CHAPTER ONE

"Supposing Truth Is a Woman—What Then?"

For a long time now, there has been a little something about a bicycle inside my head that I have been meaning to write down somewhere; only recently did I come to understand that here is where I should write it. In December 1991, two months after I moved to Japan to do the field study for this book, I received the loan of a bicycle from a woman who had hired me to tutor her sixteen-year-old daughter in English for an hour once a week. The woman's home was a bit inconveniently located, and the family did not have a car. She loaned me the bicycle so that I could travel to and from her house for the Friday evening tutoring sessions, but she let me store it at my apartment building and use it at my liberty during the rest of the week.

The bike was old and green, and it had the low-slung woman's crossbar, the large seat, and the upright handles that had ceased to be popular with Americans before I was born (although these days such old-fashioned bikes are enjoying a "retro" vogue among a certain twenty-something crowd). Large metal baskets had been welded to the front and back of the bike. The handles were covered with tie-on vinyl cuffs lined with fake fur to keep the cold from the rider's hands, and a rusty bell adorned the right handle bar. The brakes were "iffy" on a dry day.

My feet, and more especially my shoes, had been ill-used by all the walking I had done in my first weeks in Tokyo. I welcomed the chance to zip about the neighborhood on my new acquisition, but I soon found that I was not prepared for the packed, narrow roads. When I loaded the baskets, the bike was hard to balance, and the shaky steering scared

me. If I took downhills too fast, I found that I could not stop at inter-sections without dragging my feet in a bumping desperation. I had to remind myself that the Japanese drive British-style, that I must stay on the "opposite" side of the road so as not to confuse traffic, and on the well-traveled roads, I was constantly brushed back against cement gar-den walls, scraping a knee or knuckle as I tried to avoid a taxi blazing past. I was a preposterous white woman—zooming and weaving, screaming and praying, and yelling out awkward apologies as I cycled through Ōizumi, the section of the Tokyo ward, Nerima, where I con-ducted most of this study.

My predicament was not lost on the housewives whom I had come to study. Shortly after I acquired the bicycle, I started to get a wealth of soft-spoken instruction: how to secure packages in the basket, how to keep the seat dry in the rain, how to hold an umbrella while pedaling, and why it is important to dismount on the left side with your right leg out behind you and your left foot still on the pedal. Most important of all, I was taught which roads to choose as I moved about from an in-terview to a volunteer field site, to a co-op meeting, to the grocery store. I had known the area by its train station, its shopping streets, and its car-traveled roads, but cycling behind housewives, I came to avoid those paths for less-traveled residential streets and back alleyways, which were safer for the cyclist.

At first I merely added the routes that housewives showed me to my store of knowledge about the main thoroughfares, but sometime during my eighteen-month stay, I started to think in a wholly new manner about the streets of Ōizumi. To the housewives' routes, I began to add my own. My psychology about getting to places changed. In my mind, I no longer visualized Ōizumi according to the train station, bus stops, and commercial centers. Instead, I saw it as a collection of paths to places I had been, and I gradually found myself talking like housewives I had heard, saying things like, "Go up behind the co-op center toward the 'school road' near where Tanaka-san lives."

What I really learned through the housewives' lessons in bicycle nav-igation was an alternative means of seeing Ōizumi. A garden gate, a tiny playground, a smaller bakery, and the other cyclists—mostly women— took a prominent place in my bicycle view, but in a bus or train, or even my professor-sponsor's car, I would never have seen those things—or, even if I had, they would not have come to *make sense* to me, to be part of my daily, useful knowledge about how the world around me oper-ated. I have lived in the United States at times without a car, and I have

heard both myself and others who do not own cars lament that "when you don't drive, you don't know how to get anywhere." But, on a bike in Tokyo, I learned that when one drives one knows only how to get some places. Without a bike, and a housewife to teach me how to ride it, I never would have seen certain places in Ōizumi.

The "bicycle Ōizumi" was important for me to see when I lived in Tokyo because it eased my everyday survival. But the idea of a "bicycle Ōizumi" is important for this book, too. In essence, "bicycle Ōizumi" is a suggestion that many worlds may be layered on each other in a single spot. The world we see at a given time is chosen for us by the transportation we use to get there. Before my bicycle, Ōizumi seemed full of taxis and smoking, suited men. After I began to bike my way around, Ōizumi seemed more like the sound of piano lessons leaking from living room windows; I seldom saw suited men, and take-out food delivery boys on mopeds unquestionably outnumbered the taxis. These are prosaic examples of the connection of "seen worlds" and "transportation," but I do not think we have to stretch very far in order to speculate that a similar phenomenon occurs in a social sense. Besides, strictly speaking, whether one takes a taxi or a bicycle to one's destination is a social phenomenon in itself.[1]

Like the Ōizumi streets, politics is also a many-layered world, and what we see there depends on the social "transportation" that we have. Our social "transportation" is who we are, or our identity—as a cyclist or taxi-taker, for example—when we enter the political system. I have chosen a particular social identity, the housewife, as the "transportation" through which I want to study Japanese politics. By employing participant-observer methods borrowed from anthropology, I have tried to "follow" the paths the housewife uses when she confronts the political system, so that, in the end, I may begin to the see the political world that she sees.

The reasons why I wanted to see Japanese politics in a housewife's eyes are several—some of them peculiar and personal. However, my particular reasons for choosing to study housewives reveal tensions in political and intellectual worlds that are larger than my individual experiences. Taking a moment to explore these tensions is important because the questions such an exploration provokes help to explain why housewives in Japan should be a concern of literate students of politics everywhere.

In part, my interest in Japan was piqued by the special characteristics of the historical moment in which I happened to be beginning my

formal study of politics. When I was filling out graduate school applications in the spring of 1988, we Americans were still living in the Cold War with a presidency that had prided itself on bringing our defenses up to speed, seeking even to extend the power of our weaponry to the reaches of space. But before I had finished my second year of graduate course work, the Berlin Wall had tumbled, and, instead of new weaponry, some political leaders began to talk of a "peace dividend." The division of the world between communist and non-communist that I had known my entire life was gone—leaving, if for but an instant, the possibility that the American sort of democracy would spread everywhere.

Through that instant of possibility, however, rose a tremendous cloud of doubt. It seemed that, practically simultaneous with the early, unsuspected removal of the first stones in the political Berlin Wall, had come some rather ugly revelations about the American liberal democratic alternative. In our generalized sense of insecurity we look for alternatives (or reassurances that our path is, after all, the right one) in our competitors. Until very recently Japan dipped and bobbed before the United States as a contrast marker—a buoy marking enviable stability, harmony, and peace in social life that the American version of liberal democracy seemed unable to provide. Around Japan we have developed a sort of mythology that both explains and explains away its buoy status. In *Outnation,* journalist Jonathan Rauch attempts to probe the nature of Japan and the source of our fascination with it. He writes: "One day in the library browsing among the books on Japan, I began to see a pattern among the titles. *Queer Things about Japan. A Fantasy of Far Japan* (nonfiction). *Unfathomed Japan. Secrets of Japan. Oddities in Modern Japan.* I plucked out *The Enigma of Japanese Power,* by Karl van Wolferen, and noticed that on the back cover was written only this sentence: 'Inside Japan, nothing is quite as it seems.' Good for literary business, this queer, fantastic, unfathomed, secretive, odd, enigmatic Japan where nothing is quite as it seems."[2]

I suppose my initial desire to study Japanese politics was not much more than the sort of fascination with the "enigmatic and unfathomable" of the imagined literary Japan that Rauch described. It was mere coincidence that, the same summer I had begun to study Japanese, the Liberal Democratic Party lost its majority in the 1989 elections for the upper house of the Diet, and a record number of women won seats in a sudden burst of women's political power that came to be called the "Madonna Boom."[3] However, one day, looking at a striking photograph of the

1989 campaign period in a news magazine whose name I cannot recall, I moved from a fascination with the "Enigma of Japanese Power" to a more scholarly desire to put the puzzle together.

According to the caption, the photo showed a group of "housewives" who were yelling at Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) candidates. The housewives were upset about a new consumption tax that had been passed under the most recent, LDP-controlled government. Either the photographer had been very good or the scene rather stunning, or both. At any rate I was duly impressed by what seemed to be such a large number of women, and I was even more impressed by the evident intensity on their faces. A woman in the foreground stood out especially well; anger had completely distorted her features.

The angry women and the election results told stories that defied common notions that Japan was a buoy marking calm (if slightly corrupt) political waters. Nearly every available English account of Japanese political culture had suggested that Japan was a model for the continuity of traditional culture despite sweeping changes in the structure of political institutions.[4] Furthermore, Japan has been widely characterized as a "spectator" political culture in which citizens do not perceive it their place to be involved in politics, presumably because such involvement is not encouraged in traditional culture.[5] Nevertheless, the disgruntled housewife voters of the 1989 elections did not look like obedient spectators.

Following the election in 1989, the split in the Liberal Democratic Party that occurred in the summer of 1993, the continuance of previously unheard of coalition government, and the concomitant move among a majority of the electorate to define themselves as disaffected, "non-party" (*mutōha*) voters all indicate that our understanding of Japanese politics should permit more complex discussions than it has.[6] In retrospect, we might perceive the anger during the House of Councilors elections of 1989 as a sort of "Berlin Wall" for Japan. Yet our fascination with the past success of LDP elites has not prepared us to see beyond them. Our commitment to the study of a politics in which voters had an unvarying set of political choices has not encouraged us to examine what might happen in an altered setting. The housewives in the photograph of 1989 were precursors of a larger wave of public disillusionment with political leadership, but hardly any of us has paid their case the attention that a cool-headed application of our scientific methods would suggest it is due.[7]

In 1990, I spent a month in Japan, where I tried to learn more about

political change, the "Madonna Boom," and the angry housewives. That summer I met a Tokyo ward assemblywoman, a representative of the Seikatsu Club Co-op's political network and a self-declared "housewife" in politics. In her discussion of politics, I noticed the assemblywoman's conviction that she and other housewife members of her movement had a unique political perspective. I was drawn to that idea both because I wanted to understand the source of her conviction and because I found something attractive in her conception of how politics ought to be.

The assemblywoman's perspective was compelling to me as a political scientist because it was rich with information about politics and citizenship that had meaning not only for Japan but for anyone who studied liberal democratic citizenship—even for Americans who were beginning to despair of their own system. If the Japanese housewife did see politics a different way, then as scholars we had better know as much. We needed to have our facts straight about Japan, but we also needed the opportunity to see new worlds as we debated the best way for men and women to live. The seething confusion of current Japanese politics notwithstanding, such information seemed, and still seems, vital in the wake of the real Berlin Wall's collapse.

To speak honestly, however, I must admit that even without the demise of Eastern Bloc communism and the beginnings of the breakdown of the Liberal Democratic Party domination of Japanese politics at the end of the 1980s, my awakening to the nature of the (my) profession of political science during my years of graduate school might have driven me from the taxis to the bicycles anyway. Those who have not met me do not know (perhaps they imagine) that I am a woman. I am small in stature—five feet, three inches tall—and I look many years younger than I am. When I smile, I look younger still. I have round cheeks; my nose turns up.

People who *do* know me probably soon forget the smallness of my physical presence. I know how to make myself heard. I can make my acquaintances forget that I look more like a nice, suburban coed and hopeful housewife than a scholar with the "terminal" degree in her field. I, myself, have a harder time forgetting my exterior, however, and the structure of my profession—the demographics of its members, the subjects of its study, and the methods it employs—all have the power of reminding me as much of who I look like as of who I really am.

Back in 1988, just before I started my first graduate seminar, I went to my first national meeting of the American Political Science Association. Reflecting on his own introduction to the convention, one of my

professors mused about looking at the scholars all about him and thinking, "Finally, I have found a place where I fit in." My experience of my first meeting could not have been more different. Never in my life had I seen so many middle-aged men gathered in one place at the same time. I felt like a misfit. After a badge-wearing, tipsy conventioneer tried to pick me up while I waited in the lobby to meet a friend, I considered ditching my plans for my future altogether.[8]

My fit with political science was not nearly so bad as it first *appeared,* but I never entirely overcame the shock of that initial meeting either. I could not find myself at ease with the fact that in our broad-ranging study of political phenomena I seldom if ever encountered anyone with whom I could easily identify. Our discussions of everything from the structure of political parties to the effects of the strategic thinking of political actors on the incumbency reelection rate hovered around the elite. Of course, large voting behavior surveys and the rare crossover work actually focused on citizens. But even here, I did not hear much from voices I recognized. Where were the children of two-, three-, and four-bedroom suburban homes? Where were the women who were not in the seats of legislatures and cabinets? Where were the huge numbers of people who never bothered to vote? Of *indicators,* of *mass political behavior,* I heard quite a bit, but I could not escape the conviction that few citizens of democratic nations thought of their behavior as "mass." We use our theories to construct broad characterizations about the processes of individual political behavior. We spend relatively little time checking the dimensions in which our "indicators" and our "categories" fail to fit the people we want to study.

The Unstudied Housewife Citizens of Japan

Few scholars have studied how Japanese citizens perceive their citizenship. As I will explain again in later chapters, most studies of Japanese politics are studies of elite-level politics. The most recent English-language study of Japanese citizens, *The Japanese Voter,* is a mass opinion study modeled explicitly on *The American Voter.* The huge proportion of its data is from a *1976* survey (although the publication date is 1991), and the structure of the study is dominated by a behavioralist perspective that was called into question for its conservative, elite, white American cultural biases as early as 1969.[9]

Japanese women are frequently studied, but their political life is not. This book is the only attempt, in Japanese or English, to capture the nature of the relationship between politics and the daily lives of non-elite and Japanese homemakers in the postwar era. While certainly path-breaking, Susan Pharr's *Political Women in Japan: The Search for a Place in Political Life* (1981) focused on the political socialization of women activists.[10] Very little systematic English-language study of women in Japanese politics has occurred since the publication of Pharr's book, and indigenous research on Japanese women and politics has also tended to concentrate on activists.[11]

Studies of Japanese women in daily life have seldom included more than a cursory discussion of their political experiences because "political" is interpreted as "elite politics." Anne Imamura does find that house-wives have some specific opportunities for community participation that descend from their housewife roles. Some activities outside the home, such as the parent-teacher association (PTA), are almost unavoidable. But the purposes of Imamura's research do not allow her to probe the implications of her findings for citizenship.[12] Most English-language scholarship of Japanese women focuses on their exclusion from social participation, making assumptions about their constraint by Japanese traditions.[13]

The study of housewives has useful new information to offer spe-cialists, but it should also be of as much interest to political generalists. Despite the neglect that she has experienced at the hands of political scientists, the Japanese housewife is a marvelous subject for an investi-gation of modern political life. She is at once a member of a political system that challenges our tendency to think about liberalism in solely American terms and a representative of a gender role that seems to throw a shadow on the liberal idea of the democratic individual. Taking up the housewife in Japan's post-postwar liberal political atmosphere can be a means of readjusting our sights as democratic theorists. We replicate the work of Alexis de Tocqueville, if we do so at the price of turning his project on its head. He went to America to see democracy so that he could understand the "American" future of France.[14] We look at de-mocracy in Japan to see what that "American" future looks like, but also so that we might see truths about democracy that the powerful American example might otherwise obscure. We go to Japan to get a bicycle for political theory.

Liberalism: Its Women, Its Problems

That we require a new vehicle for seeing in liberalism is readily apparent. Like the chorus in a Greek drama, American students of liberal democracy have hailed its doom. Turning to Nietzsche, they proclaim that we have reached the age of the "last man." At best our lives are full of material comforts, but they are without the greater human excellences of spirit.[15] Scholars decry the American regime for failing to allow its citizens an enriching relationship with the political community.[16] Our politics provides a degree of individual choice, but it offers no explanation of what purpose one's choice should serve. Our politics permits us to present our interests, but it gives us little guidance for choosing among interests when we cannot address them all or address them all equally well. Our politics claims to base itself on individualism, but few citizens feel that it really adjusts itself to the exigencies in their lives. The bureaucratic systems that we build to serve the lonely and the weak are so impersonal that they accentuate the problems of individuals as much as they might solve them, and our adherence to the logic of interested individualism leaves us unable to color our politics persuasively with shades of other important motivations such as love, compassion, and a desire for caring relationships.

In his study of contemporary American populist movements, Allen Hertzke suggests that liberalism is a "crucible," and that we must "struggle through . . . its potentially corrosive individualism, its hollow moral core, its atomizing influence on communities, its disposition to cast the young adrift, and its ready abandonment of those unprepared for international competition."[17] Among traditional liberal democratic thinkers there has developed a growing consensus that liberalism is in crisis because, as the authors of *Habits of the Heart* put it, we need a means to "preserve or create a morally coherent life."[18] That moral coherence cannot survive if it is not somehow embedded in our political life. So long as morality is merely a "private" concern, we cannot make the institutions that are more and more powerful in our lives respond to the priorities that motivate us. Unfortunately, in liberalism, forging a connection between moral and political life is extremely difficult, if not impossible.

As if the unease about its seemingly empty moral legacy were not troubling enough, a yet more fundamental critique of liberalism has

come out of a growing body of feminist political theory. Feminist theorists claim to have found a paradox in liberalism's citizenship ideal. Citizenship in a liberal worldview is supposed to be universal because it is a mastery of an abstract understanding of basic principles of social contract. As the principles are abstract, so, liberals would have it, is the liberal citizen. Liberal citizenship ought to be a one-size-fits-all concept. However, feminists thinkers point out that, precisely because the liberal citizenship ideal attempts to be universal in its application, it cannot be universal in content. Women especially confound the liberal citizenship ideal because they embody a complexity in human relations that is not well described by the model of "individual" contracting to form political society that we have inherited from liberal philosophers such as John Locke.

The reasons different theorists have given for the poor fit between women and our philosophical model of the social contract individual are various. What the explanations all have in common is an emphasis on the connection between women and motherhood. In bringing forth and nurturing young life, the woman (or, in the case of some theorists, the gender role of woman qua woman) defies liberalism's picture of the radically free, self-sufficient individual, making apparent the fact that liberalism cannot be generally applied. The relationship between mother and child—from the womb until the child's maturity—is not contractual, equal, or free. The fact that the mother's health cannot be separated from that of her fetus demonstrates that the relationship extends beyond the temporary dependence of minors on their guardians.[19] Moreover men and women can never equally experience this heightened degree of obligation. Women, to the extent that they represent their gender role, must be excluded from the social contract. If not, the contract's validity as a universal principle to which anyone in logic may accede will be irrevocably disturbed.

Feminist theorist Carole Pateman argues that, at base, liberalism is a patriarchal mode of social organization; the idea of equal, contracting individuals is an incomplete picture of liberalism because the ideal of abstract individualism does not depict the fact that women are necessarily below men in status. Women's inclusion in the social contract is unequal because they are submitted, through marriage, to a sexual contract that comes prior to and as the basis for the social contract. Marriage, viewed as a form of "contract" in the era of liberalism, replaces the coverture of women in marriage that existed prior to liberalism. Locke argues that the conjugal relationship would occur even in a state

of nature where no "social" contract existed.[20] Therefore, Pateman concludes that, while the liberal marriage seems to allow women an equal status with their mates, it actually preserves the effect of excluding women from political society because the world of "family" is deemed a "private" issue, and a woman's sexuality—the very reason for her tie to a man—also remains natural and private. By placing women within a conjugal relationship that is determined to be natural, liberal thinking assures that, to the extent that women act *as women,* they cannot partake of the *political existence* that men get when they surrender their ties to the state of nature and form an alternative context for their behaviors— the social contract.[21]

Pateman's is but one feminist perspective on women's exclusion from the social contract. Working from Hobbes, Kathleen Jones argues that although women are naturally free and the natural masters of children, they are necessarily subjected to men with the formation of political society. When men covenant to form political authority, their "plurality of voices" is reduced into the "one will" of the sovereign. Jones explains: "Participation in this kind of authority amounted to the annihilation of difference because difference was understood to be divisive and destructive. In fact, Hobbes' point was that the sovereign was to make the multitude into one by overcoming their differences."[22] Women could not participate *as women* in the authorship of the sovereign because their nature as bearers of children meant that they had bodies that were "divided and dividing" and, thus, defied the "univocal" nature of the sovereign.[23]

Jones's argument that women violate the univocality principle of the idea of social contract necessary for liberal democracy is echoed in the work of other feminist theorists as well. Iris Marion Young suggests that liberalism assumes a certain "homogeneity" in its idea of "universal" citizenship.[24] Because society contains structured inequality, even when citizenship is universally extended, the idea of citizenship will be more representative of societal elites—dominant white males—than others. Those who in actuality differ from the "homogeneous citizen" are forced to transform their differences into "neutral" categories that reinforce social inequality.

A concrete example of how this works in social policy is maternity leave. "Equal" treatment in a system that views citizens as constructed on a general, homogeneous model forces an interruption of work due to pregnancy into the "neutral" category of "disability."[25] Of course, becoming pregnant signals not that a woman is disabled, but quite the

opposite. The pressure to reclassify the woman's *ability* to be pregnant as a *dis*ability demonstrates the impossibility of incorporating women as they really are into liberalism's "universal" public sphere.

Other feminist theorists, such as Jean Bethke Elshtain, also emphasize the unsatisfactory manner in which maternity, an issue of tremendous *human* importance, is dismissed from the public sphere, and they call for a renewed politics in which the special contributions that women make in the family, for example, may be revalued.[26] However, even a broader inclusion of the maternal woman in public spaces cannot save liberalism for feminists. As Mary Dietz argues in "Citizenship with a Feminist Face," advocating the inclusion of women in the public sphere in the gender role of mother and nurturer can be a means of reinforcing a view of woman's citizenship where her voice is limited to public issues that fall within the socially defined feminine sphere.[27] To require that women define themselves by their maternal capacities is a form of "essentializing" that locks women into gender roles that were predetermined in a society which presumes women's inequality and relinquishes the possibility of restructuring those roles so that one's sex does not determine one's social capacities.[28]

Demanding that women fit themselves for a more generalized citizenship, however, seems to have similar implications. In "The Democratic Potential of Mothering," Patricia Boling points out that neither the Elshtain nor the Dietz alternative is satisfactory. On the one hand, what "maternal thinking" is, why only women can do it, and how exactly it will transform the public sphere are questions that those who advocate a new inclusion of maternal women into liberalism cannot answer. On the other hand, women's inclusion in actual politics has often been linked to their interests as mothers; a rejection of maternalism as a basis for women's citizenship may lead to a rejection of many real-life women's possibilities for making a distinctive contribution to public life.[29]

Feminists and more mainstream theorists alike are convinced that liberalism presents its citizens with utterly irresolvable dilemmas.[30] Despite their broad consensus on the desperation of liberalism's circumstances at precisely the moment in history when it seems to be the most attractive political possibility, however, the theorists have the stench of ivory tower mold about them. Surely it matters to real people if a real political alternative brings emptiness, alienation, and the devaluation of an entire gender and its human contributions. Yet the theorists who have dug up these apparently real problems do not perform extended investigations of their origins and effects among real people.

Most theorists stay locked up in the writings of a few philosophers, and they do not even talk much among readers of the same thinkers. For example, Iris Marion Young and Thomas Pangle are both desperate to unearth a basis for a more meaningful citizenship, but neither seems to notice that the other exists. Young's astute observations about power relations and "homogeneous citizenry" are not informed by Pangle's extensive understanding of the evolution of citizen ideals from ancient times; the reverse is also true. In the United States a few scholars, such as Bellah and Hertzke, have attempted to connect the theory with the people, but such undertakings have remained limited to the American example.

The dominance of the American case study is rather curious considering the generalized assumption, among the mainstream authors like Pangle, and even more so in the feminist writings, that liberalism shapes its unsatisfactory legacy through the power of *ideas*. Maybe the problems with liberalism are actually only problems with the American culture, but we cannot know as much if we do not follow what happens to different societies with similarly liberal politics. Theorists want to defend their devotion to the examination of the "great Western" texts as an undertaking with benefits universal to the most diverse populations, but they cannot make that defense if they have not looked at political life abroad. They have no standard by which to decide what "universal" means.

Moreover, the scarcity of studies of real women filling traditional gender role models and their relationship with liberal politics leaves feminist critics of liberalism with a devastating lack of evidence. Feminists may claim that women confound the liberal ideal of citizenship, but if they continue to base their arguments on rereading after rereading of the "dominant male" philosophical texts, they will have a hard time convincing either the proprietors of the dominant interpretation of those texts or the women they hope to empower that feminists really know what women's problems are.

The Nature of the Bicycle Citizens Study

In terms of thinking about politics, the liberal democratic theorists, traditional and feminist, are taking taxis. Their roads are real routes to political ideas, but they are already well-traveled. In this book, I am pedaling a bicycle by trying to record how Japanese housewives

perceive their citizenship in a liberal democratic political system located in a culture vastly different from the American example. I still hope to get to some of the same destinations that the theorists in their taxis seek. I want to know, for example, what the liberal democratic citizen looks like. I want to know if women, or, more specifically, if women in their gender roles, fit that citizenship model. I want to know what that citizenship feels like. But I want to get to all of these destinations by taking routes we have yet to see.

The importance that my "bicycle approach" places on different means of seeing different political worlds extends to both my methodology and my subject matter. The pictures of housewife citizenship that I paint on the following pages are the result of my analysis of eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in northwest Tokyo between November 1991 and May 1993. I chose an ethnographic approach over other, more traditional political science approaches because, despite its well-documented shortcomings, ethnography seemed to present the greatest possible opportunity of avoiding being trapped in unexamined preconceptions.[31] Traditional political science methodologies such as the theory-driven mass opinion surveys are tremendously problematic for the study of women.[32]

Linda Zerilli and Diana Owen assert that political scientists have been unable to get a full view of women as citizens because "women are visible to the conceptual and empirical lens of political science only when they resemble or fail to resemble men."[33] They argue that political scientists do not "examine consciously and critically" the "facts" that correlate with biological sex. "In the absence of a meaningful critique of the social origins and maintenance of the sexual division of labor, for example, women can easily be blamed for 'choosing,' more or less freely, a muted role in political life," they explain.[34]

A similar argument has been made by Japanese sociologist Ehara Yumiko, who suggests that the best means of probing the Japanese woman's relationship with political power is the ethnographic method. Ethnomethodology offers the benefit of focusing a researcher on the consciousness of her subject. In doing so, she can begin to understand the source of a subject's actions as what Ehara calls "something midway between force and freedom." In other words, people, especially women, are often conscious of acting in a manner that is neither a complete submission to a power system that dominates them nor a fair execution of what they want to and believe that they should do.[35]

Ehara says that this in-between-power-and-values consciousness may

be very strong in women as a result of the structure of ideologies of modernity such as democracy and productivity. As participants in the economy, men are encouraged to evaluate themselves according to the universal standards applied in these ideologies. But as the development of modern work patterns led to a division of labor where men worked away from home and women, because they were women, were consigned to the family sphere, a set of ideologies developed for women's work that were contrary to the universalistic standards applied to men. Women came to be seen as representatives of particularistics — individualism, emotion, and love in specific situations. Women are caught having to act in response to a social structure that does not recognize their motivations as universally valid, and they are likely to be conscious of a dissonance between what they think and how their actions appear.[36]

Ehara suggests that an already present tendency toward particularistic, or situation-specific, thinking in Japanese society exaggerates the Japanese woman's consciousness of the disparity between her reasons for her actions and the content of those actions. Moreover, standard political science tends to view political actors as creators of political structures and to ignore the web of historical and cultural forces that constrain the shape of those actors' choices. Without investigating the consciousness a subject has about her actions, we cannot see the constraints that operate within and result from her very exercise of free choice, and we can have only the simplest understanding of the nature of power in a given political system.[37]

Significantly, we cannot "see" the constraining power of gender structures easily in modern politics because modern universal ideologies do not recognize gender divisions as relevant. Because ethnomethodology does not require us to have "objective" proof of the existence of constraining structures but lets us instead begin an investigation from a person's *consciousness* of a feeling of constraint, we have a greater chance of seeing beyond the boundaries of modern ideologies. Ehara explains: "Because ethnomethodology departs on its [investigation] from the position of the ordinary person's cognition, it must direct itself to explaining that cognition. It cannot say that when one feels forced, the feeling is not power but only an individual phenomenon or something imagined. When someone senses a problem, the ethnomethodologist seeks to explain how the problem is sensed, why the problem is sensed."[38]

I share Ehara's and others' concerns about the tendency of mainstream political science methodology to constrain our perceptions of political phenomena and hamper our capacity to understand the

complicated practices of citizens and the labyrinthine shape of power. These concerns have shaped my methodological approach in ways that I can best explain by returning to the images of the taxi and the bicycle. In a taxi-driven approach to the study of non-elite political behavior, we would place a high value on gathering a large amount of relatively accurate information about our subject of study with as much rapidity as possible—just as a traveler with heavy bags would probably catch a cab to the train station even in expensive Tokyo because carrying those bags by hand through overcrowded, winding streets would be arduous. The "taxi" student of Japanese housewives would develop a table of "indicators" of "housewifeness," assemble a barrage of questions seeking information such as level of education, family income, and age that had proven interesting on surveys of other political subjects, and prepare a series of "thermometers" (or scales) that would elicit the extent of a surveyed individual's "political participation" according to a generalized set of standards. From the taxi research, we would learn some important information about hundreds, perhaps thousands, of women. We could quickly and confidently make some generic observations about women. We could soon know which already established political groups they join in the highest numbers, how many vote how often, how many have ever hung a poster, if the richer were more political than the poorer, and maybe many other things as well.

In taxi research, we can make a big suitcase of data rapidly available, but in doing so we must begin with a great many presumptions about our subjects of study. Ideas that would seem to be deeply interior to a person's understanding of herself (for example, whether she called herself a housewife or not) can be understood only to the extent that our original, generalizable indicators are useful. In two ways, however, our indicators might already be compromised. First, we would have to make assumptions about the proper array of categories among which to allow our survey subjects to choose. If our understanding of the survey subject is already quite limited, we cannot be sure our definition of categories is as sensible and relevant as it should be. Second, the importance placed on the generalizability of our categories would force us to flatten out the differences in individual cases. Such flattening of differences would necessarily occur before we begin our data collection, during the construction of questions that can work for everyone in the same way. A similar flattening would also take place after we have done the data collection, in the process of our reading patterns that are statistically significant. For study subjects who—as Ehara suggests Japanese women