The Influence of Technology on Digital- and Japanese Feminism

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Introduction

Japan is a country that leaves people with the impression that it is full of dualities. On the one hand, it is globally renowned for its booming sex industry as well as its advancement on technology while on the other hand it is known for it's lingering sexist attitudes towards women. How is it possible that Japan has embraced modernity (and sexuality) in one aspect, but continues to hold onto its "traditional" values?

Modernisation, especially modern technology (including social media), has greatly influenced the historical and social development of many countries, mostly well-known in the West. It might not be evident that modernisation clashes with a country's history, but there are certainly examples of such. Japan is a country that has a big clash between modernisation and its "traditional" values. Such conflict will inevitably bring along issues within its people. Women in Japan, like many other countries, have been feeling restricted and defined by external elements that are man-made. This thesis will look at how technology can have an effect and play a role in these external influences. Does the internet aid women's rights developments or does it worsen their oppression? The existing scholarship on technology and human agency, I argue, falls short as it gives only two extreme positions. The first is the totalisation of technology where we will reach a point where we will lose control over technology and we become slaves to it. The second is innate rationality where we will always make rational choices no matter how far technology develops. This theory of technology also includes women's agency. Both positions have consequences for (the development of) feminism. I will argue that there is a need for a historical aspect to this theory in order to add more nuance and be more inclusive regarding this debate as cultures are all different and it would be wrong to merely focus on the West.

What has already been done in the West regarding technology and feminism, is that technology took the word of feminism and digital activism over the Western world. Speaking up about women's rights issues has begun to be a new normal. This attitude is still controversial in many Asian countries. That is why it is of the essence to give more

importance to Asian feminism. We will see that the potential for goodness and badness lies within the user of the internet. Japanese feminism is reaching a new height thanks to the internet which makes communication more inclusive and available. At the opposite end, the internet also made a new wave of ultranationalism within Japan possible that wants to go back to the "traditional" and sexist values, even more.

Euro-American feminism (sometimes also called "white feminism", however, this is an overgeneralisation) is a type of feminism that is not inclusive to all women of all traditions and cultures, but it is the most well-known. For example, Euro-American feminism fought for the ability for women to work. While at the same time, South American women were already forced to work, but had other ideals regarding their type of feminism. Feminist perspectives are essential when it comes to criticising patriarchal values and improving society. However, different societies with different criticisms bring forth different feminisms, because the movement is dependent on a specific historical horizon. Feminism is still an ongoing movement that is actively changing and developing, but by merely focussing on Euro-American feminism, we are not giving all women a voice and a right to agency and equality. The fact that some cultures have different feminism that might be differently developing, or not "as far" as Euro-American feminism, does not mean that it is to be discredited or seen as "inferior".

This thesis will primarily be a literature study with a focus on Japanese women's movements and personal accounts. The main question of this thesis is: Does modern technology facilitate women's autonomy or does it exacerbate women's oppression? There are multiple things this thesis wants to achieve. Firstly, show how the existing scholarship has a problematic dichotomy and why adding a historical perspective is extremely beneficial to its development. Secondly, the thesis shows the historical perspectives that play a part in the modernisation of Japan. Lastly, within the focus on the Japanese people, this thesis will show how Japanese women are creating a new type feminist discourse and how they are negotiating intersectional forces.

In chapter one I will discuss the existing scholarship of philosophy of technology with regards to human autonomy. Chapter two will focus on the situation in Japan. How did Japan reach modernity? Why does Japan hold onto traditional values in ways other countries do not? What are the current viewpoints on women in Japanese society? How are they fighting the sexist attitudes of Japanese patriarchal values? Chapter three will set out to look into Shiori Ito's alleged rape case which makes her known as the face of the Japanese #MeToo movement. After going over necessary information and developments, this chapter will further focus on the media coverage of Japanese women who stood up to voice their resistance against sexism in Japan.

Preface

Technology is rapidly improving and has already planted itself in our daily life. This exponential technological advancement must have a consequence for our human existence. When looking at the West, technology is embraced and incorporated within (popular culture and) our society without much problems, but this is not the case for every country. Within Japan, we see a large dichotomy. The industrial aspect of the country, on the one hand, is more than happy to collaborate with other countries, import and export products and, all in all, contribute to the globalisation of technology. When looking at the vernacular society, on the other hand, we see that the Japanese people still hold tight onto "traditional values." These opposites create conflict regarding women's autonomy. This thesis focuses on the image of women within "modern Japanese society." Due to the vernacular society holding onto "traditional values" (in contrast to the global attitude of Japanese industrial life) development of women's rights has become difficult to achieve.

Before we can continue, we need to look at the existing literature on the philosophy of technology and the consequences it brings along. Modernisation is a recurring theme in this thesis in order to explain the developments of the country. But before we can move on, we should do a quick definition study on what actually is "modernity", and "modernisation?" Chistopher Goto-Jones refers to "modern" as a term of "a period of time that is close to the present", which more specifically refers to "a more-or-less specific constellation of intellectual, social, political, and scientific norms and practices."[1] An ethical difficulty regarding the term "modernity" comes due to its European and American history (roughly starting in the Enlightenment period); does this term not judge the development of nations against Euro-American ideals? Goto-Jones says that a society could be considered as modern, when exhibiting signs of industrialisation and urbanisation.[2] There is a foundational emphasis on rationality: the modern era is by nature rational where science and technology

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[1] Goto-Jones, Christopher S. *Modern Japan: a very short introduction.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2009) p.7

[2] Goto-Jones, Christopher S. *"Ibid."* p.8

triumph and mechanisation thrives, in contrast to the superstitious past.[3] The modern era is

also characterised by great social anomie and political unrest.[4]

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[3] Goto-Jones, Christopher S. "*Ibid*." p.8
[4] Goto-Jones, Christopher S. "*Ibid*." p.9

Chapter One: Technology and human agency from a feminist perspective

In this chapter, consisting of three parts, I will discuss the existing literature.[5] The scholarship on technology and its effects on humans generally fall under one of two extremes. The first is the totalisation of the internet, where humans lose control over technology. The other is innate rationality where, no matter how far technology develops, humans will continue to be rational and actively make choices within such a (modern) society. The first two parts will explain these attitudes and the last part will argue why the existing scholarship with its two extremes falls short and needs a socio-historical aspect.

Ever since the Era of the Enlightenment and the rise of technology, humans have entered a crisis. It is a crisis of orientation, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually insofar as we do not know where to turn.[6] Philosophers like Ellen Willis and John Stuart Mill argue that no matter how far technology develops or integrates within human society, humans will always have innate rationality. Humans will always have control over their actions and thoughts. Technology, here, is a means to an end.[7] The other side argues that modern technology could develop so far that it totalises society and that humans will lose their control over it. This position is being taken by philosophers Martin Heidegger and Karl Marx. It seems that as long as we approach technology as a means to an end, we will continue to assume the mentality of a master. But how can we master it if technology is an end of itself?

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[5] There exists a vast scholarship of Asian women in Euro-American context which I will not dive into, because the focus of my thesis is Japanese women in Japan.
[6] Kohanski, Alexander Sissel. *Philosophy and Technology : Toward a New Orientation in Modern Thinking. (*New York, N.Y.: Philosophical Library, 1977.) p.ix
[7] Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays. (*Harper & Row. 1977.) p.4

1.1 Innate rationality

This subchapter will focus on the theories of Ellen Willis and John Stuart Mill. But before we can look into their view on (innate) rationality, we need to define what rationalism entails. Rationalism holds that knowledge comes from intuition and is deduced through reasoning. These concepts, for innate rationalists, are innate to people. Rationalists would therefore agree that reality has an intrinsically conceptual structure, containing truths that can be acquired and justified through the functionality of the mind.

1.1.1. Ellen Willis

Mass media is highly dependent on advertising revenues.[8] Many feminists (Betty Friedan included) argue that mass media reinforces and perpetuates "the public- and self-image of woman as a mindless, emotional, dependent housewife with no interests beyond her home."[9] The global beauty industry is now worth $511 billion, meaning that there is a lot of money to make from a woman's insecurity and/or general embodiment.[10] Whereas many feminists would argue that mass media (thus also technology) is responsible for manipulating women to desire and purchase consumer goods, Ellen Willis refutes this idea. For this rebuttal she gives four main arguments in her essay *Consumerism and Women*:

1. People buy consumer goods, not because they have been manipulated, but as a rational response to the limited alternatives available within the commercial system. Willis says that people purchase goods for practical, and self-interested reasons.[11]

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[8] Ceulemans, Marie José., and Katholieke Universiteit. Departement Communicatiewetenschap. *Women and Mass Media : a Feminist Perspective : a Review of the Research to Date on the Image and Status of Women in American Mass Media.* Leuven: Katholieke Universiteit. (1980) p.103
[9] Ceulemans, Marie José., and Katholieke Universiteit. "*Ibid.*" p.102
[10]https://dealsonhealth.net/beauty-industry-statistics/#:~:text=The%20global%20beauty%20industry%20is%20worth%20%24511%20billion.&text=The%20rapid%20increase%20of%20the,products%20will%20always%20be%20high.
[11] Ceulemans, Marie José. "Women and Mass Media : a Feminist Perspective : a Review of the Research to Date on the Image and Status of Women in American Mass Media." p.105

2. How women are represented in media stereotypes is not to sell goods, but to reinforce the ideology of male supremacy. Advertisement exploits women's subordination rather than causing it.[12]

3. Women's behavior as consumer is mostly work as part of their sexual and domestic obligation.[13]

4. The consumerism theory is based on class, sex and race bias.[14]

Willis' essay argues for the anti-brainwashing line (which failed to gain acceptance within the larger movement). Supporters of this line refuse to accept the concept of internalisation. This is the process in which women internalise the expectations associated with their prescribed social roles. The first argument she gave is in accordance with the rationalist position. It would make sense to argue that men and women operate and exist within the framework of their context. It would not seem fair to argue that women do not have agency over the choices they make, after all, both men and women are always bound by certain limitations of life even though this comparison is not completely equal.

Socialist feminists like Kathy McAfee and Myrna Wood suggest that mass media reflects the prevailing societal values to the effect of fortifying them, thus obstructing change.[15] It seems that this immaterial condition that now includes the entirety (or the gross majority) of the global society, is slow to enforce change due to its size. Change depends on people because without a big enough desire, nothing will "suddenly" happen. In a global society it is difficult to reach a majority.

The general feminist critique of mass media is that it reflects social reality in their messages. This can cause a view of mass media socialising the receiver into accepting, believing and enacting the established social values. Mass media and those who control them emerge as allies of the established power and order, and thus as adversaries of forces

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[12] Ceulemans, Marie José. "Women and Mass Media : a Feminist Perspective : a Review of the Research to Date on the Image and Status of Women in American Mass Media." p.106
[13] Ceulemans, Marie José. "*Ibid*." p.106
[14] Ceulemans, Marie José. "*Ibid*." p.107
[15] Ceulemans, Marie José. "*Ibid*." p.111

for social change, including the women's liberation movement.[16] In this critique, mass media is seen as an evil that inhibits change to happen as it is a tool for those in power to push for their agenda. Willis would argue that this internalisation does not happen, but that women make rational decisions as a result of commercials and economic society due to self-interest. This self-interest would also be argued for in cases that might not directly involve a rational choice of a woman, but it might indirectly help her to exist within her framework. For example, it might make a woman's life easier if she has cosmetic surgery as it will reduce her insecurity of her body. Some could say that she is catering to the male gaze and patriarchy, but it would still be her choice that could also contribute to her well-being (even if it would not even be necessary if patriarchy did not exist, but that is not reality).

1.1.2 John Stuart Mill

John Stuart Mill says that "we are naturally inclined to desire pleasure, and such desires strike us as reasonable and as being desire-worthy."[17] Mill says that we can know about things, and make choices, based on how the external world appears to us.

> We know of objects in the world only to the extent that they affect us and give rise
> to conscious impressions—and such impressions will only ever be presented by
> way of the mediating sense faculties. Mill claims that we cannot know anything of
> objects in themselves, but only as they appear to us, and terms this position the
> "Relativity of Human Knowledge" (Examination, IX: 4).[18]

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[16] Ceulemans, Marie José. "Women and Mass Media : a Feminist Perspective : a Review of the Research to Date on the Image and Status of Women in American Mass Media." p.491
[17] Macleod, Christopher. "John Stuart Mill", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (*Summer 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/mill/>.
[18] Macleod, Christopher. *"Ibid."*

This quote says we can only have knowledge of our external world when the world affects us and leaves in us conscious impressions. As specified by Macleod Christopher, this means "impressions will only ever be presented by way of the mediating sense faculties. Mill claims that we cannot know anything of objects in themselves, but only as they appear to us."[19] This would then seem, that we view the world from how it expresses itself onto us and that the consequences of our actions and choices are ours to carry, but according to Mill, we are actively choosing the course of events. When talking about having subjective knowledge about things as they appear to us, this knowledge is no longer limited as technology and the internet can make the entirety of the world appear to us.

People are cultivated by the mass media when they come to learn from them the lessons on interacting with each other in a society, which shows, as remarked by Gaye Tuchman, societies "must pass on their social heritage from one generation to the next."[20] The dominant values are passed down through mass media as a necessary social need. Mass media has the potential to affect our lives dramatically. A question we should ask ourselves: how free are we in our choices regarding what the media are telling us? Do we have to follow what they claim? Can we resist?

Mill recognised that "individuals and their actions are influenced by the social, cultural and moral frame inside which they operate."[21] In Michel Zouboulakis's reading of Mill, through complex social phenomena (which are produced by an intermixture of causes), every type of human affairs depends on their own specific causes; psychological, cultural, economic components can all be included into "causes". [22] Zouboulakis considers "disturbing"

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[19] Macleod, Christopher. "John Stuart Mill"

[20] Tuchman, Gaye. "Introduction: The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by the Mass Media." In *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media* , ed. Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan Daniels, and James Benet, 3-38. New York: Oxford University Press. (1978) p.3

[21] Zouboulakis, Michel S. "On the Social Nature of Rationality in Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill." *Cahiers D'économie Politique (Amiens)* Vol. 49, no. 2 (2005). https://doi.org/10.3917/cep.049.0051. p.55

[22] Zouboulakis, Michel S. "*Ibid*." p.55

economic causes (as Mill calls them) to include the "aversion to labour", and the "desire of the present enjoyment of costly indulgences."[23]

We can no longer deny the big role technology and the internet play in our lives and thus it might very well be possible that we can never go back to how life was before. People must learn to consider the benefits in proper perspective and to gain mastery over its potential. People have to learn to set boundaries to technology which technology itself cannot set.[24] Technology is no longer just industrial machinery needed for material goods or electric media of communication. Technology now includes all forms of social, political, even cultural and religious organised life, which are being administered by a variety of mental as well as physical schemes.[25] It includes techniques used in government, education, information services, in the administration of justice, organisation of religious institutions, and nearly every other social form, extending to individual interrelations.[26]

For innate rationalism, the course that the internet is taking right now, consists of two things: 1) people actively making choices and participating (willing and rationally) in the internet and 2) the consequences happening within the internet and the effects the internet has on society as a result of these rational decisions and willingness to continue. So, in opposition to the position of totalisation of the internet (which we will discuss in the following subchapter 1.2), innate rationalists would argue that no matter how far the internet develops, humans will always have control over the internet and have control over the course that the internet develops in.

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[23] Zouboulakis, Michel S. "*Ibid.*" p.56
[24] Kohanski, Alexander Sissel. *Philosophy and Technology : Toward a New Orientation in Modern Thinking. (*New York, N.Y.: Philosophical Library, 1977.) p.178
[25] Kohanski, Alexander Sissel. "*Ibid.*" p.178
[26] Kohanski, Alexander Sissel. "*Ibid.*" p.178

1.2 Totalisation of modern technology

1.2.1 Definitions of totalisation

In order to understand what is meant by totalisation of the internet, this thesis turns to Martin Heidegger and the three salient features of technology as detailed in his "The Question Concerning Technology." As summarised by Future Learn, these three are[27]:

1. Technology is "not an instrument", but a way of understanding the world (a philosophy so to say);

2. Technology is "not a human activity", but develops beyond human control;

3. Technology is the "highest danger", putting us at risk of only having a technological way of thinking.

    For Heidegger, totalisation is a way of defining and understanding the world. Modern technology will not allow us any other form of human thinking and it will reach a point where it will no longer be in our control. There will no longer be other conceptualisations of the world as technology is the new *ratio.*

1.2.2. Karl Marx

Karl Marx says that in the age of modern industry, man has become a slave to his forces of production or a mere accessory to the machine which he has produced.[28] According to Marx, there are three suppositions of the existence of individuals as producers of the material means of life.[29]

1. Individual man is a category of the mode of production and this mode is coeval with human history;

2. Individual man, as he produces the material means of life and as he reproduces himself, of necessity enters into relationships with other individuals and establishes

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[27] https://www.futurelearn.com/info/courses/philosophy-of-technology/0/steps/26315

[28] Kohanski, Alexander Sissel. *Philosophy and Technology : Toward a New Orientation in Modern Thinking.* p.47

[29] Kohanski, Alexander Sissel. "*Ibid.*" p.50

the kind of communication that is determined by the forces of production available at a given period in the history of production;

3. Division of labour, which is determined by the social forces of production, leads to different forms of possession of property in different social orders, like tribal, state, or feudal, and finally the capitalist order.

> Marx postulates that the division of labour has undermined two major human interests, namely, freedom of the individual and the quality of his labour-power. Since his very beginnings as a producer of the means of life individual man entered into social relations with other individuals, which forced him to give up his freedom and become progressively enslaved in this relationship, as his modes of production advanced from one stage to another.[30]

According to him, what makes us human all relates to our social relations we have with other people. Marx distinguished men from animals by their corporeal organisation as it determines their mode of production of the means of life.[31] Consciousness and speech are necessary for communication and the reason why that is so important, is because it is necessary for production. Technology and machinery do not come from one person alone, and the same goes for production, it is a joint effort. Beasts do not have relationships with others nor do they produce any means of life. Humans fulfil themselves via their creations. Which can be beautiful when looking at culture and tradition. However, due to modernity and technology, we are at risk of becoming slaves to our creations. It totalises us when it goes beyond our control. The advancement in machines and tools that are used for the production of the material means of life together with the concomitant changes in social relations of production have dehumanised the individual labourer.[32] The fault of this totalising issue,

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[30] Kohanski, Alexander Sissel. *Philosophy and Technology : Toward a New Orientation in Modern Thinking.* p.51
[31] Kohanski, Alexander Sissel. "*Ibid.*" p.50
[32] Kohanski, Alexander Sissel. "*Ibid.*" p.52

according to Marx, is the division of labour.[33] Man becomes identified with the automated electric medium.[34]

Herbert Marcuse's theory is similar to that of Marx. Marcuse says that people's needs, regardless of its quality as true or false, furnish an objective condition for satisfying artificially created standards.[35] However, as we have seen before, such standards are dependent on society to form, as it creates an approved narrative that the people will eventually come to see as their own. Marcuse says that "the question of what true and false needs are, must be answered by the individuals themselves, but only if and when they are free to give their own answer."[36] This is not possible as long as their subjectivity and agency become jeopardised by manipulation. Advanced industrial society wants to effectively suffocate the needs of the people that demand liberation.[37] Individuals will "identify themselves with the existence which is imposed upon them and have in it their own development and satisfaction."[38] The subject alienates its own existence and further becomes consumed in this process as a one-dimensional being. This "false consciousness" of their rationality (being formed by industrial societies) becomes the true consciousness.[39] To exercise further control, the state can control which needs are being met, oftentimes creating one happy individual at the expense and misery of others as the price of his satisfaction.[40] We will later see that this conforms with the top-down notion of power that is prevalent within Japanese society.

If we are to believe the theory of Marx and Marcuse of the totalisation of technology and the hold it has on people, together with the values we continue to see in Japanese society, it could form an echo chamber of ideologies that reinforce each other making change within individuals and the system even harder to achieve.

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[33] Kohanski, Alexander Sissel. *Philosophy and Technology : Toward a New Orientation in Modern Thinking.* p.53
[34] Kohanski, Alexander Sissel. "*Ibid.*" p.72
[35] Marcuse, Herbert. *One Dimensional Man; Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society.* (Boston :Beacon Press, 1964.) p.8
[36] Marcuse, Herbert. *"Ibid."* p.8
[37] Marcuse, Herbert. "*Ibid.*" p.9
[38] Marcuse, Herbert. "*Ibid.*" p.13
[39] Marcuse, Herbert. "*Ibid.*" p.13
[40] Marcuse, Herbert. "*Ibid.*" p.7

1.2.3. Patricia Hill Collins

Patricia Hill Collins argues for the existence of a totalising attitude by the means of women identifying themselves with the false consciousness, in this context, the images of women. She introduced the concept of "controlling images". What she means by that is that society (and nowadays the internet) can create and reinforce certain stereotypes about (certain groups of) women.[41] These controlling images stigmatise women and force them into certain stereotypes, think for example about the jezebel, the bitch, the mammy, and the recently popularised "Karen". Collins gives multiple characteristics of these controlling images. One is most profound also within the totalising attitude of the internet. Namely: the overarching purpose of controlling images lies in normalising and naturalising social hierarchies within a given social context.[42] When looking at these controlling images from an interactional view, it brings about power-relations as it creates and re-creates one's own subjectivities in relation to others within intersecting power relations.[43]

1.2.4. The internet becoming its own entity

I argue that at this point of modernisation, the development of technology has become its own entity. It has become a body that plays a big part within society that we can no longer turn our back towards. I also argue that this either/or attitude toward humans and technology does not suffice as a methodological sphere on groups of people. This either/or approach either attributes innate rationality to people, or it does not, meaning that people will eventually lose control. The picture is more complicated than this and needs more nuance. I argue that the identity of an individual is the accumulation of everything that individual has experienced or done. The person you are is a result of the life you have lived or experienced. I do not believe that one can define themselves completely. One does have influence about the person they are, plus responsibility for one's actions. By merely being a subject within society

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[41] Collins, Patricia Hill. "Controlling Images," in *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology*. edited by Weiss, Gail, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon. 2020. p.77
[42] Collins, Patricia Hill. "*Ibid*." p.78
[43] Collins, Patricia Hill. "*Ibid*." p.81

you are also being acted upon, not just an actor. Therefore, when talking about the possible coexistence of people with technology (in this case, the internet), we also need to include the nuance of society. To understand the general morals and values of a society one needs to turn to its history and culture as each society with its people is unique. Japanese society is not the same as Dutch society. Exactly because of this we need a middle way of this dichotomy.

The 'entity' of the internet knows two faces. One face is global, meaning that global social-norms are enforced. This enforcing can happen in the form of claims of desirability, wealth, success, etc. It paints a picture that certain behaviours or acts will lead to those things. Which can make a lasting impression on the consumers. I believe that the global social-norms that are currently being reinforced by the internet (especially social media) largely comes from American influences. The other face of the internet is more diverse and nationalistic. The internet has infiltrated within every sphere of society, but that does not mean that it excludes people from each other. Society still has influence and power to exert over others. Social media being a part of society, is a part of culture. Culture is dependent on a country or a people. The internet also spreads social norms that are more bound to a certain country. For example, beauty norms can be spread globally, but also nationally. For example, a small forehead for women is not only seen as a beauty ideal in the West, but also in Asia. Tanned skin is a beauty ideal that is only accepted in the West, while in Asia the beauty ideal remains pale skin as this has been determined within tradition centuries ago.

The internet seems to paint a picture of "the woman", that is not necessarily closely related to actual women. This fantasy image is an ideal that comes from the media, but is it realistic to expect from real women? Women portrayed in the media are often monolithic; they fall under one category and do not have diversity or multiple aspects nor spheres or roles in their lives. Oftentimes in this monolithic idea, a woman can be one of two things often called the Madonna/whore complex (sometimes called the mother/whore complex). A "woman" is a mother or a whore; it is impossible for a woman to be a complex human being

who happens to be a daughter, mother, colleague, sexual partner, and friend, depending on whom you are asking.

Humans are the producers of the media. Does this mean that we always have control over it no matter how far it develops? We have entered an age where we are dependent on media, not just for work purposes or the creation of material means of life, but also for our pleasure and free time. However, when talking about media as a form of communicating information, it can be censored as it is state controlled, which begs the question once again, are we in control over it?

1.3 The need for nuance: why this scholarship falls short

1.3.1. Historical socio-cultural systems

Charles Wright Mills assumes that "human nature is formed by the interaction of historical and social structure."[44] Human beings, according to Mills, "cannot be understood apart from the social and historical structures in which they are formed and in which they interact."[45] Through the socialisation process, certain parts of human character are liberated or repressed.[46] Meaning, that certain characteristics are repressed or liberated when people grow up with the internet and the possibility of endless information resources. Indeed, "historical transformations within societies also affect the predominant character of human beings, their values, ideologies, beliefs and expectations, and also their very character."[47] It thus becomes clear that, outside the larger socio-historical context of a culture where humans navigate life and interact with each other, it is impossible to understand a person[48] So, why would it be different when talking about human agency with regards to technology?

1.3.2. Western focus

The reason why this scholarship of technology falls short is because it does not take into enough consideration a society's history, culture, and traditions, that, as Mills argues, play a part in human nature. As we have seen with John Stuart Mill, his theory on innate rationality does argue for the influence of social, cultural, and moral aspects. However, as with the majority of philosophy, his theory focuses on the West. The way that society interacts with modernisation, technology, and the internet relies on the way that society deals with the development of modernisation. The views of social influences are different per culture and country. The existing literature does not go into depth regarding certain societies and their

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[44] Elwell, Frank, W. *The Sociology of C. Wright Mills,* 2002. Retrieved May 26th 2022
[45] Elwell, Frank, W. *"Ibid."*
[46] Elwell, Frank, W. "*Ibid*."
[47] Elwell, Frank, W. "*Ibid*."
[48] Elwell, Frank, W. "*Ibid*."

relationship with technology. The internet creates a global society, but that does not suffice with culturally bound societies. Neither does a theory focussed on Western types of societies. More nuance is helpful regarding how women of different societies and countries fight for their rights and how they deal with their struggles, maybe even more in Asian countries as the focus has already been on the West. The way the internet plays a role within this whole activism also differs per society and country.

Modernisation, through which technology came to be, is a complicated story and a different story for every country. To understand a country's (modern) national or social issues, when technology or social media is concerned, it is important to also shine a light on its history because the course of time and history often explain the position a country has taken. Even when considering the internet's penetration in society and other external and international influences, scholars like Myunghee Lee and Amanda Murdie find that "domestic political opportunity structures also play a remarkable role in motivating individual digital feminist activation."[49]

We have now seen the issues people might come across when it comes to modernisation and technology. The rest of the paper will focus on the internet when talking about technology. This thesis will add another nuance to this scholarship: the historical aspect. It will use Japan as an example where we will learn that modernisation is different to all countries due to their history, tradition, and culture. This thesis will show how modernisation happened in Japan with a specific focus on the role and position of women.

In this chapter I have shown multiple philosophers whose theories exist on the opposite ends of the totalisation of technology debate. Ellen Willis and John Stuart Mill argue that we will always have reason and that we always have a choice in our actions and that we are not defined by external things. Marx, Marcuse and Collins would argue for the totalisation of technology because:

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[49] Lee, Myunghee., Murdie, Amanda. "The Global Diffusion of the #MeToo Movement." *Politics & Gender.* Vol. 17, no. 4 (2021): 827–55. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X20000148. p.848

1. The division of labour, since industrialization, goes against the possibility of human autonomy and man became identified with the automated electric medium. (Marx) With the help of technology, the identification of individuals is with their society as a whole. (Marcuse)

2. The internet creates and reinforces controlling images of women that define their existence and embodiment which can lead to harmful practices towards women by others as well as the women themselves. (Collins)

Chapter Two: Contextualising interplay between media control and women's autonomy in a larger framework

In this chapter I will discuss the current situation of the feminist movements in Japan. The first subchapter dives deeper into the traditional values that exist in Japan that are still held onto and how these clash with Japanese "modernisation." Subchapter two dives into the history of Japanese traditionalism. 2.3 talks about how modernisation happened in Japan. Next, "becoming Japan-centric" explains how Japan became a country unlike any other. The fifth subchapter explores women's rights and women's developments within Japan. What struggles and fights are frequently part of Japanese women's lives?

After having explained the existing literature, my contribution is to add to the discussion and the existing push and pull factors that exist within this debate. It is not as simple as discussing the influence and power of technology on human beings, but how human beings, especially women, forming part of a society, handle and interact with technology. Technology, being our creation, is a mirror of ourselves. It is already established that societies are different and thus would all have their own "mirror". To understand the question as to whether the internet aids us or has the power to worsen our oppression, we need to look at a society and its history. The rest of this thesis will focus on Japanese society. It has been widely accepted that the structure of Japanese society is patrilineal. This means that society is based on the descent through the male line. We will see, in subchapter 2.3, that the reason why Japan became nationalistic, is because it had to be. In order to rebuild itself to a glorious nation, it needed this nationalistic attitude to build up society and create a new, united people. It was necessary that, while the men were working, women were at home, taking care of the household, birthing and raising the future generation. This patrilineal context makes it difficult to develop into an attitude of women also being able to

work as its opposite made the rebuilding of a nation possible. So what change will women working bring?

It is undeniable that the internet shapes a narrative and creates a certain type of influenced people. This can happen globally, or nationally via an algorithm, but also via the society and demographic of a certain country. If it happens via a general algorithm, that means a popular culture narrative is being pushed forward on the media consumers. One of the best and latest examples I could give is that of the cancel-culture and the influence of the Kardashians on the beauty ideal. The media pushes this "dogma" on everyone, creating a network of more people agreeing with this and acting in accordance with those dogmas. The media is a form of technology and as Michel Foucault claimed, this is an administrative system and service of social power where people constantly surveille themselves and correct others without the need for punishments, but mainly via shame. It is a part of the microcosm of social control of the wider population via 'biopower'. A body of knowledge and behaviour (i.e. the internet and social media) defines what is normal, acceptable, deviant, etc.[50]

Not only the internet is a body of knowledge and behaviour, but also every single country. Japan is its own body of knowledge and behaviour and can therefore also exert the same type of power over its subjects. This is why the Japanese people can partake in a "global society" via the internet, but will always also be a part of the Japanese society. In the 21st century, women do not only have to fight against the entire structure of society, but now also have to fight with a global-society. As sexist and patriarchal societies often base their beliefs and attitudes on the differences on the sexes, the act of sex also plays a huge part into these attitudes. A woman's sexuality is being weaponised against her, once again, using the Madonna/whore complex. A woman who enjoys sex (or is merely sexually active) is not a virtuous person. As women exist for men to control, the same goes for her sexuality. As detailed by Chang Pilwha, how women are sexualised in a patriarchal society works to

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[50] https://www.powercube.net/other-forms-of-power/foucault-power-is-everywhere/

exacerbate the oppression of women's own sexuality.[51] Taking control over their own

sexuality is an important step for all feminisms, and thus also Japanese feminism.

> [...] "sex has existed as a fundamental means of human subordination", so,
> recovering, with their own hands, their sexual power, which has been stolen from
> them and controlled by the system and by men, is a very important objective for
> women and for the Women's Liberation Movement.[52]

The following part consists of the situation of Japan and its development of

modernisation. Also, the existing model of scholarship will be enriched with the historical

aspect to show and prove how this contributes and improves the existing scholarship.

The country seems to be divided between the push and pull factors. The older

generations (generally) seem to hold onto more tightly to "traditional values" and nationalism

whereas the younger generations embrace the foreign influences more if it means positive

developments for their lives and their happiness. Foreign influences (especially from the

West) can include more individualism and focus on themselves, for example, people

standing up for themselves more and no longer always needing to answer to elders at one's

own expense. Also, another foreign influence that originated from America is the #MeToo

movement. As this thesis focuses on how Japanese women are portrayed and whether the

internet aids this women's development or exacerbate it, the #MeToo movement cases

known in Japan explain clearly all push and pull factors within this debate, to which we will

return later.

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[51] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "MeToo in South Korea and Japan – a Comparative Study of Newspapers' Coverage of the MeToo-Movement in South Korea and Japan." p.8
[52] Mackie, Vera C. *Feminism in Modern Japan : Citizenship, Embodiment and Sexuality.* p.155

2.1 Clash modernisation and traditional values in Japan

In order to express gender equality in a country's own cultural terms, scholars and researchers have turned to Asian feminist theories to explore how it is possible to realize gender equality as that in Western feminism, all the while maintaining, rather than abandoning local cultures.[53] This is tricky as it brings about clashes between modernisation, feminist developments, and patriarchal traditional values of that society. Ide Sachiko, professor at the Japan Women's University and linguist, says that it would be foolish to ignore Western theory and all that fruitful developments it can bring, but at the same time this has to be applied with a degree of sensitivity to the cultural variants that operate within the Japanese context.[54] According to her, adaptation, not adoption of Western theory is what is required.

2.1.1. "Traditions"

Following the Confucian way, women have been held away from the public and have been limited to the "inner sphere" of the house. The same access to self-cultivation through taking important social and organisational positions was not granted to women in comparison to their male counterparts.[55] This was all considered to be part of the "outer sphere" which was a man's place to fulfil. Women could only live their "sexed" lives as mothers and wives, nothing more. Because of this, women were not seen as able to make moral decisions because "a person with no needs cannot have moral thoughts."[56] Any women's issue became a private issue which kept women from speaking up or taking part in the public (and also political) sphere, undermining a woman's need for her own life. In Japan, there is patriarchal separation of gender that has been consolidated in the family system called *ie*. Inger Helene Johnsen Blegeberg stresses that "the role of the 'traditional' *ie*-system in Japan

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[53] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "MeToo in South Korea and Japan – a Comparative Study of Newspapers' Coverage of the MeToo-Movement in South Korea and Japan." p.8
[54] Buckley, Sandra, and Aoki Yayoi. *Broken Silence: Voices of Japanese Feminism*. (Berkeley, CA [etc.]: University of California Press, 1997.) p.43
[55] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "*Ibid.*" p.10
[56] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "*Ibid.*" p.10

is often used as an argument by the conservatives and nationalists against modern and/or global concepts such as feminism."[57] However, feminist scholars Ueno Chizuko and Ochiai Emiko argue that the *ie*-system was reinvented during the Meiji Restoration as an attempt of modernisation, [58] meaning that it was neither old nor traditional. The idea of separating women from men due to their gender was not widely accepted for the common people before mechanisation.[59] Portraying the *ie*-system as an old Japanese tradition ensures the people taking pride in it and arouses a feeling of unity and solidarity.[60]

This is where one of the big differences lies within Western and Japanese feminism. Nowadays, domestic labour has been devalued in North America in such a manner that a woman is looked at as weird if she chooses to be a housewife. In Japan this *okusan* role (role of wife) is revered in society and it is the working woman that has to deal with social stigma.[61] Criteria of North American and European feminism focus on labour-force participation, meaning how many women work. These non-Asian feminism cannot understand how woman can "have a palpable power within the household," saying that it is not real power.[62]Thus, the question boils down to how Asian women can propose their version of feminism as that which is rooted in their own culture and remains meaningful for themselves.[63]

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[57] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "MeToo in South Korea and Japan – a Comparative Study of Newspapers' Coverage of the MeToo-Movement in South Korea and Japan." p.10
[58] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "*Ibid.*" p.8
[59] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "*Ibid.*" p.10
[60] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "*Ibid.*" p.10
[61] Buckley, Sandra, and Aoki Yayoi. *Broken Silence : Voices of Japanese Feminism.* p.47
[62] Buckley, Sandra, and Aoki Yayoi. "*Ibid.*" p.278
[63] Buckley, Sandra, and Aoki Yayoi. "*Ibid.*" p.278

2.2 History of Japanese traditionalism

2.2.1. Confucianism and its (patrilineal) influences

Many of Japan's traditional values stem from Confucianism, since Japanese Confucianism is an integral part of the institutionalisation of a Japanese state.[64] As underscored by Kiri Paramore, Japan utilised Confucian universalism to make a case for its cultural superiority and military domination.[65]

> Culture and civilization in the Confucian sense, therefore, and indeed the idea of harmony, were thereby rooted in a brutal politics of submission that, on the one hand, transcended (or did not imagine) ethnicity, but, on the other hand, institutionalised and legitimised as never before set relations of clan, class, and state power and the violence inherent therein.[66]

This excerpt above talks about how early Confucian culture in early Japan was one of institutionalised forms of clan, class and state power. We still see this in the 21st century where class and state power, when hierarchy is concerned, plays a big part in daily Japanese culture.

As we have already seen with the *ie*-system, Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism rely heavily on patrilineal values. That is to say, men are supposed to preside over women, just as "heaven is above the earth, and the head is above the body."[67] This status asymmetry involves "female inferiority, subordination, and vulnerability that all tie in with jural patricentricity in property ownership, household headship, and succession."[68] These attitudes are also visible within Japanese mass media. Aoki Yayoi, independent scholar and

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[64] Paramore, Kiri. "Confucianism as Cultural Capital (Mid-First Millennium CE–Late Sixteenth Century CE)." In *Japanese Confucianism: A Cultural History,* 16–40. New Approaches to Asian History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. doi:10.1017/CBO9781107415935.004. p.16
[65] Paramore, Kiri. "*Ibid.*" p.22
[66] Paramore, Kiri. "*Ibid.*" p.23
[67] Slote, Walter H., De Vos, George A. *Confucianism and the Family*. SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture. (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press. 1998.) p.211
[68] Slote, Walter H., De Vos, George A. "*Ibid.*"p.211

critic, believes that "over time women internalise elements delivered to them via the media."[69] These media images work to strengthen the aestheticization and glorification of femininity, where ideologies are re-expressed in aesthetic terms and instilled as the natural in a society. She says that "Japanese consumers are naive in relation to the media and that there is an absurd level of trust in anything seen or heard on television."[70]

Miya Yoshiko, freelance writer and critic, argues that the collapse of sex, sexuality, and gender into one another is an effective traditional technique for the containment of women's bodies and female desire within the dominant ideological construction of "the feminine."[71] Whereas there has been adequate focus in Anglo-American and European feminist theory in the 1980s to clarify the differences between sex, sexuality, and gender.[72]

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[69] Buckley, Sandra, and Aoki Yayoi. *Broken Silence : Voices of Japanese Feminism.* p.14
[70] Buckley, Sandra, and Aoki Yayoi. "*Ibid.*" p.14
[71] Buckley, Sandra, and Aoki Yayoi. "*Ibid.*" p.156
[72] Buckley, Sandra, and Aoki Yayoi. "*Ibid.*" p.162

2.3 Development of modernisation

2.3.1. Meiji Restoration

The Meiji Period, when Japan quickly modernised itself, lasted from 1868 to 1912 CE. It was during the beginning of the era that an important document was signed called the Meiji Imperial Rescript on Education, which states that Confucianism is to be the centre of moral education.[73] The Japanese people, according to the Meiji Constitution of 1890, are granted rights and duties by the Emperor of which they are deemed as subjects.[74] Women, as subjecthood was also gendered, were not mere subjects of the emperor, but also subjects of their husbands. The rights ascribed to female subjects differ from male subjects as Article 5 of the Public Peace Police Law of 1900 states that women are not to attend political meetings, speak of political matters in public, nor are they allowed to join political organisations.[75]

> As women's groups came to consider the intersections of gender, class, ethnicity and "race" in the political economy of the East Asian region, they also gradually confronted the histories of such differences, and their own imbrication in these histories.[76]

It is widely acknowledged in the scholarship that feminist movements in Japan welcomed its first wave towards the end of the nineteenth century.[77] At that time during the Meiji Period, many parents would give up their teenage daughters into prostitution when they could not pay for debts. This practice was criticised and refuted by groups of Christian women because they considered it to be against human rights. Their protests against such practice gradually animated the suffrage movements in Japan.

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[73] Slote, Walter H., De Vos, George A. *Confucianism and the Family*. p.114
[74] Mackie, Vera C. *Feminism in Modern Japan : Citizenship, Embodiment and Sexuality.* p.5
[75] Mackie, Vera C. "*Ibid*.".5
[76] Mackie, Vera C. "*Ibid*." p.197
[77] Buckley, Sandra, and Aoki Yayoi. *Broken Silence : Voices of Japanese Feminism.* p.11

2.3.2. Culture and historical discourse

Robert Bellah believes that "there is a cultural system which is for certain purposes analytically distinct from the social system."[78] He believes that "social action itself is determined not just by structures of economic, political, and social relationships, but also by structures of social values."[79] These values are what society understands as being good. He also says that "this is the system of social values which exists in any society, and creates a set of possibilities and impossibilities for social action in that society."[80] Religion, to the extent that it is involved in everyday life's values, also becomes relevant. According to Bellah, the set of Japanese values that are still predominant in Japanese society can be traced all the way back to the Edo period (1603-1868), with some key values that can be dated as early as the Kamakura period (1185-1333).[81]

Japan became nationalistic during the Meiji modernisation as the mandate of nation-making. The leaders at that time strove to ensure the safety of the nation and the people. This meant a struggle against constant threats of foreign invasion, domestic rivalries, and resistance of traditional groups.[82] Various groups were destroyed in the midst of drastic shift in economy and social status, which the Meiji leaders wanted to prevent from happening to them. So far, despite multiple oppositions, none of them have questioned the system as-is.

It thus explains why Japanese society maintains its "feudal remnants."[83] This is not to be confused with the European feudal system. For Japanese society, value comes from the group or the collective instead of the individual. The group is called *kyōdōtai* [literally, cooperative body] is the origin of value.[84] Also, the structure of reality is shaped by these groups, both secular and religious, because according to Bellah, Japan is both.[85] Lastly, the

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[78] Bellah, Roberti N. "Traditional Values and the modernization of Japan." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 1962. https://doi.org/10.18874/jjrs.crj.3.3.1962.. p.207
[79] Bellah, Roberti N. "*Ibid.*" p.208
[80] Bellah, Roberti N. "*Ibid.*" p.208
[81] Bellah, Roberti N. "*Ibid.*" p.209
[82] Bellah, Roberti N. "*Ibid.*" p.216
[83] Bellah, Roberti N. "*Ibid.*" p.211
[84] Bellah, Roberti N. "*Ibid.*" p.211
[85] Bellah, Roberti N. *"Traditional Values and the modernization of Japan."* p.211

realisation of value of the group is also being contributed by religion, science, ethics, and philosophy.[86]

It even has been said that there is no need for an ethical code, but group obligations.[87] As such, the Japanese are obliged to conform to loyalty to the group and filial piety to the senior. There are two main reasons why Japanese modernisation has been successful, according to Bellah. Firstly, "it provided a discipline group structure on which a modern state could be erected, which could direct and control the modernization process."[88] Also, this structure "provided the energy for labour necessary in a modern economy."[89]

Masao Maruyama says that calling it "feudalistic" is an oversimplification.[90] Japanese sectionalism, however, is a structure where everything is judged according to the vertical connection and closeness to the Emperor, which is a more active and aggressive type than what is associated with feudalism.[91] This hierarchy is a top-down model of power where oppression flows from superior to inferior with no possibility of it flowing the other way.[92] This model of power, according to Fukuzawa Yukichi, is the "result of attaching too great importance to power which has been the rule in human intercourse in Japan ever since the beginning."[93]

> [The Japanese] make a clear distinction between the moral codes that apply to
> people above and to people below, and an equally clear distinction in the field of
> rights and duties. As a result every individual is in one capacity the victim of
> coercion, while in another capacity he metes out coercion to his follow-men. He
> both suffers and perpetrates oppression; in one direction he yields, in another he

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[86] Bellah, Roberti N. "*Ibid.*" p.212
[87] Bellah, Roberti N. "*Ibid.*" p.212
[88] Bellah, Roberti N. "*Ibid.*" p.213
[89] Bellah, Roberti N. "*Ibid.*" p.213
[90] Morris, and Morris, Ivan. "1. Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism." In *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics.* Expanded ed.[, reiss.]. (Tokyo [etc.]: Oxford University Press, 1979.) p.15
[91] Morris, and Morris, Ivan. "*Ibid.*" p.15
[92] Morris, and Morris, Ivan. "*Ibid.*" p.18
[93] Morris, and Morris, Ivan. "*Ibid.*" p.18

> boats… Today's joy compensates for yesterday's shame, and thus dissatisfaction is evened out…[94]

As suggested in this quote, acceptable behaviour in public, as well as the social discourse related to it, is largely determined by existent norms of the Japanese society.[95]

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[94] Morris, and Morris, Ivan. *"1. Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism."* p.18

[95] Alexander, James R., "Obscenity, Pornography, and Law in Japan: Reconsidering Oshima's 'In the Realm of the Senses'". *Asian-Pacific Law & Policy Journal,* vol. 4, (April 17, 2012) p.162

2.4 Becoming "Japan-centric"

Since colonisation, Japan has developed to become its own country again. It no longer wants to be Eurocentric, nor Sinocentric. Japan has created the goal of becoming one country and one people.

There has been debate within existing scholarship about whether or not Japan has a "shame-culture". Ruth Benedict would say yes, because:

> True shame cultures rely on external sanctions for good behaviour, not, as true
> guilt cultures do, on an internalised conviction of sin. Shame is a reaction to other
> people's criticism.[96]

James Sack disagrees with Benedict because for him, there exist only societies that tend to emphasise shame or guilt over the other. Both of these are found in Japanese, but also in American culture.[97] Takie Sugiyama Lebra agrees with Benedict on the way in which the shame culture is salient in Japan.[98]

> Shame is pervasive partly because in Japan, unlike culturally and ethnically
> diverse societies such as the United States, has its cultural norms well defined so
> that their violations are readily recognized, and partly because the Japanese
> individual is more surrounded by significant audiences to whom his action is
> exposed.[99]

Within Japanese society, social relationships are of the utmost importance. The world of a Japanese person is divided into three categories of seniors (*sempai*), juniors (*kohai*), and "one's colleagues within the same rank" (*doryo*).[100] Once established, these

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[96] Sack, James. "Shame in Japan." テオロギア・ディアコニア = *Theologia Diakonia 37* (2004): p.111
[97] Sack, James. "*Ibid*." p.112
[98] Lebra, Takie Sugiyama. "Shame and Guilt: A Psychocultural View of the Japanese Self." *Ethos: Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology.* Vol. 11, no. 3. (1983) p.193
[99] Lebra, Takie Sugiyama. "*Ibid*." p.193
[100] Sack, James. "Shame in Japan." p.113

relationships will remain unchanged for a lifetime. This seeps through even in the Japanese language, where it becomes nearly impossible to talk anything else but honorific towards a senior. There is a difference in women's and men's language. Women remain subordinated to their male counterparts, which makes women's societal status lower and requires women to embody such inferiority in their use of language on formal occasions.[101] Kōra Rumiko, poet and critic, says that language and experience were incompatible to her.[102] Her struggle was to find ways of playing with language to fit it to her, instead of fitting herself to language. How people in Japan come to communicate and converse with one another has to follow *awase*, as a style that expects the speaker to change her words in accordance with her listener's response.[103]

> With group-consciousness so highly developed there is almost no social life
> outside the particular group which an individual's major economic life depends. The
> individual's every problem must be solved within the frame.[104]

The sense of self in Japan characterises itself from Western understanding of the "self". Whereas in the West, the self is understood as individualistic and extremely personal to everyone. However, in Japan, it is best understood as the we-self (coined by Al Collins and Prakash Desai).[105] Throughout history, Japanese education placed a great emphasis on emptying oneself for serving others.

> Books of shingaku (popular ethics), which taught a philosophy of life to the masses
> of the Tokugawa period, always encouraged the people to have no self. The
> purport of the term is not to act as one pleased, forgetting who one is, but to serve
> one's superiors dutifully.... Whether one realises it or not, the concept of no self is

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[101] Buckley, Sandra, and Aoki Yayoi. *Broken Silence : Voices of Japanese Feminism.* p.49
[102] Buckley, Sandra, and Aoki Yayoi. "*Ibid.*" p.115
[103] Lunsing, Wim Marinus. *Beyond Common Sense : Sexuality and Gender in Contemporary Japan.* p.222
[104] Sack, James. "Shame in Japan." p.113
[105] Sack, James. "*Ibid.*" p.116

identical with the spirit of service above self, where every spontaneous impulse is

rejected as selfishness.[106]

This idea of *no-self* being that is being discussed in the quote above, is still

prominent in modern Japan. There is a big push for performance expectation within

institutions such as education and work. Japanese people will present a false self or an

image to the rest of the world, accommodating themselves to the expectation of the people

around them. Lebra postulates the inner self from which everyday behaviour is organised.

This inner self takes priority over the interactional self. She also proposes the importance of

muga, the non-self, which is a pre-reflective raw nature. This is related to the Buddhist

anatman.[107]

It is often said that Japanese lack a sense of individualism, self-identity, or the

concept of self, implying that one's decision is heavily affected or colored by

considerations of how others socially around him might feel about his decision and

its consequences. Decisions a Japanese man makes are affected by these

considerations because his anticipation of how the others will feel in turn affects his

own emotional state of mind. Thus an ethical decision tends not to be made strictly

on the basis of abstract or universalistic principles, but rather on the basis of his

anticipation of the feelings of others.[108]

In contemporary Japan, changes are happening regarding themselves together with

other social changes. The youth of contemporary Japan might find themselves under greater

tension to find a balance between the individuals they are and the "need to accommodate

themselves to the social environment."[109] Considering how the Japanese society strongly

values peace and harmony, people born and raised in this society have learnt to be mindful

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[106] Sack, James. "Shame in Japan." p.119
[107] Lunsing, Wim Marinus. *Beyond Common Sense : Sexuality and Gender in Contemporary Japan.* p.19
[108] Sack, James. "Shame in Japan." p.114
[109] Sack, James. "*Ibid*." p.121

of others' reactions and opinions. The self is mainly relational, as constantly defined through

in relation to significant others such as a person or a group.[110] However, there still remain

so-called, interactional concepts that include this personal-outer dichotomy. Japanese people

are said to demarcate their *tatemae* (face) behaviour from their *honne* (real feelings).[111]

There are contexts where their showing of *tatemae* and showing of *honne* roughly overlap

with *soto* (outside) and *uchi* (inside) contexts.[112] The Japanese people, according to Lunsing,

are also taught from a young age to distinguish between these situations, depending on what

type of behaviour is appropriate in a given context. This ability, called *kejime*, is seen as an

essential part to the maintenance of Japanese social order.[113] Many of such pressures are

used to "save face" with the rest of the community.[114] Saving face (avoiding humiliation and/or

avoiding others losing respect for you) is a big motivator for people within Japanese society;

avoiding situations that cause shame.

Lebra continues his article by proposing another factor of the pervasiveness of

shame. He calls it "the exposure sensitivity of the outer self."[115] Westerners seem to be

sensitive to "embarrassment" which is a more surface-level type of shame that does not

affect the person further than the outermost layer of the self.[116] When a person feels

embarrassed, it is because of an action of that person, not a person's whole personality and

being. This is different for Japanese people. *Haji* is a term both ascribed to embarrassment

and shame.[117] This exposed sensitivity, according to Lebra, is culturally bound.[118] The

Japanese people feel ashamed because of their exposure "to the concentrated attention or

"gaze" of others, whether it is malevolent or benevolent."[119] This Japanese type of shame

hinders self-expression and can lead a person to turn inwards because of fear of the

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[110] Sack, James. "Shame in Japan." p.125
[111] Lunsing, Wim Marinus. *Beyond Common Sense : Sexuality and Gender in Contemporary Japan.* p. 17
[112] Lunsing, Wim Marinus."*Ibid.*" p.17
[113] Lunsing, Wim Marinus."*Ibid.*" p.17.
[114] Sack, James. "Shame in Japan." p.116
[115] Lebra, Takie Sugiyama. "Shame and Guilt: A Psychocultural View of the Japanese Self." p.193
[116] Lebra, Takie Sugiyama. "*Ibid.*" p.194
[117] Lebra, Takie Sugiyama. "*Ibid.*" p.194
[118] Lebra, Takie Sugiyama. "*Ibid.*" p.194
[119] Lebra, Takie Sugiyama. "*Ibid.*" p.194

judgement by others in combination with the desire for acting and behaving formally and flawlessly.[120]

> What adversity one encounters, one should reflect upon oneself in search for one's own wrongdoing.[121]

Guilt is tied to self-reflection, because guilt is allocentric and reflects concern with others. When one feels guilt, she feels so because she did or did not do something that negatively influences her group. That action says something about her as a person.

The internet is a magnificent way of communicating all across the world no matter their geographical location. Together with English being spoken by the majority of people, or via a translation function, language is no longer a limiting factor. It can be used to educate oneself by coming in contact with other people from a different framework and learn more about other countries, cultures, traditions, people, etc. However, the internet can also be used for less good purposes. For example, to spread racist propaganda, like conservative Japanese movement (Action Conservative Movement) does.[122] In the advent of the 21st century, the xenophobic discourse comes to surge conspicuously on the internet. Tomomi Yamaguchi argues that in Japan the use of the internet by the Left has been much less visible than that by the Right.[123] Once something is put on the Internet and gains traction, it is impossible to keep it composed and limited. We have come to the point where deleting what one has posted might not definitively remove something from the Internet. Anybody can copy, save, and upload it again, even after the original person who posted it, no longer wanted it published. The online proliferation of the conservative and the right-wing discourse, cannot be ignored as a minor trend or as limited actions by extreme individuals. Surging online nationalism and racism may have an impact on public opinion on those controversial

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[120] Lebra, Takie Sugiyama. "*Ibid.*" p.199
[121] Lebra, Takie Sugiyama. "Shame and Guilt: A Psychocultural View of the Japanese Self." p.203
[122] Tomomi Yamaguchi; "Xenophobia in Action: Ultranationalism, Hate Speech, and the Internet in Japan." *Radical History Review (1* October 2013) Vol. 117.. doi: https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-2210617. p. 110
[123] Tomomi Yamaguchi. "*Ibid.*" p.111

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[124] Tomomi Yamaguchi. "*Ibid*." p.112

2.5 Women's rights and developments

2.5.1. How life equals politics

Life has become a big political playground. Everything is public; there is no longer a private/public distinction, because of modernisation and the internet. People's private lives are now public and for everybody to see. All those people active on social media, talk about their daily lives as if they are the example and people should strive to be like them. Not only is this idea based on presuppositions and a certain social and cultural background. Citizenship is a political status; democratic equality means "the ability to participate on the same terms as others in collectively shaping the conditions of common life."[125] However, this does not seem to be the case in Japan. When looking at the working culture for example, we see different norms and expectations for women on the office floor from their male counterparts. For example, Japanese women in the office are expected to wear heels and make-up. Even though women are now allowed to work at the office just like men, gender norms are still held in place which means that for the time being, there can be no true equality.

Kanazumi Fumiko, who founded the Women's Legal Cooperative, thinks there is a link between the need for recognition of women's sexuality and a wide range of violence, both emotional and physical, in Japanese families.[126] She says that there is something fundamentally wrong in the sense of human relations that is developing among children in contemporary Japanese families. What is missing, according to Fumiko, is any real sense of intimacy, any sense of emotion free of obligation or manipulation. Could this be because of the vertical sense of authority? Fumiko says that the media and the public are too quick to point the finger at inadequate mothers or overly severe schoolteachers.[127]

When talking about victims of sexual violence in Japan, there seems to be a large amount of "victim blaming" for the women. In Japan there exists this perception that victims

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[125] Kaplan, Morris B. *Sexual Justice : Democratic Citizenship and the Politics of Desire.* (New York [etc.]: Routledge. 1997) p.x
[126] Buckley, Sandra, and Aoki Yayoi. *Broken Silence : Voices of Japanese Feminism.* p.77
[127] Buckley, Sandra, and Aoki Yayoi. "*Ibid.*" p.77

are "good" or "bad", based on how they act. They are sometimes even described as "fake" or "real" victims or not "victim enough". This is a way of discrediting; not only is the victim being blamed for being assaulted, but are also made to feel shameful about it.[128] The pressure for victims to be broken, defenceless, vulnerable, powerless, and helpless is deeply ingrained in Japanese culture that without such self-representation, these victims cannot make their stories to be seen as true. This is a harmful practice as it increases humiliation and avoidance regarding infliction of additional trauma when the victims do not fit the picture of "the victim."[129] There are, however, open political systems that encourage political engagement and social movements. This encouragement shows that women's rights are being valued and that women are allowed to express themselves within the political system.[130]

2.5.2. Feminism in Europe and America versus in Japan

Feminist women can mainly be sorted into three groups in accordance with the ways in which they embrace emancipatory and feminist viewpoints.[131] As summarized by Wim Lunsing, the first is that there are women who are "born feminist" or with egalitarian ideas. Since childhood they have "felt disagreement with roles and patterns of behaviour assigned to them."[132] Secondly, experiences like sexual violence or sex discrimination in the workplace are causes for joining the feminist cause. Lastly, it was important to establish contact with other feminist women or organizations.

Within Western feminism, there has been a focus on individualism in Western society and communication about women's struggles happened sooner than in Asia. Because of this

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[128] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "MeToo in South Korea and Japan – a Comparative Study of Newspapers' Coverage of the MeToo-Movement in South Korea and Japan." (2020) p.12
[129] Quan-Haase, Anabel, Kaitlynn Mendes, Dennis Ho, Olivia Lake, Charlotte Nau, and Darryl Pieber. "Mapping #MeToo: A Synthesis Review of Digital Feminist Research Across Social Media Platforms." *New Media & Society.* Vol. 23, no. 6 (2021). https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820984457. p.1713
[130] Lee, Myunghee. Murdie, Amanda. "The Global Diffusion of the #MeToo Movement." Politics & Gender. Vol. 17, no. 4 (2021): 827–55. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X20000148. p.850
[131] Lunsing, Wim Marinus. *Beyond Common Sense : Sexuality and Gender in Contemporary Japan.* p.326
[132] Lunsing, Wim Marinus. "*Ibid*." p.326

Western feminism had a clear voice which is a development we are encountering recently in Asia. Maybe we could say that because of the internet, Japanese women are enforcing change even more because it gives the possibility to speak up that they lack within daily life.

A development we now see in Japan, is women speaking up more. As we have seen, Japanese society is one that focuses on the group instead of the individual. However, the internet, being part of the press, gives every individual the opportunity to express themselves and to give their accounts, opinions, and experiences for the entire world to read.

> Consciousness-raising is advocated as a method for women to "recognise themselves as the victims of sexual discrimination", and to "hack their way through today's conditions - the conservative views which confine women in the conventional sex-roles and which are still spread through any kind of means and media.[133]

A large goal of the internet is to connect people with each other. By posting, for example about discrimination on the work floor, women can share other shared experiences and to support and give strenght to one another. It can show that a person is not alone in the situation she is in, or the feelings she has. The hashtag #私たちは女性差別に怒っていい ("It's okay for us to be angry about discrimination towards women") has blown up on Twitter.[134] The internet can give a sense of solidarity when people are given an adequate stage for their experiences and feelings. This is a technological development that upholds positive social change as it becomes a problem of a larger group, instead of one individual, giving it more importance and urgency. However, as we see positive developments of women's rights via the internet, it completely depends on who wields it.

This rise in digital activism does not mean that Japanese feminism is a recent development. Japanese women have been fighting before that, but the internet makes this activism more accessible.

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[133] Mackie, Vera C. *Feminism in Modern Japan: Citizenship, Embodiment and Sexuality.* p.155
[134] https://savvytokyo.com/4-of-the-most-powerful-to-date-feminist-movements-in-japan/

2.5.3. Japanese women negotiating intersectional forces and speaking up

Japanese women are negotiating these intersectional forces. While the majority of Japanese feminists place the rise of feminism in 1911, Sei Shōnagon (who lives 1000 years before that), who composed the *Pillow Book* (*Makura no Sōshi*), can be understood to be a feminist forerunner.[135] However, these earliest stages of what could be called feminism is in no way comparable with the more recent waves of feminism. Since the first half of the 1970s, women in Japan initiated their liberation movements, under the notable influence of similar moments in the U.S. and other foreign countries.[136] For example groups like Tsukuru Kai and the International Women's Year Action Group managed to use international publicity as a way of putting pressure on the Japanese government and fighting for change.[137] Also, advocates for equal opportunity turned to the Sex Discrimination Act that was implemented in the UK since the end of 1975, and then translated it into Japanese as one of the resources they could use in their campaign.[138]

There is a continuing rise in women's movements in Japan that started in the 20th century and has exponentially increased since modernisation. A few of the movements that have been given large publicity, are the petition against wearing high heels in the office, which has been signed more than 19.000 times,[139] and Ito Shiori speaking up about her alleged rape case (which we will focus on later). We are seeing more and more Japanese women speaking up about their anger about being discriminated against on the work floor, but also in everyday life. Japanese women have been posting on the internet (and thus giving publicity to) what is currently known as the "Tokyo Medical University Scandal." In

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[135] Lunsing, Wim Marinus. *Beyond Common Sense : Sexuality and Gender in Contemporary Japan.* p.19

[136] Lunsing, Wim Marinus. "*Ibid.*" p.21

[137] Mackie, Vera C. *Feminism in Modern Japan: Citizenship, Embodiment and Sexuality.* p.179

[138] Mackie, Vera C. "*Ibid.*" p.180

[139] Weaver, Matthew. *"#KuToo: Japanese women submit anti-high heels petition."* Article on The Guardian. 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/03/women-in-japan-protest-against-having-to-wear-high-heels-to-work-kutoo-yumi-ishikawa

August of 2018, news started to circulate that the Tokyo Medical University admitted to

having purposefully altered university entrance exam scores in an attempt to stop women

enrolling.[140] Tokyo Medical University admitted to wanting less female students because they

expect that women's careers will eventually be cut short due to having children. This

argument given by the university holds that, because women will eventually have kids, the

effort to start a career earlier in her life will be a waste, because she will not work on that

career until retirement, but will quit after a few years once becoming pregnant. So, why

bother? This attitude is discriminatory and sexist as it does not give any agency to the

women themselves about whether or not they want to go through the effort of attaining a

degree. Women are being defined by these sexist attitudes. Political equality can exist only if

women are protected by laws against discrimination on the job market, in the educational

system, as well as in other important socio-economic arenas that allow for exersising civil

rights.[141]

There is also a level of irony in this argument from the University, as it is society who

pushes women to have children. Japanese society holds the belief that women who do not

have multiple children will become a burden on society as they will not contribute enough, as

they call having children a "public service".[142] The once Health Minister of Japan, Hakuo

Yanagisawa (no longer in office), even calls women "birth-giving machines".[143] It is due to

these sexist attitudes that inhibit women from making a career, earning as much as men,

and being respected in the same sense that they do not want to follow them. Men are still

being favoured. Japan holds a proximal attitude when it comes to raising children. Meaning

that the mother's approach to childcare is hand-on. Generally, Japanese mothers have 2

hours a week away from their baby, meaning that they are not physically together.

Co-sleeping, co-bathing, etc, is the norm in Japanese society and babysitters, movie nights

away from babies, and other instances that help mothers to have some self-care, are not

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[140] Larsen, Brooke. "The 4 Most Powerful To Date Feminist Movements In Japan." *Article on Savvy Tokyo*. 2018. https://savvytokyo.com/4-of-the-most-powerful-to-date-feminist-movements-in-japan/
[141] Kaplan, Morris B. "Sexual Justice : Democratic Citizenship and the Politics of Desire." p.x
[142] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/jan/29/japan.justinmccurry
[143] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/jan/29/japan.justinmccurry

well accepted in Japanese society.[144] Also, the mothers are the primary caregivers and often raise the kids alone as the (working) father only provides financially. Women are choosing to have fewer children, to postpone marriage, and to pursue a career.[145] It seems that feministic attitudes about career and postponing children, if not the choice to not have children, are not widely accepted by the general Japanese society as it does not fit the general model of marriage (which still abides by the nuclear family standards) nor does it fit the patriarchal view of work (where the woman is the housewife).

In 1977, Cecchini revealed a spike in suicides among women of marriageable age.[146] The reasons why young women choose to commit suicide are financial. Work is difficult for women as they are often discriminated against during job interviews, or the environment on the work floor is hostile and makes women feel unsafe. Lebra, in 1984, discussed essays where schoolgirls envisioned their future life. These essays would end with a portrayal of wedding as the day when their life as a free woman also comes to a sort of end; one girl was thinking about how committing suicide might be better before having to get married.[147]

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[144] https://socialanxietycounseling.com/japanese-parenting-style/
[145] Kojima, Kazue. "Gender, Family and Fertility: Why Japanese Women Having Fewer Children?" PhD thesis, University of York. (2013) p.2
[146] Lunsing, Wim Marinus. *Beyond Common Sense : Sexuality and Gender in Contemporary Japan.* p.83
[147] Lunsing, Wim Marinus. "*Ibid.*" p.83

2.6 Ultranationalism

2.6.1. Traditionalism and held onto attitudes about women

Within Japanese folklore there are common themes regarding the demonic aspects of female sexuality. A country's folklore is often a mirror to its culture.[148] Women within Japanese folklore often play one of a few roles: the eternal mother, the demon woman, the married woman, the doll-like type of woman, the prostitute (or geisha), the third sex (sexually ambivalent).[149] It has often depicted within Japanese folklores that a female demon uses her sexual charm to seduce men and bring about their destruction.[150] Within the Japanese entertainment media, the exploitation of female sexuality and its violation is a common occurrence while at the same time Japanese society reveres women for their performance of traditional roles.[151]

James R. Alexander says that despite this Japan "still exhibits fairly low levels of violence toward women in real life."[152] However, there remains a huge difference in the number of rapes and reported rapes, meaning that violence against women is still extremely prevalent, yet the levels of reported incidents, are "fairly low".[153] It is often within this media that this violence against women comes in the form of violence against schoolgirls and professional women, i.e. women that do not conform (or are not conforming yet) to the traditional sexed roles of wife and mother who nurtures children, stewards their educations and maintains the household.[154] It seems that these social roles are both shaped by the fantasies of men.[155]

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[148] Bascom, William R. "Four Functions of Folklore." *The Journal of American Folklore.* Vol. 67, no. 266 (1954). https://doi.org/10.2307/536411. p.338

[149] Buruma, Ian. *Behind the Mask : on Sexual Demons, Sacred Mothers, Transvestites, Gangsters, and Other Japanese Cultural Heroes.* p.115

[150] Alexander, James R., "Obscenity, Pornography, and Law in Japan: Reconsidering Oshima's 'In the Realm of the Senses'" p.166

[151] Alexander, James R., "*Ibid*." p.164

[152] Alexander, James R., "*Ibid*." p.164

[153] Itō, Shiori. *Black Box: the Memoir That Sparked Japan's #MeToo Movement.* (First Feminist Press edition. 2021) p.139

[154] Alexander, James R. "Obscenity, Pornography, and Law in Japan: Reconsidering Oshima's 'In the Realm of the Senses." p.164

[155] Buruma, Ian. *Behind the Mask : on Sexual Demons, Sacred Mothers, Transvestites, Gangsters, and Other Japanese Cultural Heroes.* p.xi

Simone de Beauvoir has famously claimed in *The Second Sex* that "one is not born, but educated, to be a woman."[156] This is also a big part of Japanese culture. In practice, the biological nature of the body determines the social expectation on how someone should behave, which explains why Wim Lunsing remarks that in Japan, "those born with a vagina have to behave 'like a woman'."[157] It seems that the most important aspect in a person's life, in patriarchal society, is their sex. The first question people ask to inquire about the birth (or even during pregnancy) of a new baby, is whether it is a boy or a girl. This question carries so much weight because the entire trajectory and future life of that baby is dependent on that question. The different sexes are categorised differently. Men are favoured and treated as complete human beings, yet women cannot enjoy these same principles. Within patriarchal societies, women and children are never seen as fully human the way men are. Not just that, but women encounter a more rigorous categorisation in their lives, because the way others treat her depends on what category she applies to. The way women are being treated depends on whether or not she is sexually active, whether or not she has passed the menopause (thus if she is still fertile or not), whether or not she is married, whether or not she has children, whether or not she wants children. The overarching similarity all these categories have, is that they are imposed on women by men. Women have been defined by men since the start of history, and if she wants to take part in society, she better fit at least one acceptable category as to not fit into the pile of "abnormal women ". It should be kept in mind that even if a woman fits an acceptable category, this will not magically mean that she is deemed as fully human, because she never will.

> According to the masculine consciousness which shapes our understanding of
> sexuality, men are unable to see a woman as an integrated whole who has both
> the emotional quality of gentleness and the sexuality which is the physical
> expression of this gentleness. As far as men are concerned, a woman is split into

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[156] Lunsing, Wim Marinus. *Beyond Common Sense : Sexuality and Gender in Contemporary Japan.* p.9

[157] Lunsing, Wim Marinus. "*Ibid*." p.269

two images - either the expression of maternal love: a "mother", or vessel for the management of lust: a "toilet".[158]

While for men it is okay to play different social roles within his life at the same time (being a father, son, colleague, friend, etc.) women are defined as monolithic non-humans who have to abide by the Madonna/whore complex. The difference between playing multiple social roles (like the ones mentioned in the previous sentence) and the distinctions of *tatemae*, *honne*, and the ability of *kejime*, is that in the latter the individual self is often neglected, while the other has multiple roles of that individual self. The reason for this neglect has to do with cultural influences that have already been discussed previously. Japanese people, just like others from a different cultural, social background, consist of autonomous individuals but cultural limitations make it difficult, or almost impossible, to openly voice personal views.[159] Previously, it was the government and society that implemented these categories and expectations upon people and especially on women, it is thanks to modernisation and the rise of technology that the internet now also plays a big part in this. The internet, being authored by millions of people from across the globe and whose authors all have equal chance of gaining an audience of following, is also implementing these categories and beliefs on women. This makes it even harder for a young woman to navigate life and try to figure out who she is and what her identity is, because the internet also tells her who and what she should be, how she should behave, etc. The internet is just another entity that defines her. It makes resistance more difficult, but not impossible. Because as we have seen, the internet can also play a positive effect on women for the same reasons. They can be authors on the internet, and define themselves with their own agency.

Even if it would be the case that violence against women in media does not increase violence against women in real life, that does not mean that this media portrayal is not

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[158] Mackie, Vera C. *Feminism in Modern Japan : Citizenship, Embodiment and Sexuality.* p.144
[159] Lunsing, Wim Marinus. *Beyond Common Sense : Sexuality and Gender in Contemporary Japan.* p.18

problematic. It remains disrespectful towards women. People have already established the importance of representation within the media. When women consume media, they want to see other women they can look up to. After all, life and growing up, for a huge part, is orientation and imitation. Women do not want to look up to being the next possible victim.

2.6.2. Resistance against foreign influences

Ever since the Meiji Restoration, there has been a resistance against foreign (especially Western) influences. The Japanese people believed that the Western individualism could lead to disturbing consequences.[160] They are cognisant of the potential chaos that could result from suddenly unregulated behaviour. Conservative Japanese people are concerned that their society will become chaotic rather than liberalised. Potential rebellion within Japanese society has always been carefully watched. It was Gloria Steinem who said that feminism is antinationalism because there is only a thin line separating cultural relativism and nationalism.[161] Because, feminist issues are human right issues.

Since the internet, this form of nationalism has been rising in popularity. The term ultranationalism has been explained in detail by Masao Maruyama in his book *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics.* According to him, ultranationalism "succeeded in spreading a many-layered, invisible net over the Japanese people" that still has a grip on them now.[162] His explanation includes a comparison to European nationalism. According to Carl Schmitt, a characteristic of a modern European nation-state is adopting "a neutral position on internal values" (what justice and truth are); it leaves room for "judgement of all values of this sort to special groups or the conscience of the individual. The basis of national sovereignty is a formal legal structure that stands separate from everything regarding internal value."[163] After the Meiji Period and especially towards the end of the Taisho period, the nationalist control in Japan remains on internal values, not on authority from external

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[160] Slote, Walter H., De Vos, George A. *Confucianism and the Family*. p.115
[161] Buckley, Sandra, and Aoki Yayoi. *Broken Silence : Voices of Japanese Feminism.* p.169
[162] Morris, and Morris, Ivan. "1. Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism." p.1
[163] Morris, and Morris, Ivan. "1. Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism." p.3

laws, to be contrasted with its European counterparts. It is all about exercising power via a subject's "private life", as indicated by the following passage from *The Way of the Subject (Shinmin no michi (臣民の道) 1941):*

> As such, it has a public significance, in that each so-called private action is carried out by the subject as part of his humble efforts to assist the Throne… Thus we must never forget that even in our personal lives we are joined to the Emperor and must be moved by the desire to serve our country.[164]

This passage shows that people live their lives serving their country, meaning that private interests always infiltrate into national concerns. Morality has been identified with power and this means that inner morality was seen as "impotent", meaning that it does not have the strength to move other people (neither ethics nor ideals have ever claimed to possess).[165]

This chapter showed what the "traditional" Japanese values are, how they came to be and the development through the Meiji Restoration. Confucianism became the leading tradition in early Japanese history, and the Meiji Restoration once again pushed the Neo-Confucian values onto Japanese society. In order to restore Japan to great levels, nationalism was necessary and for this they needed a traditional *ie* family system to secure the existence of the great Japanese society. In combination with contributing most value to the group, instead of the individual. With the rise of technology, Japanese women started to speak out more. They spoke out against the living circumstances and their anger with being defined by society to abide by their sexed roles.

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[164] Morris, and Morris, Ivan. "*Ibid.*" p.7
[165] Morris, and Morris, Ivan. "*Ibid.*" p.10

Chapter Three: #MeToo in Japan and Shiori Ito

This last part of the thesis focuses on the case of Shiori Ito. This part will start with her case and its media coverage.[166] 3.2 talks about how this case portrays the issues we see of Japan and the clashes between modernisation and traditional values. Next, we discuss the role that the internet played in Shiori Ito's case (with a focus on media coverage) and women's movements in general. As we will see, the internet plays both parts of helping women's developments and women's rights, but also being harmful towards these same movements.

3.1 Shiori Ito's case[167]

Shiori Ito (born in 1989) is generally considered to be the face of the #MeToo movement in Japan. She is known as a journalist and moviemaker. Her focus lies on gender equality and human rights issues, and her fight for justice. It should be noted that most of the information about her case that is open to the public, comes from her published book *Black Box* and thus illustrates her side of the story. There are also multiple academic papers that write about this case as well as certain (online) Japanese newspapers. I am limited to the sources that were either written in English or have been translated into English as I do not speak

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[166] My selection of sources will show that there is a scholarship regarding Shiori Ito and her activism. For more academic studies on her case from the perspective of legal studies, see:
O'Mochain, R. (2021). "# MeToo movement in Japan." *The Routledge Handbook of the Politics of the #MeToo Movement.* Milton: Taylor & Francis Group. 360-372.
For more academic studies on her case from the perspective of media studies, see:
Matsushita, Kayo. "Diverging narratives: exploring the hidden influence of transquoting in framing the journalistic portrayal of Shiori Ito." *Language and Intercultural Communication*, Vol.21 no. 3. 2021.
Hasunuma, Linda, & Shin, Ki-Young. "MeToo in Japan and South Korea: #WeToo, #WithYou." *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, Vol. 40, no. 1, (2019) 97-111.
[167] There has been a substantial scholarship about Shiori Ito as there are many articles written about her and her case (a few examples are: Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "MeToo in South Korea and Japan – a Comparative Study of Newspapers' Coverage of the MeToo-Movement in South Korea and Japan," (2020.), Romano, A. *Transnational Perspectives on the #MeToo and Anti-Base Movements in Japan.* MA Thesis. University of South Florida. (2022.), Lilja, Mona. "Pushing resistance theory in IR beyond 'opposition': The constructive resistance of the #MeToo movement in Japan." Review of International Studies, Vol. 48, no. 1. (2022.)149-170.)
These studies come from different fields and most of them rely on her own published book which can make it seem as if there are many similarities. However, this is due to using the same source, which I also used. Her case is a valid and accepted academic topic. Also, with my background information about Shiori Ito's case, I am not making a ruling about this case but I am explaining this in a neutral manner, with a focus on the media coverage and not the legal case of it.

Japanese. However, this will not change my argumentation because my focus lies on the media coverage and not on the legal aspect.

As described in *Black Box*, In 2015, Shiori Ito met with a work colleague who was her senior for a dinner, this man was journalist Yamaguchi Noriyuki who was a television company's foreign correspondent.[168] She explained that the reason for this meeting was because she believed he was interested in finding a foreign correspondent for the TBS media company.[169] After having a blackout, she said she woke up to Yamaguchi on top of her.[170] The police were reluctant to investigate her case, but after seeing security footage of her being carried into the hotel and hearing the taxi-driver's testimony, they picked up her case.[171] Shiori Ito was incapacited due to alcohol and she claimed to have been drugged.[172] From Yamaguchi's perspective, he denied the charges on many occasions and insisted that there was no "unlawful sex" and that everything had been consensual.[173] [174]

In *Black Box*, Ito does not only discuss her alleged rape case, but also goes into detail about how the Japanese legal system does not offer enough help which leads to victims giving up and suffering in silence.[175] When Shiori wanted to go to the press to tell them her story, she met NTV reporters to film an interview.[176] The running of this interview got delayed multiple times until she was told "they'll run it if the case is dismissed."[177] Also, a reporter from *Tokyo Shimbun* told Shiori that "the timing was difficult for reporting [her]

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[168] O'Mochain, R. "# MeToo movement in Japan." *The Routledge Handbook of the Politics of the #MeToo Movement*. (Milton: Taylor & Francis Group. 2021) p.365

[169] O'Mochain, R. "*Ibid*." p.366

[170] McNeill, David. "I Have No Regrets." *The Asia-Pacific Journal*. Vol. 19 no. 1. Issue 16, Article ID 5615. (2021) p.2.

[171] Romano, A. "*Transnational Perspectives on the #MeToo and Anti-Base Movements in Japan." MA Thesis. University of South Florida. (2022)* p.15

[172] Romano, A. *"Ibid."* p.15

[173] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen."MeToo in South Korea and Japan – a Comparative Study of Newspapers' Coverage of the MeToo-Movement in South Korea and Japan." p.31

[174] There has been a new court ruling as per the 7th of July 2022. This decision states: "The Tokyo District Court and Tokyo High Court both acknowledged that Yamaguchi had sexual intercourse with Ito without her consent." and "In a decision dated July 7, the Supreme Court upheld a high court ruling, which ordered Yamaguchi to pay Ito about 3.32 million yen ($24,000) in damages." Source: Shioiri, Aya. "Shiori Ito: Voices of sexual assault victims are being heard at last." *The Asahi Shimbun.* July 21, 2022.

[175] Itō, Shiori. Black Box : the Memoir That Sparked Japan's #MeToo Movement. First Feminist Press edition., 2021. p.187

[176] Itō, Shiori. *"Ibid."* p.166

[177] Itō, Shiori. "*Ibid*." p.166

case."[178] The first article that was published about Shiori's case came from *Shukan Shincho* on the eighteenth of May 2017 after an interview not even a week earlier.[179] On May 29th 2017, Shiori held a press conference which did not go as she expected and she faced a lot of resistance.[180] Afterwards, she was told that "the government is recommending to media outlets that they ought not to cover the story, that the sources are not reliable."[181] Upon holding multiple press conferences, her personal information was made public and she was receiving backlash.[182] In her own terms, "I was harassed and threatened, and I was bombarded with scathing emails."[183]

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[178] Itō, Shiori. *Black Box: the Memoir That Sparked Japan's #MeToo Movement.* p.169
[179] Itō, Shiori. "*Ibid.*" p.182
[180] Itō, Shiori. "*Ibid.*" p.191
[181] Itō, Shiori. "*Ibid.*" p.192
[182] Itō, Shiori. "*Ibid.*" p.195
[183] Itō, Shiori. "*Ibid.*" p.195

3.2 How Shiori Ito's case portrays all issues

3.2.1. Reluctance of Japanese media coverage

As Ito recalled in her book, after the arrest of Yamaguchi was cancelled, Ito tried her best to engage the media in hopes of raising social awareness and putting more pressure on the Prosecutor's Office to continue with her case.[184] Ito's case got a lot of media coverage outside of Japan. In sharp contrast, only one Japanese newsmagazine, *Shukan Shincho*, wrote about this. How is it possible that Japan is so reluctant to write about Ito's case? In a larger context, the #MeToo movement does not seem to attract as much media attention in Japan as it did in the Western world. Indeed, the little coverage it has, is in no way comparable to the West and how much coverage the #MeToo movement is there.

The Japanese government seems to want to make sexual harassment a *josei mondai* (女性問題, women's problem), "instead of acknowledging this as a cultural problem that needs to be dealt with for the sake of a proper functioning and diverse workforce."[185] As we have seen in chapter two, this reluctance of coverage is in accordance with the Japanese "traditional" values. Women's issues are part of the inner sphere and should be handled privately. Ito goes against the top-down model of exercised power. Coverage of an individual's case and "problem" goes against the established value of the group. Ito's speaking up should be understood as going against the established order and it also goes against conformity to loyalty.

3.2.2. Self-blame

As we have already seen in 2.4, Japan has a large culture of allocentric self-blame. One is aware of the other as a victim of one's action or inaction. However this seems to be a one way street. From the examples given by Lebra: as the mother, a woman is supposed to endure guilt when her child is sick and as the wife, a woman shall feel ashamed of her own

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[184] Itō, Shiori. *Black Box : the Memoir That Sparked Japan's #MeToo Movement.* p.178
[185] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "MeToo in South Korea and Japan – a Comparative Study of Newspapers' Coverage of the MeToo-Movement in South Korea and Japan." p.42

defected character when her husband cheated.[186] It seems that the fault is always put on the woman. It cannot be said that the person with inferior social status is the aggressor, because that does not hold within the child-mother dynamic. Is this 1) because Lebra does not give full scope of occasions and situations of who is to blame or 2) do men not take blame? I ask this question because when looking at the case of Shiori Ito, people online and in real life criticise her and believe that she seduced him, as high ranking female politicians of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) claim "that her clothes and behaviour on the night in 2015 left no doubt to her plans of the evening."[187] This amount of criticism towards the victim makes it seem as if she is to blame for something.

> It is not uncommon for Japanese to become sensitised to guilt-feelings when they
> see their kin or other significant persons suffer from illness, death, or other
> misfortunes, regardless of their responsibility for these sufferings.[188]

Ito's case might be more specific than the general shame and guilt attitude the Japanese people generally have. In this case, if Yamaguchi would feel any guilt and apologise to her, it could mean that what Shiori claims would be true and the entire country would become aware. So far, it is only alleged rape, because he continues to push for his innocence. Nevertheless, Yamaguchi said during his press conference after the court's reveal of the verdict that "a real rape victim could never laugh as Ito did," which flows together with the sea of criticism Shiori is encountering.[189] Other people criticised Ito's behaviour as well, saying that she has not been acting as a victim of sexual violence should.[190] People online and in real life criticised everything about her: her clothes, alcohol consumption, behaviour, etc.[191] Some people have gone so far as to call her not a true

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[186] Lebra, Takie Sugiyama. "Shame and Guilt: A Psychocultural View of the Japanese Self." p.203
[187] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "MeToo in South Korea and Japan – a Comparative Study of Newspapers' Coverage of the MeToo-Movement in South Korea and Japan." p.33
[188] Lebra, Takie Sugiyama. "Shame and Guilt: A Psychocultural View of the Japanese Self." p.204
[189] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "MeToo in South Korea and Japan – a Comparative Study of Newspapers' Coverage of the MeToo-Movement in South Korea and Japan." p.32
[190] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "*Ibid.*" p.32
[191] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "*Ibid.*" p.33

Japanese woman because "a Japanese woman would not speak about such shameful things."[192] Miya Yoshiko says that rape is like pornography in the Japanese society.[193]

> It is something that women aren't supposed to talk about. Men participate in it,
> enjoy it or are disgusted by it, talk about it, joke about it, fantasise about it, but
> "good" women should pretend it's not there.[194]

3.2.3. Suspicion of Western Feminism

Another possibility of why Japan is so reluctant to discuss the problem of sexual violence might be due to suspiciousness connected to Western feminism.[195] We have already seen that during modernisation Japan strived to be a united country, a vision of Japan versus the rest of the world. In this dogma, it is logical that there is suspiciousness or even defensiveness against foreign and especially Western influences. The #MeToo movement started in America after all. Japan, like all other East Asian countries, know their own intricate and extremely detailed historical culture which does not exist in the West. Even if Japan would be enthusiastic to incorporate and evolve their feminist discourse, they need to navigate this development with their culture. The only other option would be to drastically alter or even abandon their culture. People on both sides of the gender equality discussion have evoked the argument that popular feminist theories in the West do not fit Eastern societies. [196] On one hand it makes sense that there is a request for more Asian women studies, but on the other hand this argument can be used to disregard feminism as a whole. To further understand these traditional values, we need to once again look at Confucianism.

The (neo-)Confucian approach to gender has become debated among scholars that work on feminism in Asia. Some would argue that the Confucian patriarchy is the seed of the

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[192] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "MeToo in South Korea and Japan – a Comparative Study of Newspapers' Coverage of the MeToo-Movement in South Korea and Japan." p.33
[193] Buckley, Sandra, and Aoki Yayoi. *Broken Silence : Voices of Japanese Feminism.* p.161
[194] Buckley, Sandra, and Aoki Yayoi. "*Ibid.*" p.161
[195] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "MeToo in South Korea and Japan – a Comparative Study of Newspapers' Coverage of the MeToo-Movement in South Korea and Japan." p.49
[196] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "*Ibid.*" p.49

gender inequality, with others suggesting on Confucian thought being a possible ally of feminism (like Huh Rakeum) that allows for creating a Confucian reading of feminism. Confucianism has already adapted to the change of times, otherwise it would have never survived hundreds of years, and it is argued that the same goes for the introduction of gender equality.[197] As remarked by Inger Begeberg, this nationalistic resistance against foreign ideology (Western feminism) could explain why the Japanese government has not yet taken proper stance on the issue.[198]

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[197] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "MeToo in South Korea and Japan – a Comparative Study of Newspapers' Coverage of the MeToo-Movement in South Korea and Japan." p.49
[198] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "*Ibid.*" p.50

3.3 The role of the internet

The internet falls under the umbrella term of "mass media". It is a form of communicating information to the general public.

> The term media defines a number of different communication formats from television media, which share information through broadcast airwaves, to print media, which rely on printed documents. The collection of all forms of media that communicate information to the general public is called mass media, including television, print, radio, and Internet.[199]

The delicate consequence of the internet can be summarised in a well known sentence: with great power comes great responsibility. The extremely easy access to both read and post on the internet together with the fact that there are no limitations on who can 'author' on the internet, there is no real wall of trust where what is written on the internet is factually correct and/or properly researched. To every movement there can be a counter-movement. The internet can be used to aid women's movements but at the same time is a place where others can disagree and even go so far as to actively oppose feminism. Online misogyny is also a form of violence against women, according to Jessica Taylor.[200]

3.3.1. Freedom of press

Christine Kalenborg and Christian Lessmann argue that in order to control corruption (both governmental and private form), a society demands press freedom.[201] When it comes to freedom of press in Japan, there are a few factors that need to be explained. In Japan, there is a term called "*sontaku*" (忖度) that has no direct translation into English. In this context, it means "to guess what would make your superior most pleased."[202] This form of

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[199] https://courses.lumenlearning.com/os-government2e/chapter/what-is-the-media/
[200] Taylor, Jessica. "Why Women Are Blamed For Everything: Exposing the Culture of Victim-Blaming" Constable. (2020) p.1
[201] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "MeToo in South Korea and Japan – a Comparative Study of Newspapers' Coverage of the MeToo-Movement in South Korea and Japan." p.43
[202] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "*Ibid*." p.43

self-censorship that tries to "not step on any toes" is probably the reason why #MeToo stories are scarce. However, with the internet and social media, a lot of change is coming to this aspect of Japanese society. The rise of internet journalism makes censorship more difficult. Reporters and activists have experimented with other communicative tools to steer away from the influence of conservative (and state approved) newspapers.[203] As such, freestanding journalists and activists have moved their platform to the internet and used their blogs and sites to attract readers, which in turn urged the traditional types of newspapers to engage with more liberal topics and maintain their readership.[204]

3.3.2. Media outlets working on improving the female condition

There are multiple social movements of protest that go against the historically approved narrative. The first example is The Flower Demonstration (フラワーデモ) which started out as a protest against the ruling of several alleged rape cases. These demonstrations show that people are supporting victims of sexual violence and standing up against such injustices.[205] It thus indicates how a part of the Japanese society is not agreeing with the approach of the government with regards to sexual violence. Secondly, Femintern Press was established to circulate information about Japan in the English language, in an attempt to "fill the huge gap between the knowledge women in Japan had about the West and the lack of knowledge other countries had about Japan."[206] This broadens the audience and decreases the knowledge gap between the West and Japan. Giving the possibility for others to become aware of these issues.

> Any social movement or political protest needs more than just participants; they
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> need recipients to agree or disagree with their stance to be able to start proper
>
> discussion. To get those recipients they need people to see and hear them (and in

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[203] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "MeToo in South Korea and Japan – a Comparative Study of Newspapers' Coverage of the MeToo-Movement in South Korea and Japan." p.44
[204] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "*Ibid*." p.44
[205] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "*Ibid*." p.39
[206] Mackie, Vera C. *Feminism in Modern Japan: Citizenship, Embodiment and Sexuality.* p.153

this case, read them), and without it the movement will only be visible for those

who seek it.[207]

These organised protest groups and newspapers that are open to discussion and go against the approved narrative allow people across the country to engage in a discussion. Without people from both positions, change can never happen as there will never be a demand for change in the first place.

However, the movement stagnated in Japan without the media to push it to the

front line, forcing it to stay in the category of digital activism, rather than a social

movement.[208]

Access to digital newspapers or outlets is not so easy in Japan. Many online newspapers exist behind a paywall and in order for people to be able to access it, they need to pay for an account. Consequently, people can become less interested in reading newspapers frequently, which makes their selection of reading material less varied as well.[209] I have also encountered this paywall while trying to collect information for my research. This paywall is also not cheap, namely $30 a month and $249 for a year (3000 yen monthly or 24,900 yen yearly) for The Japan Times. This price is for one digital newspaper and if one considers the most popular newspapers are a top 5, people would choose either none or one newspaper if they do have the money. The consequence for this is that every newspaper has their own conceptualisation about society and tries to fit their own agenda considering if they are a progressive or conservative newspaper. The Japanese people, according to this model, are not able to consume multiple outlets that would enable them to form their own opinions on social issues by reading about multiple coverages.

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[207] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "MeToo in South Korea and Japan – a Comparative Study of Newspapers' Coverage of the MeToo-Movement in South Korea and Japan." p.52
[208] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "*Ibid*." p.52
[209] Blegeberg, Inger Helene Johnsen. "*Ibid*." p.54

3.3.3. The media as being harmful towards women

The media can also contribute to harmful attitudes towards women. Japan knows strict

obscenity laws when it comes to sex and violence within media. Censorship is also included

in these laws and is a common practice within Japanese media. When it comes to the

representation of sexuality and violence in the media, does such media representation

promote or prevent illegal, violent behaviour?[210]

Pornography is an epitome of this media representation, which also features the

internet culture. Catharine A. MacKinnon argues for acknowledging the role played by

pornography in supporting the constructed dominant-value in a patriarchal society that

continues to perpetuate the subordination of women and motivate violence against them.[211]

There is a wide variety of what is all included under the umbrella term "violence against

women".

Violence against women includes domestic violence, femicide, rape and sexual

violence, corrective rape of lesbians, child sexual abuse and exploitation of girls,

prostitution, trafficking, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, street

harassment, online misogyny, forced abortions, ritual abuse, juju, acid attacks,

public flogging of women, surrogacy and slavery.[212]

All that is named in the quote above is not all-including, but it gives a good idea to

start and show how many practices are included as violence against women. But is there

truly a link between the consumption of (violent) pornography and violence against women

due to an increased misogynistic view on women? Research has shown that certain

instantiations of pornography consummation leads to greater sexism. The first is when

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[210] Alexander, James R., "Obscenity, Pornography, and Law in Japan: Reconsidering Oshima's 'In the Realm of the Senses." p.148
[211] Alexander, James R., "*Ibid*." p.151
[212] Taylor, Jessica. "Why Women Are Blamed For Everything: Exposing the Culture of Victim-Blaming" p.1

people believe pornography to be realistic in its depictions of sexual situations.[213] So far, pornography use does not readily promote general sexism. However, there is a significant research base to indicate that pornography use promotes sexual violence against women.[214] The biggest scientific proof is that the effect of pornography will be more pronounced among individuals who are already high risk factors for sexual aggression, and less pronounced (or non-existent) for those who are low on such risk factors.[215] As noted by James Alexander, regardless of the fact that "the American courts have never truly accepted the connection between pornography and sexual violence to permit a systematic reduction in the protection of free expression, they have almost without a doubt accepted the existence of a correlation between child pornography and sex crimes against children."[216]

Entertainment media, such as cartoons, comics, and video games, in Japan is famous for its sexual and violent content (often emphasising the nudity, rape, and torture of young girls).[217] Kanazumi Fumiko argues that "the current market in pornographic comics is a breach of women's rights and a denial of any sexuality other than the male reader's."[218] Even though there is no substantial evidence that pornography leads to more violent attitudes towards women, there is substantial evidence that sexually explicit material on the internet can cultivate less supportive attitudes (and thus more resistance) towards the combat against sexism, including #MeToo.[219]

> As a matter of public policy, public discussion or portrayal of topics considered
>
> integral to social stability and the maintenance of national values was considered

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[213] Miller, Dan J, Garry Kidd, Peter T. F Raggatt, Kerry Anne McBain, and Wendy Li. "Pornography Use and Sexism Among Heterosexual Men." *Communication Research Reports Vol. 37*, no. 3 (2020): 110–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2020.1777396. p.118

[214] Miller, Dan J, Garry Kidd, Peter T. F Raggatt, Kerry Anne McBain, and Wendy Li. "*Ibid.*" p.117

[215] Miller, Dan J, Garry Kidd, Peter T. F Raggatt, Kerry Anne McBain, and Wendy Li. "*Ibid.*" p.112

[216] Alexander, James R., "Obscenity, Pornography, and Law in Japan: Reconsidering Oshima's 'In the Realm of the Senses." p.151

[217] Alexander, James R. "*Ibid.*" p.153

[218] Buckley, Sandra, and Aoki Yayoi. *Broken Silence : Voices of Japanese Feminism.* p.79

[219] Maes, Chelly, Lara Schreurs, Johanna M.F van Oosten, and Laura Vandenbosch. "(Me)too Much? The Role of Sexualizing Online Media in Adolescents' Resistance Towards the Metoo-Movement and Acceptance of Rape Myths." *Journal of Adolescence (London, England.) Vol. 77*, no. 1 (2019): 59–69. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2019.10.005. p.59

appropriate only if it was respectful and reinforced mainstream cultural and political values.[220]

Wim Marinus Lunsing gives three types of sexual discourses that exist in Japan.[221] The first type encompasses the pornographic discourse, which is characterised by rape, violence, and sadomasochism. The second type amounts to an aversion to pornography discourse, which is characterised by disgust over violence, rape, pornography and prostitution. This second discourse is often seen as a feature of feminist ideas of sex in Japan. The last type entails a more liberal discourse and attitude towards sex. According to Lunsing, the prevalence of sadomasochism in Japanese pornography can be explained as a result of the obscenity laws.[222] Due to a form of censor, producers look for other ways of making exciting content. However, women grow tired of this focus on male pleasure while at the same time ignoring the pleasure of the woman, which leads women to resort to masturbation when only men receive pleasure in this sexual discourse.[223]

> To date, the rulings of the Japanese courts have been quite consistent in confirming the policy that protection of the public welfare through censorship of obscenity is not a violation of free expression guarantees, but rather is integral to the maintenance of a stable society in which those guarantees have substantive meaning.[224]

The said Japanese obscenity laws are primarily enforced at the local level, paired with the Customs Bureau (when it comes to import), and a self-governing regulatory

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[220] Alexander, James R. "Obscenity, Pornography, and Law in Japan: Reconsidering Oshima's 'In the Realm of the Senses." p.153
[221] Lunsing, Wim Marinus. *Beyond Common Sense : Sexuality and Gender in Contemporary Japan.* p.278
[222] Lunsing, Wim Marinus. "*Ibid*." p.278
[223] Lunsing, Wim Marinus. "*Ibid*." p.283
[224] Alexander, James R. "Obscenity, Pornography, and Law in Japan: Reconsidering Oshima's 'In the Realm of the Senses." p.156

commission made up by the top six major motion picture companies.[225] In other words, the obscenity laws are not regulated by the national government, but are a local responsibility and that of the top six motion picture companies. Customs Bureau reviews and grants approval to import products, including film. Under Article 21 of the Customs Standards Law of 1910, they can either censor or restrict those products "considered of such a nature as to excite sexual desire and give rise in people to feelings of shame or repugnance."[226] Under this logic of these obscenity laws rules are being set in place for the existence of women. Dress-code being one of them. In some schools in Japan, a ponytail is not even allowed as it would "excite" the boys.

It seems that the Japanese obscenity laws established in 1910 are no longer compatible with the internet. By far the greatest majority of internet content cannot be regulated. Simply due to the fact that internet consumption is of immense proportions. It also gives problems to the import aspect of the laws as the internet is worldwide and does not have to go through "customs" anymore, but is widely available to all that seek a certain content by just typing it in on their devices. There is no longer a third party that stands between the market and the consumer that could exert control. It is now a "free-for-all". There are however certain marginal notes to this idea of the internet as being a "free-for-all". The internet does have algorithms that are capable of detecting certain types of content and disabling it so that nobody can no longer get to it, but even that can be worked around with special networks (like Tor). Even though Japanese laws cannot have the same sense of control over pornography consumption, within Japanese society there are certain trends of pornography that are most popular. This "free-for-all" can be damaging to women as this gives a wrong and warped attitude of sex that is harmful to both men and women, but women will have the more difficult to handle end of the stick as they are now at risk for physical sexual violation (even more).

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[225] Alexander, James R. "Obscenity, Pornography, and Law in Japan: Reconsidering Oshima's 'In the Realm of the Senses." p.157
[226] Alexander, James R. "*Ibid*." p.157

3.3.4. The internet as a more pervasive and intimate form of biopower

It seems that women have always been controlled via the body and the labour the body exerts. Via biopower and the structure of society, women have to do certain things, agree to certain acts (marriage, children, etc.). Sexist attitudes hold that women are not fully human (if human at all), or at the very least, less than men. They would sooner agree that women are property than women being human beings. Property, in combination with the notion of being non-human, focusses on the physical body. Women are sexually objectified or exploited within the work sphere (be it at the office or household work), focussing on the physical body. Why would these sexist attitudes (that focus on their physicality) even do so much as acknowledge a woman's autonomy and agency? Why take into consideration her feelings, mental health, her soul etc.? Physical oppression and control becomes difficult when women confine themselves to their own privacy and their own house and not contributing to external society. This is where the internet becomes convenient. The internet, now being so vast and pervasive within our lives, can intrude into our most intimate and personal moments. Via television, phones, or laptops, women continue to consume sexist media solely for the reason that "they cannot catch a break". Even if women do not actively search for this, an algorithm of approved narrative is being pushed onto the media she consumes. This biopower not only happens in the external world, but within her own mind and consciousness. The internet is much more pervasive as it focuses more on taking hold onto the mind. The struggle can become bigger as it is no longer a control that solely focuses on the physical, but now has become internal. However, at the other side of the spectrum, women have the ability to contribute to feminism and women's rights developments from the comfort of their own homes. They always have a voice lest they decide to speak up. Women could lead a double life of "average woman" in the office and a groundbreaking feminist who works on smashing patriarchy.

> Digital revolutions do not make social revolutions in and of themselves. It is not the technology itself that brings down repressive regimes, exposes unjust laws, frees

political prisoners or secures human rights. Social change comes from the people -

the people on the ground who are using digital technology as well as more

traditional methods, to help organise and expand their demand for change.[227]

In this chapter, the case of Shiori Ito was discussed and what that meant for her and Japanese society. The internet mattered greatly while she was fighting her battle and it made a permanent mark on the Japanese #MeToo movement, both positively and negatively. This chapter talked about all the ways in which Japan was reluctant to talk about sexual violence and why the country does not see it as a national problem, but a women's problem. At the same time, Japan (even with obscenity laws) has no problem in displaying pornography in every cornerstone and in every sphere of society, possibly harming attitudes towards women and their sexuality. This chapter also showed how the internet can aid women's rights development and how they can take more control and power while fighting their battles.

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[227] Lee, Myunghee., Murdie, Amanda. "The Global Diffusion of the #MeToo Movement." p.832

Conclusion

In this thesis I tried to answer the question whether the internet aids women's rights development or does the internet exacerbate women's oppression. While this thesis does not necessarily argue for one specific position, it shows in what ways the internet can be harmful towards the image of women and in what ways it can be helpful.

As the internet (together with technology in general) is developing exponentially. It grows into playing a bigger role in our lives every day. As technology can be a great tool to make our lives easier, it could also make the lives of others more difficult. Not by the technology itself, but via the creator, or the person who is in control of what becomes of certain forms of technology. In terms of the internet that would be anybody who is participating in this online discourse. One of the goals of this thesis is to raise awareness of the possibilities and influences the internet can have on people's lives and entire population groups.

As for the feminism debate, we could see similarities between the totalisation of human autonomy and internalisation. It is more generally agreed that internalisation of the internet's influences happens to most women. It seems that within patriarchal societies women are totalised and defined, since modernisation the internet is responsible for internalisation. This does not mean that women have become slaves to it, but are fighting against these struggles. This is why the dichotomy of the existing scholarship is wrong. It needs to be a spectrum including the historical and social aspect per each country. This extra aspect explains the current status-quo.

In the West, looking at Europe and America, feminism is recently being called "white-feminism", this is because it focussed on white, upper to middle class suffragettes who fought for the right to vote and to live a life not confined to the white picket fence. However, this understanding of feminism is exclusive to a lot of other groups of women. For example, in South America, women had to work and did not have the possibility to stay inside and care for the kids. These women were forced to work to keep their kids fed. With

this simple comparison, we see that Euro-American does not suffice for the entire world. We need to pay attention to the social and historical background of these women. This Western feminism has always been big on voicing one's opinions and demands, but for a lot of Asian countries, Japan included, this collective speaking up has just recently begun. Within Japanese society there is a big distinction between male and female language, inhibiting women from speaking about their experiences, or talking to men as their equals. This is the main aspect in which the internet can aid Japanese feminism. It allows for everyone to speak up and to find like-minded souls who can confine in each other and form solidarity. Certain developments that have already happened in Western feminism still need to be achieved in Japan. Communication might be the biggest one, but we are seeing positive change in Japanese women and their communicative (online) discourse.

In the first chapter I went over the existing scholarship about the philosophy of technology and whether it has the power to totalise human beings or not. I argue for an extra dimension within this debate - a historical dimension - in order to be more inclusive and at the same time concise as every country has its own history and history of modernisation that is influenced by society and vice versa. In the second chapter, I showed the historical dimension of Japan necessary to answer questions about the role of the internet within Japanese society together with their views on women. In the last chapter, I focussed on Shiori Ito and her alleged rape case as an example to show all the possible problems Japanese society encounters when talking about sexual violence and women's rights.

It seems that the biggest way in which the internet can aid women's movement and women's rights developments, lies in its communication. Throughout the history of Japan, there has been a difference between women's and men's language. As a consequence of this, women struggle with expressing themselves in the world and they are bound by the rules of women's language, already prohibiting any further development towards gender equality as it also prohibits women to talk to men in an equal manner but always talking like an inferior. However, in order for change to truly happen, activism does not only need an intention or a (digital) platform, it also relies on the people. Japanese society, as it still values

"traditional" values and attempts to hold onto these, is reluctant to join this activism. It is these "traditional" values that made Japan into a great nation again after the wars. However, technology has developed further and the internet has taken up a role we can no longer ignore or live without. The internet aids women by means of language, giving them a platform that leads to solidarity. The global aspect of the internet allows different societies to stand in contact with each other and see how others take on gender inequality.

However, the internet also allows for more pervasive and penetrating sexist attitudes that women, whether they consent to or not, are exposed to on the internet. Different ways in which the internet exacerbates women's oppression is in the means of pornography, forced stereotypes, refusal of progress, or plainly anti-feminism.

Implications of this thesis, is having shown how a historical aspect is essential into the technology debate regarding human lives and developments. This thesis has tried to show whether the internet aids women's developments or if it exacerbates women's oppression. It seems a difficult question that is subjected to the people who are consuming and posting on the internet.

Living with technology is a difficult thing. Not only is its growth exponential and we might not even know how much it has further developed a year from now. But development is certain. The internet and social media are dubious, possibly being a wonderful means to an end depending on who is "posting", however, the same goes for people with a more sinister agenda. Younger generations are looking for examples, they navigate people within their lives who they can look up to in the search for identity and meaning of life. In the age of the internet, there are innumerable people that can be "in your life". The dangers of algorithms and echo chambers have the possibility of pushing people to extreme attitudes, as they will not receive pushback or encounter opposing attitudes. With regards to the lives of women, they can fall prey to judgments, criteria and hate from others. These "others" might easily include misogynists that want to define women and push them into a corner, trying to make them take up as little space as possible. In this age, not only society can be a "boogeyman" but now the internet could fulfil that role as well. This is not the only role the

internet and social media could take up. Even though Japanese women are continuing to receive backlash, criticism, and hate for going against "traditional" Japanese values and the patriarchal ideal of "the Japanese woman", they are not backing down. The internet forms a network of people who share experiences, struggles, and create solidarity. This in turn encourages the women to continue their fight. As a global society, all we can and should do is be there for these women and encourage them, until we, as a global unit of women, are happy with our lives, our own defined identity, and position within society.

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