

Ethnographic Research on a Women's University in Japan:

How the absence of males influences the consciousness and behavior of female students

Maki YAMADA* and Mark REBUCK**

1. The background to this research

(1) *Women's Universities Survival Research Group.*

Women's universities in Japan are facing uncertain times as high school girls increasingly choose to enter coeducational universities, a trend that is reflected in the statistics: between 1998 to 2008 the number of women-only four-year universities dropped from 99 to 82 (Ishikawa, 2008). The reasons for nearly this nearly 20 percent fall are multiple (Yamada, 2003), but include demographic trends leading to a shortage of students and, paradoxically, the social advancement of women that has led people to question whether these institutions still have a role in today's Japan. In contrast, all-female schools and universities in Europe and America are seeing a revival, reflecting a reevaluation of the value of single-sex education in helping women to achieve their full potential (Hirose, 2001)¹.

The women's university with its single-sex population represents a unique environment, a uniqueness that in Japan has tended to attract both loyal supporters as well as fierce critics. To shed light on the actual situation in these institutions, the Survival Research Group² in 2000 and 2001³ conducted ethnographic fieldwork at Sakura University (a pseudonym), a private, middle-ranked, liberal arts women's university. An outline of the work of the research group is shown in Diagram 1.

2. Aim of this research

The aim of this study was to investigate in what ways the environment of a women's university influences the students studying there. The most distinctive feature of a women's university is, of course, the absence of male students. Through interviews with students at Sakura University, the research group sought to ascertain the way female students viewed their university life, and to discover the effect their environment had on the students' behavior and consciousness.

* 教育学部 子ども発達学科

** 名古屋大学 国際開発研究科

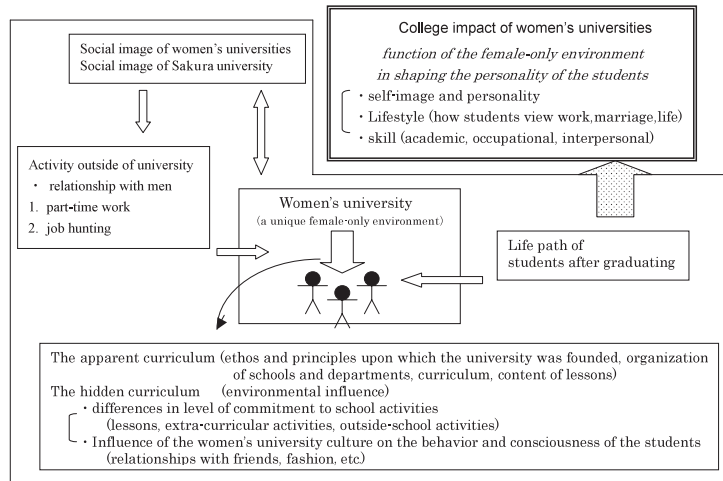


Diagram 1. Outline of the work of the Women's Universities Survival Research Group.

Research into the impact the all-female university has on shaping the attitudes and behavior of its students has been carried out under the two broad research areas: “women’s university research,” and “college impact studies” (see Meyer, 1970). In Japan, however, most of this research has focused on elite women’s universities such as Ochanomizu University (Ochanomizu, 2001) and Tsuda College (Aoi, 1988), with questionnaires being the principle form of data collection.

In contrast, the present study was conducted at a middle-ranking university, located not in Tokyo but at a university on the outskirts of a provincial city. In addition, because they allow closer contact with the students, interviews were employed for data collection. The interviews sought to answer three questions:

- (1) How did the female students evaluate a university with no male ones?
- (2) In comparison with a coeducational institution, what effect, if any, did being in an all-female environment have on how the students dress and make up?
- (3) What effect, if any, did an all-female (or male-less) environment have on the behavior and personality of the students.

It was hoped that the answers to such questions would give an insight into how university life without male peers influences the consciousness and behavior of female students.

Women’s universities are not a homogenous entity, and a proper understanding of the motivations and feelings of students in a cross section of these institutions is invaluable when discussing their *sonzai igi*, or *raison d’etre*.

3. How do female students regard the absence of male students?

Students were asked the following question: "What has been your impression of a women's university?" In their responses, the majority of students spoke about the absence of men and described their feelings about being in a women's university. The responses could be broadly classified into three groups:

1. Positive evaluation: indicating positive feelings about being at a women's university.
2. Negative evaluation: indicating negative feelings about being at a women's university.
3. Mixed evaluation: indicating ambiguous feels about being at a women's university. Note, "Education" refers to a student's schooling before university.

(1) *Positive evaluation*

Example 1 Year: 1; Education: coeducational

Q: What has been your impression of a women's university?

A: The fact that it's a women's university has not really been an issue. I'm really enjoying it.

Q: What aspect in particular do you find enjoyable?

A: You can relax here.

Q: Is that because there are only women?

A: Yes, it is.

Q: What in particular makes you feel relaxed?

A: I suppose it's because I always feel nervous when I speak to guys.

Q: So, not having to speak with men makes it feel more comfortable here?

A: Yes.

Example 2 Year: 3; Education: coeducational

Q: What was your image of women's universities before you entered this one?

A: I didn't like the sound of them at all. I thought coed ones were much better.

Q: Why?

A: A single sex university sounded really boring. You know, with only women. I thought everyone would be really square with no guys around.

Q: Are there any other reasons you weren't really keen on the idea of a women's university?

A: Well, I wanted to fall in love. You know, meet someone nice. And I thought at a women's university there wouldn't be a chance to meet any guys.

Q: Now that you're actually attending a women's university, has your image changed?

A: Well, I don't know if it's really changed, but I don't feel out of place at all. I've really

fitted into the way things are here. It feels comfortable.

Q: And what happened to all that “I wanted to fall in love” feeling?

A: You know, listening to people, it seems that just going to a mixed university doesn’t guarantee you’ll find a boyfriend. Those that can get a boyfriend, will get one regardless of the university, and those that can’t, won’t find one wherever they are. Just because you’re taking the same class with a guy, doesn’t mean you’ll get into a relationship with him. Everyone says that most people meet their boyfriends at inter-university clubs or at their part-time jobs, and not really on the campus.

Q: So you’re saying that you weren’t keen on single sex universities before, but once you entered one you found it comfortable?

A: Yes. In fact, I think it’s better that there are no men. In summer it would be too hot and stuffy with all sweaty men around! Women aren’t like that, so it’s much more pleasant here.

Example 3 Year: 4; Education: coeducational

Q: Does it feel comfortable being at a women’s university? All your education until university has been coed, hasn’t it?

A: Well for me, it feels really comfortable here. This may be a strange way to put it, but I think life at a coed school is in some ways like a war, isn’t it? You see, at our age everyone is competing to meet some guy.

Q: Really, you’re saying it’s like a war?

A: That’s right. You always kind of feel that you have to be on guard if there are guys around. If it’s just women, you don’t mind so much if people see you make a mistake or something. There’s a sort of feeling of being able to get away with things. . . a kind of relaxed feeling. Also, I’ve never really been good at making male friends, so that’s another reason why I thought a women’s university sounded good. I don’t think it’s really much fun chatting with men. Maybe that’s not the right way to put it. . . more like, it’s a strain.

Over half the students interviewed for the study positively evaluated an environment where men were not present. However, it should be noted that, as in Example 2, for a number of students their favorable perception of women’s universities only developed after entering Sakura. The women’s university is a place where there is no need to feel conscious of “men looking” and no need to “fight amongst each other over men.” Such an environment leads to a sense of feeling “comfortable” and “calm.” Such positive feelings towards an all female environment seem more pronounced in those students, exemplified in Examples 1 and 3, who regard themselves as poor at communicating with the opposite sex.

(2) *Negative evaluation*

Example 4 Year: 4; Education: coeducational.

Q: Do you find it comfortable being at this university?

A: Comfortable? Not particularly. In fact, if anything, I don't really feel comfortable here. It's difficult to explain, but it's more relaxed, and I suppose more natural, in a mixed school.

Example 5 Year: 3; Education: coeducational

Q: Do you enjoy being at a women's university?

A: I don't really feel comfortable here.

Q: You don't feel comfortable?

A: I've never really been good at speaking to girls of the same age group. I actually find it easier to talk to guys. It's probably because I have an elder brother and no sisters, so from an early age I always played "boy's games" with my brother and his friends. I'm no good at talking with other girls; I don't feel comfortable in an environment where there are only women

Q: You don't feel comfortable here?

A: Not really. I suppose that because there are only women, there are things you don't have to worry about, so in a way it's less bother. In some ways it's also easy to get on with friends here. But there can also be problems. At the moment, I'm in a group with seven other girls. Well, we seem to have fallen out. When it's all women, it's like we all have the same way of thinking and we end up arguing. Sometimes I think that if men were around this wouldn't happen. For me now it doesn't feel so comfortable here. On the school bus, for example, it's crammed full of girls making a racket. Sometimes, it's so bad that I just want to get off.

Although most students regarded the all-female environment favorably, there was a minority who viewed it negatively. In Example 5, although the student acknowledged having only women around was "less bother," her reviews were generally negative. She expressed her dislike of the quarrels which, she believed, resulted from a predictable mentality of women-only groups, and at the school bus crowded with chattering women. As can be seen in Examples 4 and 5, those who take a negative view contend that "having men and women together is more natural," and consider that all women "causes your way of thinking to become slanted." Another reason, unambiguously put, was "it's boring without men."

Among student who feel negative towards women's universities, there are many who do not feel inhibited about making male friends. This may be related to the fact that many of these women, like the student in Example 5, had brothers.

(3) *Mixed evaluation*

Example 6 Year: 3; Education: unknown

Q: Why do you find it comfortable here?

A: It's great that you can make any joke you like when it's just girls.

Q: Really? And why isn't it fun making jokes with men?

A: When it's just girls, you can laugh any way you like. You can make any face you like and not have to care. That's why it's comfortable here. On the other hand, it can be a bit dull.

Q: In what way?

A: Because it really is only girls here, and we don't have any contact with guys, except at our part-time jobs. I guess I'd like to meet some guys.

Example 7 Year: 3; Education: coeducation until junior high school, then a single-sex high school.

Q: Would you liked to have gone to a coed university?

A: Yes, I would.

Q: Why?

A: Well, there's nothing wrong with women's universities. . . they're good, and I think Sakura is good as far as a women's universities go. But I think it would have been more fun at a coed one.

Q: Why?

A: Well, men are able to let their hair down in a way we can't. Having just women here makes it boring.

Q: Well, do you feel comfortable being at a women's university?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: Why?

A: We can openly borrow sanitary towels and the like. I can't really explain, but it makes life easier.

Q: Easier?

A: Yes. If guys were suddenly put into an all female high school or university, I'd feel really out of place. I'd be really conscious of them — more so than when I was in junior high school. Personally, I wouldn't like that.

Q: You'd feel nervous.

A: Yes. Just the presence of guys means you can't really feel relaxed.

Examples 6 and 7 illustrate how the absence of men is regarded with ambivalence by a number of students. While it was seen as “comfortable,” there was also a feeling that something was lacking from the all-female environment. In Example 6, the student described how she could relax when she did not have to be concerned about men looking at her, and how open her mouth and laugh out loud without inhibition. On the other hand,

the same environment was also regarded as “dull.” The student in Example 7 felt dissatisfied because she could not join in with the activities of men who, she believed, were better at “letting their hair down.” However, on other occasions (for example, borrowing sanitary towels) she found the absence of men convenient. Moreover, the fact that she did not have to be concerned about how men were thinking about her made a women's university more “comfortable.” She was concerned, however, that, as a consequence of becoming accustomed to such an environment, she would end up feeling that having men around was somehow unnatural.

In brief, we have seen how the absence of male students was evaluated by students at a women's university. The all-female environment was seen as being both “comfortable” and “dull.” For those female students who were not good at mixing with men, it was seen as comfortable, while those who were more skilled at relating to the opposite sex regarded it as “dull” or “lacking in something.” The positive feeling of being “comfortable” and the more negative feeling of “lacking” something should be seen as two sides of the same coin. Indeed, almost all the students interviewed simultaneously held both of these feelings, although the relative strength of one over the other varied from student to student.

4. Does the absence of men change the way female students dress and make-up?

This section will examine whether the absence of male students effects the behavior of female students. Looking first at how female students dress and make up in an all female environment, the absence of males could be expected to make the female students feel less self-conscious, resulting in the competitive “getting the best guy” mentality not arising among female students. This may lead to female students “cutting corners” in regards to their appearance. On the other hand, it may also be expected that fashion rivalry between female students would motivate them to make an effort to look their best. To understand how the female students were actually behaving in this regard, they were asked the following: “Has the absence of men made you change somehow?” “If so, in what ways?” Those replies that included comments about fashion and make up were then selected.

(1) *Students who “cut corners”.*

Example 8 Year: 3; Education: all-girl's school annexed to Sakura University

Q: Do you think that if you were in a coed university you would be concerned with how people saw you?

A: Well, there's no way I could come to university without make up if there were guys here.

Q: So you don't care about coming to Sakura without make up?

A: No, as long as I draw in my eyebrows!

Q: Would the way you dress change?

A: I don't think it'd make much difference, but here I wear the clothes that I like to wear.

I suppose if it was coed, I'd probably choose something more feminine.

Q: Can you tell me why you'd choose feminine clothes?

A: Why? I suppose when you're with boys you become more aware that you are a women. However, when there are only girls, you can wear what you like.

Example 9 Year: 3; Education: coeducational

Q: Do you think that you don't have to pay so much attention to what you wear and to your appearance because there are no men here?

A: Yes, in a way. If there were men, I'd be more conscious of how I looked. In the morning, I'd think more carefully about whether my clothes matched. Even if I was in a rush, I'd still be a lot more careful about my hair and make up.

Q: You were at a coed senior high school, weren't you? What was that like?

A: I was always conscious of the fact that there were boys in the classroom, even if they weren't particularly looking at me. In that respect, I suppose it's more comfortable now.

The student in Example 8 described how she felt able to go to school without wearing any make up, but would feel obliged to expend time and energy to put on make up if men were present. She also mentioned that she could now choose to wear the clothes she liked, but would feel pressure to choose "feminine clothes" if men were present. She thought that she would behave in this way because in the presence of men she "would probably feel more conscious" of her femininity. In example 9, the student also commented that she would generally worry more about her hair and clothes if men were around. The same student felt that just the presence of men, even if they weren't actually looking at her, made her more self-conscious.

Overall, there were many students who felt that the absence of men meant that they did not have to pay as much attention to their clothing and hairstyle. More importantly, the comment in Example 9 of being was conscious of males "even if they weren't particularly looking at [her]," perhaps suggests that the female students themselves recognize that they have internalized the expectations and attitudes of men.

(2) *Students who take trouble over their appearance*

Example 10 Year: 3; Education: all-girl's school annexed to Sakura University

Q: You know, of course girls at coed schools do themselves up, but don't you think that at women's universities they take even more care of their appearance?

A: I once talked to my friend about this, and we decided that women look more critically at what other women are wearing than do men.

Q: I think men tend to be more forgiving about how a girl looks, or maybe they're not really bothered. They don't seem to care if a girl's socks have rolled down a bit too far. What do you think?

A: It's strange, isn't it? Here we are all seemingly on good terms, but you have to admit there's a lot of rivalry. When it comes to appearance, even good friends can be really cutthroat.

In Example 10, we see that the student believes women at single-sex universities to be more concerned with fashion, a situation that arises from them being more competitive and critical of each other. It is in the female only environment of a women's university, rather than a coed, that a "fashion competitiveness" is more likely to develop.

Example 11 Year: 3; Education: coeducational

Q: Does it make a difference to you whether or not there are men around?

A: Yes, it makes a difference to how I feel. Also, it makes a big difference to what I wear. When I'm only going to the campus, because it's only girls, there are times when I think that I needn't wear anything fancy and that something simple will do. On the other hand, there are other times when you see all the girls around you dressed up, and think, "I can do as good as them." That's when I go out and buy a skirt or something and come to school looking really nice. But it's when I meet a guy that I really make an effort to look feminine -I'll wear a skirt, and put on make up and jewelry. I try to look as feminine as possible.

Example 12 Year: 3; Education: coeducational

Q: What's the image of girls at women's universities?

A: They like to tart themselves up.

Q: Why's that?

A: I don't really do this myself, but when it's just girls, they get competitive and try to outdo each other. Also, because there've only girls on campus, they have to find boyfriends or make male friends outside university. So, in fact they probably pay more attention to how they look.

In Example 11, the student felt that without the presence of men she could to a certain extent "cut corners," but the competitive mentality of female peers induced a counter tendency to motivate them to look their best. Another reason why students at women's universities become fashion sensitive can be gleaned from the response in example 12: female students have little chance to mix with men on the campus and wish make the most of the limited opportunities to meet them outside of university; therefore, they exert more effort to make their appearance appealing than do their coed peers who naturally have more contact with men.

It appears, therefore, that fashion is decided depending on whether the environment is perceived either as a place where there is no need to be concerned about the opposite sex, or one where other female students are regarded as a source of pressure.

5. Does the absence of male students cause a change in behavior and attitudes?

In response to the question, “Does the absence of male student’s cause a change in behavior and attitudes?”, students responded that they, and almost all their friends, had indeed changed. The type of attitude and behavior change in the absence of men can be classified into three types:

- 1) Revelation of usually hidden behavior.
- 2) A change in the form of relationship with others.
- 3) Regaining one’s suppressed self.

(1) *Revelation of usually hidden behavior*

Example 13 Year: 4; Education: coeducational

Q: Would you say the best point about being at a women’s university was that you feel comfortable?

A: Yes. You know, the way you can do things like fixing your make up, even in the classroom.

Q: Yes, everyone does it. In the cafeteria after eating, for example. If guys were around, you’d go to the toilet to do these things, wouldn’t you?

A: I think I would. But I’ve never been to a coed university, so I couldn’t say for sure.

Example 14 Year: 3; Education: coeducational

Q: What surprised you when you came to Sakura University?

A: Seeing girls blow their nose in front of other people.

Q: And this didn’t happen at high school?

A: No one would do it in front of boys. If a girl wanted to blow her nose, she waited until she could go to the toilet.

Q: So now you do this also?

A: No. I still can’t bring myself to blow my nose in front of everyone. But seeing other girls do it really surprised me at first.

Example 15 Year: 3; Education: coeducational

Q: Was your high school mixed?

A: Yes, it was. Now when I feel tired I can take a nap in the lobby, but at high school there was no way I could do this. I didn’t feel I should act like this in front of boys, but

at Sakura quite a few girls just fall asleep on the sofas [in the lobby]. I don't think they would do it if this were at a coed university. That's what surprised me when I first came here.

Many students pointed out that at a women's university they could openly perform behavior that in a mixed environment they would do in a private space such as the toilet. Specific examples of such behavior included fixing make up during the lesson and after eating in the cafeteria, blowing one's nose loudly, lending and borrowing sanitary products, talking about menstruation and other matters related to a woman's body, and falling asleep in the lobby of their department building. The student interviewed in Examples 13 and 14 commented that initially they were surprised at such behavior, suggesting that it was unique to the environment of a women's university. Some interviewees regarded the relative freedom from (mostly self-imposed) constraints as a plus of women's universities. However, others saw fixing ones make up in public and sleeping in the lobby as "going to far" and "slovenly," and generally regarded such behavior as a negative aspect of an all-female environment.

(2) *A change in the form of relationships with others*

Example 16 Year: 4; Education: coeducational

Q: Do you enjoy male company?

A: Well, the topic of conversation changes when men are around.

Q: What do you speak about when it's only girls?

A: Our conversation gets quite crude. We often talk about sex and things like that. We make gags. I think when it's all girls, making others laugh is important.

Q: And this is not important when men are around?

A: When it's only girls, I'm motivated to make others laugh, but with guys I'm happy to leave it to them to make me laugh.

Q: So what do you do when there are men?

A: I stop making jokes. I think girls moderate what they say when guys are present.

In our daily interaction with other people, the contents of a conversation and the division of listener and speaker roles changes depending on to whom we are speaking. In Example 16, the student commented on the way the content of the conversation changed in an all female environment (she felt comfortable making jokes and broaching crude topics). She also described how the division of roles may also alter: when only women are present the student felt motivated to make others involved in the conversation laugh, while in the presence of men she is content to be passive and leave the bantering to them. Her behavior in the presence of men can be considered as a response to the pressure of social norms, under which making gags or swapping dirty stories is not regarded as feminine. There is also a tendency for men in general to be the ones expected to make

women laugh. It is clear that an all-female environment provides temporary release from such socially prescribed sex roles.

(3) *Regaining one's suppressed self*

Example 17 Year: 4; Education: coeducational

Q: There's an image of women's universities being boring, and of no one studying. Does this image fit your experience?

A: No. It's really fun and comfortable. It may be because I tend to be quite an active person anyway, but I've really got involved in different things and taken on new challenges. For example, I'm in the drama club, but if this was a mixed university, there's no way I'd join because I'd be too embarrassed. I think that because men aren't looking at me here, I don't feel at all self-conscious.

Q: So you can do what you want to do?

A: Yes, and it's the same with studying. The library is comfortable, and it's quiet with just girls there. Everyone does their own thing. When I was at high school, I used to be concerned about boys looking at me. When I remember how it was then, I like it all the more here.

Q: So the library at high school was quite different?

A: At high school, there were lots of books I wanted to take out, but not many girls borrowed books. There were a few who took out loads, but most girls didn't go near the library. There was some strange kind of showing off to prove you weren't square. On the few occasions I went to the library, it had been taken over by a certain group of kids who were just interested in making a racket. I just left.

Q: What else is different?

A: When I was at high school I was always being told that I was "cute" or "carefree", but since entering this university no one says things like that. I think because of this I can really be myself at this university.

Q: The way people view you is different?

A: Yes, here there are other girls who are like me. I don't have to keep up a front all the time.

Q: Was your high school mixed?

A: Yes, I was at mixed schools since kindergarten.

Q: You said that you felt really comfortable at a woman's university. Why do you think this is so?

A: At high school, I was always being told by boys that I shouldn't do this or that because I was a girl. For example, if I wanted to borrow a *manga* which was a bit sexy, they would say, "Someone like you shouldn't read stuff like that". I used to think, "Why shouldn't I?" but I didn't want to be thought of as some kind of pervert, although everyone read them. The boys always made me worry whether I was doing something that didn't fit my "cute" image. In reality, inside I was completely different

from the image that the boys forced on me. The “real me” is actually quite boyish, even vulgar, but from my appearance I seemed shy. Because I had this shy, cute-girl image, I felt that this was how I had to be. So both consciously and subconsciously I acted so they wouldn't be disappointed. I don't know, but I was really passive then.

Q: Do you feel that now you are more assertive now?

A: Definitely. I've taken on a lot challenges and really gained a lot of experience.

Q: So things are better here?

A: Yes. So much so that now I wish I'd gone to an all girls' high school as well.

This student is an example of how four years at a women's university enabled her to regain her true self. Her comments regarding her time at high school show how the presence of boys stopped her revealing her true personality. She recalled how she would not go to the library because it was only the bookworm-types who borrowed books. The library had also become a hangout of *yankee* (delinquent) girls, so she also avoided going there because she did not want to be associated with them. Moreover, the image of being “a shy and quiet girl” was imposed on her by her male peers, and when she did things which did not conform to this image, she was told so by them. She acted according to this externally imposed image because she felt that she had to and because she wanted to be regarded favorably by the boys. However, after entering Sakura University, she was able to be herself, and, free from the gaze of boys, no longer felt overly self-conscious. Relieved of the tension that she had throughout high school, she has been able to enjoy an active university life.

There are many occasions when we try to fulfil the expectations of important others such as parents, teachers, and members of the opposite sex. This is especially so with girls who excel in their studies (Kerr, 1985). For girls entering puberty, the presence of boys is something that cannot be ignored. Internal conflicts in such girls arise when the expectations and social norms are in conflict with who they feel they really are. In Example 17, we saw how the student suppressed her true self to conform to the image that she believed was expected of her. It would thus appear that expectations for women to act and look a certain way are internalized and reflected in their behavior. The women's university, a place where it seems these male expectations do not dominate, can provide for its students a valuable environment for self-discovery and chance to live true to themselves.

6. Conclusion

(1) Findings

The aim of this paper was to ascertain through interviews how the all-female environment of a women's university influenced the attitude and behavior of the women studying there. The following three findings are important when assessing the social role

of women's universities.

Firstly, the attitude of students at women's university could generally be considered ambivalent. For example, being in an environment without men was seen on the one hand as "comfortable," but on the other as "lacking" something. While students felt that they could "cut corners" when it came to fashion because of the absence of male peers, there was another kind of pressure to look one's best, a pressure that developed out of a competitive group-mentality amongst females.

Secondly, the absence of men produced actual changes in behavior. Things Japanese women would usually refrain from, or be reluctant to do in the presence of men, for example, opening one's mouth widely and laughing out loud, or sharing a dirty joke, were all done openly at Sakura university. When the students considered why they felt so uninhibited, they become aware that in their previous mixed schools they had followed socially constructed norms of what was regarded as suitable "girls' behavior." The freedom to behave in the ways described above was not necessarily evaluated positively by all students; there were many who regarded such behavior as "going too far" or "slovenly." However, even for those students who regarded it negatively, the experience of the women's university had given them the opportunity to critically consider an important distinction, i.e. between the social norms women are pressurized into following and those that they are expected to follow as human beings.

Thirdly, an environment with no men allows students to gain an awareness of the fact that certain expectations of their male peers may have been internalized. Girls reaching puberty are acutely sensitive to the presence and expectations of boys, and their behavior is often a response to this pressure. For girls who have always been in mixed education, it is often difficult to become aware of this.

It is the choice of individual universities whether they choose to offer gender studies in their curriculum. However, students at women's universities in Japan are provided the opportunity by the nature of their all-female environment to become gender sensitive. This should be in mind when considering the value of women's universities.

(2) Further research

Whether attending a women's university and becoming gender sensitive results in the students developing into more independent women once they graduate would be an interesting avenue of investigation.

After leaving university, graduates will enter environments where there is pressure on them working to undo the influence previously exerted by their former all-female environment. Future research will seek to illuminate the dynamics of "college impact" and further understand the influence that women's universities have on other aspects of the student's personal development.

Notes

- 1 It is of interest that the No Child Left Behind Act, signed into law by President Bush on January 8, 2002, and labeled by the Whitehouse as the “most sweeping reform of federal education policy in a generation,” includes a provision authorizing local education agencies to provide same-gender schools and classrooms. According to Cuesta (2006), in 2006, about 200 public schools in the United States, both primary and secondary, were providing single-gender classes for gym or health, and also for subjects such as mathematics.
- 2 The Women's Universities Survival Research Group was set up by the author and a lecturer at the same university, Ms. Fujiwara Naoko (Human Sciences Department), as well as ten students. The word “survival” as used here has two meanings. Firstly, it refers to how the students attending a women's university live (“survive”) in an all-female environment. Secondly, it alludes to the need for women's universities to develop in order to remain viable in the future. It is hoped that through an objective understanding of the former, concrete suggestions will emerge to help achieve the latter. The group has interviewed over 200 students and carried out extensive fieldwork.
- 3 Although presented by the author at a conference, for various reasons the data in this paper has not been published until now. In the six years since the interviews were carried out, the demographic trends that threaten enrollments at tertiary institutions in Japan have continued, and in 2007 the number of university places became equal to the eighteen-year old population. In an era where students are so spoiled for choice, why do some young women still opt for women's universities? Further interviews with the students at Sakura would be of value in answering this question.

References

- Aoi, K. (1988). *Kougakureki josei no raifukoosu: Tsuda juku daigaku shusshinshya no seditanhihaku* [The life course of highly educated women: A generational comparison of Tsuda College graduates]. Tokyo: Keiso-shobo.
- Cuesta, C. (2006, September 15). Same-sex public schools hit milestone, few obstacles. Fox News. Retrieved January 14, 2009, from <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,213720,00.html>
- Hirose, Y. (2001). *Kyouiku to jendaa mondai no shin-isou — joshi wa mainoriti ka* [A new phase in gender-education: Are female students a minority?]. *Associe*, 5, 213-221.
- Ishikawa, T. (2008, October 18). Women-only universities swimming against the tide. *The Asahi Shimbun*. Retrieved December 18, 2008, from <http://www.asahi.com/english/Herald-asahi/TKY200810180038.html>
- Kerr, B. A. (1985). *Smart girls, gifted women*. Dayton, OH: Ohio Psychology Press.
- Meyer, J. W. (1970). The charter: conditions of diffuse socialization in school. In W. R. Scott (Ed.). *Social process and social structure* (pp. 564-578). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Ochanomizu, (2001). *Sotsugyousei/shuuryousei no raifukoosu to kokuritsudaigaku no shourazou ni kansuru chousakekka houkokusho* [Results of a survey on the life course of graduates from a

national university]. Ochanomizu University.

Yamada, M (2003). *Joshidaigaku ni okeru ningenkeisei — kajouna joshidai imееji to gakusei no sore heno hanou ni chuumokushite* [Character shaping of female students with a focus on the reaction of students to stereotypical images of women's university] *Journal of Sugiyama Jogakuen University* 14, 45-55.