The unbearable lightness of collectivity: complicity, voice and exit

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Abstract

Poststructuralism provided feminists with a useful shift from a focus on 'women' to the constructivist conception of 'gender' as relational and constituted by power. Diverse concepts of power have proven useful in understanding normative projects requiring conceptions of societal and institutional change toward gender equality. Seyla Benhabib's critical theory dual categories of the 'explanatory-diagnostic' and the 'anticipatory-utopian', integrated with complementary frameworks incorporating feminist institutionalism and organizational theories of voice, visibility and exit, underpin this empirical research. Drawing from extensive interpretivist data from sixty-five in-depth interviews of professors at twelve Japanese universities, this project uses an exemplary case to explore the concepts of collectivity and power in the institutional gender regimes. The assumption that Japan falls on the collective side of the individualist/collectivist bifurcation has found support but also has been disputed. This paper found that in the Japanese institutional environments of universities, collectivity was strongly exhibited in the form of male homophily. This was found to be exclusionary of women who did not conform to the 'gendered logics of appropriateness' that have typically positioned women as upholders of the institutionalized male status hierarchies. This research contributes to empirical explorations on mechanisms of gender segregation in Japanese institutions.

Introduction

Regions that embrace the ideal of gender egalitarianism, such as the northern European countries, may exhibit relative openness in dealing with gender inequality in institutions. However, in regions where male-dominance is entrenched in employment practices and principles, amelioration of gender

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injustice can be particularly complex. Raising the issue of gender in institutions has generally been found to be controversial and this is particularly true in male-dominated contexts. While justice within borders has received sizeable attention in social and political philosophy as have critiques of policy development, there has been a shift in focus toward global justice as well as an increased focus on international laws that promote human rights norms within states.

International laws, such as the United Nation's (UN) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), are undergirded by the duties that states are responsible to uphold in order to comply with international standards, thus bridging rights within borders with global standards. For the basket of women's human rights embodied in international laws such as CEDAW, enforcement has been a key international (Hellum and Aasen 2013a, 2013b), as well as domestic, concern and this is true in regards to Japan, where state policies and cultural norms exhibit resistance to changes toward gender equality (Savery 2007; Ochiai 2014). Theoretical and philosophical debates have revolved around responsibilities of ensuring women's rights generally, while one key area of import is the right to non-discrimination in employment. However, there is the question of whose duty it is to rectify discrimination that interferes with women's rights as they are ensured under CEDAW, given that domestic enforcement in Japan is known to be weak. While domestic laws that counteract international laws protecting women's human rights need to be interrogated, institutional praxis that (re)produces inequality also requires scrutiny, as micro-level organizational processes reveal both how reproduction of inequality occurs as well as indicate potential avenues to improvement.

Feminist scholarship has found that despite the ratification of CEDAW and domestic laws that guarantee gender equality (the Japanese 1947 Constitution, the Equal Employment Opportunity Laws—EEOL—of 1985 and 1997), there has been little amelioration in women's employment equality in Japan. As highly educated women enter the work force, economic arguments that promote employment commensurate with women's abilities are more likely to take hold than appeals to women's human rights due to the historical emphasis on economic development (Peng 2001, 2012). Notwithstanding the effects of Japan's compressed modernity, with the push and pull of 'housewifization' and employment (Ochiai 2010), as well as women's proclivities, institutions are key arenas that produce and reproduce injustice in employment.

A key feminist institutional insight is the 'economic' loss to organizations in

the pursuit of bolstering certain types of masculinity, such as stereotypes of male competence, leadership and expertise, even when their reinforcement may actually take precedence in lieu of the actual job requirements and task goals. The institutional 'logics of gender appropriateness' are built on gender stereotypes (Glick and Fiske, 1999) that position being a man and maleness as more desirable than being a woman and femaleness for positions of authority, such as *sennin* (lifetime, full-time) faculty positions, which this present research explores. Understanding the gendering of institutions is imperative since it has been found that workplace masculinity and efforts expended on reinforcing masculinity command a cost in organizations since they have a negative impact not only on workplace relations, including the marginalization of women, but also interfere with good decision making (Ely and Meyerson 2000: 5).

Of particular concern and the focus of this paper, is the issue of power, which necessitates normative modes of theorizing and empirical examination rather than a sole focus on economic efficiency. Since contextualized interrogation may indicate the stigmatization of normative explorations such as gender regime change, gender scholars and activists are faced with a dilemma, as was the case in this current research undertaking that examines voice and silence (Hirschman 1970; Lewis and Simpson 2010a, 2010c). In this research in Japanese universities, there was broad resistance to incorporating gender awareness and addressing gender equality, as has been found elsewhere in Japanese institutions (Fujimura-Fanselow 2011). The quandary is that interrogating and challenging power abuses requires moral, normative stances and bringing them into the open was found to have little formal, nor indeed informal, legitimacy in the Japanese universities that were examined in this research. This is not surprising, since norms preserve and conceal gender privileges and protect them from substantive interrogation and challenge.

Dealing with controversial issues such as gender inequality is difficult since silence in organizations is pervasive (Morrison and Milliken 2000), and raising contentious subjects such as gender equality can be stigmatizing, thus leading to apprehension and self-silence (Piderit and Ashford 2003). Addressing gender inequality has often resulted in tensions and resistance in most regions, and this has been found in Japanese institutions, including universities (Fujimura-Fanselow 2011). While women's participation rates in employment might be assumed to have a strong impact on men's gender attitudes, men's gender ideology is 'distinctly related to their individual breadwinning experiences' (Cha and Thébaud 2009: 237), as it requires negotiation and resolution within families.

Traditional gender ideologies continue to be relatively unassailable in regions such as Japan where male breadwinning remains entrenched. Given that Japan's ratification of international women's human rights laws requires equality 'sooner rather than later' (Hellum and Aasen 2013b), the rigidities of gender regimes and seeming immutability of employment inequality requires concerted effort and immediate attention.

Kanter's (1977) seminal work on gender in organizations that examined difficulties token women faced in male arenas has been analyzed in terms of the hidden dimensions of gendered power (Jeanes *et al* 2011; Lewis and Simpson 2012). There is a plethora of research on the 'logics of gender appropriateness' in institutions that generally disadvantage women (Chappell and Waylen 2013; Kenny 2007; Kenny and Mackay 2009). Normative assumptions around prescribed gender roles that privilege men in the workplace enforce the notion of the unassailability of gender *differences.* The resultant entitlement to disparate status is accompanied by a denial of male embodiment and an overemphasis of female embodiment. However, increasing women's numerical representation does not necessarily lead to diminished tensions or reduced exclusion faced by token women, but rather may lead to more discrimination, hostility, competition and less cooperation. In fact, women may seek to attain 'strategic invisibility' in order to erase anything that marks them as women and may adopt masculine strategies (Lewis and Simpson 2010b: 155-156).

Social control of women has been evident not only in the gendered exercise of power that has resulted in the curtailing of women's agency in Japanese institutions (Hayes 2014), but also in social norms legitimizing sanctions that disadvantage women in the patriarchal society. The resultant sanctions exercised on those who defy gender-appropriate norms affect how behaviour is interpreted and dealt with within the institutional hierarchy. Women who are ambitious and assertive tend to be judged negatively and possibly face severe sanctions, unlike their male counterparts who are praised for similar behaviour. Research shows there are relatively few women who have been able to succeed in being powerful without facing approbation. In fact, a key insight of feminist research on organizations is that women in male-dominated arenas often have to choose between being effective or being liked, but cannot have both (Sandberg 2013).

This paper explores the integration of complementary frameworks while incorporating critical theory into a multidimensional analysis (Allen 2013; Arendt 1969; Butler *et al,* 1995; Foucault 1977, 1978; Foucault and Kritzman 1988; West and Zimmerman 2002, 2009) so as to move this present normative research

project forward. Seyla Benhabib's characterization of critical theory as dichotomously 'exploratory-diagnostic' and 'anticipatory-utopian' (Allen 2007) is useful in envisioning institutional change toward amelioration. Building on poststructuralist multi-dimensional approaches to power, this feminist institutional analysis, through an interpretivist relational approach, examines the micro-interactions in the gender regimes in relation to aberrant power that is exercised in the form of gender-based harassment, or power harassment. This empirical study draws from extensive data from sixty-five in-depth interviews of professors at twelve university institutions, using an exemplary case to explore collectivity and power regarding gender regimes in institutions.

First, theories on voice, silence and exit will be discussed, followed by an analysis of empirical data illustrating the impact of abuses of institutional power. This will be interrogated in terms of individuality and collectivity. A discussion of power abuse, which is instrumental in unhinging women's legitimacy, authority and autonomy as holders of tenured academic faculty positions, concludes this paper.

Voice, silence and exit

Hirschman's (1970) seminal work theorized institutional change (Campbell 2004; Scott 2014) through micro-level agency in order to interrogate organizational concerns and potential amelioration. Discontent can be expressed through exit (leaving employment) or voice, both of which may be tempered by loyalty. The asymmetries that individuals face in organizations in terms of their capacity to exit indicate the complex relationship between exit and voice. Where exit is relatively easy, voice may atrophy. Furthermore, when the possibility of exit is low or nonexistent, voice is hindered. Generally, the implicit or explicit threat or possibility of an individual being able to exit is important in making voice influential.

Whether or not voice is expressed individually or collectively through groups such as unions, having a voice is crucial. Discussing corporate issues, problems and ideas can be encouraged in optimal organizational climates. Since voice is discouraged when exit is both easily attainable and when it is strongly impeded, for individuals to be effective and able to speak out, exit needs to be plausible, though tempered. In other words, for institutions to benefit from the exercise of voice, the middle range possibility of exit (not too easy, not too difficult) is necessary. In terms of Japanese faculty positions, exit is highly constrained

through expectations of age normativity and uninterrupted careers, and is particularly limited for women whose employment options, commensurate with their qualifications, are hampered due to male-normativity. Loyalty can temper exit as an option, especially when exit as a strategy is not appealing, as has been argued to be pertinent in Japanese institutions (Mouer and Kawanishi 2005).

In empirical work exploring the Japanese context (Aoki 2012; Keizer 2010; Witt 2006), it has been found that voice continues to be prevalent through internal organizational unions and largely outweighs exit. This is argued to generally be the case in coordinated market economies (CMEs), where exit is more constrained than in liberal market economies (LMEs), and corporate unions are deemed significant in this respect. However, these above-mentioned analyses were not gender disaggregated nor did they specifically examine voice in terms of gender issues. Firm-specific training in combination with age-normative hiring that disadvantages women, as well as the male-dominated context of the universities, indicate that these findings require interrogation through a gendered lens.

Organizational voice is viewed as positive, since the expression of ideas, issues and problems can result in improvements. However, silence in organizations is ubiquitous and has been found to be motivated by resignation, fear, and the desire to maintain cooperative relations. In Japan, the latter might be expressed as *wa,* or a desire for harmony, though cooperative relations in institutions are similarly important across cultures/regions. In constrast, harassment is a gender-based social breach that results in disruption of cooperative relations. In examining sex-based[1] harassment and nonsexual harassment Berdahl (2007) argued that these occur when distinctions between the sexes and the superiority of one sex are emphasized. She argued that sex-based harassment is more likely where these distinctions occur as individuals may be motivated to protect and enhance their status through disparaging others. Speaking out against transgressions triggers retaliation, isolation, and criticisms, while silence to injustice results in dissatisfaction at work, emotional stress and even negative health effects (Berdahl 2007). Harassment is a form of 'doing gender' (West and Zimmerman 2002) that enforces specific forms of masculinity in men and attempts to compel femininity in women in organizational praxis, (re) producing rigidities of gender norms by isolating those who violate them.

Milliken *et al* (2003) found that expectations of negative repercussions affect the exercise of voice, with fear being a significant motivator, though the

1. Berdahl (2007) specifically uses the term sex-based versus gender-based harassment.

assumptions of negative outcomes may be over-emphasized. Of particular interest are the collective dynamics that discourage voice and that silence is learned through the word-of-mouth relaying of organizational information from colleagues and through observation, particularly in unsupportive organizational cultures; Milliken *et al* found there is a collective nature to silence (19). Relational consequences of breaking silence include, for example, being labeled negatively, and careers being adversely affected. Power through labeling activates schema and 'alters interpersonal interactions, changes social identity, and creates self-fulfilling prophecies that seemingly validate the labels' (Ashford and Humphrey 1995, cited in Milliken *et al* 2003: 20). They also found that interpersonal consequences of being labeled negatively result in loss of social capital (loss of trust, diminished power, social rejection and exclusion, and diminished capacity to do one's work), which motivated individuals to be silent. Additionally, they found that often in cases where there was widespread knowledge of organizational injustice, this information was not relayed upwards to management. Since negative information does not tend to flow upward, due to the reasons just stated above, yet positive information does flow upward, this often creates misunderstandings by senior management of the nature of the organizational relations, which could potentially result in senior management misjudgments. Milliken *et al* (2003) argue that since lack of voice can lead to potential problems, including stress and health issues for those remaining silent, organizational design should aim to encourage and promote communication (24).

Cortina and Magley (2003) argued that interpersonal mistreatment should be viewed as an organizational responsibility since those who are victimized are often left with no legitimized course of action. Rather than an unbiased system that is gender neutral, institutional mechanisms operate to reinforce the institutional gender regimes (Hayes 2014; Nemoto 2010, 2013). Simpson and Lewis (2005) have shown how the gender of men is made invisible through the supposed gender-neutral institutional practices and principles, and this contributes to micro-advantages being accrued to men, and micro-disadvantages to women. Furthermore, harassment is more likely for women in male-dominated occupations. Women with assertive personalities are subjected to more harassment, as well as those who display characteristics typically associated with men (i.e. leadership and ambition), and are subjected to social sanctions such as being silenced, publicly chastised, or being told to wear make-up (Berdhal 2007: 647). Settles *et al* (2007), using multiple regression analyses, found that in male-dominated science departments, negative work environments for women faculty

resulted in negative job satisfaction, though having women mentors contributed to women having a voice, which in turn led to higher job satisfaction.

Piderit and Ashford (2003) found that speaking out about gender issues, for some women, was limited to private, personal broaching of the topic due to fears of being labeled negatively. However, they found that this strategy for change was the most ineffective. The lack of public discussion about gender led to silence since the issue was perceived to be an individual, private endeavor that was 'undiscussible' (1496). In contrast, there were women who personally took proactive approaches and were willing to reveal their commitment to gender equality and 'do whatever it takes' (1492). This was found to be the most effective strategy for exacting change in gender injustice. As this current research project examines how a particular individual, as well as the 'collective' or group, dealt with power abuse that was widely known, the question of voice and silence of collectives in organizations was central. Dyne *et al* (2003) posit that being 'other-oriented', that is, having a goal of cooperation, can result in 'ProSocial Silence' or 'ProSocial Voice' (1362), with the former using silence to maintain cooperation and the latter also being based on cooperation but through expression of problems having a goal of change (1363). However, silence for the sake of cooperation can lead to the Abilene Paradox (Harvey, 1988, cited in Dyne *et al* 2003: 1373), where alternatives are not explored and though outcomes through conformity are unwanted by most everyone, no one can be 'blamed' for their silence.

Power harassment or *akahara* (academic harassment) and non-sexual bullying in Japan, as elsewhere, have entered public consciousness. In the early years of awareness of *akahara*, a legal case against harassment (Ogoshi 2001) was won, and the plaintiff wrote that hostile work environments were an 'increasingly notorious but rarely highlighted issue in Japan'. Ogoshi wrote, her case was based on 'unjust distribution of research funds; attempts to force me to resign or transfer; and refusal to sign documents needed for my work to be done ... Bullying towards women or those who do not conform in Japan's academia is rampant' (396). The majority of private universities (77.1% by 2004) have now established consultation on harassment (MEXT 2004, cited in Hata 2007), and legislation has strengthened regulations (Munakata 2001; Muta 2008; Shinohara 2008; Uggen and Shinohara 2009).

Empirical analysis: Voice/silence and exit

This section on the empirical analysis begins with an introduction to the

exemplary case that is utilized as a means to illuminate the micro-level interactions of the abuse of power dynamics that occurred across the range of universities. This section is separated into two sections, starting with individual voice/silence and followed by collective voice/silence.

Individual voice/silence

Professor Okada[2] had worked at Shakai Daigaku for eighteen years. The vice president of the university, Professor Kitayama, was her mentor and supportive of her pedagogical goals, which included a broad range of sociological areas, including feminism and gender studies, which she said she had integrated into all of her courses. She reported during her interview that this was not only important for student learning but as a feminist she indicated this was required by international laws such as CEDAW. These international laws require the populace to have a broad understanding of equality, including how the mechanisms of segregation, stereotyping and discrimination operate, as well as the guarantee of gender equality in employment.

According to Professor Okada, her working situation from the beginning of her career was exemplary. This was substantiated by her colleagues participating in this research. They described an excellent collegial and working atmosphere, where people got along, had allies and engaged in mutual support. They characterized Professor Okada as having a loyal student following, with excellent student evaluations. The department respected her professionalism and expertise, often soliciting her ideas and opinions regarding pedagogy and student issues. According to Professor Okada as well as other interviewees, students continuously mentioned to other professors that they were learning interesting things in her classes and that they enjoyed them, and her popularity was known by the administration. Student surveys every semester showed that she was above average on all aspects, such as effectiveness, professionalism, ability, and popularity.

This capability to work effectively in the institution, what Pansardi (2011) terms 'power with' in the 'opportunity context', highlights how institutions not only constrain, but also enable (Giddens 1984, 1987). This feminist conception of power as consensus-based collectivity is not only useful in illuminating institutional power in contexts of cooperation, it is also consistent with the principle of collectivity that is embodied in Japanese corporate consensus decision

2. Professor Okada, Professor Kitayama and Shakai Daigaku are pseudonyms.

making, which is underpinned by an ideal that promotes consideration of conflicting ideas and embracing diversity.

Around her fifteenth year Professor Okada said she started having problems after her mentor, Professor Kitayama, retired. Another male professor, Professor Yamashita, took over the administrative position. Speaking of Professor Yamashita and the ensuing problems, Professor Okada said:

> He was really against me. He began to bully me and things just completely got out of control. You know, he would call me into the office every day! For what? He was making this list of everything he didn't like about me, and going around actively collecting people's supposed complaints. This was so ridiculous. Of course, every teacher has some students who don't love them. But I had a really good record and was, well, really professional. And popular with students. Gee! He would go into my class before I got there, and start feeding the students, like, with doubt and asking them, seriously, to come forward with complaints. I knew he was collecting ammunition to be used against me. It was all so unbelievably unprofessional!

Professor Okada indicated an awareness of the build up of antagonism that resulted in Professor Yamashita's unprofessional harassing behaviour. She started to be reprimanded and unjustly criticized for behaviour that had, in the past, brought her praise and popularity. Because the administrator had gathered a list of what Professor Okada believed to be trivial complaints that he had collected and compiled to use against her, she began to realize she was losing her professional reputation, not from her lack of professionalism, but from the power that Professor Yamashita was able to wield due to his administrative position. Mackey and Martinko (2012) distinguished bullying from harassment, with the former making it *difficult* to defend oneself, while the latter is the *inability* to defend oneself (52). Professor Okada perceived these changes to be an indication of her changing relationship with the university into a strong situation of bullying that eventually evolved into a severe case of power harassment. Using the two lenses of economics versus human rights, an economic analytic approach towards institutional problems such as this would posit that power harassment potentially results in the loss of 'productivity' or 'efficiency', while a focus on human rights would emphasize how this contravenes international human rights laws, such as CEDAW, as well as domestic laws such as the Japanese Equal Employment Opportunity Laws (EEOL).

Collectivity and voice/silence

Professor Okada and her colleagues, some of whom participated in this research, believed that it was her success as a teacher, researcher and colleague, as well as her field of expertise (gender/feminism) that made her such a target of Professor Yamashita. Additionally, Professor Okada's colleagues believed that Professor Yamashita found her particular approach to professionalism to be 'unfeminine', and had difficulty dealing with her 'exceptional intelligence', 'superb linguistic abilities' and her abilities as 'a good strategist'. He derided her area of expertise and there were instances where his contempt regarding this was overt. Professor Okada spoke of how her colleagues dealt with the situation:

> They were only willing to stand behind me and then to send me off on my own, completely on my own, because they didn't want to be the next to be attacked. I was supposed to feel like their silent support would help. But it didn't.

A group of her colleagues secretly took her out for dinner and told her they knew what was happening and that they were against what Professor Yamashita was doing to her. However, they said they could not speak up on her behalf, but could lend her, in their words, 'silent support', while suggesting she should *gaman* (endure the harassment). They explained that they could only support her in this silent, secret manner as there were no protocols or procedures to protect them. Because of the compiled list of complaints fabricated against her that had been used as an excuse to harass her, as well as the lack of overt support from colleagues, she said she had no chance of winning any fight against the department.

Professor Okada's colleagues expressed fear that they would be targeted should they intervene in the harassment. This fear contributed to their inaction. Ely and Padavic (2007: 1131) posited that power operates 'on two mutually reinforcing fronts: external and internal', with the internal operating as self-enforced compliance. Foucault's incorporation of Bentham's panopticon has been employed in feminist analyses of power and is useful in this instance to conceptualize her colleagues' non-action. They seemed to rationalize their lack of action through an assumption that there would not be protection and enforcement through the existing formal anti-harassment policies. They feared reprisals should they appear non-cooperative. Colleagues exhibited various forms of self-monitoring to conform to norms. The fear of being labeled as trouble-makers

propelled them to keep their convictions in check about gender equality since they viewed being overtly connected with 'anything to do with gender' as the trigger that caused Professor Okada's harassment. Since negative labeling is known to be strongly stigmatizing, resulting in self-fulfilling behaviours and interpretations, this is an effective strategy in creating silence in institutions. The institutionalized normativity of gender issues, which portrayed them as an individual 'women's' problem versus an organizational issue, was instrumental in male colleagues not getting involved. Additionally, male colleagues in particular expressed the importance of not compromising their relationships with others, especially men with influence or power. Her colleagues told Professor Okada that, because they themselves were not being bullied at that point, it was between her and Professor Yamashita (though she said eventually others were also bullied).

Professor Okada's outspokenness, while lauded by colleagues and students alike, seemed to be a particular source of antagonism for Professor Yamashita. Some colleagues were aware that her 'unusual outspokenness' was, in actuality, relatively gentle compared to her male colleagues, who were viewed as leaders for exhibiting their assertiveness, intelligence, and expertise. Her milder exhibition of the same qualities that were praised in men, were judged as 'unfeminine', aggressive and rude for women, while her assertiveness and ambition were derided. Colleagues reported that it was known that Professor Okada would not tolerate maltreatment, and they viewed Professor Yamashita's abuse as 'putting her in her place'. Drawing on the broader data from all the universities from which the empirical data were collected, the knowledge that women who aspired to 'play equally with the boys' or who transgressed gender norms could potentially be subjected to harassment with impunity, resulted in severe consequences for many women in the various universities.

A number of Professor Okada's colleagues that took part in this research concurred that this incident had a strong impact on their work environment, including statements that they were 'traumatized' and 'have been considering leaving'. It was the silence of others that was the most disturbing, and Professor Okada and many of the female participants expressed frustration and anger that their male colleagues had done little more than saying, in private, that they thought Professor Yamashita was in the wrong. Silence as a response to conflict at work may be a way to avoid disrupting power relations (Martin 1990). Examining the absence of voice and visibility/transparency in organizations, Simpson and Lewis (2005: 1262) argued that 'privileged discursive regimes are based largely on hegemonic understandings of masculinity'. They maintain that 'normative

rules marginalize and suppress sexual harassment' as an issue through labelling it as insignificant and therefore not worth discussing (1262).

The male research participants' awareness of the power-harassment incident was acknowledged privately, through comments that it was 'abhorrent' and 'unconscionable'. Women's sense of powerlessness was attributed to the reality that a strong collective of women was not possible as there were so few women in faculty positions (this was true of all the universities examined), and was evidenced by their overwhelming silence. Since Japan has an extremely low number of women in faculty positions, the lack of strict enforcement of policies that aim to protect women faculty is particularly problematic due to this imbalance in representation that leaves women particularly vulnerable.

While the university had formal anti-harassment procedures in place, in the form of a harassment committee that would convene when cases emerged, Professor Okada and her colleagues expressed a lack of confidence in its efficacy. Given that formal anti-harassment procedures were in place, one might expect that it would be someone with Professor Okada's particular characteristics—a knowledgeable, academic feminist, a senior faculty member, and an accomplished academic—who would have been able to utilize the harassment procedures. Yet the reality of the corporate culture dissuaded her. This illustrates that the formal procedures were not substantive despite the administration's assertion that the university had complied with legislation regarding gender injustices. Of particular relevance were the informal institutional principles and practices that indicated the corporate culture potentially would result in stigmatization should allies speak out against gender injustice.

Exit

The severity of the hostility forced a tenured professor in her early fifties out of her career and livelihood. Due to age normative employment (Charles and Grusky 2004), Professor Okada had little chance of acquiring similar employment elsewhere, and in fact she was only able to find part-time precarious employment after leaving her tenured position. The Japanese employment system has been characterized as prioritizing voice and loyalty over exit as corporate strategies (Keizer 2010; Mouer and Kawanishi 2005; Witt, 2006); however, this is premised on a male normative model. A situation such as Professor Okada's, for example, provided no opportunity for voice, as was further indicated by her colleagues' inability to speak out, and therefore, the only viable option was exit.

She said that being deprived of her livelihood was devastating, but not as

devastating as her lack of power to do anything and the lack of support from her colleagues despite the widespread knowledge of the injustice that was occurring. It resulted in 'an emotional rollercoaster', a 'kind of emotional and mental breakdown'. Muta (2008) has argued that the Japanese concept of workplace *wa* (harmony) complicates challenges to inappropriate uses of power, in that maintaining harmony and challenging harassment are seen as being incompatible.

Professor Okada's case of power harassment had wide-reaching repercussions regarding exit. Others withdrew their commitment and loyalty to the university, and exited to the periphery, though did not leave the institution as they had prioritized maintaining their employment. This research found that, across the universities, exiting was exercised in multiple ways such as leaving employment, emotionally withdrawing, and withholding commitment. The cost to the universities where forms of bullying and harassment had occurred, in terms of a loss of women's expertise, was at the expense of the exercise of certain types of masculinity that characterized the institutions. It was found that these could not be interrogated or challenged due to institutional complicity in male-normative praxis that delegitimated concerns regarding gender injustice. To reiterate one aspect of Allen's (1999, 2007) multidimensional approach to power, *power over* is often not intentional but routine and can be an institutionalized source of domination.

Workplace bullying and harassment can become normative in a corporate culture, and therefore may be difficult to challenge as well as result in underreporting. Furthermore, people may be reluctant to report any harassment and bullying not directed at themselves (Kassing, 2011: 121) leaving employees, in this case Professor Okada, with little support and no option but to exit. While the university had formally complied with Japanese law to implement harassment procedures, it is significant that a feminist, who was aware of the laws and procedures, was unwilling to utilize the formal procedures even in a situation that her colleagues acknowledged to be abusive. A theme touched on by many of the interviewees across all the universities was the incompatibility of organizational cultures with raising the topic of gender, along with the stigmatization of those who specialized in feminist and gender studies or who indicated that gender issues required attention.

Conclusion

This paper explored power explicitly through an examination of the micro-level institutional relational interactions. This case was exemplary in that it encompassed many elements that were found across the various universities examined and is illustrative of segregative mechanisms *within* institutions. Furthermore, the varying conceptions of power explored in this paper were fruitful in explaining how collectivity, lack of voice, and exit were manifested in the institution. Taking a feminist, multidimensional approach to power in institutional gender regimes, the empirical data showed that the unequal, gendered distribution of power can have particularly negative implications for a community of women, in terms of the impact of power abuse on the quality of their work environment and their sense of job security. Fear of reprisals and the lack of support from colleagues reluctant to speak out for an individual who is facing injustice had a ripple effect of silencing other women, since the institutional inaction created an awareness that their low numerical representation had resulted in vulnerability in the male-dominated university context. The empirical analysis found that policies that aimed to comply with domestic and international laws were discursive rather than substantive. Since the abuse of power adversely affects those who would otherwise potentially be the most likely to agitate for institutional change by positioning them as ineffective, this is particularly constraining regarding change toward gender equality. Additionally, the lack of enforcement of laws designed to protect women's employment challenges the view that voice over exit is a viable option for women in secure employment.

The internal dual-labour markets that have been an omnipresent feature of Japanese labour markets generally (Mouer and Kawanishi 2005; Witt 2006) also construct gender inequality through forms of social control that are specifically gendered. The internal institutional segregation (the 'forced' exit from core employment) occurred when power was abused and not kept in check by collective action within the institution or by substantive organizational principles and procedures. Feminist research has expanded the concept of exit to include withdrawal of commitment (trust) in organizations (Cortina and Magley 2003; Dyne *et al* 2003; Milliken *et al* 2003). This research found not only 'forced resignation', but also withdrawal of loyalty, commitment and trust. This was the case for an inordinate number of women. The form and severity of this kind of segregation that positions women as 'Other' in institutions is co-constitutive of exclusion from crucial processes of organizational inclusion that depend on voice

and collectivity.

The economic consequences of power abuse were revealed through this empirical research. Taking an economic productivity approach, the decrease in 'output' from the compromised working conditions and the eventual exit of the harassed professor, who had previously greatly contributed to the university, negatively impacted 'productivity'. Professor Okada's case resonated with the fears and perceived vulnerabilities of women in the male-dominated contexts, and there was also a ripple effect through the universities for women who knew what had happened in this or similar cases, or had witnessed the lack of legitimacy the issue was given. The possible collective action that was *not* mobilized was a signal to women of what they could expect should future problems arise, which resulted in women exiting, not necessarily physically but through withdrawing their energies and loyalty. Some women also expressed the desire to find other employment. The institutional cultures in the universities showed that voice was not encouraged and that the possibility of voice being heard by the lower and upper administration was not viewed as an option regarding gender issues, though extreme cases of sexual harassment had received formal treatment.

Furthermore, the empirical data challenges the belief that academic autonomy is equally protected for researchers in Japanese universities. This case, which mirrors others that emerged in the empirical work, illuminates that academics whose fields of expertise are not consistent with male normative conceptions of expertise or the personal proclivities of those (men) in positions of power, such as feminist and/or gender specialists, were not necessarily afforded the same academic autonomy that others were privy to.

Much is written on social sanctions levied against women who defy 'gendered logics of appropriateness' (Chappell and Whelen 2013) such as women who are viewed to be pushy, bossy, rude, and aggressive. Kato and Steven (1991) argued that Japanese organizations across the decades have been characterized as a polemic of 'loyalty for benevolence' at one extreme versus 'intrusive and overbearing control' at the other pole. They describe it as a kind of 'super-Fordism, even more ruthless in the exploitation of workers' (cited in McCormick 2007: 765). This is a strong judgment and, while this research found mixed results on this front, there were elements regarding the gender control aspect. This was particularly true for women who did not conform to supposed standards of Japanese femininity. Since gender relations are infused with expectations of culturally specific, though varying, gendered behaviour, women who attain high-level positions such as professors may experience conflict regarding performances

of femininity (Fenstermaker and West 2002a, 2002b) within male-dominated institutions since the occupational role would need to be performed differently than the expectations that arise from norms defining one's gender performance.

Being female and femaleness have been found to disrupt the traditionally male homosocial workplace (Hayes, 2014; Nemoto 2010, 2013). However, organizational 'myths and ceremonies' (Meyer and Rowan 1977) of gender neutrality that have developed as a norm tend to obfuscate the gendered nature of institutions (Calás *et al* 2014; Jeanes *et al* 2011). This results in men's gender being made invisible (Lewis and Simpson 2010c) while women's gender is viewed as problematic. The continuing social control of women is accompanied by persistent denial, and the invisibility of this social control thus obscures its role in the gendering of the institutions. This ideology of 'gender neutrality' produces a 'we are all equal' institutional rhetoric that is instrumental in the construction of workplaces that obscure power differences. This has been found to result in women being ignored, marginalized, and power harassed. An example of this was the tension some women experienced when they did not conform to appropriately 'polite behaviour', which carried the expectation that they *not* be 'strong', outspoken, or contradictory. The disparagement and shunning that ensued when these gendered norms were violated was particularly disempowering. This was especially problematic considering that academic status is garnered, to a certain extent, from administrative expertise that involves discussions and decision making processes that require a show of intellect through being articulate. Since ample evidence (Hayes 2014 on the Japanese context) shows that very few women have been able to successfully accomplish an acceptable blending of leadership with femininity due to normative gendered expectations, this puts an unfair burden and an unequal onus on women to 'behave' properly as academics, whereas men are afforded a much broader range of acceptable behaviour.

The assumption that Japan falls on the collective side (Hofstede 2001) of the individualist/collectivist bifurcation has also been disputed (Ikeda and Richey 2012). This paper found that in the institutional environments, collectivity was strongly exhibited in the form of male homophily that was exclusionary of women who did not conform to the 'gendered logics of appropriateness' that positioned women as upholders of the institutionalized male status hierarchies. In the Japanese context, the relevance of collectivity versus individuality through explicit attention to power will further add to understandings of institutional change in relation to institutional gender regimes. In particular, while the well-known supposed collectivity of Asian/Japanese cultures has been argued to be a

defining feature of organizational operations, the 'in group' rules were found to still be strongly male-normative, and the collective (in group) not only was unhelpful in cases of harassment, but actually exacerbated problems. When the unsanctioned abuse of power, which was gendered and has been argued to be more widespread in societies/cultures such as Japan with the emphasis on gender *difference* over gender *similarity*, was not countered, this had a devastating impact not only on the targeted individual, but resulted in a diffused wariness with some women being traumatized to the point of 'exiting' or withdrawing.

Improvement in organizations, through addressing issues and concerns, can be mobilized through encouraging voice. Since exit is generally constrained for highly educated individuals in CMEs where firm-specific training along with loyalty are emphasized, voice is crucial. Muta's (2008) argument that the Japanese practice of *wa* makes it difficult to combat gender issues such as harassment was further substantiated in this research. However, a more nuanced interpretation is offered. The collective harmony (*wa*), that is culturally valued, was evidenced in the empirical data regarding men's relations in the universities, but not when it came to grappling with gender issues such as power harassment. ProSocial Voice (Dyne *et al* 2003) was prevalent within the norms of the prevailing (male) status hierarchies of institutional operations in the form of consideration of individual voices through processes such as networking and consensus decision making, while it was not exhibited regarding justice for women. ProSocial Silence exemplified the collective approach to gender-based power harassment, which was viewed as an individual (woman's) problem that did not require collective (male) action against the male perpetrator. Unlike other analyses of Japanese institutions (Keizer 2010; Mouer and Kawanishi 2005; Witt 2006), this research found that voice was not a viable strategy for issues concerning women/gender, and that collectivity in the form of networks, union support and harmony amongst colleagues was gendered and was found to disadvantage women facing institutional injustices.

The rationales for limiting involvement to 'silent support' and the strong emphasis on culturally specific ideals of consensus and harmony, indicate similarities that have been found across regions in the male-dominated institution of academia. It is apparent that the prevailing gender regimes enforced gender appropriateness regarding power, hierarchy, and status that overrode concerns for women's human rights, employment equality, and the mobilization of collective support to combat harassment.

Allen's (1999, 2007) multidimensional approach to power, which incorporates

Arendt's (1969) conception of collective power, argues that domination is one form of power over, and to reiterate, that it is often not intentional but routine—an institutionalized source of domination. An individual may respond through resistance, which can be effective particularly where there is collective action. Arendt posits that acting in concert, what Allen calls *collective empowerment,* is one form of the power to resist (Vickers 2012: 142). This is useful in understanding the institutional dynamics explored in this paper, since the silence of colleagues who held powerful positions (all men), and the fear of retaliation that colleagues (mostly women) felt if they spoke out, indicated the institutionalized power that immobilized action toward gender justice. Without substantive enforcement mechanisms regarding gender justice in Japanese employment when there is power abuse and gender injustice, who carries the responsibility regarding the guarantee of women's rights that are enshrined in Japanese domestic laws and international laws such as CEDAW is unclear. Since the laws require institutions to provide non-discriminatory workplaces, when substantive protection is insufficient, universities are complicit in (re)producing gender injustice. Formal procedures without substantive impact are not compliant with international or domestic laws.

There are indications that there may be a promising normative change internationally, shifting the duty of responsibility away from women having to 'prove' they have been victimized. This reallocation of duty toward the institution (for example, through the people who administer the universities) to go beyond the ineffective formal procedures and to acknowledge the non-gender-neutral institution needs to be systematized. The lack of acknowledgement that gendered power asymmetries in institutional policies and practices requires more than formal procedures, contributes to the (re)production of gender inequality. Existing gender norms impede institutional change and enacting effective praxis that destigmatizes gender issues requires increasing gender inequality awareness until it becomes normative in institutional praxis. Dealing with gender issues is seen as having little institutional/social value and receives little sustained attention since failing to educate corporate citizens works against those who are working for gender injustice change. Therefore, the bottom line is that gender justice requires constant, ongoing examination, reflection (discussion) and 'noticing', as well as deep, continuous reflexivity on praxis as well as substantive systemization.

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