‘could not find anyone else’ (Interview with Moriyama, 2007). In her publication, ‘What I Saw in the Cabinet’, Moriyama (1991, p. 12) remarks that she initially turned down the request because, being married to an LDP Diet member, she had seen what a strenuous career it was. She then goes on to describe her change of heart.

What I had tried to hammer home as the director-general of the Women’s and Young Worker’s Bureau was that “Women cannot be hesitant and timid. We have to strive to take on difficult challenges, and if we do not then we will never achieve equality”. Yet, here I was now, going totally against my own stated beliefs by my refusal to run for election, because I felt that politics was a difficult field. Finally I decided that I would give it a try…(Moriyama 1991, p. 12)

40 I have omitted including the fourth of the ‘Koizumi Children’ interviewees in this discussion because of anonymity considerations.
According to this account, Moriyama was guided by a sense of obligation to ‘achieve equality’. This demonstrates a feminist consciousness. Her motivation also reveals a sense of obligation to serve others. In Moriyama we see the articulation of an obligation to her husband and the LDP, and an obligation to the cause of increasing women in politics. A sense of obligation to answer the requests of family members or colleagues and to also somehow serve the public can be interpreted as a stereotypical feminine response because it articulates a desire to help others.

To the extent that women accept and internalize gender roles that describe the female as communal, nurturing, and other-regarding, they may in fact be more likely to pursue higher office out of a sense of service to the community rather than out of a desire to enhance their own careers (Bledsoe and Herring 1990, p. 218).

In contrast to the majority of informants who became politicians upon request, some informants took up politics of their own volition out of a desire to improve society. The obligation to society can be seen in their responses below.

6.1.2 A sense of ‘civic duty’

Analysis of the motivations of the three women who entered politics of their own volition accords with Ling and Matsuno’s (1992, p. 59) claim that Japanese women in politics are there to ‘get things done’. All three of these interviewees claimed that they desired to change society for the better—to have acted out of a sense of ‘civic duty’ (Dowse and Hughes, 1979, p. 309, cited in McCulloch 1990, p. 503). This also resounds with discourses of femininity that posit women as less interested in power or even furthering their career than in serving others. One of my interview questions was: ‘Where do you see yourself in five years’ time?’ Only one spoke of career progression, saying that, ‘I’ll still be a Lower House member, but I’d like to gradually rise in the ranks to be a minister’ (Interview, name withheld). Most women, however, seemed surprised by this question and responded along the lines of, ‘Well, if the public vote me in again, I’ll continue serving them’, thus demonstrating an adherence to gendered

41 I do not discount the possibility that many men are also in politics to ‘get things done’. On the contrary, pragmatism may be behind many Diet members’ political ambitions, regardless of gender.
norms which construct women as concerned to serve others but unambitious about personal career progression.

The informant who talked of becoming a Cabinet minister mentioned later in the interview that ‘In Japan, people don’t like it when women occupy higher positions than men. Those women are regarded as having bad personalities and as being pushy’ (Interview, name withheld). In doing so, she expressed a critical acknowledgement of her perceived ‘unfeminine’ ambition. She claimed that this negative attitude towards ambitious women was part of the glass ceiling that prevented more female representation in the Diet.

One of the three women who self-recruited wanted to mend the health system which, according to her, had been damaged by Koizumi. Ishii Midori decided to run for a seat in the Upper House after a 32-year career in paediatric dentistry because she was concerned with the direction in which the national health system was heading. According to Ishii, under the Koizumi government the national healthcare budget had been reduced substantially and she was worried about how this was affecting medical practitioners as well as patients (Interview with Ishii, 2008).

Tokashiki’s motivations can also be traced to a desire to serve others. After a varied and successful career in pharmacy and business, Tokashiki became a politician in order to ‘give something back to society’ (Interview with Tokashiki, 2007). She attributed this desire to ‘give something back’ to her Catholic education where, she says, she was taught to believe that because society had given her so much in the way of education and upbringing, it was her obligation to return the favour as soon as she could. Tokashiki spent at least two years wondering how she could do this and decided that a career in politics was the way to fulfil this desire (Interview with Tokashiki, 2007). Compared with Ishii, who had a specific goal of improving the health system, Tokashiki’s goal was vague. She won her first election to the Suginami ward council as an Independent and did not join the LDP until 2005 when the LDP opened nominations for candidacy to the public. When Tokashiki saw Koizumi being interviewed on
television the day he announced the dissolution of the Diet, she thought, ‘National politics is about to change’ and she wanted to play a role in that change. That same night, she logged on to the LDP website, where there was a public call for candidates, and applied (Interview with Tokashiki, 2007).

The third woman who ran for election without an invitation, Kamikawa, ran with a particular mission. Kamikawa’s motivation was grounded in her work experience in policy-making consultancy as a political aide in the US, and her ability in this capacity to view Japan and Japan’s political system as an outside observer. She was working and studying in the US in the late 1980s and was concerned for Japan’s national interests in the context of the US-Japan trade friction of that era.

I felt that politicians who were representing Japan’s national interests were not asserting Japan’s national interests well enough against their partners, that is, America. I was working as a policy-making consultant so I was aiding political activity you see, as a professional at work. But I was extremely worried that Japan’s future would be jeopardised if the politicians, if politics could not for certain and with confidence properly explain and negotiate in decision-making areas. I felt this, and I thought that I must take that next step after my study in the US to act responsibly on those feelings and take the step from my policy-making job to decision-making (Interview with Kamikawa, 2007).

A sense of altruism (a desire to do something for Japanese society) coupled with specific areas of concern were the driving factors for these three women to enter politics on their own volition. This then leads to the question of why they chose the LDP.

6.1.3 Motivations for joining the LDP
As already mentioned in previous chapters, the opposition DPJ has a financial assistance scheme for women running in their first election, the SDP has had two female leaders and a high percentage of women in the Diet, and the JCP and Kōmeitō also have higher percentages of women than the LDP. This raises questions about the motivations of women who choose the LDP over other parties that would appear to be more woman-friendly. One would assume that political ideology plays a part when a

42 See Appendix 2 for exact figures.
politician joins a particular party. The LDP is often called a ‘catchall party’ (Curtis 1999, p. 30) because of its apparent ability to attract politicians who have a wide range of political leanings. Evidence from discussions with LDP women about their motivations for joining the party supports this label and suggests that political ideology has only a minor impact on politicians’ decision to join the party.

When asked why they joined the LDP, many women answered, ‘Because it is the government party’. Joining a party because it is in government can be regarded as a pragmatic decision, particularly considering the long-term and stable nature of the LDP’s reign, at least at the time the women ran for election. While party philosophy was mentioned by only three of the informants, a large proportion of women were of the opinion that if they were to make a difference to policy, they had to do it from inside the government party. Take, for example, Koike Yuriko, who was one of the ‘Koizumi Children’. Before joining the LDP, she had been a Diet member since 1992 and had experience in several political parties, including the Japan New Party, the New Frontier Party, the Liberal Party and the New Conservative Party. Koike’s motivation to join the LDP derived from a sense of pragmatism, as is demonstrated in the following exchange.

Author: Why did you choose the LDP?

Koike: Because other parties are not fully-fledged political parties. They have tried to be, but they have a long way to go, particularly in relation to security policies. Parties split when they attempt to create a comprehensive security policy.

Author: So, the LDP was better in this area?

43 After a career with a high public profile as a television news reporter, Koike successfully ran for a seat for the Japan New Party (Nihon Shintō) in 1992. In 1994, the party dissolved and the New Frontier Party (Shin Shintō) was formed, which Koike joined. The NFP was part of the ruling anti-LDP coalition. After the NFP collapsed in 1998, many of its members, including Koike, joined the newly formed Liberal Party (Jiyūtō). In 2000, Koike left the Liberal Party to become one of the founding members of the Conservative Party (Hoshutō), which changed its name to the New Conservative Party (Shin Hoshutō) in 2002, and eventually merged with the LDP in 2003.
Koike: Well, the LDP has actually assumed security; they have in fact taken responsibility for it. So, my choice of the LDP was a practical one. Other parties, well, until then I had been creating political parties. As a result, I decided that it is more practical to put the energy I was using in creating political parties into actual dealings with the country’s affairs.

Author: Some people have stated that one of the reasons they joined the LDP was for the party’s philosophy. What about you?

Koike: With regards to LDP philosophy, you know, I think there are several problems with LDP philosophy in terms of political operations. So, until now I had been attacking the LDP from outside but not much had changed, so I realised it would be quicker to change the party from the inside (Interview with Koike, 2008).

Koike made the pragmatic decision to join the government party because that is the source of power—otherwise she would have continued to ‘attack it from the outside’. Her choice to join the LDP was described in terms of a process of elimination. She chose the LDP not because she agrees with its philosophy but because, in her eyes, it is the only one worth joining because she sees the other parties as not fully formed.

Another example of an informant whose decision to join the LDP was guided by pragmatism was Ishii, the ex-paediatric dentist. She was one of the three female informants who ran for election without first being asked to. Her motivation can be interpreted as a case of a ‘sense of civic duty’ underlining a specific goal, combined with the pragmatism that drove her to join the government party. She also mentioned, however, that she recognised herself as a realist and that the reason the LDP has been in power for so long is that it is a realistic party.

Ishii: In order to fix [the health system], commenting, criticising or condemning it is not enough. You have to correct the mistakes by making statements where the power is—that is, within the government party. That’s why [I ran for election].

Author: And that’s why you chose the LDP?
Ishii: That’s the only reason.

Author: So, the party’s philosophy or policies didn’t really matter?

Ishii: (Long pause) The main reason was that it was the government party. In addition to that, why has the LDP been the government party for so long? Because they are realists […] I am a realist too. Of course, philosophy is important, but I don’t approve of people who talk a lot of theory without really understanding the reality of society (Interview with Ishii, 2008).

Koike and Ishii joined the LDP despite opposing what the LDP represented. Koike did not agree with the party’s operations in general and Ishii opposed a particular policy created by the LDP. Rather than opposing it by joining the opposition party, which is the path that might seem more logical, they decided to join the party that ignited their feelings of opposition because it was the government party. It is the government party that has more power to implement and change policy. The longevity and stability of LDP power—at least at the time these women joined the party—arguably led these women to choose the LDP over any other party.

Arimura discussed how both pragmatism as well as a sense of identifying with LDP philosophy was behind her decision to join the LDP.

Arimura: The opposition can express its philosophy but is lacking in terms of feasibility. It’s important to participate in the decision-making process in the government party because ultimately what is decided upon becomes action, so in this respect I’m realistic. Then there’s the party ideology. The LDP is the closest to my beliefs.

Author: Is that so? How specifically is the LDP’s philosophy similar to yours?

Arimura: In the way that the party strives to carve out a future while valuing traditional culture. And you know, my father was an LDP prefectural councillor too (Interview with Arimura, 2007).
Although it was mentioned as an afterthought—perhaps because she thought it was not important, or perhaps because she realised I was aware of that particular fact—Arimura’s father being a politician is not an insignificant factor. As outlined in Chapter Four, political dynasties are common recruitment paths for the LDP. In contrast to Ishii and Koike, who joined the party to change the party, Arimura mentioned that one of the motivating factors was that her beliefs were in line with the party. A finer reading of the statement however, reveals little articulation of beliefs or philosophies. Instead, the LDP is characterised as pragmatic in comparison to the opposition. This sense of pragmatism combined with respect for the stability of the party was prevalent in many women’s discussions of why they joined the LDP. Informants expressed their admiration for the party in terms that connoted an appreciation for the way the LDP had managed Japan ‘responsibly’ (sekinin o motte) (Interviews with Kamikawa, 2007, Sakamoto, 2007); or the way the party was ‘realistic’ compared to the opposition (genjitsuteki / jitsugensei ga aru / genjitsushugi) (Interviews with Koike, 2008, Arimura 2007, and Ishii 2008).

Lower House member Kamikawa Yōko was an Independent when she first ran for election. Her motivation for this, as discussed above, was her concern for Japan’s ‘national interests’. She joined the LDP during her second election campaign in 2000.

Author: So you became a politician as an Independent and then joined the LDP later. Why did you choose the LDP?

Kamikawa: At the time, I was an Independent so I needed to decide on a party that could operate responsibly. I met with people from various political parties, you see. And I decided that I wanted to match my activities with the LDP’s political stance, or the LDP’s politics.

Author: The LDP’s political stance?

Kamikawa: Well, basically, the LDP was the party that had responsibly managed Japan’s politics for the 50 years since the war and I felt very strongly that politics would not run smoothly unless that party was working confidently. I wanted to create a new Japanese style [of politics], if you will, by firstly changing the LDP from the inside (Interview with Kamikawa, 2007).
Although Kamikawa mentioned political stance, it is apparent in the last paragraph that she actually meant the LDP’s stability and what she perceived as their sense of ‘responsibility’ to the country. Because of minimal opposition to their control of government, the LDP seems to be viewed by many LDP women as ‘responsible’—the only party that has been able to govern Japan. In other words, for these informants, the LDP, more so than any other party, has shouldered the responsibilities of governing Japan. The other parties have been unable to pose any valid threat to the LDP.

Nishikawa Kyōko is another informant who articulated the attraction of the LDP due to its ability to sustain Japan over the long-term. Nishikawa joined the LDP at her husband’s suggestion. She had moved to Kumamoto upon marriage to become a full-time housewife after having lived in Tokyo. After several years of marriage, her husband became the LDP mayor of a town called Tsunagi. He asked her to work (voluntarily) for the Kumamoto LDP chapter women’s division. According to Nishikawa, the women’s division ‘helps’ the Kumamoto LDP chapter, an organising body consisting mainly of prefectural and municipal council members from the Kumamoto area. Initially she was reluctant to help the LDP because, as she described it, she had been at university during the student riots of the 1960s and, in her words was part of a ‘more progressive’ generation (Interview with Nishikawa, 2008). She thus did not support the LDP despite being raised by parents who did. After living in Kumamoto for a period of time and working voluntarily for the LDP women’s division, she came to realise that the ‘best of real Japan’ remained in rural Japan and it was the LDP that had supported this (Interview with Nishikawa, 2008). Rural Japan had typically provided the LDP strong support, and in return had benefited from the redistribution of national income by LDP governments in the form of protectionist farming policies and funding for public works (Kabashima and Steel 2007a, n.p). Nishikawa’s support for the LDP thus grew out of this opportunity to witness and become part of rural and agricultural Japan.

A similar appreciation for the stability and perceived long-term commitment of the LDP was articulated by another informant, Fujino, who had only very recently realised what she admired in the LDP after being in the party for two years (Interview with Fujino,
Until Fujino started really thinking about it, she ‘simply accepted’ that the party had supported the nation for so long. She admired the unpretentiousness and steadiness of the party and contrasted this with the opposition, whom she likened to an extravagant father who promises to buy his wife and daughter lots of items such as beautiful clothes but does not actually have the money to do so. Fujino thus gendered the political party into a father figure. In contrast to the irresponsible father (the DPJ) stands the LDP, the sturdy and reliable father who has assumed responsibility for his children—the state—and protected them for the last half-century. The metaphor of the political party as responsible and reliable in contrast to its opposition that is frivolous with money and therefore cannot be trusted is reminiscent of political posters from the 1920s and 1930s that enjoined voters to use their vote in order to eliminate corruption (Mackie 2002, pp. 49-52). Like these posters, where women featured only as symbols of either corruption or purity, but not as political agents, Fujino’s imagining of the political space is gendered masculine.

Unless I brought it up, it was rare to hear mention of gender-equity related issues during informants’ discussions of why they had joined the LDP or become politicians in the first place. The desire to change certain aspects of either society or the party itself generally did not include addressing the issue of the under-representation of women in the LDP. Of the fourteen LDP female informants, just two—Moriyama Mayumi and Sakamoto Yukiko—mentioned the gender imbalance in the Diet when discussing their motivation to become politicians. Sakamoto was initially reluctant to leave her job in the bureaucracy but was often asked by LDP acquaintances to run in elections. She answered the question ‘Why did you become a politician?’ with the by-now-familiar response, ‘Because I was persuaded to’ (Interview with Sakamoto, 2008). After pressed about why she finally relented after having refused for several years, she responded that the main reason was that there were so few women in politics. This was a similar sentiment to that of Moriyama Mayumi, the other former bureaucrat. Moriyama did not mention this during our interview, but discusses it in her book (1991, p. 12). She thought it would be hypocritical to decline the invitation to run in an election because she had discouraged other women from being ‘timid’ when challenging career opportunities arose. These two women therefore had a critical perspective on the under-representation of women in the Diet, perhaps because they already had a heightened
consciousness from being two of the very few women in the male-dominated bureaucracy.44

In summary, many women talked of their decision to run for office in ways that confirmed their adherence to dominant discourses of femininity. Many became politicians not out of burning ambition, but because a colleague, family member or acquaintance asked them to run for election. This passivity was combined with an outward show of lack of ambition expressed in thoughts about their future career paths. This suggests an adherence to normative discourses of femininity. Only one woman expressed an overt desire to climb the political ladder by saying that in five years’ time she would like to be serving as a Cabinet minister. This informant requested that her anonymity be maintained while the others did not, suggesting that some might not want to publicly declare their ambitions. This informant also recognised her transgression from normative gender discourses by expressing her discontent at being perceived by others in the party as ‘pushy’ and ‘forward’ (Interview, name withheld). It is difficult to conclude whether the informants are truly as uninterested in climbing the political ladder as they appear, or whether they choose not to verbalise their ambitions.

Very few informants became politicians because they were particularly concerned about social or political gender inequities. However, failure to articulate the pursuit of gender equality as central to one’s motivation for becoming a politician does not necessarily mean a lack of concern for the issue. It does not mean that LDP women are not concerned with the issue of female under-representation in the Diet. Many expressed anxiety about the problem when asked about it. The following section explores their thoughts on the issue.

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44 The bureaucracy in Japan is heavily male-dominated. In 2008, women comprised 19.2 percent of those who passed the Higher Civil Service Examination. Of those who passed, women comprised 25.5 percent of all those who were recruited (Gender Equality Bureau 2009b, p. 24). However, women tend to be employed in low-ranking positions in the public service: while they made up approximately seventeen percent of all those employed at administrative service and unit chief levels, their numbers were negligible in high-ranked positions, such as ‘designated service’ level or division director level, where women’s representation was approximately two percent (Cabinet Office 2009, pp. 23-24).
6.2 LDP Women’s Thoughts on the Under-representation of Women in the Diet

Some scholars have argued that women in positions of power in political parties can influence the numbers of women coming into their party by raising awareness of the problem of low female representation and exerting pressure on party leadership to take active measures to counter the problem (Caul 1999, p. 2; Galligan and Clavero 2008, p. 154). Women’s mere presence, however, will arguably have minimal effect unless they take action in pursuing the issue. An analysis of women’s perceptions about female under-representation in the Diet may reveal whether they have the potential to act in positive ways to improve female representation.

The desire to address the gender imbalance in the Diet, such as that intimated in discussions with informants Sakamoto and Moriyama, requires acknowledgment that the under-representation of women in the LDP is a problem. If LDP women do not regard the under-representation of LDP women in the Diet as a problem, they are less likely to pursue policies to increase the number of women, or even encourage female candidates. In contrast, if they believe that the poor representation of women in the Diet is a problem it is conceivable that they might attempt to do something about it. Analysis of discussions with LDP women about the issue of female political under-representation includes considering party loyalty as a silencing factor. This means that talking in gender-neutral terms is more palatable than acknowledging gender inequalities. Party loyalty does not, however, stop women from talking more generally about the under-representation of women in politics. Why the Diet needs more women, as opposed to why the LDP has so few women, was a much more comfortable topic of discussion.

6.2.1 Female political under-representation a problem but not for the LDP

There was quite a contrast between some LDP women who regarded the lack of women in the Diet as a problem, and others who, while believing that it was a problem, were

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45 There is, nevertheless, a substantial body of literature, some of which was discussed in Chapter One, that asserts the importance of role models in increasing the number of women in national assemblies (Phillips 1995, p. 62; Mansbridge 1999, p. 651), and in changing the socialisation of girls so that they take more of an interest in politics (Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006, pp. 244-45).
not very interested in discussing it. For example, some evaded the general question, ‘Do you think the lack of women in the Diet is a problem?’ Consider the following response.

Well, it depends on the woman. Female local councillors and female Diet members are quite different, you see. This is because…. And this applies to men as well, men are like this too. When you work in local politics, you get a close connection with and an understanding of that local area. But I think national Diet members are different. You have to have knowledge of a variety of things through a global perspective and you need to have a vast network in order to get information. I think many of those Diet members who have come from local councils—both men and women—those Diet members who only have experience in local politics can only see what’s right in front of them. The reality is that there are quite a lot of women, also in the opposition as well, entering the Diet who might be appropriate for local politics, but not so for national level politics (Interview with Santō, 2008).

Concern for the lack of women in the Diet is absent from this response. In contrast, it is a criticism of Diet members, with an emphasis on female Diet members, who enter the Diet from local politics. As discussed in Chapter Four, one of the most common routes to an LDP Diet seat is from local politics. Not only did Santō fail to comment on the gender imbalance in the Diet, she attempted to omit gender from the conversation by arguing that the problem of local councillors becoming national-level politicians incorporates men as well as women. Santō nevertheless concluded her statement by shifting the focus back to women, suggesting a more critical stance towards women who take that particular path to the Diet. At any rate, examination of Diet members’ backgrounds suggests that men are more likely to take this route to national politics. Only three LDP Diet women come from local politics, which represents less than ten percent of all LDP women, whereas after the 2005 election, the percentage of total LDP Diet members to have come from local politics was 30.4 percent (Stockwin 2008, p. 188).

Some informants attempted to downplay the issue of female under-representation by suggesting it was only a small problem because the number of women was increasing. This stance regards the under-representation of women in politics as a problem that will solve itself in a matter of time, because the numbers of women are slowly but surely rising. In another expression of minimal concern for gender balance in the Diet, Nishikawa posited that women should constitute 30 percent of total Diet members, and
maintained that, while there is nothing wrong with the idea, there is no need for them to make up 50 percent. Her reasoning was that women were ‘overwhelmingly’ better at debating than men and that if women constituted half of all Diet members it would actually feel as though they constituted two thirds (Interview with Nishikawa, 2008). This would support Puwar’s theory of the ‘burden of doubt’ placed on women in hyper-masculinised jobs, such as politics (Puwar, 2002, p. 90). This ‘burden of doubt’ means that women’s capabilities are viewed suspiciously because of women’s higher visibility as ‘othered’ beings, and therefore they have to try harder than the existing men to prove they are as good as them. In other words, women’s apparent superior ability at debating could be a materialisation of the phenomenon in male-dominated parliamentary spaces whereby women perform better than men because they feel compelled to. As ‘space invaders’, their abilities are doubted, and they are constantly under pressure to perform at a heightened capacity. This is compared to male politicians who, because they are the ‘somatic norm’ are secure in their positions of privilege. Male politicians do not suffer the burden of doubt as much as female politicians (Puwar 2004, p. 11). This is an indication of powerful gendered norms at work in politics that position women as less competent than men. Nishikawa paradoxically suggests that because women are better than men at debating, there is no need for gender equality in politics. This attitude does little to dismantle the ‘burden of doubt’ on women, but instead perpetuates the notion that women should perform at a higher standard in order to be taken seriously.

In contrast to these kinds of responses, the majority of informants regarded the gender imbalance in the Diet as a problem. The concern for the lack of women in the Diet expressed by most women, however, did not include acknowledgement of the LDP’s poor record for female representation. In fact, many respondents believed that women were better represented in the LDP than in other parties. In response to my question, ‘Why do you think there are so few LDP women in the Diet?’ many women flatly denied that the LDP had a lower percentage of women than other parties. The 2005 increase in the number of women was often referred to by informants to justify their claims that LDP female representation in the Diet was not low. I attempted to push the issue in some cases by explaining that although the LDP had more women in raw figures in the Diet than any other party, women as a percentage of the total was still
lower than the other parties. However, in some cases, I thought it wiser to simply continue to the next question.46

I had sent the interview schedule to the interviewees at least a week prior to holding the interviews. At least two women had prepared statistics for me to demonstrate how ‘well’ the LDP was progressing in terms of female representation. These women and others who expressed surprise at my question were defensive in their responses, implying that I had not conducted my research properly. They were determined to defend the LDP by creating an argument that ignored total percentages. They suggested that because the numbers of female LDP women in the Diet were higher than for any other party, the LDP had better female representation than other parties. The LDP’s poor record of female representation is a material reality. The LDP has always had a lower proportion of female members in the Diet than the other major parties. It is also recognised by many scholars as the party that makes the least effort to support women in elections (Ōgai 2001, p. 208; Iwanaga 2008, p. 115; Martin 2008, p. 146). Failure to admit this fact shows either ignorance of actual percentages of women in the Diet or an attempt to defend the party.

In contrast to the women who did not know about, or would not acknowledge, the numbers, some acknowledged that the LDP had the poorest record for female representation and speculated on the reasons for it. For example, Ishii, who was not defensive about the lack of women in the LDP, responded by commenting that attitudes in the LDP, more so than in other parties, were ‘perhaps more patriarchal and old-fashioned’ (Interview with Ishii, 2008), indicating a conceptual link between party culture and female Diet representation. Another believed that other political parties, such as the DPJ and JCP, were more pro-active in fielding women in elections, and that the LDP was difficult to break into for women because of the longevity and stability of so many incumbents (Interview, name withheld).

46 I thought that pushing the issue in the face of defensiveness would jeopardise the rest of the interview. This question was situated quite early in the interview. Getting into a disagreement so early into the interview might have proved disadvantageous for me with regards to obtaining data in a friendly and open atmosphere as is encouraged in interviewing, particularly by feminist researchers (Oakley, 1981, pp. 30-61, Reinharz, 1992, p. 27).
In summary, it seems that it is acceptable for women to talk about the ‘lack of women in the Diet’ in general, but focus on the LDP was a topic most wanted to avoid. Most LDP women nevertheless viewed the lack of women in politics as a problem. The next section discusses LDP women’s views on why there should be more women in the Diet. Analysing why LDP women think the under-representation of women in the Diet is a problem highlights how LDP women contribute to the normalisation of dominant discourses of gender and politics. Discussion about what might change with more women in politics reveals affirmation by LDP women of dominant discourses of femininity and marginalisation of types of womanhood that transgress against those discourses. The vast majority of LDP women framed their discussions of the importance of increased female representation in ways that connected women with stereotypical feminine roles, such as mothers, wives and peace-keepers. These discussions, analysed below, reveal, somewhat paradoxically, that LDP women perpetuate the very discourses of femininity that I have argued contribute to a construction of women as political outsiders.

6.3 The Importance of ‘Women’s Perspectives’ in Politics

When asked why they regarded the lack of women in the Diet as a problem, many informants suggested that a ‘woman’s perspective’ is inherently different from that of a man. Consider the following dialogue.

Author: Why do you think the lack of women in the Diet is a problem?

Tokashiki: The sexes have completely different ways of looking at things. For example, if we’re both looking at this glass, a man might look at it from the top and think it is round, but a woman might look at it from the side and see it as square. So there are more people who see it as a circle in terms of numbers. Women make it known that you can also see it as a square! And this type of debate will not happen [without more women].

Author: So, if the number of women increases…

Tokashiki: If the number of women increases, these types of debate will emerge. If all the men say, ‘it’s a circle’, and if someone with power says, ‘it’s a circle’, then
everyone will say it’s a circle. Some people saying it’s a circle and some people saying it’s a square will produce good politics. In particular, there will be more diversity within the Japanese population in the future, so in this respect, I think it’s very important that people of different sexes, people from different careers and people with a wide variety of experiences enter this field of employment (Interview with Tokashiki, 2007).

The statement, ‘There will be more diversity within the Japanese population in the future’, implies a belief that eventually, in line with the development of a more diverse society, the body politic will become more capable of representing diverse views. Tokashiki also believed that the political world was ‘backward’ compared to the business world in terms of female participation, but that it would improve ‘in the future’.

While Tokashiki has an understanding that women and men have different perspectives, she is vague when it comes to defining the nature of their differences. In this statement, she seems to articulate a desire for more people in politics who come from a wide variety of backgrounds. This includes women because, for her, women and men typically have different life experiences. Later in the interview Tokashiki commented that women were suited to political matters that were ‘close to daily life, like society, welfare and the environment. Women find it easier to make the most of their skills in these areas’ (Interview with Tokashiki, 2007). The idea that women are linked to day-to-day issues and the community is a common thread in discourses in Japan about ‘women’s perspectives’ and the importance of these perspectives in politics. Female political representatives are therefore discursively constructed as experts in these areas. The gender-specific terms *seikatsusha* and *shufu* are often deployed in these discussions.

### 6.3.1 The *seikatsusha* and *shufu* discourses

Women engaged in politics, be it mainstream politics or activist politics, often refer to themselves as *seikatsusha* (‘lifestyler’) (LeBlanc 1999, pp. 138-44; Okashita 2001, p. 64; Iwamoto 2003, pp. 27-28), or claim to have an ‘understanding of daily life’ (*seikatsu jikkan*) (Interviews with Tokashiki, 2007 and Nishikawa, 2008). The literal English translation of *seikatsusha* is ‘daily life/ordinary life person’. The term is technically gender neutral, but, as LeBlanc (1999, p. 140) notes, ‘[M]any—even men—might achieve a seikatsu-sha subjectivity temporarily or at different periods and in
different tasks in their lives, but the premier seikatsu-sha is, by definition, the	housewife’. A seikatsusha is therefore not gender neutral but almost always a woman.
Japanese male politicians use the word seikatsu (lifestyle) and the slogan on the DPJ
website even contains the term: Kokumin no seikatsu ga daiichi—‘People’s Lives Come
First’ (DPJ website, accessed 16/12/10). But men do not generally refer to themselves
as seikatsu, so it is in fact a gender-specific term.

The development of the consumer advocate group, the Seikatsu Club Co-op, in 1965
and its political arm, the Seikatsusha Network, in 1977 (hereafter Netto47), is an
example of the way the identity of housewife came to be used for political purposes in
the 1970s and 1980s. The Seikatsu Club was, perhaps surprisingly, formed by a man,
Iwane Kunio, who saw the potential in harnessing housewives’ connection to their
communities for his political ambitions, which included supporting the socialist
movement (LeBlanc 1999, p. 128). When door-knocking for signatures to a petition
opposing the hydrogen bomb, Iwane realised that the people at home during the day
connecting with their local communities were housewives: ‘People who work are not in
the community. The people who are left there are children and housewives’ (Iwane,

Another example of women’s seikatsu identities being put to use for political
purposes is the ‘Madonna Strategy’. Only a decade after the Netto successfully ran a
candidate in the Nerima ward election, the ‘Madonna Strategy’, deployed by SDP leader
Ishibashi Masashi, gave rise to the ‘Madonna Boom’—a term coined by the media to
describe the influx of mainly Socialist women into the Upper House in 1989. The
number of women elected that year was 22—more than double that elected at the
previous election in 1986. The percentage of women in the Upper House consequently
jumped from just below eight percent, where it had been stagnating for almost ten years,
to approximately 17.5 percent (Iwai 1993, p. 104).48 Many of the so-called ‘Madonnas’
emphasised their political neophyte status by identifying as seikatsusha.

47 I borrow this abbreviation from LeBlanc (1999, p. 123)
48 This number was not surpassed for almost 20 years, when 26 women were elected in the 2007
Upper House election.
Female politicians use the word *seikatsu* *sh* *u* *sa* almost interchangeably with *shufu*, with the main distinction being that *seikatsu* *sha* need not be married. The word *shufu*, loosely translatable into English as ‘housewife’, is an extremely common identification for married women in Japan. The words *shufu* and *seikatsu* symbolise a connection with day-to-day tasks. They are notions that have been appropriated by some female politicians to present a view to voters of ‘ordinariness’. Some politicians use the word *shufu* to describe their qualifications. More specifically, some women have claimed to enter politics from the standpoint of a *shufu* or a *sengyō shufu* (full-time housewife). Many female politicians depict themselves as having originated from ‘ordinary housewife’ backgrounds (Tanaka 1989, p. 234; Okashita 2001, p. 64; Yamanaka 2004, pp. 143-45). This can be interpreted as an attempt to emphasise their difference from the incumbent males (Itagaki 1994a, p. 65).

6.3.2 Political amateurism as strategy in male-dominated politics: Tanaka Makiko

The early career of former LDP Diet member Tanaka Makiko, whose political success came shortly after the ‘Madonna Boom’, demonstrates the gap between *seikatsu* *sha* discourses of political womanhood and reality. Tanaka borrowed heavily from the *seikatsu* *sha* discourse by campaigning on the strength of her experience as a mother and carer to her ailing father, former Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei. Tanaka Makiko was first elected in 1993, at the age of 49, to the Niigata prefecture seat. Her motivation, she claims, emerged after caring for her father and witnessing how inadequate the Japanese welfare system was: ‘I felt that the system had no sympathy or understanding of human pain. I thought I could become a lawmaker and change that’ (cited in Takayama 2001a, n.p).

Once in politics, she did not become an ambassador for improving Japan’s welfare system. One small contribution she made in this area, nevertheless, was a Diet members’ bill (*giin rippō*) that led to the introduction in 1998 of a special carers’ experience law (*Kaigo Nado Taiken Tokurei Hō*) relating to the pre-requisites for attaining a primary or

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49 *Shufu* does not usually connote a housewife who does not engage in paid work, and most *shufu* do actually participate in the paid workforce. *Sengyō shufu* is the term to describe a ‘full-time housewife’. *Kengyō shufu* is a housewife who engages in part-time work.
junior-high school teacher’s licence. The curriculum for a teaching licence now included ‘carer’s work experience’ (*kaigo nado taiken*), which Tanaka hoped would create a generation of students who could draw from real life experience and ‘understand the pain in people’s hearts’ and be able to appreciate other people’s values (Tanaka, cited in Irie 2008, p. 93). Aside from an apparent desire to mend the welfare system, a career in politics was a natural progression for Tanaka Makiko because of her politician father.

Tanaka took up politics after raising three children and supporting her husband in elections. She made the most of her background as a wife and mother to gain popularity with voters. In her book, *Toki no Sugiyuku Mama ni* (As Time Goes By), she explains her opinion on educational issues by identifying herself as ‘a housewife and mother’ (Tanaka 1989, p. 149). The experience of homemaking is something no male politician makes claim to in Japan, so it is a heavily gendered assertion. Appealing to voters in her upfront and no-nonsense manner by utilising the gendered concept of ‘housewife’ and promising to clean up a government tainted by corruption helped Tanaka win her first Diet seat (Itagaki 1994b, p. 20).

‘Cleaning up’ politics has been a gendered promise dating back to the 1930s when the Women’s Suffrage League, led by Ichikawa Fusae, campaigned for women’s suffrage on the grounds that women would clean up electoral corruption (Mackie 2003, p. 63). This is a pledge Ichikawa continued to make as a post-war Upper House member. However, cleaning up corruption is no longer a promise that only women make—Prime Minister Koizumi made a similar claim before coming to power in 2001 (Takayama 2001b, n.p). It seems that the promise to ‘clean up’ corruption, however, is more likely to be believed if it comes from a woman. This is illustrated by Social Democratic Party leader Fukushima Mizuho’s response to the revelation of several bribery incidents soon after Tanaka’s nomination as minister. Fukushima observed that in bringing LDP corruption out into the open, Tanaka had achieved something male cabinet members would never be able to do (Takayama 2001b, n.p).
Japanese-language works published around the time Tanaka became a Diet member dedicate large sections to her position and experiences as a mother and housewife. For example, in the seven-chapter *Zubari Makiko Bushi* (Phrases from Straight-Talking Makiko), three chapters are directly related to her domestic life: ‘Phrases from a housewife who values the home’; ‘Phrases from a mother who packs lunches lovingly’, and ‘Phrases from an up-and-coming wife who makes her husband the man’ (Itagaki 1994b). The introduction to Endō Takashi’s book about Tanaka, published in 1994, declares the potential benefits of Tanaka becoming prime minister by borrowing the metaphor of the sun, first used by early feminist writer Hiratsuka Raichō. It claims that what Japan needs now is a ‘warm’ leader that can be conceptualised as the ‘sun’ and as a ‘mother’, making a connection between the maternal, warmth and politics (Endō 1994, p. 4). Endō and Takashi thus discuss Tanaka’s political suitability in terms of her activities in the home and family, emphasising her attributes and experiences as a *seikatsusha*.

Itagaki (1994a, p. 65) notes that Tanaka’s fashion sense was even part of her tactic to capitalise on her ordinary housewife image. According to Itagaki, Tanaka strategically dressed down in jeans and baggy t-shirts during election campaigns so that she could emit an air of approachability and ‘ordinariness’. Itagaki contrasts this to the dress sense of Doi Takako, the then-leader of the JSP and one of the most prominent female politicians in Japan, who is always professional and immaculate. Itagaki notes that while Tanaka is a mother of three, Doi is single and childless. The particular language Itagaki uses to compare the two reflects the general perception of women in politics in Japan at the time. He argues that compared to Doi, Tanaka’s fashion sense ‘smells’ of life, and that this is because Tanaka is ‘appropriately’ married, has borne and raised three children, has the experience of being a wife, housewife and mother, and has looked after an ailing father. He thus labels Tanaka a ‘housewife politician’. Doi, on the other hand, is labelled by Itagaki a ‘single upper-class politician’ who does not ‘smell’ of life (Itagaki 1994a, p. 65). Doi was also criticised by male politicians for being blunt and ‘unfeminine’ (Bishop 2002, n.p). These judgements of Doi and Tanaka suggest an expectation of women to be bound in some way to the home and family. Tanaka’s utilisation of the housewife identity was very successful in gaining popularity amongst
the public\textsuperscript{50} as well as validation in the eyes of writers and scholars. Itagaki’s images reinforce in readers stereotypical roles for women. Moreover, these descriptions fail to acknowledge Tanaka’s privileged upbringing. She may not have dressed like an ‘upper-class politician’, but, armed with an excellent education, an élite political pedigree, and a wealthy background, she was no ordinary ‘housewife’. Her initial foray into politics instead followed the common trajectory of dynastic succession.

Like Tanaka, most LDP women do not come from housewife backgrounds. The dominant perception of national level politicians is that they are élite (LeBlanc 1999, p. 82), so presenting an image of ordinariness can be interpreted as a strategy to appeal to voters on the basis of being ‘just like them’. Some women in the Diet become politicians after their politician husbands step down or pass away, or even while they are still in office, and until then have been self-claimed ‘full-time housewives’ (for example, LDP Diet members Nagaoka Keiko, Fujino Makiko and Nishikawa Kyōko).\textsuperscript{51} However, the reality is that the majority of women in the Diet do not come from ‘ordinary’ backgrounds. They are extremely well educated, many of them speak a second language and most of them have some sort of connection with the political world. Yamanaka Akiko, for example, discusses how her experience as a housewife benefits her career in politics.\textsuperscript{52} Specifically, she talks of her ingenuity in ‘creating a fuss-free daily life’ (tema no fuyasanai seikatsu no kufū) which ‘anyone, if they are a shufu, does naturally’ (Yamanaka 2004, p. 143). She narrates a story of a young Tokyo University graduate with policy secretarial experience who was doing some work in her office (Yamanaka 2004, pp. 143-44). He turns out to be inept at keeping track of receipts. She juxtaposes this image of a highly qualified élite university graduate fumbling with paper and glue with images of cool-headed, sensible and organised housewives to champion the practical applicability of housewife experience to political

\textsuperscript{50} Tanaka enjoyed enormous popularity and, in the lead-up to the 2001 LDP leadership election, was Japan’s most popular politician with an approval rating of ninety percent (Profile: Japanese Foreign Minister Makiko Tanaka (radio transcript) 2001). She backed the eventual winner, Koizumi, who appointed a record five women to his cabinet, including Tanaka, who was given the highly coveted post of Minister of Foreign Affairs as a reward for her support.

\textsuperscript{51} Nagaoka is a current Diet member, while Fujino and Nishikawa failed to be re-elected in the 2009 general election.

\textsuperscript{52} Yamanaka failed to be re-elected to the Diet in the 2009 general election.
work. Nevertheless, a look at Yamanaka’s CV reveals that her ‘housewife’ experience mingles with a decades-long career as an academic.

The claims to ‘ordinariness’ by women who inherit seats from husbands are also dubious in the sense that they have probably worked as political personal secretaries and campaign managers and therefore have much more political knowledge and experience than the average citizen. Former LDP member Okashita Nobuko is an example of this. She did not inherit her late husband’s seat as such, because none of his three campaign attempts had been successful, but she inherited his kōenkai (support group) (Okashita 2001, pp. 64-65). After having been his campaign secretary, she had good connections and years of political and campaign experience. The reality of most LDP women is far removed from housewife realities and this suggests that adoption by them of the seikatsusha or shufu discourse is strategic.

6.3.3 Women’s outsider-ness as a challenge to male-dominated politics

Most LDP informants articulated assumptions about women’s roles as shufu and seikatsu-sha in a way that viewed those identities as based in socially and culturally crafted models of gender. The perspective that a typical woman gains is not a ‘natural’ characteristic of women but derives from her experiences in family and community activities. Consider, for example, the following dialogue.

Author: Do you think female under-representation is a problem? What do you think will change with more women in the Diet?

Kamikawa: As I mentioned previously, I think it’s very important in politics to have various people throwing around different ideas on issues. So, for example, if we compare men to women, men have led lives that have been job-only, or at least they have placed greater importance on their jobs. On the other hand, women do their job, participate in local activities, participate in children’s education, and are active on the PTAs [parent-teacher associations]. Women’s rate of participation is higher in those sorts of areas in Japanese society, in terms of community activity. So within these types of activities and regions and across all of Japan, with regards to issues like education, community activities, the aging society and aged-care—you know, issues related to the community—women can represent the finer details. Women’s experiences in absorbing the problems of the region are a lot deeper [than men’s] so I think it’s a good idea to hear those women’s voices. I think it is in these areas that expectations of women MPs
Men’s lives have been, well, one-tracked I suppose, in the sense that some have focused their lives on their jobs. In contrast to that, [men] are now attempting to widen their lives to involve their local community and individuals. And in contrast to that, women are putting those areas to one side and are involving themselves more and more in decision-making positions, for example, politics and corporations.

Author: So do you think that women and men are suited to different political jobs?

Kamikawa: I don’t think men and women are suited to different areas of politics in terms of ability or essential differences. But I think women’s ideas are important for the future of Japanese society because of the experiences they have accumulated in their particular social roles. This is an individual thing, however, and not ‘because you are a man’ or ‘because you are a woman’. The division of labour across gender lines has been a big characteristic of Japanese society and it is because of this gendered division of labour that women’s experiences and opinions are now important for the future of Japanese society (Interview with Kamikawa, 2007).

Kamikawa implies that the typical gender roles she talks of are changing and that these changes will mean more women entering politics. In essence she implies that the very roles that hindered women from politics are those that make women’s voices necessary in contemporary political debates. When she says that women’s experiences and opinions are important for the future of Japanese society she is referring to the social and economic impact of the aging society. Women’s experiences caring for the elderly in their roles as daughters, daughters-in-law, wives and volunteers in the community has provided them with insights into the concerns and needs of the aging society—insights that men do not have because of their absence from the local community. In this way, she argues that women’s increased political participation is essential now (Interview with Kamikawa, 2007).

Although some informants regarded women’s and men’s different perspectives as deriving from the gendered division of labour, others made reference to essentialist notions of women’s capabilities. Arimura, for example, believed that it was only a matter of time until society realised that women are less likely to act out of self-interest than men in politics.
I think society and political parties are beginning to realise that policies are sounder if there are women MPs around. You’re a woman, I’m a woman, women are serious—this is generally speaking, mind you. Women don’t act out of self-interest. In this respect, I think more women will become politicians when everyone realises that it’s more likely to be win-win when women participate in decision-making (Interview with Arimura, 2007).

Another informant, Ishii, believed that women were less prone to war than men, and in doing so articulated the stereotypical notion that women are more pacifist than men. Ishii linked pacifism to women’s potential reproductive capabilities. Consider the response to a question about what might change when there are more women in the Diet.

Ishii: I didn’t have any children, but females are the sex that bears children, aren’t they? Of course to create a life you need involvement from a man, but the fact that you actually bear the child with your own body is of great significance. So we have a much higher sensibility and a higher awareness with regards to life… What do you think is the lowest thing in life?

Author: Um…

Ishii: I think the thing that takes life to the lowest level is war. It’s war that makes life cheap. I think the most important thing is peace. And I think women are more capable of solving problems without going to war. I might be called prejudiced, but that’s what I think. Of course, women quarrel and argue, but I get the feeling that they don’t think of killing, massacring or raping the opponents’ women (Interview with Ishii, 2008).

It is thus potential motherhood, and not actual motherhood that makes women more pacifist than men for Ishii, who has no children of her own. The centrality of motherhood to being a woman was apparent in many discussions with LDP women about why female political representation was important. Former LDP Upper House member Ono Kiyoko entered politics because the Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro (1982–87) wanted someone to represent mothers and housewives in areas of education, child-rearing and health. Ono was elected to the Upper House in 1986. In our interview, Ono framed much of her discussion in housewife/motherhood language. When I asked her how important she thought the perspective of a mother is in the Diet, she explained that there are some things you cannot understand until you have had children and these things are important in terms of education policies (Interview with Ono, 2008).
emphasis that Ono placed on motherhood (as opposed to parenthood) is reflective of the general belief in Japan of the importance of motherhood to the well-being of children (Allison 1994, p. 172; Hirao 2007, p. 64).

In fact, amongst gendered discourses adopted by LDP women, the maternal discourse is particularly prevalent. The conspicuousness of the maternal discourse among LDP women can be interpreted as indicative of the current political climate characterised by the declining fertility rate, and also significant in the broader historical context of the significance placed on the mother-child relationship in Japan. The maternal discourse is not deployed exclusively by women in the LDP but by many women in various different political parties, indicating that it is not necessarily a strategy by conservatives to appeal to voters, but more of a utilisation of a particular gendered discourse that operates throughout society and can therefore operate unproblematically across party lines.

Ono made the following comment in response to a question about whether people in the Diet were more likely to be respected and trusted if they were parents.

Well, that’s [having children] up to the individual isn’t it! And besides, you know, some people are physiologically and physically unable to have children even if they want to, aren’t they? And you can’t have children if you’re unmarried either. So, the two nurses in the proportional representative blocks weren’t married, you know. Himei sensei—we retired together—and Nōno sensei who is my age but was elected three years after me—both of them were unmarried so didn’t have any children (Interview with Ono, 2008).

She also made the following comment when questioned about the declining fertility rate.

Only later do you appreciate the pain you went through at some stage in the past. It’s only ten years later when you see your daughter sitting by your pillow that you feel the pleasure from that pain. I think there is great significance in feeling the pain in your youth that will be joy ten years later. But there are people who can’t have babies even if they want to, because of physical problems, so that is where everyone has to work together (Interview with Ono, 2008).
Although there is an effort at expressing respect for reproductive rights in the first sentence of the first comment, both statements contain the message that the only reason for not having children is infertility, or being unmarried. Illustrated in Ono’s comments is clear support for the significance of childbirth for a woman as an essential life experience, but limited within the institution of marriage.\textsuperscript{53} The decision by Ono to become a Diet member to represent mothers and housewives was therefore informed by the motherhood discourse which emphasises childbirth as an integral experience in the life-course of a (married) woman (Molony 1995, p. 270; Ōhinata 1995, p. 33).

Another informant, Arimura, demonstrated how motherhood was central to the idea of being a woman. I asked her if she believed that representing women was one of her responsibilities as a Diet member. She responded strongly in the affirmative and proceeded to explain how she had been instrumental in the creation of the ‘maternity mark’, a commuter badge made available by the train companies in Japan to pregnant women who may not be obviously pregnant so that commuters can easily identify them and give up their seats.

For example, as an individual Diet member, not as the head of the women’s bureau, I came up with the idea of the maternity mark (shows me the badge) to be used nation-wide by women with babies in their tummies, women who are eagerly awaiting the birth of their child. My suggestion was accepted and it was put into practice. I too am a mother (shows me a photo of her child with whom she is pictured on some of her promotional pamphlets), and the most difficult time of a pregnancy is not when you are showing but in your first trimester. It is the time when people can’t tell that you’re pregnant. Morning sickness is severe and the possibility of miscarriage is at its highest. But in this period pregnant women can’t really say ‘I’m pregnant’. They don’t have the courage to speak up, do they? So it’s these times when they can put the badge on their bags and in doing so, unceremoniously say, ‘I may not be showing, but I’m pregnant, so I’m tired’. I made this proposal believing that society should value life in this way. There are one million pregnant women in Japan. In that respect, I think it’s important to make proposals and suggestions in the Diet based on the experiences of all types of feelings, inconveniences and confusions that happen in life, and then act on those suggestions (Interview with Arimura, 2008).

\textsuperscript{53} Ono’s almost unconscious comment ‘you can’t have children if you’re not married anyway’ is not surprising in Japan where the percentage of children born outside marriage was 1.9 percent as at 2003 (Ministry of Health 2005).
Mentioning her personal experience as a mother can be interpreted as an attempt to validate her argument on the importance of women representing women. She has lived through pregnancy so she knows the physical pressures a pregnant woman experiences. Arguably a man would be unlikely to suggest such a proposal unless a female acquaintance or partner had persuaded him to do so. The number of women with the maternity mark attached to their bags observable on Tokyo trains and subways would seem to suggest that the maternity mark has been successful for women who are not visibly pregnant. However, in answering the question of whether part of the job of a female Diet member is to represent women, Arimura understood ‘women’ as pregnant women—or perhaps more broadly, as potential reproducers.

Something that Arimura said during our interview provides a possible insight into why the motherhood discourse is popular among Diet women. Arimura was married without children when she was first elected to the Diet at the age of 30. When I asked her whether she believed it was difficult for women to climb the political ladder she responded,

> It’s hard for men too, you know. But for women, yes, there is an expectation that female politicians will have the ideal family—that expectation of a woman politician that she will be able to say more important things once she has had a child and supported a husband. I’m always told that (Interview with Arimura, 2008).

When I asked her who had told her that, she said vaguely ‘everyone, my supporters’. Arimura therefore felt pressure from her supporters to slot into the cherished ideal of wife and mother. Obuchi Yūko, another young LDP woman, expressed similar sentiments about supporters’ views changing for the better once she had become a mother: ‘Since giving birth, I have gained more sympathy from women. Previously I found it difficult to approach women of my generation, but now it’s ok. I now understand their hardships’ (cited in Akiyama 2010, p. 152). Perhaps this says more about LDP supporters than the view of the broader voting public in Japan, for two of the most popular and successful female politicians in Japan were Ichikawa Fusae (Independent) and Doi Takako (Japan Socialist Party), both of whom had no children.
A woman need not necessarily have had or raised any children to adopt the motherhood discourse. Ishii, who utilised maternal discourses to advocate the need for women in politics, despite having no children of her own, embodies a broader prevalence of a disjunct between rhetoric espoused by LDP women and their lived realities. While Ishii was the only informant without children to adopt the maternal discourse in discussing the need for more women in politics, many informants subscribed to the dominant discourse of femininity, the *seikatsusha*. The adoption of both discourses can be understood as strategic. Arimura and Obuchi, for example, explicitly felt that becoming mothers has endeared them to their supporters, so emphasising their motherhood status would appear to be good for their careers. Emphasising one’s motherhood or *seikatsusha* status would also appear to be a central theme in arguing for the importance of women’s voices in decision-making, particularly in the era of a low fertility rate and aging society.

### 6.3.4 The ‘utilisation’ of women’s experiences

The conceptual link between women’s political participation and certain political areas, such as the declining fertility rate, has been made by LDP women. For example, LDP Diet members Inoguchi Kuniko, Koike Yuriko and Satō Yukari have formed a ‘policy unit’ called Tokyo Projects of/by/for Ladies (TPL). Their recent publication, ‘Tokyo Women’s Grand Strategy’ (*Tokyo Women Daisakusen*) defines the motivation of their group.

> What kinds of policies are needed for women who work, live and raise children in Tokyo? Hasn’t the time come for women representatives from Tokyo to consider this question seriously and offer some suggestions? We, Inoguchi Kuniko, Koike Yuriko and Sato Yukari, created the policy unit ‘TPL’ to tackle this issue (TPL 2008, p. 2).

The argument of the ‘Tokyo Women’s Grand Strategy’ is that ‘pro-active putting forward women’s perspectives and ideas is essential for changing Tokyo for the better. And, if Tokyo changes, Japan will change and the world should then change’ (2008, p. 3). The call for more women’s perspectives in politics because of women’s perceived expertise in dealing with issues concerning the aging society and declining fertility rate can be read as an attempt by LDP women to bring women’s voices to the centre of
politics. It is possible therefore to interpret this attempt in a feminist light for bringing women’s voices to the centre of debate is an objective of feminism.

These three women have internalised the conceptual basis of the phrase ‘utilise’. They, like Ono, who was chosen as a representative of motherhood, offer their services as women to the state. In the same publication, Koike (in TPL 2008, p. 192) claims that women are a ‘wasted resource in Japan’ (katsuyō sareteinai shigen). Satō (in TPL 2008, p. 193) notes that women who obtain post-graduate education in English-speaking countries inevitably are only employable in Japan by foreign-affiliated companies because Japanese companies find educated women ‘difficult to use’ (tsukainikui). On the one hand, the TPL offers a strong criticism of Japanese social infrastructure such as working and employment conditions (2008, pp. 16-60; 151-61), child-support availability (2008, pp. 14-15), and discrimination against women by companies (2008, p. 193). On the other hand, their criticism does not actually contain the language of ‘gender equality’. There are instead many references to ‘policy responses to the low fertility rate’. The authors’ emphasis is on convincing those who hesitate to ‘use’, or ‘take advantage’ of women to realise the potential benefits that women could bring to companies, Japanese society, and even ‘the world’.

Women can be useful in politics too. Building on this theme that women are an untapped resource that would benefit the wider society, the Tokyo Project Ladies and informants refer to women’s capabilities in discussions about female politicians’ contribution to politics. Women, according to the TPL, are more willing than men to take risks. This gives women an edge as politicians because the aging society and declining fertility rate are issues that need to be addressed by drastically reforming certain aspects of society—something that risk-averse men are often unwilling to attempt (Koike, cited in TPL, 2008). Two of my informants also articulated women’s putative superior capabilities in politics compared to men’s. When discussing whether women were suited to particular political jobs or not, Inoguchi Kuniko stated that she did not believe in gender stereotyping, but that women may actually have the capacity to be better than men in many areas of politics, such as public speaking and policy-making (Interview with Inoguchi, 2007). This view echoes Nishikawa’s opinion that
women in the Diet were ‘overwhelmingly’ better than male Diet members at public speaking (Interview with Nishikawa, 2008).

6.3.5 Advantages and limitations of stressing ‘women’s perspective’

As political sociologist Takeda Hiroko (2006, pp. 185-98) claims, the use of gendered discourses by female politicians in Japan can serve to both empower and constrain them. On the one hand, campaigning on the strength of her perceived feminine identity as, for example, a housewife, might appeal to a certain sector of the public and therefore allow her access to a realm previously almost monopolised by men. On the other hand, having campaigned as a housewife, there will naturally be pressure to perform in areas pertinent to housewives once in office, and perhaps there will also be resistance to her participating in areas outside housewife issues, thereby limiting her political activities. In short, performing a particular gendered role might help in climbing the political ladder but there is also the danger that it will limit the scope of activities available.

Puwar has argued that politics has always been a male-dominated arena where women do not represent figures of authority as men do and therefore their capabilities are viewed with suspicion (Puwar 2004, p. 59). Men are therefore the ‘benchmark’ normative politician. On the one hand, the discursive construction of the Japanese female politician by LDP women as connected to the home and ‘daily issues’ can be interpreted as an attempt to challenge the normalisation of male authority in politics. On the other, it also brings into focus the delineation between men and women, securing women’s position as the ‘Other’. Compared to the male benchmark, women are represented as more community-minded and pacifist. When LDP women discuss their own careers and motivations in discourses that support the assumption that women are active primarily in these spheres, they contribute to the normalisation of dominant discourses of femininity.

Furthermore, arguments for the importance of women in the Diet based on the assumption that women are reproducers or are connected to daily life reinforce dominant discourses of femininity at the expense of neglecting other forms of
femininity in the political arena. The maternal discourse, in particular, encourages a very limited understanding of what it means to be a woman. When women rely on an identity as a mother to somebody else, be it a child or the earth, instead of arguing from the independent position of ‘self’, they ‘are submitting to the dominant gender ideology, leaving women unable to establish alternatives’ (Nakamatsu 1994, p. 101). It can be argued that the conservative and at times essentialist justifications for the importance of more women in the Diet do little to encourage gender equity within the party. The majority of informants argue for more women in the Diet, but it appears that the type of woman deemed important by informants is the type who can represent the ‘women’s perspective’, which a woman gains by being a mother or a seiikatsusha.

6.4 Conclusion

On the whole, LDP women think that the lack of women in the Diet is a problem. Most LDP women expressed a desire to see more women in the Diet, but failed to criticise the party itself for its lack of action to solve the problem of female political under-representation. Many women believe that the political under-representation of women is a problem, but do not identify the LDP as having a problem with its gender composition. In fact, many LDP women actually refused to acknowledge that the LDP has, and always has had, the lowest percentage of female members of the Diet. This can perhaps be explained by party loyalty.

Most political women believe that the lack of women in the Diet is a problem for Japanese society because society needs people to represent its interests in areas that women know more about than men. LDP women’s arguments for more women in politics rest on the notion that women’s services are needed for the betterment of Japan, not for the betterment of women, nor the pursuit of gender equality. LDP women argue for the importance of more women in the Diet to help solve issues that women are more likely than men to have knowledge about, such as those concerned with the community, the environment, the family and children, thus reinscribing the normative gender system. Recently, the issue of the declining fertility rate has been invoked by women who extol the virtues of women’s input in politics. As discussed in Chapter Five, the government has focused on the difficulties married women face in combining child-rearing and paid
employment as a cause of the declining fertility rate. The arguments discussed in this chapter about the need for more women in politics often refer to women’s social roles as mothers and wives to emphasise the potential benefits women can bring to debates and the decision-making process regarding the issue of low fertility.

LDP women thus deploy dominant discourses of femininity to argue for the importance of women in politics. Yet the life experiences the LDP women refer to are usually related to the life experiences of mothers, seikatsusha and ‘working mothers’ who are struggling to find a balance between family and employment. In referring to ‘women’s experiences’ in this way, LDP women’s proclamations about the importance of women in politics help to define women as those bound to the community, the home and the family. They reinforce the discourses of gender that construct women as seikatsusha and men as not connected to daily life. In doing so, they refer to women’s public sphere activities as occurring within the boundaries of socially-sanctioned womanhood.

The answers that LDP women provided to the two central questions about motivations for becoming politicians and why an increase of women in politics is important point to a tendency to reinforce rather than challenge dominant discourses of gender. Rather than denying them, women draw from dominant constructs of Japanese womanhood when asserting the importance of women’s voices in the Diet. This tendency, when discussing political motivations, allows LDP women to talk about their career ambitions in feminine terms so that the disruption they cause as women entering the masculinised space is mitigated.

Unfortunately, the same women who speak with some passion about the need for ‘women’s perspectives’ in politics say little about how to bring about change to enable the participation of more women in the Diet. Gender equality in politics appears low on the priority list of most LDP women. Telling me, during an interview about the problem of female political under-representation, that they believe there is a problem with female political under-representation is one thing; actively pursuing policies to remedy that problem is another. Apart from a claim by Inoguchi Kuniko that she ‘helped’ female
candidates in the 2005 election and a claim by Arimura that one of the roles of the
Women’s Bureau is to ‘provide support’ to female candidates, there is no evidence that
women in the LDP are doing anything to increase the number of women in the Diet.

Perhaps it is difficult for women to pursue gender equality in the LDP which, as I have
argued in this chapter, is a masculinised space. I explore this idea further in the next
chapter, where I examine the culture of the LDP and suggest that the masculinised
culture is an environment not conducive to women pursuing gender equality in politics.
CHAPTER 7: COPING IN A MASCULINISED PARTY CULTURE

In this chapter, I examine the party culture of the LDP. I argue that the Diet has a masculinised culture, and that this culture exists within the LDP. Analysis of the way the masculinised party culture of the LDP functions is important to demonstrate how this affects women’s participation and membership. The meaning of ‘masculinised party culture’ and its implications for women in the party are discussed by considering the experiences of interview informants and other secondary data. I examine the way that LDP women negotiate this culture and uncover a trend of individualisation of problems rather than interrogation of structural inequalities and the party culture. This strategy can be seen as a refusal by LDP women to be constructed as ‘whiners’, victims or failures as defined in patriarchal society.

In the last section of the chapter, I examine LDP women’s opinions on electoral gender quotas. As we saw in the previous chapter, the active pursuit of gender equality in politics is not a priority for most LDP women. I use interview and other data to consider the opinions of LDP women about Koizumi’s and other positive action strategies to increase the number of women in the Diet. When I asked LDP women about their thoughts on Koizumi’s strategy, some of them began talking about gender quotas. I found that some LDP women do support gender quotas. I consider how these women’s comments fit into international debates about gender quotas and suggest that the LDP women who advocate gender quotas reflect broader international debates on the importance of gender quotas in politics and are out of sync with the official party line which opposes this measure.

Despite the support for quotas from some women, it is difficult to find examples of pro-active pursuit of measures to increase the number of women in the LDP, or even public statements about the issue. I argue that the party culture explored in this chapter is not hospitable to the the idea of establishing gender quotas for the purpose of increased female representation. Nor is it conducive to women’s increased engagement in Diet-level politics more generally.
7.1 Negotiations of a Masculinised Culture

Previously, I drew from Puwar’s notion of space in politics to argue that the LDP, and the Diet more generally, are masculinised spaces. Labelling the Diet a masculinised space means that apart from being numerically dominated by men, it is also characterised by normative behaviour for masculinised spaces such as smoking and late-night meetings. Male Diet members embody dominant discourses of masculinity by dressing similarly to the salaryman in dark-coloured suits, aspiring to marriage and fatherhood, and having full-time careers as the centre of their lives.

Dominant forms of masculinity are dichotomously constructed against notions of femininity (Enloe 2004, p. 17). In other words, in order for dominant discourses of masculinity to work, they need dominant forms of femininity to measure themselves against, and vice versa. As discussed above, the salaryman model of masculinity emerged during the period of rapid economic growth in Japan in the 1960s and 1970s, when men became state-sanctioned ‘corporate warriors’ and women’s roles as their supporting housewives were reinforced. As the Japanese population became increasingly urbanised and the nuclear family became the norm, women became economically dependent on their husbands and in return provided them with emotional, nutritional and sexual support. In other words, the salaryman could not devote his energies to his company without his private life being taken care of by his wife, and the housewife could not devote her energies to childcare and home duties without being financially provided for by her husband.

The masculinised culture of the Diet is dependent on women to occupy support roles outside the Diet in the private sphere. Although women support men who engage in the economic workforce, when a married woman becomes the breadwinner or even a full-

\[54\] Although recent years have seen many media reports lamenting the rise of women smokers, statistics reveal that smoking is very much a masculine habit in Japan. According to the 2006 National Nutritional Survey in Japan of 3,599 households, men smoke at a much higher prevalence than women. The highest prevalence of smoking for men was 53.3 percent in the 30-39 age-group. In contrast, only 16.4 percent of women in the same age-group smoked. The highest prevalence for female smokers was identified in those aged between 20 and 29 at 17.9 percent, well below the percentage of men who smoke in any age-group, apart from those men aged over 70 who narrow the gap with 19.9 percent prevalence (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare 2006, p. 15).
time wage earner, the normative salaryman/housewife couple model is not necessarily reversed so that a husband supports his wife in the same way. The meaning of support changes according to the context in which it is used. ‘Support’ when used in the context of the ‘supportive wife’ of a typical salaryman implies support in the form of practical duties such as cooking, cleaning and childcare, emotional support and a willingness to stay married to someone whose priority is work. Iwai (1993, p. 112) notes that in addition to this kind of support, most male politicians have wives who act as their private secretaries in their electorate as well as full-time housewives. This also gives male politicians married to full-time housewives a financial advantage over female candidates because they do not have to employ a private secretary for their electorate. While the Japanese husband is discursively constructed as the daikokubashira (mainstay) (Roberson and Suzuki 2003, p. 6; Dasgupta 2005, p. 168) of the family, the wife’s value as a supporting pillar for a politician is immeasurable.

The importance of women’s support and the perceived negative repercussions of disturbing the salaryman/housewife model for the function of the Diet cannot be underestimated. DPJ Diet member Komiyama Yōko (quoted in Yamaguchi 2006a, p. 9) laughs as she comments that, in general, wives take care of their husbands’ electorate area. She comments, ‘women don’t have wives—I want a wife too’, alluding to the difficulty women in politics face because of the absence of that support figure, the ‘wife’. Women politicians, it seems, have difficulty in receiving that support from male partners. A sobering example of how women’s support roles are understood as necessary by Japanese men generally, and how this affects politically ambitious women is the sombre remark of one informant who commented, ‘It seems that in general, if a woman decides to run [for election], her husband says he’ll divorce her’. While on paper this comment appears flippant, Kamikawa’s tone suggested that she was not joking. Kamikawa herself nevertheless was married with children. She informed me that her husband lived elsewhere for work (tanshin funin) and that when she was in her electorate of Shizuoka (outside Diet sessions), she lived with her younger daughter and her parents in her parents’ home. Her comment about divorce suggests a belief that without women at home, men cannot cope and furthermore, that married men in Japan are not willing to give up their position of power—that is, their position as main breadwinner in a nuclear family.
The support that Japanese men provide their wives typically does not extend to shouldering the majority of domestic duties. The support a man provides to a full-time working woman appears to mean ‘lack of opposition’ rather than substantive support. This meaning of support can be also seen in the comment by former cultural division assistant managing director of *Kita Nippon Shinbun* (North Japan Newspaper) Tateno Tomoko, interviewed by Kubo Kimiko from the the Fusae Ichikawa Center for Women and Governance. In a discussion between three women about how the support of their husbands allows them be active in their careers, Tateno commented,

> I think one thing all our partners have in common is that they are generous in that seeing their wives in a more public position than themselves makes them happy. When I became a reporter, my husband, who is a teacher, told me, ‘I don’t mind how often I have to eat out, so long as you are active and happy every day’ (Kubo 2008, p. 11).

Although this comment is made in praise of the husband for his supportive qualities, a deeper reading of it reveals the inactivity of her husband in the kitchen. While he does not oppose his wife’s activities outside the home—on the contrary, to see her active makes him happy—the assumption that she is the one who cooks the meals remains. This example is not of a female parliamentarian but it does reflect the realities of many married couples in Japan, the expectations placed on married women, and the difficulties facing married women who have demanding careers and thus are unable to fulfil the role of supportive wife. According to a 2003 national opinion survey of men and women aged between 20 and 34, while most couples express a desire to share the housework evenly (cooking, washing, cleaning and so forth), the reality is that in couples where both partners work as regular employees (*seishain*), women perform over four hours housework a day compared to men’s approximate 1.5 hours (Cabinet Office 2003, accessed 08/12/10).

In addition to housework, the assumption that the woman in the partnership should be responsible for childcare is also widespread. As mentioned in previous chapters, the view that a mother’s constant care is vital for a child in its infant years is prevalent. During a discussion about what would make an ideal gender equal society, one Upper House member, Santō, mentioned that workplaces should have childcare centres so that
parents do not have to treat their children like baggage, dropping them off and picking them up from childcare facilities and only seeing them ‘when they are asleep’. When asked whether the Diet had childcare facilities, she responded with a laugh.

No, not here. But, Diet members are paid well, so... well, compared to the average person. So [Diet members] can organise baby-sitters or anything, more so than the average person anyway. I think that’s the responsibility of the individual. It’s a precious child after all (Interview with Santō, 2008).

Current events in the Diet, including an increasing number of women having babies while in office and the establishment of a childcare centre in the Diet, however, suggest that Diet women do not allow the maternal myth to affect their careers. In 2010, a childcare facility capable of caring for 34 children (over the age of 57 days) was established in the premises of the Lower House. It is available for use by Diet members, their employees, bureaucrats, and local residents (Lower House facility to open its first child care center next month, 2010).

The average age of female members of the Diet from the LDP and the DPJ is 51 and 50 respectively—an age when most women who have had children are freed from intensive child-rearing responsibilities. Iwamoto (2003, p. 33) has speculated that having children at the same time as having a career in the Diet is difficult and claims that there is a higher percentage of single female Diet members than single male Diet members. She claims that historically, particularly before the influx of self-identified ‘housewife politicians’ in the 1980s, female Diet members have typically been single. The only way to ascertain this would be to survey the marital and parental status of all Diet members, and, to my knowledge, there is so such data available. Furthermore, contrary to Iwamoto’s suggestion, in recent years, three LDP Diet women, Hashimoto Seiko, Arimura Haruko and Obuchi Yūko, have given birth while in office, proving that mothers with babies and small children can be Diet members. The introduction of a

Their childcare arrangements are unknown. Unfortunately this is an area that is under-researched. Future research on women in politics should include consideration of how parents combine a political career with childcare. Statistics on the married and parental status of Diet women compared to Diet men, and then compared to the general population would be a good place to start.
childcare facility also suggests that future generations of Diet women may find it easier to combine a career in the Diet with being mothers.

The assumption that a Diet member is free from childcare and household responsibilities would thus appear to be changing slightly. This is one step towards creating a culture that is more welcoming to women. The appearance of childcare facilities, however, is not enough, for, as I will discuss below, there is evidence of deeply entrenched attitudes in Diet members towards women in politics that do not facilitate a culture hospitable to women. It is difficult to make any conclusive assertions that the LDP has a more or less masculinised political culture than other political parties or other social organisations in Japan. Mitsui Mariko, for example, left the Japan Socialist Party in 1993 after five years on the Tokyo Metropolitan Council, citing the cause as sexual harassment. She said of the party at the time that it ‘does not value the voice of women and therefore is incompatible with my efforts to improve the status of women’ (cited in Kaya 1995, p. 126). Furthermore, many informants, including one DPJ member, believed that the sexist and patriarchal nature of Japanese politics was characteristic of the whole Diet and not just the LDP. Nevertheless, in what follows I provide evidence that the LDP has an intense masculinised culture and that this culture has a negative effect on the number of women who join the party as well as on the political efficacy of women who are already in the party.

7.1.1 ‘Toughening up’: Negotiations of sexism by LDP women
It has often been observed that women employed in hyper-masculinised organisations have to adopt the dominant traits of the culture of that industry in order to be successful. Tickner (1996, p. 621) notes, for example, that the famous female exceptions in the male-dominated area of international leadership, Margaret Thatcher and Golda Meir, ‘succeeded in the tough world of international politics by acting like men’. Ross (2002, p. 197) calls the same two former leaders ‘women in men’s clothing’. She reveals that some Australian female parliamentarians, despite finding it difficult, report feeling it is necessary to adopt a ‘confident persona which is assertive’ (Ross 2002, p. 192). This suggests an acknowledgement by some female politicians that a woman is marked culturally as not belonging to the body politic. On the one hand, labelling politically
successful women ‘women dressed as men’ is counterproductive because it reinforces gender stereotypes, but on the other hand, it also reveals the extent to which women seem to feel the need to conform to succeed in politics, thus exposing the masculinised and patriarchal characteristics of political cultures.

It is beside the point to ‘grant’ equal access to women and others excluded from the traditional body politic, since this amounts to ‘granting’ access to the body politic and the public sphere in terms of an individual’s ability to emulate those powers and capacities that have, in a context of male/masculine privilege, been deemed valuable by that sphere (Gatens 1999, pp. 230-31)

Margaret Thatcher is referred to as an example of this, as she mastered the art of acting like a man professionally, but also maintained her femininity through her appearance by wearing feminine suits, make-up and jewellery (Puwar 2004, pp. 99-104). Thatcher is sometimes quoted by LDP women as being a role model. LDP Diet member Yamanaka Akiko (2004, pp. 149-51), for example, admires Thatcher because she had the three qualities essential for a ‘successful woman’: elegance, serenity and the ability to win debates. This suggests that the strategies need to be twofold: politically successful women must show masculine traits, such as assertiveness, while simultaneously reassuring the public and their colleagues of their femininity through their appearance. These are strategies for navigating political landscapes that are gendered masculine.

In a study that included women in the British parliament, Ross (2002, p. 196) discovered that many women in the Conservative Party believed it was a tough world and if you wanted to survive, you had to ‘toughen up’. This acts as a warning to those who experience anything they might feel as discrimination that they should expect it and learn how to deal with it. Many of my informants revealed similar sentiments. What follows is an account of some strategies that LDP women have adopted to negotiate the culture and the sexual discriminatory practices that are supported by the culture. I also analyse why these strategies might have been chosen.
One methodological issue involved in interviewing female Diet members was creating an environment conducive to open discussion of the sensitive issues of sexism and gender inequality in the LDP. As a white Anglophone female interviewer, I ran the risk of becoming the stereotypical white person coming to teach them about gender equality, which might have resulted in the interviewees becoming defensive about the LDP. Therefore, in an attempt to reassure the informants, I introduced into the interview a comment about sexism in the Australian political context made by former Australian Sexual Discrimination Commissioner Pru Goward. In 2007, on the evening of her first day in the NSW parliament, Goward stated that it was one of the most sexist places she had ever worked (Bearpit sexist says new MP Goward, 2007).

As I told this story, some women nodded while others seemed surprised by Goward’s comment. In response to the question, ‘Have you experienced any sexual discrimination in the Diet?’, one informant responded that, on becoming a Diet member less than five years ago, she noticed that there remained ‘old-fashioned’ ways of thinking, including ‘gender-divided roles’, but at the same time she was unsure whether this was discrimination or difference. On the one hand, she articulated the age-old feminist debate over equality versus difference (Pateman 1989, pp. 196-97; Weedon 1999, pp. 13-14), while on the other hand, she was dangerously close to falling into the trap of accepting discriminatory treatment as simply different treatment and, at times, quaintness. She claimed that she did not necessarily think of the ‘old-fashioned’ attitudes in the LDP in a negative light. Yet she had earlier narrated a specific incident where the city and prefectural councillors in her electorate told her clearly that they did not want a woman representing them in the Diet. Even the expressed desire to be represented by a man and not a woman, however, was justified by the informant as the remnants of old-fashioned thinking that included the idea that women needed ‘protection’. Referring to how women were protected from going to war by staying inside the home, this informant justified some Diet members’ beliefs in the notion that women require ‘protection’.

People [in the Diet] still have the idea that long ago in Japan, women looked after the house. Men worked outside; men were warriors and women looked after the children and the home and family. The notion that men can make the most of their potential if
women are taking care of the home and that, in contrast, if women can’t go outside to work, then they can’t become warriors, is deep-rooted (Interview, name withheld).

Another similar incident of unconcealed articulation by LDP men of women’s ‘space invader’ status is Kamata Sayuri’s experience running for the LDP in the 2000 Lower House election in a seat which had been held by the LDP. Kamata decided to leave the LDP for the opposition DPJ after being told by LDP local councillors that she should be home looking after her husband (Aiuchi 2001, p. 222). Both of these experiences illustrate how the idealised notion of the male-breadwinner/female-housewife couple informs some LDP members’ beliefs and discourages women from running for the LDP or staying in the party.

The belief in the normalcy and predominance of this particular model of the heterosexual couple is, contrary to the above informant’s belief, not a remnant of ‘olden-day’ Japan, but a product of modern industrialisation and capitalism (Ueno 1988, p. 170). While the rhetoric around this idealised family model and the social policies constructed around them during the period of rapid economic growth encouraged the belief that these gender identities were based on ‘tradition’, Ōsawa (2002, p. 72) reminds us otherwise. She observes that the proportion of full-time housewife/salaryman couples as a percentage of the total number of married couples was at its highest in the late 1970s, when it reached 37 percent. This figure gradually declined and by the early 1990s was just below 28 percent. Furthermore, with regards to the ‘warriors’ mentioned by the above informant, apart from élite samurai families, married couples in the Tokugawa era (1600–1868) did not resemble the idealised modern-day nuclear male-breadwinner/female-housewife couple. They were more likely to work together as a unit in a family business and their roles were not as clearly demarcated as those of the housewife/salaryman. In this way, imagined pasts engender a belief in ‘traditional’ and ‘old-fashioned’ notions of gender that inform contemporary LDP members’ thoughts about women’s (and men’s) roles. The public/private binary whereby masculine and feminine stand in contrast to each other serves to hinder women from entering the male-controlled Diet because such attitudes deem women unsuitable for public positions of power and authority.
The informant above, who referred to women needing protection, discussed gender equality in a very thoughtful way. She raised issues of equality versus difference and also indicated that overt sexual discrimination against women exists in the LDP. She also articulated a belief that the typical gender roles represented by the salaryman/housewife couple were relics of Japan’s past that continued to linger. For this informant, the invocation of the past, and the idea that sexism will eventually disappear in future generations becomes a method of negotiating the masculinised and sexually discriminatory party culture that she herself identifies when discussing her treatment by LDP men during the election campaign.

Some LDP women are not so accepting. Another LDP woman responded to the inquiry about her experience of sexism in the Diet with an immediate ‘yes, there is sexism in the Diet’. She went on to express disgust with Diet culture. She stated that at the end of more than 20 years in her previous career (before entering politics), women accounted for approximately 30 percent of workers in her industry. When she became a Diet member, she felt as though she had travelled 30 years back in time.

Informant: Firstly, there are so few women. And everyone smokes. Sure, people who want to smoke can smoke, but there are those who don’t want to and when I ask smokers to smoke elsewhere, they think I am the one being selfish. The men have that attitude. So they deliberately smoke close to me.

Author: Really?

Informant: Yes. I have no idea what they are thinking. Anyway… And also, even when I speak perfectly logically there are those with the attitude ‘a woman has nothing worthwhile to say’ or ‘I’m better than you—you aren’t going to say anything worthwhile’. Not in so many words though.

Author: I see. So they don’t actually voice this—but you feel this is what they mean?

Informant: Yes.
Author: I see.

Informant: So, a lot of people have the attitude that ‘women don’t understand politics; women can’t understand a thing’ or ‘you [women] are only mascots, you aren’t human, you are a type of pet’.

Author: Is this attitude more likely to be in older men?

Informant: No, it exists in younger people too (Interview, name withheld).

The way this informant responded suggests a deep dissatisfaction with Diet life and the lack of opportunities to challenge or even discuss these issues. This was the only informant who stated emphatically that the Diet was a sexist place (as opposed to remarking so in a hesitant or defensive fashion, as will be shown in other interviews below). She was also the only LDP informant who requested her anonymity be completely maintained, suggesting that to publicly protest against sexist behaviour or comments might make life difficult.

LDP Lower House member Noda Seiko’s published comments, although vague, also offer a strident criticism of LDP sexism: ‘There are more than a few members in my party that hope for a return to good old Japan and frown at the idea of expanding women’s rights’ (cited in Ichikawa Fusae Kinen Kai 2003, p. 6). Noda made this comment in response to a question about the spate of sexual harassment incidents and sexist comments made by male Diet members in the months June to July 2003. The majority of these comments were made by LDP members. Former Prime Minister Mori famously remarked that women who had not borne children should not receive the pension (Ichikawa Fusae Kinen Kai 2003, p. 4); Ōta Sei’ichi remarked that gang-rapists are virile (Ichikawa Fusae Kinen Kai 2003, p. 4); and though not a Diet member, LDP Tokyo mayor Ishihara Shintarō mentioned in a public speech that there is nothing worse in the universe than ‘old hags’ who have passed the age of reproduction (Asakura 2004, p. 9). Noda regards such comments as illustrative of sexist beliefs held widely by LDP men and not simply as individual aberrations. Sentiments similar to Noda’s were expressed by other LDP women. Noda’s comments are also a direct criticism of the
patriarchal character of the party, something most informants avoided. Most women avoided overtly criticising the party, or the Diet, for sexism. Instead they deployed the discourse of individualism to discuss their experiences. As will be explained below, deploying the discourse of individualism enables a woman to talk about sexist treatment as something that an individual woman feels or an individual man perpetrates. This discourse places the responsibility of handling sexism on the individual and does not consider structural or patterned inequalities between women and men that legitimise sexism. In fact, the discourse of individualism fails to acknowledge that such structural inequalities exist.

7.1.2 Avoiding the failure/victim label: Deploying the discourse of the individual

After relating Pru Goward’s story to informants and asking the question of whether they could relate to her sentiments through their own experiences in the Diet, the most common, carefully articulated response was along the lines of ‘I think some people seem to think it’s sexist but I don’t’. For example,

(Long pause) If you think very carefully and super sensitively about a comment, there might be some people who say things towards female Diet members. It’s done without malice though. There is no malice—rather it’s the person’s education. For example, I might go to a committee meeting or study group concerned with defence and someone there might say to me, ‘you’re enthusiastic for a woman’, and whether or not you feel that comment is sexist or not..... There is definitely no one who makes comments like, ‘you shouldn’t be here because you are a woman’. I also make sure that people recognise that I’m a specialist in international politics. I sharpen my expertise on a daily basis so that people will think that I have come to the self-defence committee meeting because of my expertise.’ (Interview with Inoguchi, 2007)

To ensure there is no possibility of being criticised by her colleagues, Inoguchi hones her ‘expertise’. Otherwise, she might be an easy target for gender-based criticism, particularly in the very masculinised space of a defence meeting. Due to a woman’s high visibility as a ‘space invader’ in the male-dominated political world, she is under heightened surveillance (Puwar 2004, p. 11). A woman faces particular pressure to excel when she works on a political portfolio that is typically male-dominated, such as defence, because a small mistake might confirm the implicit doubts surrounding her ‘suitability’ for such a position (Puwar 2004, p. 91). While ‘you shouldn’t be here because you are a woman’ might be an unacceptable remark in the contemporary
political world of Japan (although, as witnessed in the previous discussion about an anonymous informant’s campaign experience, those ideas are still prevalent), the comment ‘you’re enthusiastic for a woman’ reminds the female politician that she is an outsider. It also implies that her femininity is at risk by attending the defence committee meeting, for dealing with violence, protection and aggression is seen as a masculine concern.

In response to the same question regarding whether or not Pru Goward’s comment about the sexism of parliament resonated with her own experiences, Tokashiki commented that she had never experienced any discrimination personally. She added that she did not feel it was a problem because politicians should be able to manipulate their situation to their advantage.

I haven’t really felt any, but apparently some people do. It depends on the individual. This might sound strange, but sometimes you can reach a point where it becomes a plus for you. There are times when you can use something discriminatory to your advantage and gain sympathy or create a movement, for example, that emphasises the importance of more visibility for women. We’re politicians after all, and it’s one of our jobs to use that power and create our own comfortable work environments (Interview with Tokashiki, 2007).

This comment shows a sense of confidence and agency that enables this informant to potentially overcome sexual discrimination by failing to regard it negatively but instead capitalising on it for personal gain. It also suggests a belief that experiences of sexism are trivial because there are more important things to deal with. According to this view, women who complain about sexual discrimination instead of ‘using it to their own advantage’ are somehow failures in the political system where sexual inequality should not be a focal point. Perhaps this view encapsulates the attitude deemed necessary to climb the LDP ladder. Complaining about sexual discrimination would put her on the outer; her space invader status might be reinforced. Speaking out about sexual discrimination even when it does happen, or when it is not overt, might jeopardise her position within the party.
Similar sentiments can be read in a response from Arimura, who thought it was generally not a good idea to ‘make a big deal’ of sexual discrimination. Arimura took sexual discrimination to mean sexually discriminatory comments.

I think you have to evaluate whether the [critical] comment was made because you are a woman or for another reason. If it’s made because I’m a woman, well there’s nothing I can do about it. I can’t change my sex, I can’t work on that. But if the comment is made because I don’t have enough experience or if I’m under strong pressure, I can make efforts to overcome that. So, in my opinion it’s not productive to perceive criticism as being based on gender. So I think it depends on the individual incident as to whether a good result will come from making a big deal of discrimination or exclusiveness based on sexual differences (Interview with Arimura, 2007).

It appears as though Arimura has made the decision to avoid making a ‘big deal’ of sexual discrimination if it were to happen. Sabrine Frühstück’s (2007) study of women in the Japanese Self-Defence Forces (SDF) uncovers similar tendencies for women to avoid the victim label.

If she acknowledged gender discrimination and became hurt or annoyed, she would confirm the very discourse that defines her as a sex object and as weak and vulnerable. Trivializing such incidents, then, is a strategy to prevent the aggressively marginalizing effect of gender discrimination and sexual harassment from fully unfolding (Frühstück 2007, p. 98).

While I do not suggest that LDP women are regarded as sex objects, it is important to note the similarities between LDP women and the SDF women referred to by Frühstück when conceptualising sexual discrimination. While not denying the existence of discrimination, many implied that they would deal with potential sexual discrimination on an individual level and not allow it to inhibit them doing their jobs. Consider the trivialisation of potential sexual discrimination by one informant when she answered that even if she were to experience sexual discrimination, it would not bother her. This suggests that because this informant has not experienced sexual discrimination herself she considers it an insignificant issue. She has not thought deeply about it and was not interested in discussing it. Her response, ‘I personally haven’t experienced it’, nevertheless indicates an understanding that perhaps other people have, and at the same
time a distancing of herself from the idea of sexual discrimination (Interview, name withheld).

Women in hyper-masculinised spaces, such as the Self-Defence Forces or the Diet, are constantly under pressure to perform ‘just like one of the boys’. The men in the organisation have set a precedent for certain behaviours and attitudes; they have constructed what is normal. Failure to conform to these normative behaviours is therefore constructed as personal failure. As Frühstück observes in the SDF, one reason for women’s hesitation to speak out against discrimination is that discussing those discriminatory experiences might be perceived as personal failure and ‘thus an acknowledgment of victimization and defeat, rather than as a reflection of any shortcoming in the internal gender politics of the Self-Defense Forces’ (Frühstück 2007, p. 104).

Similarly, women’s reluctance to speak about discrimination in the Diet might be interpreted as a reluctance to identify with what might be seen as failure. Consider, for example, the following comment in response to the question of whether climbing the political ladder was hard for women.

Any field is difficult if you are a woman (laugh). But I have got to where I am by overcoming that. Even in academia—I returned to Japan after studying at Yale and started teaching at a private university. I taught politics in the law faculty—in Japan politics is taught in the law faculty—and it was the first time my university’s law faculty had employed a woman as a full-time instructor. I was the first woman to be promoted to associate-professor, the first woman to be promoted to professor, and then the first women to become Dean of the department. So, an enormous amount of effort was needed constantly. I needed to work twice as hard, needed to write the best book. I gained the positions by exerting that sort of effort. I think that now, even in politics, you need to be resolved to work two or three times as hard (Interview with Inoguchi, 2007).

On the one hand, this sounds like an individualistic approach to negotiating masculinised cultures, but on the other, Inoguchi also went on to imply that sexual discrimination against women in Japan is widespread in employment and suggested that a career in politics is becoming easier for women who have work experience in a wide
range of occupations. She even alluded to the possibility that politics is a haven for women who cannot seem to progress in the corporate world because of discrimination against them.

Women are not very fortunate in other industries, and that’s why so many are deciding to become politicians. These are women who, for example, can’t seem to move forward in their corporate careers. I mean, some companies won’t even employ them. Japanese women have high levels of education—there is no gender discrimination until university—but it is difficult when it comes to employment (Interview with Inoguchi, 2007).

Inoguchi suggests that politics is a career that welcomes women from all industries and points to the 2005 Lower House election as proof of this. She claims that this is the very reason that more women should pursue a political career. The 2005 election saw a number of women elected from a variety of fields, including business, accounting, law, journalism, and professional cooking. Her suggestion that politics is welcoming to women, however, contradicts the above comment that female politicians also need to work ‘two or three times as hard’. In response to my question about her experiences in different male-dominated industries, she reiterated her individualist approach to negotiating with masculinised culture by saying that regardless of gender, it is only those who are willing to put in the effort that succeed in any career.

It’s always only a minority of people who succeed, in any professional area. Even with regards to politicians, female politicians and male politicians are both trying hard, but men don’t simply succeed because they are men. You do have to exert an enormous amount of effort (Interview with Inoguchi, 2007).

Implicit in this statement is the idea that women (and men) need to work hard if they are to succeed. It is up to the individual (woman) to do so. Inoguchi suggests that if she can do it, other women can too. This appeal to the individual neglects to take into account structural inequalities between women and men. Yet, at the same time, she recognises that women are discriminated against in other areas of employment.
The idea that sexual discrimination in the Diet is an individual issue rather than a systemic one is one that these LDP women have seemingly internalised. In order to survive and thrive in the LDP, it may be necessary to adopt the attitude that when a woman decides to come into the male-dominated world of politics she ought not to complain about unfair treatment but ‘toughen up’ (Ross 2002, p. 196). One informant indicated her success in toughening up (in a period of less than five years) by commenting, ‘Well, I think I might have felt some [sexual discrimination] at some stage. I don’t know whether I’m immune to it or not, but I don’t feel it now’ (Interview, name withheld).

7.1.3 Party loyalty
Loyalty to the LDP must also be taken into account as a silencing factor when considering LDP women’s unwillingness to identify specific incidents of sexual discrimination in the party. As Frühstück (2007, p. 102) points out, for a woman in the Self-Defence Forces to speak out would be to attack the very organisation and, more specifically, the regiment she is allied with. If LDP women speak out against the sexism they confront in the party, not only are they are speaking out against the broader culture of the Diet, they are also speaking out against their own party.

This is a useful framework for interpreting how LDP women reacted to a widely-condemned comment made by former Minister for Health, Labour and Welfare, Yanagisawa Hakuo. In February 2007, Yanagisawa called women ‘baby-making machines’ (Nakata and Ito 2007, n.p) during a speech given to LDP members in western Japan. Speaking as an economist, he made this reference to women in the context of the declining birth rate and discussions about the number of children a woman could give birth to in her lifetime. This comment produced widespread condemnation in Japan from women’s groups, feminists and opposition political parties. Social Democratic Party leader Fukushima Mizuho created a petition calling for Yanagisawa’s resignation which all female members of the DPJ, the JCP and SDP signed but which women from the LDP and its coalition partner the Kōmeitō refused to sign (Nakata and Ito 2007, n.p).
Sexist comments made by political leaders are not unique to the LDP, and they are not unique to Japan. As recently as 2007, Australian Liberal Party back bencher Bill Heffernan criticised then-opposition leader Julia Gillard for being ‘deliberately barren’, remarking that politicians should be experienced in changing nappies and general family life (Austin 2007, n.p). This comment was introduced in my interviews as a way of broaching the topic of similarly sexist comments made by men in the LDP, including Yanagisawa’s comment. Heffernan’s comment was met with disbelief by all informants who criticised him primarily for being unrealistic in expecting politicians to be experienced in every aspect of life. They were less critical, however, of the baby-making machine comment.

Four informants—Sakamoto, Moriyama, Ono and Nakayama—defended Yanagisawa. They were all in their late 50s or 60s, had been in the party for several years and were on friendly terms with Yanagisawa. Sakamoto and Nakayama mentioned his good relationship with his wife to bolster their argument that Yanagisawa did not have sexist attitudes (Interviews with Sakamoto and Nakayama, 2008). A widely-held view amongst all informants was that Yanagisawa’s comment was a ‘slip of the tongue’ but was ‘typical of male Diet members’. One informant commented that, ‘He may have apologised profusely, but many people truly hold such beliefs’ (Interview, name withheld). This informant suggested that many male MPs probably continue to think in terms of limited social roles for women.

Not surprisingly, the three opposition party women I interviewed categorically condemned Yanagisawa’s comment. Three of the LDP women also condemned it,56 with one saying that although as an individual Yanagisawa had a kind personality and was ‘kind to women’ and loving to his wife, she thought he should resign (Interview with Ishii, 2008). Having only recently been elected to the Upper House, Ishii had not taken up her position as a Diet member at the time of the comment. The three LDP women who condemned his comment were relatively new to the party. Two were elected to the Lower House in 2005 and one was elected in the 2007 Upper House

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56 I am unaware of any public condemnation of Yanagisawa’s comment by these LDP women.
election. This could point to a new wave of women in the LDP who interpret such comments as sexist or offensive. A less optimistic reading would be that they have not yet learnt how to ‘toughen up’ in order to protect their own position or career potential. Although the women revealed disappointment with Yanagisawa’s comment during the interviews, the two who were Diet members at the time did not sign the petition calling for Yanagisawa’s resignation.

The failure of LDP women to sign the petition and the request for anonymity from the one informant who was scathing about sexism indicates that LDP women are likely to remain publicly silent about sexist comments made by LDP members even if they find them offensive. The absence of LDP women’s signatures on the petition may simply reflect a common attitude that because Yanagisawa’s comment did not affect them personally there was no need to protest against it. Regardless of their opinions on the matter, it may be a good career move to remain silent and avoid being labelled a ‘whiner’, a common criticism of women who fail to adopt the discourses of individualism to downplay or deflect sexist situations (Bulbeck 2009, pp. 189-90). This is one way of negotiating sexism. Of course, party loyalty is also an obvious explanation for why LDP women did not sign the petition. If someone from another party had made the comment, LDP women may have been more likely to condemn the offender publicly.

7.1.4 Party loyalty defends factions
Informants’ discussions of factions should also be analysed in the context of party loyalty. Exploration of women’s involvements in factions, which represent an element of the masculinised party culture, sheds light on another way that LDP women navigate that culture.

As discussed in Chapter Five, the fund-raising capabilities of factions have diminished, and because of increased power in the office of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet it is possible (but not always practised) for the head of the party to largely ignore factions when allocating posts. Nevertheless, as already outlined, the increasing rate of faction
affiliation indicates that their significance to LDP members has not waned. Despite the continued salience of factions, however, it would appear that women join factions at a lower rate than men. Prior to the 2009 general election, 27 percent of female LDP Diet members were unaffiliated as opposed to twelve percent of male LDP Diet members (Election! Election! List of factional affiliation for LDP members, accessed 7/4/09). Of fifteen LDP informants (fourteen women and one man), only Inoguchi was not affiliated with a faction.

Almost all informants mentioned that today the role of factions has changed and that they are now more like ‘policy-making groups’ (seisaku shūdan). Considering that factions have largely been understood as organisations heavily concerned with power-brokering and fund-raising and only mildly interested in policy issues (Hayes 2005, p. 76; Stockwin 2008, p. 191), and have even been criticised for discouraging policy-oriented debate (Wolferen 1990, p. 139), these claims are intriguing. Some informants became quite defensive when asked about factions. This can be understood in light of heavy criticism of the LDP by academics and the mass media for being a faction-based party (Wolferen 1990, p. 139; Kishimoto 1997, p. 85; Hayes 2005, pp. 76-77; Inoguchi 2005, p. 65). The focus of the criticism has primarily been that the fund-raising capabilities of factions led to corruption and that due to their power, factions discouraged new blood. Questioning informants about their factional affiliation most probably put many on guard against further criticism of the party.

One informant went so far as to advise me against ‘wasting my time’ by asking questions about factions because their role was no longer important (Interview, name withheld). In her opinion, scholars are excessively concerned with LDP factions. She was, nevertheless, a member of a faction, having apparently joined because a friend was also a member. Our exchange became uncomfortable as she attempted to include me in her criticism of scholars studying Japanese politics, who, in her opinion, focused too heavily on LDP factions. Taking into consideration the recent literature that suggests the continuing importance of factions as organisations to assist career progression in the LDP (Hayes 2005, p. 114; Krauss and Pekkanen 2008, p. 26), I could not help but feel that this informant’s impatience was a reflection of more than mere opposition to the
direction Japanese political studies was taking. Contrary to her claim, given the affiliation rate of Diet members, it would seem that being part of a faction remains very important. Her impatience is better interpreted as a desire to distance herself from the negative image of factions often found in the media and academic literature.

I received a similar reaction from Kamikawa Yōko when factions were brought up. Kamikawa was slightly more explicit in her refusal to be associated with the negative image of factions. She suggested that I was generalising about factions after I asked her what she believed to be the role of factions. After telling me which faction she was in and her motivation for joining, I asked if she believed affiliation to a faction was important for a politician.

Author: Do you think joining a faction is important for a politician?

Kamikawa: Your question is a bit…… what do you mean by important?

Author: Um, for example, is it important for career progression?

Kamikawa: I think your question reveals stereotypical [ideas] about factions. Factions these days, I don’t know what they were like a long time ago, but they have changed drastically since I have been affiliated. Now they are policy groups. So, I have joined the Kōchi-kai policy group and a characteristic of the Kōchi-kai group is that it works as a group of policy-makers. In that respect, we have a very strong sense of affinity. In my opinion, your general question of whether factions are important was posed from the wrong angle.

Author: I see. So they are policy groups.

Kamikawa: Yes, policy groups. I have an affinity with the group because I am active as one of the members of the policy group. There are factions that operate politically, but the group I’m affiliated with is actually quite weak in that area of politics (laugh) (Interview with Kamikawa, 2007).

When Kamikawa mentions that some factions operate ‘politically’ I assume she means that they operate as power-brokers, and this, for her, contrasts with policy-making group
factions. Similar to the informant discussed previously, Kamikawa was keen to correct my misconceptions concerning the role of factions. She emphasised that affiliation to a faction was important for her, but not for the reason I had suggested. For Kamikawa, the significance of joining a faction was to participate in policy discussions. This was a common reason also given by other informants.

Another common reason for joining a faction was a desire to be part of an information network. A male LDP respondent, Kōno Tarō, discussed the basic administration difficulties he had encountered before he joined a faction.

Initially I wasn’t interested in factions at all, but I was never informed about anything until the day before a Diet session. For example, I wasn’t even told about Diet member room allocation or Diet member accommodation. When I mentioned this to the central office I was told that I should have been informed by an LDP faction. But I wasn’t in a faction (interview with Kōno, 2008).

There is some evidence to support the claims of informants—the role of factions has changed to the extent that they no longer wield as much power in terms of the allocation of Cabinet posts (Itō 2008, n.p; Stockwin 2008, p. 192) and their ability to dispense large amounts of funds has diminished substantially (Hayes 2005, p. 75; Itō 2008, n.p). Prior to losing power to the DPJ in the 2009 election, the LDP’s Cabinet contained four members who were not in a faction, including the Minister for Finance, and the Minister for Education, Science and Technology, which are prestigious and senior posts. It could be said, then, that although factions have some power in the allocation of Cabinet posts, this does not necessarily mean that in order to gain a Cabinet post an LDP Diet member must be affiliated with a faction.

Without exception, female interview subjects who talked about factions discussed them as policy-making groups, suggesting that their purpose in joining a faction was to stay in the information loop and discuss policy. Inoguchi Kuniko, however, who was elected to the Lower House in 2005 and was not affiliated with a faction, believed that factions were a remnant of the ‘old LDP’. She explained that in the ‘new LDP’—which for her
started evolving under Koizumi’s leadership—Diet members have to secure their own positions and create their own networks without relying on factions.

Author: Are you in a faction?

Inoguchi: No. Like I said, I’m not really interested in that kind of activity of the old LDP.

Author: You say the ‘old LDP’…. do you mean then that you don’t have to join a faction in the current LDP?

Inoguchi: Um, yes, that’s what I think. I think that party members need to learn how to create their own networks, garner their own information and protect their own standing without being part of a faction. If you can’t do that without being in a faction, as a member of the new LDP, well, I don’t think the new culture will materialise sufficiently. I want to persevere to that end. I want to remain unaffiliated with a faction (Interview with Inoguchi, 2007).

Given the increase in faction affiliation, particularly since Koizumi stood down from the position of party leader, the ‘new LDP’—one that is not characterised by factional affiliation—that Inoguchi imagined is perhaps better called the ‘Koizumi LDP’.

Nevertheless, all female informants called factions policy groups and this indicates at least a possible discursive transformation of the functions of factions amongst LDP women. For the LDP women I spoke to, affiliation with a faction has more to do with belonging to a network of like-minded policy-makers and ensuring acquisition of information rather than, for example, the allocation of posts and access to funds, which is typically what LDP factions have been associated with in the past. These women’s testimonies certainly indicate a changed purpose of joining a faction.

The way that informants talk about factions demonstrates their agency in a patriarchal and masculinised party. This demonstrates that agency in the LDP, in the form of party loyalty, is possible within even the most male-dominated structures—the factions. Apart
from Inoguchi, all informants appeared to be positive about being in a faction and taking what they could from them. Inoguchi was the only informant who criticised factions for being symbolic of an LDP of the past. As I have noted, it is important for LDP members to join a faction, so not doing so seems a risky career decision. Inoguchi is unable or unwilling to see factions as the innocuous policy groups as described by the other informants. The informants’ assertions that factions have shifted their key focus from money and power to policy may well have been driven by defensiveness about the oft-made criticism of LDP factions.

The discursive reconstruction of factions can also be read as one way that LDP women manipulate male-dominated political structures. LDP women were thus able to come to terms with male-dominated factions by discursively re-constructing factions as policy-making groups, which are less competitive and power-hungry (than they apparently used to be), and more inclusive and practical. LDP women’s discussions of sexist treatment in the Diet, however, as outlined above, did not involve a discursive re-construction of the situation or the party culture, but an individualisation of it. The individualisation of sexism cannot lead to a collective voice of dissent against the masculinised culture. In other words, it amounts to a silencing of potential opposition to the culture.

7.1.5 The silencing of LDP women

Perhaps LDP women do not have the vocabulary with which to speak out against sexism in the Diet. Gatens explains that in some cultural spheres, women who feel conflict are denied the opportunity to create a language of resistance.

This places those who fall outside the norm in contradictory and conflictual situations, with little opportunity to create a language, or a discourse, in which to voice these contradictions, since the failure to match, or live up to, the norm is understood as a failure of the individual concerned (Gatens 1996, p. 98).

The masculinised culture constructs the individual who speaks out against sexual discrimination as a failure because she has not endured sexism silently. Perhaps the
LDP women I interviewed understood the importance of toughening up. When a woman speaks out against sexism she is shining a spotlight on her difference from the norm when the norm is to ignore sexism. Toughening up entails emulating the norm so as not to react against sexism. Puwar (2004, p. 52) argues that the entrance of women to élite public spaces that have hitherto been occupied by the privileged—the middle-class male in the case of the Diet—creates ‘terror’ in the minds of the incumbents. While ‘terror’ might be too strong a term, the unease felt by the privileged power-brokers in the LDP when their space in encroached upon by women is intensified when women attempt to challenge their positions. Disrupting the gendered status quo by first of all appearing in the Diet and then complaining about sexism might not be a strategic career move. Santō Akiko\(^{57}\) articulates the discomfort she thinks male politicians feel when women trespass into the masculinised space of politics. She believes that male politicians will assist women who are in inferior positions, but as soon as that woman reaches the same level as that man, he stops helping and instead thinks, ‘I can’t let a woman beat me’ (cited in Iwai 1993, p. 115).

In the next section, I suggest that the lack of discourse with which to speak about sexism extends to LDP women’s public silence on the issue of positive action and gender quotas. My interview schedule did not contain mention of quota systems, and I was aware of the LDP’s equal opportunity approach to gender equality, so I was somewhat surprised when several informants brought quotas up without prompting. It appeared that the idea of positive action and quota systems was at the forefront of many informants’ minds when discussing the under-representation of women in the Diet, as I will show in the next section. This might be attributable to Koizumi’s successful strategy in 2005 that generated an influx of LDP women into the Diet. It also might indicate informants’ awareness of the increasing popularity of gender quotas in national legislatures or political parties around the world, or the influence of domestic pressure for quotas from Mitsui Mariko and the Alliance of Feminist Representatives (AFER), who have been lobbying the government to introduce gender quotas for the purpose of increasing the number of women in politics since the early 1990s.

\(^{57}\) At the time of interview, Santō was the vice president of the Upper House which technically meant that she was not affiliated with a political party, but prior to this she had been affiliated with the LDP.
7.2 ‘Leaving it to Nature isn’t Working’

The international trend of adopting gender quotas or positive action for women in politics has not spread to Japan. Iwamoto (2007b, pp. 178-79) claims that gatekeepers to ‘knowledge’ about politics in other countries have typically been men in the political or law departments of universities and in the mass media industry. She suggests that this is a reason for the lack of space in Japan given to conversations about gender quotas in politics. The influx of gender quotas for the purpose of increasing women in politics was of no interest to the vast majority of political scientists who remained largely uninterested in and ignorant of gender issues.

Iwamoto (2007a, p. 198) notes that in the early 1990s during the debates over electoral reform, former member of the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly, Mitsui Mariko, raised a proposal for gender quotas for female political representation in Japan but received little support from other female politicians. With this in mind, I was surprised to hear some LDP women advocate gender quotas for women. To my question ‘What do you think needs to be done to increase female representation in the Diet?’ Ishii Midori, who had been newly elected to the Upper House only eight months before our interview, responded emphatically, ‘A quota system’. She continued,

So, let’s say [the population] is half women and half men. So essentially [the Diet] should be half / half as well. It being half / half as a natural course of events is ideal, but we can’t really wait for that—wait for society to develop like that. So I think that something like a policy for quota systems is necessary (Interview with Ishii, 2008).

This statement is a perfect summary of Dahlerup and Freidenvall’s (2005, p. 27) argument for the ‘fast track’ over the ‘incremental track’ for female representation—that women are no longer willing to wait for their country to ‘develop’. It took 50 years for the number of women in Japan’s Lower House to rise above the number recorded at the very first intake of women in 1946. Several others shared Ishii’s sentiment, with such comments as, ‘I don’t think female representation will increase without some measure of deliberate policy. Leaving it to nature isn’t really working’ (Interview with Tokashiki, 2007). Even Nishikawa, who normally identifies with conservative issues
such as opposing the introduction of separate surnames for married couples,\(^{58}\) and who opposes gender quotas ‘in principle’, admitted that she was pleased with Koizumi’s deployment of the joseiwaku. On the one hand, she argued that quotas derive from the notion of ‘equality of results’ (kekka no byōdō) and ‘communism’ and are therefore incompatible with LDP liberalism. She also said that the use of quotas might be regarded by men as ‘reverse discrimination’ (gyaku sabetsu). On the other hand, she stated that ‘honestly, I would like to see more’ of the tactics used by Koizumi in 2005 to increase female representation (Interview with Nishikawa, 2008). Such contradiction and ambivalence towards quotas is common among LDP women. LDP Diet member Kamikawa Yōko (cited in Yamaguchi 2006a, p. 8) says that while she opposes gender quotas in principle and is resistant to mandating such a system, she thinks that giving women more voice should be part of the party’s policy. For her, in order for this to happen, Koizumi’s 2005 election strategy should be continued in the future.

Not all women in the LDP support positive action. Then head of LDP Women’s Bureau, Arimura Haruko, suggested that although quotas might work in the short term to increase female representation, they would not work in the long term to build trust in women politicians.

Women will increase at that particular time if quotas are used. But afterwards, a woman who is elected through the quota system will find it difficult to work. People will say, ‘She only got voted in because she’s a woman’. She will be judged as a woman and not on her behavior, beliefs or experiences. She will find it difficult to build trust (Interview with Arimura, 2007).

For Arimura, the use of quotas in the short-term to increase numbers of women might work, but in the long-term they will not be effective for building trust in female Diet

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\(^{58}\) Married couples in Japan must have the same surname. This has been identified by many feminists and some politicians as a sexist practice. Although couples can use the name of either partner, in the majority of cases it is the female partner who changes her name (Inoue 1995, p. 16; Ōsawa 2002, p. 39; Fukushima 2004, pp. 104-10). The LDP opposes changing the law that prohibits separate surnames for married couples (LDP official website [http://www.jimin.jp/jimin/kouyaku/index.html](http://www.jimin.jp/jimin/kouyaku/index.html), accessed 02/01/11). In January, 2011, a group of five people brought a case to the Tokyo District Court against the practice, arguing that it contravenes Articles 13 and 24 of the Constitution, which refer to the respect of the individual’s right to life, liberty and happiness, and equality between men and women in marriage respectively (Suit claims single surname rule contravenes Constitution 2011, *Japan Times*).
members. Arimura supported Koizumi’s strategy but does not think the introduction of quotas as a permanent long-term measure is a good idea.

Similarly, another informant, Sakamoto Yukiko, did not approve of Koizumi’s strategy.

Informant: I don’t think it was very good. Women were fielded not for their ability but simply because they were women. The fact that the numbers increased is a good thing, sure. But taking a long-term perspective, I don’t think that will necessarily lead to an improvement in the evaluation of women. In the previous Upper House election, Ōzawa did a similar thing with women in the election. And you see, a woman called Himei ran in the Okayama electorate and was the cause of a disgrace and scandal. When things like that happen, I don’t know, I think they are frowned upon by the Japanese public, so for women….

Author: Right, so the effect [of positive action] might be negligible….

Informant: But, now I think of it, there are various different women and various different men so not everyone will be problem-free. Some will cause problems. Just as male politicians cause problems, when numbers [of women] increase, they too will cause problems (Interview with Sakamoto, 2007).

In the second part of Sakamoto’s response, it is evident that she realised that she had applied a double standard to women who are elected. All politicians, regardless of their gender or how they are elected, make mistakes. As Phillips (1995, p. 61) notes in response to the ‘selection by merit’ arguments against affirmative action, the assumption that politicians are selected on merit is inaccurate. As outlined in Chapter Four, the recruitment of candidates by the LDP is generally not conducted simply according to the candidate’s merit. In addition, as discussed in Chapter Four, the prevalence of ‘personality voting’, whereby voters form a personal bond with candidates and elect a candidate based on this instead of party loyalty in LDP election campaigns, also discounts the theory that LDP representatives are elected on merit. When I asked Sakamoto about the reason for the lack of women in the LDP in particular, her response suggested a deeply ingrained belief that any sort of measure to dismantle institutional barriers facing female candidates is discriminatory. In an explicit rejection of the idea of providing assistance for female candidates, she attempted to defend the LDP by saying disapprovingly that the only reason the other parties had better female
representation in the Diet was that they had deliberate strategies to ensure easy passage for women in elections.

This account of discussions with LDP women about positive action as a measure to increase the number of women in the party demonstrates that opinion is divided. The party in theory opposes gender quotas, as indicated in its response to the 2007 Japan Accountability Caucus for the Beijing Conference ‘open letter’ (JAC 2007). It is therefore not likely that gender quotas or positive action style targets will be incorporated into party rules, and tactics like Koizumi’s are unlikely to be repeated. In the 2009 Lower House election, the LDP did not create a women’s bloc on the party list, as Koizumi had done in 2005 (Jimin, jikishūsenkyo joseiwaku de kuryo: Hosoda kanjicho kentō, dansei hanpatsu, 2009). The decrease in the number of LDP Lower House women from 26 to eight after the 2009 election demonstrated that Koizumi’s support for increased female Diet representation was not considered a priority for other party leaders.

The lack of follow-up support for the women who gained seats in the 2005 election meant that the increase in LDP Diet women was short-lived, unsupported and superficial. One reason for this is that those at the top are men, and many men regard positive action as ‘reverse discrimination’ (Yamaguchi, 2008, pers. comm., 22 Jan). In liberal societies, it is assumed that people are judged on their individual ability and that election candidates compete in elections accordingly. In countries where liberal individualistic models of citizenship prevail, like the USA, the UK, Australia, and Japan, ensuring people have equality has meant treating them equally (Dahlerup 2007, p. 75). Providing equality involves fair competition. If political parties are compelled to treat women and men differently by implementing quotas, some argue that this amounts to discrimination against men and discrimination for women. The existing political system, according to this theory, is equal; different treatment becomes discrimination. According to this argument, quotas represent a system that provides unfair advantages to women because it provides women with something they have not earned or achieved. This logic does not acknowledge that the system is not equal or fair but disadvantages women, and quotas are a way of minimising those disadvantages. Former member of
the Council for Gender Equality, Yamaguchi Mitsuko, concludes from her experience in discussing the issue of gender quotas and positive action with Diet members, that male members of the Diet are ‘completely uninterested’ (Yamaguchi, 2008, pers. comm. 22 Jan). Yamaguchi also expressed her frustration with the government for failing to establish gender quotas, or even targets, in politics despite the Cabinet Office for Gender Equality urging all sectors of society to establish targets for the number of women in decision-making positions.59

Rejection of positive action and gender quotas emphasises an individualisation of the issue of the under-representation of women in politics. Refusal by the LDP to consider gender quotas despite international trends and pressure from a small number of feminists (such as Mitsui Mariko and Yamaguchi Mitsuko) demonstrate the party’s individualistic approach to the under-representation of women. In this approach, barriers to women’s entrance into politics are constructed as problems facing individual women. These problems should thus be resolved by individual women if they want to enter politics. Adherence to the classic individualistic liberal model of citizenship underpins the LDP’s opposition to positive action and also explains the party’s lack of action with regards to amending the gender imbalance in the Diet. Despite the support by some LDP women for positive action in politics and thus a rejection of the discourse of the individual, as I showed earlier, the same discourse was deployed by almost of my informants to discuss their thoughts on sexism in the LDP.

I have noted that positive action strategies are supported by some individual LDP women to increase female representation, and that such strategies are also encouraged by the Council for Gender Equality in the areas of business and the public service. Yet this issue is not on the LDP agenda for debate. The disjuncture between many informants’ beliefs in the need for positive action and the absence of debate within the party about positive action suggests that many women’s voices are either not being heard in the party—again highlighting the lack of discourse women have to talk about

59 Although targets are not as formal as quotas in the sense that they usually take the form of recommendations, they are not necessarily less effective than the more formal quotas, if they are followed in the correct spirit (Dahlerup, 2006b, p. 21).
such issues—or that there is no space in the party for these issues to be debated. Policy discussions in the LDP occur in a variety of venues. Advisory councils are usually established to study a particular issue and devise proposals for tackling that issue. Actual policy-making decisions typically take place in the Policy Affairs Research Council (PARC) which comprises sub-groups concerning different policy areas, including agriculture, education and other areas, normally aligned with cabinet ministries. PARC is the central policy-making body in the LDP, but policies debated in it are normally ones that would impact a broader sphere than the party itself. There are also committees that Diet members from all parties join, which also generally parallel the ministries, where members discuss legislation with ministers (Hayes 2005, p. 51).

Perhaps a logical arena for a discussion on gender quotas for women would be the LDP’s Women’s Bureau. The Women’s Bureau website, however, suggests that the Women’s Bureau’s main focus is the welfare of children, mothers and tackling the declining fertility rate (LDP Women’s Bureau website, accessed 5/12/10). Arimura, who was the Director of the Women’s Bureau at the time of our interview, told me that the Women’s Bureau’s main function was to ensure that the voices of the 458,000 female members of the LDP reached the national administration. The Women’s Bureau, said Arimura, dealt with ‘women’s issues’, which, judging by what Arimura told me would be on the following year’s agenda, was a vague set of issues, not necessarily related to women directly: environmental problems, child protection, and safety in regional areas. The current director of the Women’s Bureau, as of December 2010, is Ishii Midori, who, as already noted, enthusiastically endorsed the idea of gender quotas to increase the number of women in politics. The Women’s Bureau has low status within the party (Yamaguchi, 2008, pers. comm. 22 Jan), so regardless of whether or not it is the most appropriate place for a discussion of quotas, the effect of such discussion might be minimal.

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60 As of 2009, there were 388,663 female members of the LDP, comprising 36.8 percent of all members (Gender Equality Bureau 2009b, p. 35).
7.3 Conclusion

LDP women are faced with a party culture and, more broadly, a political culture that is not friendly to women. The culture is apparent in sexist comments made by senior LDP members. Secondary sources testify to the power of dominant discourses of gender that define women as unsuitable for politics because of their primary roles as carers and homemakers. Testimonies from some LDP women suggest, for example, the need for women to ‘work twice as hard’ as men to succeed in politics.

The masculinised party culture that women enter upon election to the LDP renders it difficult to speak out against any discriminatory or sexist behaviour. It appears that in the LDP there are limited opportunities to voice or create a discourse of resistance. It is important to elucidate the inability of LDP women to create a discourse that enables them to resist sexism without appearing as victims or ‘whiners’. It is also critical, however, to acknowledge LDP women’s agency, and their apparent party loyalty. Expressions of party loyalty in women’s conversations and silences about sexual discrimination can be interpreted as a way to avoid being regarded as a victim. Many women admitted or alluded to sexism in the Diet, but only one informant, who requested that her anonymity be maintained, spoke of sexism in the LDP. The same kind of loyalty was witnessed in Chapter Six, where I demonstrated LDP women’s resistance to the idea that the LDP had the poorest representation of women of all the major political parties.

Without a discourse to express negative opinions about sexual discrimination, an angry or disgruntled woman must turn a blind eye to any sexist behaviour, comments or treatment and ‘toughen up’. An inability to do so will mean that she is a failure in the system. The LDP is thus a masculinised space in which emulating the masculine norm becomes the most attractive option for success. Emulating the norm can be taken as not complaining about sexism. In order to avoid appearing as though they cannot handle the party culture which does not confront sexism, women in the LDP deploy the discourse of individualism when discussing potential or real sexism.
In using the discourse of individualism, LDP women perpetuate the same individualising discourse that the LDP uses to justify its opposition to gender quotas for the purpose of increasing the number of women in the Diet. The inability of LDP women to move away from the discourse of the individual to create a language that allows them to voice concerns about sexual discrimination is a significant factor in the lack of power women have to raise the topic of positive action for women in politics. Although several informants appeared to advocate the use of positive action—even those who oppose it ‘in theory’—it would appear that the topic is not on the party agenda for debate. I have already noted that LDP women do not appear to prioritise the problem of the under-representation of women in the Diet as one requiring immediate action. Telling me during a private interview that they like the idea of gender quotas is not quite the same thing as pushing party leaders to implement them.

In summary, the LDP has a masculinised culture which is not welcoming to women or conducive to discussion about positive action for achieving a better gender balance in the Diet. Such a culture is a massive hurdle to attracting more women to politics. LDP women themselves appear to cope in the culture by dealing with sexism and male-domination on an individual basis rather than challenging the inherently patriarchal and unequal foundation upon which the culture it is based. It would appear that this is necessary in order to survive and thrive in the LDP. In the next chapter, I present a summary of my findings as a conclusion to this thesis.
CONCLUSION

The pace of growth in the number of women in Japanese politics has been glacial since women first ran for office in 1946. The current figure of 10.9 percent for the Lower House and 18.2 percent for the Upper House is low compared to other industrially advanced democratic nations such as Australia (24.7 percent and 35.5 percent in the Lower and Upper Houses respectively), Canada (22.1 percent and 34.4 percent) and the UK (22 percent and 20.1 percent) (IPU website, accessed 20/1/11). The representation of women in Japan’s Lower House is particularly dismal considering that it has increased a mere three percent since women ran in the first elections open to women in 1946. The under-representation of women in Japanese politics would appear to be a very difficult problem to solve. I have suggested in this thesis that a major part of problem is the fact that those in power have not really tried to solve the problem. I have argued that successive LDP governments, and more generally the LDP as a party, have been instrumental in keeping women out of politics. Of course, this does not mean that the LDP is solely responsible for the low representation of women in Japanese politics. Cultural issues, such as women’s reluctance to enter politics, play a significant role. What I have illuminated in this thesis is the LDP’s connection to those cultural barriers, as well as the more obvious ways that the LDP has contributed to the scarcity of women in politics. This has not necessarily been a conscious decision to keep women out of politics by party or government leaders. Rather, it has been the result of the maintenance of intersecting cultural and institutional barriers to women’s entrance into politics.

Cultural barriers: The LDP’s support of dominant discourses of gender

Gender-role socialisation in Japan has been a major cultural barrier to more women seeking political office. In Imperial Japan (1890–1945), women’s activities in the public sphere were carried out within the discursive framework of ryōsai kenbo (good wife, wise mother). The public space was gendered masculine and parliamentary politics developed as something that men engaged in and women were absent from. Women’s engagement in the public sphere typically involved care-related activities that were deemed suitable for women as wives, mothers and ‘helpmates’ to an increasingly militarised state (Mackie 1997, p. 43; 2002, p. 44). When women gained political rights in December 1945, dominant discourses of Japanese femininity did not suddenly change.
Instead, the social roles of mother and wife were incorporated into a new style of politics that was gendered feminine. Women used the political rights that they gained during the Occupation to campaign for issues that reinforced their social roles as mothers and carers, such as finding a solution to food shortages and securing a better quality of milk for infants (Shindō 2004, p. 189). The Occupation forces may have removed ryōsai kenbo ideals from official and bureaucratic ideology, but the discursive construction of Japanese womanhood as mother, wife and carer was consolidated during the Occupation. For example, the Occupation forces encouraged women to use their political rights in ways that would not diminish women’s important roles in the home, but instead in ways that would benefit children, their families and the needy (Koikari 2002, p. 35).

The dominant discourse of womanhood to emerge after the war, with its ties to community, family and maternity, was one half of the post-war family model upon which Japan’s post-war industrialisation relied. The other half of the post-war family model was the salaryman. The salaryman came to symbolise ideal and dominant discourses of masculinity, including heterosexuality, breadwinner status and devotion to employment. The policies and legislation relating to employment, welfare and tax put in place under LDP governments in the post-war era encouraged this post-war family model and its concurrent dominant gender ideals. These gender ideals included the notion that women are bound to the home and family and are outsiders to politics.

Post-war industrial development was fuelled by the mutually beneficial relationship between the LDP and business. The LDP’s development as a successful political party relied in part on its relationship with business. The business community provided the LDP with most of its funding, and the LDP rewarded business by implementing pro-business policies. This resulted in a very strong economy and long-term stable government with the LDP at the helm.

Another result was the neglect of social policies, including those concerned with gender equality. The LDP’s track record for creating gender-equity policy has been consistently
poor. The 1986 Equal Employment Opportunity Law created under an LDP government, in order to ratify CEDAW, was the result of a compromise between business and labour, with the law leaning heavily in favour of business. The original law was criticised for failing to abolish sexual discrimination against women (Molony 1995, p. 297; Mikanagi 1998, p. 189; Gelb 2000, p. 391). Employers were able to evade the spirit of equality espoused in the law and instead implemented practices that institutionalised discrimination, such as the two-track employment system. The original law has been amended twice. In 1997, all ‘protection’ measures for women workers were removed, sexual harassment was prohibited and discrimination against women in recruitment and promotion was prohibited. In 2006, it was revised again to prohibit discrimination against men and also to prohibit ‘indirect discrimination’.

Compared to the EEOL, the Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society, implemented in 1999, with its Basic Plan rolled out in 2000, was ground-breaking in concept and philosophy. By focusing on the deconstruction of gender roles, the gender-equity philosophy embedded in the law indicated a step away from focusing on raising women’s status to that of men’s. Yet the law is vague and non-binding. There has also been a backlash against its philosophy by conservatives who equate it with communism and fascism (Hayashi 2000, p. 89, 97). They also worry that its purpose is to destroy gender roles and the family (Hayashi 2000, p. 90), or argue that it will force women into the workforce, which will be damaging for children (Okamoto 2006, pp. 100-10).

The enactment of the philosophically progressive Basic Law and Basic Plan, was not, however, an epiphany on the part of an LDP government with regards to the importance of gender equality. The purpose of the pursuit of a gender-equal society is to stem the declining fertility rate. The government has made no secret of this. The preamble of the Basic Law makes this explicit by saying that one of the reasons that the realisation of a ‘gender-equal society’ is now a matter of urgency is that there are fewer babies being born. For the authorities, it would appear that a ‘gender-equal society’ is a society in which women will be likely to have more children.
It is rare for the gender-equal society to be mentioned without referring to the declining fertility rate (shōshika). The two issues of low fertility and gender equality seem to have merged to the point where they are regarded and treated as one issue. This has serious implications for gender equality in Japan, and the way women’s reproductive abilities are regarded. If the focus of achieving a gender-equal society is to enable married women to have more children, other important issues concerning gender inequality, such as domestic violence, sex trafficking, prostitution, discrimination on the grounds of sexual preference and the poverty of single mothers remain marginalised.61 This sort of approach to gender inequality serves to reinforce heterocentric gender norms, particularly the nuclear family.

Despite its vagueness, the Basic Law is a welcome development in Japanese gender equity policy. As discussed in Chapter Five, several gender-equality awareness campaigns have come out of the Basic Plan. Many local councils have responded positively to the spirit of the law, and targets for increasing the number of women in decision-making roles have been implemented in some areas of the public sector (Gender Equality Bureau 2007, pp. 26-27). Parts of the business community have also responded favourably, with some businesses adopting positive action measures to increase the number of women employed (Suzuki 2007, p. 22).

The premise behind the implementation of the law, however, remains rooted in an understanding of women as the sum of their reproductive parts. If the fertility rate was not as low as it is, LDP governments would arguably not have approached the issue of gender equality in the late 1990s with such apparent gusto. This goes to the heart of the LDP’s perception of women. As I have argued, constructs of womanhood have been shaped by LDP governments’ post-war policies and legislation. These policies have failed to acknowledge women as individual autonomous human beings who are independent of men, and are not necessarily mothers. The shaping of dominant discourses of gender, including constructs of womanhood discussed here, has hindered

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61 However, the 2000 Anti-Stalking Law (Sutōkā Kisei Hō) and 2001 Domestic Violence Law (DV Bōshi Hō), enacted under LDP governments, are examples of laws that do tackle sexual violence against women.
women’s entrance into politics by socialising women into life courses that do not include careers in politics. In addition to this, the LDP contributed to the maintenance of institutional barriers to women’s access to politics by supporting political structures that were élitist and male-dominated.

**Institutional barriers: The LDP’s success fails women**

Institutional barriers to women entering politics have been supported by LDP party structures, such as factions and kōenkai, and broader political structures, such as the way the electoral system is designed. In Chapter Four, I argued that the structures that facilitated successive LDP electoral victories are some of the very structures that make the political world difficult for women to access. The lack of central organisation of the LDP made election campaigns expensive to manage, and encouraged candidates to base their campaigns on themselves as individual candidates rather than the party. In order to be nominated by the LDP, a potential candidate typically has to have strong political connections and a substantial amount of money to register. Women in Japan, because of their socialisation into feminine roles, tend to occupy worlds outside this political network and, unless they are somehow connected to someone in that network, they do not have access to the funds required for electoral campaigning. The LDP maintained and also benefited from the kōenkai / faction system that I discussed in Chapter Four. This system has been criticised for engendering corruption and making Diet politics a very difficult field to access. I have argued that this system has also contributed to the maintenance of a male-dominated Diet. Not only is it prone to corruption and dynastic politics, it is a *gendered* system whereby masculine routes to power are normalised, as is the scarcity of women.

In Chapter Five, I briefly discussed the changes to the political system in 1994 and how these changes benefited women. In doing so, I supported other scholars in Japan who argue that Japan’s post-war electoral system was a significant barrier to women entering politics (Kubo and Gelb 1994, pp. 126-27; Yamaguchi 2002, p. 12; Ōgai 2005, pp. 207-08). In particular, the introduction of the proportional representation (PR) electoral system has led to an increase in the success rate of female candidates running for election. Aside from the introduction of PR seats, however, the other revisions to the
electoral system, such as the redistribution of electoral districts and the changes to laws to curtail private donations to political parties, would appear to have had minimal effect on women’s electoral success. The expenses involved in running in an election, particularly for someone seeking endorsement from the LDP, have barely changed, and this remains a major impediment to women’s access to parliamentary politics (Iwanaga 2008, p. 117).

The result of this gendered political system has been that the number of women in the Diet has remained extremely low. There have been instances of deliberate attempts to increase the ranks of women by individual political parties at certain elections, but these attempts have not often been done in the spirit of amending the gender imbalance in the Diet. An example of this was the so-called ‘Madonna Boom’ in 1989, when the number of women in the Upper House more than doubled to 22 after the JSP deliberately recruited women. In the LDP’s case, in the 2005 Lower House election, as discussed in Chapter Five, Koizumi created a women’s bloc (joseiwaku), the result of which was a historic rise in the number of women in the Diet, as well as a historic rise in the number of LDP Diet women. This, however, was simply part of Koizumi’s reform image. Koizumi was no champion for gender equality, and the joseiwaku was only intended for the 2005 election. It was not a permanent change to the party structures to ensure higher rates of electoral success for women in the long-term.

Nevertheless, Koizumi’s joseiwaku demonstrated that if a party wants to increase the number of women elected to the Diet, it can. I have called Koizumi’s strategy a form of ‘positive action’ because it was a deliberate attempt to see more women elected. Specifically, it was a deliberate manipulation of the electoral system so that a large number of women were elected. Positive action, such as that deployed by Koizumi, represents an attempt to redress the gender imbalance in politics. My examination, in Chapter Five, of Koizumi’s positive action as a technique for correcting the gender imbalance in legislative assemblies placed Japan in the context of the international move towards gender quotas for women in politics. One form of positive action that has become increasingly popular internationally since the Beijing Platform for Action was announced in 1995 is electoral gender quotas. When a political party implements a
quota or a country changes its electoral law to require quotas be put in place, it indicates
that those who made the decision to do so have an understanding that the equal
opportunity model has been ineffective for gender equality in politics.

**Equality discourses and quotas**

I have concentrated on exploring theories of equality to demonstrate how the LDP has
dealt with the issue of female political under-representation. The LDP has demonstrated
faith in the concept of equal opportunity, where success, including electoral success,
depends on individual merit and volition. By drawing on scholars such as Gatens (1996,
p. 64), I have shown how this model of equality is based on the notion of the universal
human as male. Specifically, I have argued that this model of equality is inadequate for
the pursuit of gender equality in politics. That this model forms the basis for political
representation is one of the reasons for the lack of women in politics in Japan.

The model of equality based on equal opportunity is based on the idea that social
structures and institutions are gender-neutral and that men and women are at an equal
starting point. I showed, in Chapter Four, how the equal opportunity model failed
women in employment, by revealing the flaws in the 1986 EEOL. The EEOL was a
very good example of how the provision of equal opportunity to men and women in an
unequal labour market was ineffective (Mackie 1989, pp. 105-06). In politics, the equal
opportunity model has been ineffective because women and men come to what I call the
‘political market’ from different places, and the place from which men generally come
is typically favoured. Men’s typical life courses enable them to slot into a political
system that has been devised for and by people similar to them.

The LDP’s approach to the problem of female political under-representation
demonstrates a failure to recognise structural inequalities between men and women, and
a failure to see the political system as a gendered system. The party’s approach has been
been gender-blind, based on the belief that social structures, including the political
system, are gender-neutral. The 2009 United Nation’s CEDAW report on Japan’s
progress towards a gender-equal society specifically suggested introducing ‘quotas,
benchmarks, targets and incentives’ for the purpose of increasing the number of women in ‘political and public life’ (United Nations 2009, p. 9). This was the first time that the word ‘quota’ appeared in a CEDAW report on Japan in relation to women in politics. Subsequently, the new DPJ-led government has, for the first time, included mention of quotas in the Third Basic Plan. Specifically, the Basic Plan states,

In order to increase the proportion of female candidates in the Lower House and Upper House elections, we request that political parties consider granting incentives, establishing concrete numerical targets and introducing a quota system, and the like, to ensure women comprise a certain percentage of candidates (Gender Equality Bureau website, accessed 19/3/11).

Despite this development, according to a survey of political parties by the Alliance of Feminist Representatives (AFER), which has lobbied the Japanese government for gender quotas since the early 1990s, neither the DPJ nor the LDP appears to endorse the idea of quotas (AFER website, accessed 31/12/10). It is difficult to understand the inconsistency apparent in the DPJ response and the Third Basic Plan.

The LDP, nevertheless, is consistent in it opposition to the idea of gender quotas for the purpose of increasing the number of women in politics. In Chapter Seven, however, I noted that some LDP women are in favour of quotas, or at least some sort of deliberate measure to increase the number of women in the Diet. This demonstrates that there is a diverse range of opinions on the matter, and that despite the party’s official stance on quotas, some women in the party support the idea of introducing them.

In the same chapter, however, I argued that despite some women’s support for quotas, the masculinised culture of the party was not conducive to conversations about quotas. The culture also has the effect of silencing women on issues regarding sexual discrimination inside the party. Dominated by men numerically, the LDP has developed a culture where the scarcity of women is normalised. A result of the male-dominated party culture is that women experience what Puwar (2004, p. 11) calls ‘super surveillance’. This surveillance means that some LDP women feel the pressure to prove
themselves—that is, to ensure their political abilities are not doubted. LDP women lack a language with which to complain about sexual discrimination. In order to show their colleagues that they are strong enough to survive and thrive in the male-dominated party, they instead develop coping strategies that lean towards individualising sexism rather than treating it as a systematic problem that affects all women. The discourse of the individual with which many LDP women framed their discussions of sexual discrimination in politics mirrors the gender-blind discourse which the LDP adopts to oppose electoral quotas. According to this discourse, it is the responsibility of the individual to cope with problems on a case-by-case basis, as it is the responsibility of the individual, regardless of their sex, to be successful in their attempts to be elected. This approach fails to acknowledge the inherent inequalities that exist in the political system, including the party culture and the electoral system.

‘Women’s perspective’: Challenging the status quo or reinforcing stereotypes?

One thing that all LDP women agreed on was that the lack of women in politics is a problem. In Chapter Six, I discussed LDP women’s thoughts on the scarcity of women in politics and all of them agreed it was a problem. They did not regard the LDP as having a particular problem with female under-representation, but thought that the general lack of women in the Diet was not a positive thing. When LDP women talked about why the lack of women in politics was a problem and what might change if women had a higher presence in the Diet, a picture of women as defined by their positions in the community and the home emerged. For LDP women, the importance of more women in politics lies in women’s ability to bring to the political agenda perspectives they have gained from their roles as mothers, wives, carers to the elderly, and members of their local community. According to LDP women, these perspectives are more likely to belong to women because of the gendered division of labour that characterises Japanese society. This perspective, as the Tokyo Project Ladies (LDP Diet members Inoguchi Kuniko, Koike Yuriko and Satō Yukari) note, should be taken advantage of by the government to create effective policies to counter the declining fertility rate (TPL [Tokyo Projects of/by/for Ladies] 2008, p. 195).
In arguing for the importance of women in politics by referring to women’s experiences derived from their social roles as mothers and wives, LDP women do little to break down the barriers to women entering politics—gender role socialisation and gender stereotypes. The dominant discourses of gender that have been perpetuated by LDP-government policies and legislation are upheld by LDP women who talk of the importance of female political representation in terms of their capacities as *seikatsusha*, wives and mothers. Their definition of woman is narrow. To be sure, women’s socialisation as mothers, wives and carers provides them with insights and abilities that many men may not possess. Talking in terms of the abilities and potential benefits that women bring to politics is certainly a practical and accessible way of arguing the point that the political world needs more women. The shortcoming of this approach, however, is that it reinforces stereotypes about women and emphasises women’s reproductive functions. This makes it difficult for female politicians to embody a broader and more independent subjectivity outside mothering and caring for others. LDP women’s motivations for becoming politicians also demonstrate an adherence to norms of femininity, especially considering their outward lack of ambition.

If women bring a ‘woman’s perspective’ to politics, what do men bring? This is a question that is rarely posed. Men are the norm and women are the ‘Other’. Men do not need to justify their presence; it is taken for granted. They are not required to argue the need for male representation. Talking about a ‘woman’s perspective’ therefore reinforces the distinction between the normative politician who is male and the ‘space invader’ (Puwar 2004) politician who is a woman. This can have the effect of perpetuating dominant discourses of gender. These are the discourses which have enabled the continuation of male-domination in Diet politics. Yet the same assertion of the need for the injection of a ‘woman’s perspective’ can have the effect of challenging the masculinised status quo. The masculinised body politic cannot help but be transformed if new perspectives are included. As demonstrated in Sweden and in the United Kingdom, the increase of women in politics *did* bring about what Phillips calls a ‘politics of presence’ (Wangnerud 2000, pp. 84-85; Childs 2004, pp. 12-13). That is to say, the participation of women in national-level politics brought about slight changes to the political issues of the day and also to the way that politics was carried out.
Arguing for more women in politics on the basis of female politicians’ *difference* from male politicians is therefore a balancing act. I suspect that until women represent at least 20 or 30 percent of seats in the Diet, as they did in Sweden and Britain for Wangnerud’s (2000) and Childs’ (2004) studies, it will be difficult to know what effect, if any, more women have in Japanese politics. Having more women in politics is not, as Phillips notes, a ‘guarantee’ that politics will be ‘better’ in any way.

Changing the gender composition of elected assemblies is largely an enabling condition (a crucially important one, considering what is disabled at present) but it cannot present itself as a guarantee. It is, in some sense, a shot in the dark: far more likely to reach its target than when those shooting are predominantly male, but still open to all kinds of accident (Phillips 1995, p. 83).

For reasons of democratic justice, however, and because women have a set of issues that are probably better represented by women, the current situation of having so many more men than women representing the population is not very democratically representative (Phillips 1995, pp. 67-68).

**Future prospects for women in the Japanese Diet**

Considering the snail’s pace of growth in women’s numbers in the Diet; the uptake in quotas in an increasing number of countries, including Japan’s neighbour South Korea; and the success of Koizumi’s use of positive action in 2005, one potentially effective solution to the problem of the political under-representation of women in the Diet is staring authorities in the face. Introducing quotas, however, is only one possible solution. But at least it would force political parties to try harder to seek out women to run in elections. Part of my argument has been that the LDP has not tried hard enough to seek out women. Men put their hands up more often than women to run for election. This is, of course, linked to the cultural obstacle of dominant gender discourses that encourage women into life courses that steer them away from politics. If women are less willing than men to become politicians, or generally uninterested in mainstream politics, measures to change this should be explored. Quotas may go part of the way to addressing the gender imbalance in the Diet, but for a more long-term solution, gender discourses that construct men as the bearers of political knowledge and women as belonging outside mainstream politics should be discouraged. With the LDP no longer
in control of the government, the only hope is that future governments will demonstrate a keener interest in creating policies that do not reinforce dominant discourses of gender that construct women as political outsiders.
Bibliography


Jimin, jikishūsenkyo joseiwaku de kuryo: Hosoda kanjicho kentō, dansei hanpatsu (A women’s bloc [on PR list] next election difficult for the LDP: Secretary General Hosoda to evaluate possibility, men backlash).


--- (2006a). “Gotō joseikokkaigiin ga kataru josei no seijisankaku (Female Diet members from five different political parties talk about women’s political participation).” Josei Tenbō (Women’s Perspective) 4: 5-11.


People Interviewed
Tokyo, September 10, 2007 ~ March 6, 2008

LDP Female Diet members

Arimura Haruko December 18, 2007
Fujino Makiko January 22, 2008
Inoguchi Kuniko September 12, 2007
Ishii Midori March 4, 2008
Kamikawa Yōko October 19, 2007
Koike Yuriko February 23, 2008
Moriyama Mayumi September 10, 2007
Nakayama Kyōko March 6, 2008
Nishikawa Kyōko February 19, 2008
Ono Kiyoko February 13, 2008
Sakamoto Yukiko February 12, 2008
Santō Akiko February 14, 2008
Tokashiki Naomi October 16, 2007
Anon November 7, 2007

DPJ Diet members

Komiyama Yōko January 25, 2008
Madoka Yoriko December 19, 2007
Anon February 12, 2008

Fusae Ichikawa Center for Women and Governance

Yamaguchi Mitsuko January 22, 2008

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62 One male LDP Diet member, Kōno Tarō, was interviewed on December 12, 2007.
APPENDIX 1A: Numbers of women in Upper House since 1946

APPENDIX 1B: Numbers of women in Lower House since 1946

Women in Lower House

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1.4</td>
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<td>1957</td>
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<td>1959</td>
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<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.6</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1963</td>
<td>1.4</td>
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<td>1964</td>
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<td>1967</td>
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<td>1968</td>
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<td>7.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2: Women in the Diet by political party as of 20/12/10\(^{64}\)

### Lower House

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Total number of MPs</th>
<th>Number of women</th>
<th>Women as percentage of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DPJ</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDP</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kômectō</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCP</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDP</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Upper House

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Total number of MPs</th>
<th>Number of women</th>
<th>Women as percentage of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DPJ</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDP</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kômectō</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCP</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDP</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Both houses combined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Total number of MPs</th>
<th>Number of women</th>
<th>Women as percentage of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DPJ</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDP</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kômectō</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCP</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDP</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{64}\) Data was collected from the Upper House website, http://www.sangiin.go.jp/japanese/joho1/kousei/giin/176/giinsu.htm, and the Lower House website, http://www.shugiin.go.jp/index.nsf/html/index_kousei4.htm, both accessed 20/12/10. Smaller parties, such as Mina no Tō (Your Party), Kokumin Shintō (People’s New Party), Tachiagare Nippon (Sunrise Party), and Independents are not included as the overall number of Diet seats they possess is negligible.
## APPENDIX 3: Profiles of women interviewed

### LDP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Career pre-politics</th>
<th>Year elected</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Mother’s occupation</th>
<th>Father’s occupation</th>
<th>Marital status and no. of children ( )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arimura Haruko</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>PhD in international management, Aoyama Gakuin</td>
<td>Human resources</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>UH member, Head of Women’s Bureau</td>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>Saga prefecture council member</td>
<td>Married (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fujino Makiko</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Bachelors in French literature, University of the Sacred Heart, Tokyo</td>
<td>Pastry chef, Japanese representative to France Tourism</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>LH member</td>
<td>Full-time housewife</td>
<td>Company employee</td>
<td>Married (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inoguchi Kuniko</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>PhD in political science, Yale University</td>
<td>Political scientist</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>LH member</td>
<td>Full-time housewife</td>
<td>Company employee</td>
<td>Married (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ishii Midori</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Bachelors in dentistry, Tsurumi University</td>
<td>Paediatric dentist</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>UH member</td>
<td>Manager of grandfather’s doctor’s clinic</td>
<td>(n/a, was raised by mother)</td>
<td>Divorced (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamikawa Yoko</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Masters in political administration, JFK School of Government, Harvard University</td>
<td>Political aide in the US</td>
<td>2000 (independent) 2004 (LDP)</td>
<td>LH member and State Minister for Gender Equality and Social Affairs</td>
<td>Full-time housewife</td>
<td>Company employee</td>
<td>Married (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

65 Age, position and marital status is current at time of interview
## LDP continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Career pre-politics</th>
<th>Year elected</th>
<th>Position at time of interview</th>
<th>Mother’s job</th>
<th>Father’s job</th>
<th>Marital status and no. of children ( )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Koike Yuriko</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Bachelors in sociology, Cairo University</td>
<td>Television journalist/reporter</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>LH member</td>
<td>Information unavailable</td>
<td>Trading merchant</td>
<td>Divorced (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moriyama Mayumi</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Bachelors in law, Tokyo University</td>
<td>Bureaucrat</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>LH member</td>
<td>Full-time housewife</td>
<td>Company employee</td>
<td>Married (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nakayama Kyōko</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Bachelors in French literature, Tokyo University</td>
<td>Bureaucrat</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>UH member</td>
<td>Full-time housewife</td>
<td>Public servant</td>
<td>Married (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nishikawa Kyōko</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Bachelors in education, Waseda University</td>
<td>Housewife, volunteer for LDP local chapter</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>LH member and Vice Minister for Health, Labor and Welfare</td>
<td>Full-time housewife</td>
<td>Public servant</td>
<td>Married (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ono Kiyoko</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>Professional gymnast, Sports and Youth Bureau official</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Retired from Diet politics in 2007, currently working for NAASH (National Agency for the Advancement of Sports and Health)</td>
<td>Full-time housewife</td>
<td>(n/a, father died when small, was raised with maternal uncle’s family)</td>
<td>Married (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakamoto Yukiko</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Bachelors in law, Tokyo University</td>
<td>Bureaucrat</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>UH member</td>
<td>Full-time housewife</td>
<td>Company employee</td>
<td>Married (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LDP continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Career pre-politics</th>
<th>Year elected</th>
<th>Position at time of interview</th>
<th>Mother’s job</th>
<th>Father’s job</th>
<th>Marital status and no. of children ( )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Santō Akiko</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>Singer/actress</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Vice Speaker of UH</td>
<td>Swimmer</td>
<td>Newspaper journalist</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokashiki Naomi</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Bachelors in pharmacy, University of the Sacred Heart, Tokyo; Business School, Waseda University</td>
<td>Pharmacist/PR for Shiseido</td>
<td>1999 as independent (Suginami ward council); 2005 for LDP</td>
<td>LH member</td>
<td>Full-time housewife</td>
<td>Company employee</td>
<td>Divorced (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Career pre-politics</th>
<th>Year elected</th>
<th>Position at time of interview</th>
<th>Mother’s job</th>
<th>Father’s job</th>
<th>Marital status and no. of children ( )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Komiyama Yoko</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Bachelors in Japanese literature, Seijo University</td>
<td>Television news reporter</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>LH member</td>
<td>Information unavailable</td>
<td>Information unavailable</td>
<td>Divorced, remarried (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madoka Yoriko</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Bachelors in English literature, Tsudajuku University</td>
<td>Journalist, writer</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>UH member and Shadow Cabinet Minister for Education</td>
<td>Information unavailable</td>
<td>Information unavailable</td>
<td>Divorced (n/a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## DPJ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Career pre-politics</th>
<th>Year elected</th>
<th>Position at time of interview</th>
<th>Mother’s job</th>
<th>Father’s job</th>
<th>Marital status and no. of children ( )</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Komiyama Yoko</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Bachelors in Japanese literature, Seijo University</td>
<td>Television news reporter</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>LH member</td>
<td>Information unavailable</td>
<td>Information unavailable</td>
<td>Divorced, remarried (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madoka Yoriko</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Bachelors in English literature, Tsudajuku University</td>
<td>Journalist, writer</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>UH member and Shadow Cabinet Minister for Education</td>
<td>Information unavailable</td>
<td>Information unavailable</td>
<td>Divorced (n/a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Career pre-politics</th>
<th>Year elected</th>
<th>Position at time of interview</th>
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<th>Father’s job</th>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>59</td>
<td>Bachelors in Japanese literature, Seijo University</td>
<td>Television news reporter</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>LH member</td>
<td>Information unavailable</td>
<td>Information unavailable</td>
<td>Divorced, remarried (3)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Madoka Yoriko</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Bachelors in English literature, Tsudajuku University</td>
<td>Journalist, writer</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>UH member and Shadow Cabinet Minister for Education</td>
<td>Information unavailable</td>
<td>Information unavailable</td>
<td>Divorced (n/a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Career pre-politics</th>
<th>Year elected</th>
<th>Position at time of interview</th>
<th>Mother’s job</th>
<th>Father’s job</th>
<th>Marital status and no. of children ( )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Komiyama Yoko</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Bachelors in Japanese literature, Seijo University</td>
<td>Television news reporter</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>LH member</td>
<td>Information unavailable</td>
<td>Information unavailable</td>
<td>Divorced, remarried (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Madoka Yoriko</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Bachelors in English literature, Tsudajuku University</td>
<td>Journalist, writer</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>UH member and Shadow Cabinet Minister for Education</td>
<td>Information unavailable</td>
<td>Information unavailable</td>
<td>Divorced (n/a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 4: Interview schedule

Closed questions

❖ Profile of Respondents (all interviewees)

- Sex
- Age
- Education
- Occupation/position in party
- Number of years in this position
- Number of years in politics
- Number of years in the LDP
- Family status (marital and parental status)

Personal Background

a) What is your educational background?

b) What was your employment background before entering politics?

c) What were your parents’ occupations?

d) Do you have any family members in politics?

e) How many brothers and sisters do you have?

f) What are your current living arrangements?

g) Do you have any children? How old are they? Who looks after them when you are working?

Do you have any experience in political activism?
Open-ended interview questions

1.  **Motivation**

   a) What was your motivation for entering politics?

   b) What was your motivation for entering the LDP?

   c) Did you consider joining any other party?

2.  **What policy areas are you involved in?**

3.  **Factional involvement**

   a) Are you a member of a faction?

   b) If not, why not?

   c) If yes, which one? And what was the motivation for joining? Do you think belonging to a faction is important?

   d) If so, why?

4.  **Personal political ambitions**

   a) What are your ambitions as an LDP Diet member?

   b) Where do you hope to be in five years’ time?
5. Experiences specific to being a female politician, and a female LDP Diet member

a) Can you tell me about any positive experiences you have had as a woman in politics, and more specifically, in the LDP?

b) Have there been any challenges you have encountered as a female politician? Do you think that these challenges are any more or less for women in other political parties?

6. Thoughts on the under-representation of women in the LDP

a) Why do you think there are so few women in the Diet?

b) There are even fewer women as a percentage in the LDP than any other party. Why do you think this is?

c) Do you think this is a problem? If so, why?

d) Does the LDP do anything specifically to recruit more women?

e) What are some possible solutions to increasing the number of female representatives in the LDP and more broadly, the Diet?

f) The SDP has had 2 female leaders. Do you think the LDP will ever be headed by a woman?

g) What kind of activities does the LDP Women’s Bureau (Josei Kyoku) handle? Are you a member? Why or why not?

h) Are there any issues that are better handled by women, or any that are better handled by men? Why?
7. **Thoughts on sexism in politics**

a) Do you think the Diet is a sexist arena? (Pru Goward’s comment, Yanagisawa Hakuo’s comment)

b) Do you think it is difficult for a woman to climb the political ladder in Japan?

c) Do you think it is difficult for mothers?

d) Is it important for women in politics to be mothers? Is it important for men to be fathers? (Bill Heffernan’s comment)

e) What do you think of the sexist comments made by senior male LDP lawmakers?

f) What do you think is an ideal ‘gender-equal’ society?
APPENDIX 5: Letter of approach to potential informants

University of Wollongong

(English)

[Date]

Dear [insert name],

My name is Emma Dalton and I am a PhD candidate at the University of Wollongong in Australia. I apologise for this sudden letter.

I am conducting research for my PhD thesis about female members of the LDP. In the academic literature, there is a lot of information about socialist-leaning or independent female politicians, but there is a lack of research about conservative female politicians. I aim to address this imbalance by researching LDP women.

I have been in Japan for [insert time frame], and am conducting my research under the supervision of Professor Igarashi Akio, of Rikkyō University. I plan to stay in Japan until March, 2008. To date, I have interviewed [insert names of those already interviewed]. While I am still in Japan, I would ideally like to interview a wide range of LDP Diet women.

Included with this letter is a document which explains the interview. If you have time, I would greatly appreciate it if you could read the explanation, and respond.

I apologise for disturbing you when you are so busy. I will be in touch in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Dalton

[insert contact details]
日付
「名前」議員さんへ

はじめまして こんにちは

私はオーストラリアのウーロンゴン大学博士課程在籍中のエマ・ダルトンと
申します。

突然のお手紙、大変失礼いたします。
私の研究は自民党の女性議員について調べることによってその不均衡を直そうとします。

現在来日してから「～ヶ」月が過ぎ、日本滞在中は立教大学に所属して五十嵐暁郎教授の下で研究を行っております。2008 年 3 月まで日本にいる予定です。

今まで自民党国会議員の「名前」先生等にインタビューをさせていただいており今後の予定と致しました場合、幅広い範囲で自民党の国会議員にインタビューをさせていただければと思っております。

同封させていただいた書類はインタビューに関する説明書です。

もし時間がございましたらこちらをご覧になっていただき、ご回答いただければ幸に思います。

お忙しいところ勝手申し上げ大変申し訳ございません。

後日こちらからご連絡させていただきます。

よろしくお願いいたします。

エマ・ダルトン (連絡先)
APPENDIX 6: Consent form for interviewees

(Original English)

Consent form for female LDP Diet members
Research Title: Female LDP Diet members
Researcher’s Name: Emma Dalton

I have discussed the research project with Emma Dalton who is conducting this research as part of a PhD supervised by Associate Professor Lenore Lyons, Dr Helen Kilpatrick and Dr Christine De Matos in CAPTRANS at the University of Wollongong.

I have been advised of the potential risks and burdens associated with this research, which include time constraints, and have had an opportunity to ask Emma Dalton any questions I may have about the research and my participation. I understand that the data collected will be published in a thesis, possible academic publications and conference papers.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, I am free to refuse to participate; I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, and I am free to refuse to answer any particular questions. My refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect my relationship with the researcher of the University of Wollongong, or my participation in national level politics.

If I have any enquiries about the research, I can contact Emma Dalton whose contact details in Japan and Australia are below, or her supervisor in Australia, Associate Professor Lenore Lyons, on [ ] or if I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted, I can contact the Ethics Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, Office of Research, University of Wollongong on +61 2 4221 4457.
CONTACT DETAILS:

In Japan: In Australia:

Emma Dalton 
[to be inserted once in field] Emma Dalton

CAPSTRANS
University of Wollongong NSW 2522
Australia
Phone: +61 403555064
Email: ed315@uow.edu.au

By signing below I

- consent to being interviewed for the purpose of the research
- do/do not consent to the interview being recorded on an audio recorder
- do/do not consent to my answers being used in the research thesis, publications and conference papers
- do/do not consent to my name being used in any publications
- do/do not consent to my job title being used in any publications
- do/do not consent to having my photograph taken

Signed ....................................................... Date ...../...../......

Name (please print) .......................................................
研究協力の同意書

研究題名: 自由民主党の女性議員

研究者の名前: エマ・ダルトン

ウーロンゴン大学教授、CAPSTRA S所属のレノール・ライオンズ、ヘレン・キルバトリック、クリスティーン・デ・マートス担当下の研究者エマ・ダルトンの博士号論文のために行われているこの研究プロジェクトについて研究者と話しました。

時間の制約を含む可能なリスクと負担について説明を受け、当研究と私の参加について研究者に質問をする機会が当てられました。収集される情報は論文、学間的な書物と会議論文として出版されることを理解しています。

この同意書で表明した研究協力についての判断は自由意思に基づくものであり、その判断は撤回可能であることを理解しています。研究協力の意思を途中で撤回する自由と特定の質問に答えない自由があることを理解しています。研究に協力しない、あるいは協力する意思を途中で撤回しても研究者やウーロンゴン大学との関係、国家レベルでの政治参加に関しても不利益はありません。

研究に関する質問があれば、研究者に下記の日本とオーストラリアでの連絡先に連絡することができます。その上研究者の担当教授のレノール・ライオンズに「 」という電話番号にも電話で連絡ができます。研究行動にめぐる倫理に関する関心や苦情があればウーロンゴン大学の研究事務所の人間研究倫理委員会の倫理担当役員に +61 2 4221 4457 という電話番号に電話で連絡ができます。
お問い合わせ

日本：

オーストラリア:

Emma Dalton
[to be inserted once in field]

CAPSTRANS

University of Wollongong NSW 2522

Australia

Phone: +61 403555064

Email: ed315@uow.edu.au

研究に協力するか否か、以下のように判断いたします

- 研究のためにインタビューされることに同意します・しません
- インタビューが録音されることに同意します・しません
- インタビューでの私の回答が博士論文、学問的な書物と会議論文に利用されることに同意します・しません
- 出版物に名前が載ることに同意します・しません
- 出版物に職名が載ることに同意します・同意しません
- 写真が撮られることに同意します・しません

Signed

Date

.................................................. ....../....../.....

Name (please print)

...........................................................
APPENDIX 7: Participant information sheet

(Original English)

PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET FOR FEMALE LDP DIET MEMBERS

TITLE: Research Study on female LDP Diet members

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH
This is an invitation to participate in a study conducted by a PhD student at the University of Wollongong. The purpose of the research is to investigate the backgrounds, political policies and aspirations of female LDP politicians.

INVESTIGATOR
CONTACT DETAILS for INVESTIGATOR:

In Japan: In Australia:

1. Emma Dalton Emma Dalton
   [to be inserted once in field] CAPSTRANS
   University of Wollongong NSW 2522

2. Dr Akio Igarashi Australia
   College of Law and Politics Phone: +61 403555064
   Rikkyo University, Japan Email: ed315@uow.edu.au
   Phone:
   Email:
METHOD AND DEMANDS ON PARTICIPANTS

If you choose to be included, you will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview with the researcher, Emma Dalton. This interview will be audio-taped for recordkeeping purposes. If granted permission from participant, photos may also be taken. I alone will have access to this information. The interview will last approximately one hour. Typical questions in the interview include: “What inspired you to become a politician?”, “Who were your influences?”, “What was your family structure?”, “Were your parents political?”, or “What is one of your chief concerns in your capacity as a member of parliament?” Questions regarding your factional affiliation and challenges of being a member of the LDP will be included. If you wish, your name will not be published.

RISKS, INCONVENIENCES AND DISCOMFORTS

One hour of your time will be required. Your involvement in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation from the study at any time and withdraw any data that you have provided to that point. Refusal to participate in the study will have no adverse effects on you.

FUNDING AND POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

This study is funded by research grants from the Japan Foundation, the Australian Department of Education, Science and Training and the faculty of Arts and CAPSTRANS at the University of Wollongong. Findings from the study will be published in a doctoral thesis, possible academic publications and conference papers.

ETHICS REVIEW AND COMPLAINTS

This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Science, Humanities and Behavioural Science) of the University of Wollongong. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research has been conducted, you can contact the UoW Ethics Officer on (02) 4221 4457.

Thank you for your interest in this study.
研究参加ご協力のお願い

研究題名：自由民主党女性議員

研究の目的
ウーロンゴン大学博士課程在籍の研究生による研究参加ご協力をお願い申し上げます。研究目的は自由民主党の女性国会議員の背景、政策、希望を調査することです。

研究者
研究者の連絡先:
日本では:  オーストラリアでは:

1. エマ・ダルトン
   電話番号: 08066435733
   イメール: ed315@uow.edu.au
   CAPSTRANS
   University of Wollongong NSW 2522

2. 五十嵐暁郎教授
   立教大学、法学部政治学科
   顧問: +61 403555064
   Email: ed315@uow.edu.au

調査方法と参加者各位様へのお願い
研究参加の承諾を受けた場合、研究者エマ・ダルトンが直接お会いしインタビューすることになります。記録のためにインタビューは録音されます。参加者からの許可を得られた場合のみ写真を撮影させて頂く事もあります。撮影された写真は研究者のエマ・ダルトンに限った閲覧使用となります。インタビューは
1時間以内です。インタビューの主な質問には「政治家になった理由」「影響された人」「家族構成」「両親の政治への関心」「議員としての心配事」等が含まれます。また派閥所属と自由民主党に所属するにあたっての難問についても聞かれます。ご希望であればお名前は記載されません。ご協力はご自身の意志に基づくものであり、参加取消、途中辞退、情報提供の拒否は自由です。

研究補助と研究成果報告方法

この研究は日本国際交流基金、オーストラリア連邦政府教育省、そしてウーロンゴン大学人文科学部の補助によって行われています。この研究成果は論文、学術書、会議論文等に発表される事になります。

倫理調査と苦情

この研究はウーロンゴン大学の人間研究倫理委員会(社会科学・人文科学・行動科学)の審査を受けました。研究方法に対する苦情、ご質問、ご不明な点等がございましたらウーロンゴン大学倫理担当者（電話番号+61 2 4221 4457）までご連絡ください。

ご協力誠にありがとうございました。
APPENDIX 8: Letter of introduction

(English translation)

Referral for Emma Dalton

September 3, 2007

Dear [insert Diet member’s name],

I am writing to you to introduce Emma Dalton. Emma is currently studying for a PhD at the University of Wollongong in Australia. She is in Japan until March, 2008 conducting research for her thesis about female politicians in the LDP.

As you are aware, the number of women in Japanese politics is extremely low, and at the same level of developing countries. I therefore believe that Emma’s research is very important in terms of Japanese politics. However, gaining appointments for interviews [with politicians] is very difficult for university postgraduate students.

I know you are busy, but if you could possibly spare some time for a young researcher, I would greatly appreciate it. I hope that, in addition to Emma being able to complete her thesis, discussion of this issue will enable a deepening of academic and social interest in the issue [of female political under-representation].

Yours sincerely,

Igarashi Akio

Faculty of Law
Rikkyō University
エマ・ダルトンさん紹介状

(Original Japanese)

……………さま

2007年9月3日

エマ・ダルトンさんをご紹介いたします。ダルトンさんは、現在、オーストラリアのウーロンゴン大学の大学院博士課程に在籍していますが、来年3月まで日本に滞在して自民党女性政治家についての博士論文を執筆するための調査を行なっています。

ご存知のように、日本では女性政治家の数が絶対的に少なく、先進国中最低レベルです。したがって彼女の研究は日本政治を考える上で非常に重要であると思います。しかし、大学院生がインタビューのアポイントメントを獲得するのは容易ではありません。

お忙しいこととは存じますが、若い研究者のために時間を割いていただければと存じます。彼女の博士論文執筆をふくめて、この問題が議論されることによって学問的社会的な関心が深まることを願いつつお願いする次第です。

立教大学 法学部 教授
五十嵐 暁郎
### APPENDIX 9: Legislation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym / short title</th>
<th><strong>Full title in English</strong></th>
<th><strong>Full title in Japanese</strong></th>
<th>Year put into effect</th>
<th>Most recent revisions</th>
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<tr>
<td>WDL (Workers Dispatch Law) (Haken Rōdō Hō)</td>
<td>Act for Securing the Proper Operation of Worker Dispatching Undertakings and Improved Working Conditions for Dispatched Workers</td>
<td>Rōdōsha Haken Jigyō no Tekisei na Unei no Kakuho Oyobi Haken Rōdōsha no Shugyō Jōken no Seibi nado ni Kansuru Hōritsu</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1999</td>
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<td>Childcare and Family Leave Law (<a href="#">Ikuji Kaigo Kyūgyō Hō</a>)</td>
<td>Act on the Welfare of Workers Who Take Care of Children or Other Family Members Including Child Care and Family Care Leave</td>
<td>Ikuji Kyūgyō Kaigo Kyūgyō Nado Ikuji mata wa Kazoku Kaigo o Okonau Rōdōsha no Fukushi ni Kansuru Hōritsu</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>2001</td>
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<td>Pāto Taimu Rōdō Hō</td>
<td>Act on Improvement, etc. of Employment Management for PartTime Workers</td>
<td>Tanjikan Rōdōsha no Koyō Kanri no Kaizen Nado ni Kansuru Hōritsu</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>2008</td>
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<td>The Basic Law</td>
<td>The Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society</td>
<td>Danjo Kyōdō Sankaku Kihon Hō</td>
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<td>Anti-Stalking Law (<a href="#">Sutōkā Kisei Hō</a>)</td>
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