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Research paper: The Production of Knowledge: A Case Study of a
Government-Funded Women's/Gender Studies Program

The Production of Knowledge: A Case Study of a Government-Funded Women's/Gender Studies Program*

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Introduction

Japan ranked 101st among 135 countries in the Global Gender Gap measure in 2012, much lower than other G-8 countries (Hausmann, Tyson & Zahidi 2012). Much media attention was given to the solicited opinion of the IMF chairperson Christine Lagarde that the low level of women's employment and career development, due to various barriers, was arresting Japan's economic progress. Prime Minister Abe Shinzo picked up the rhetoric and tied the employment of women—as economic resources—to a nationalistic goal of building a strong Japan in the global context. Gender equality initiatives were implemented in Japan in the 1980s and 1990s, but a backlash quickly set in (Nihon Joseigakkai Jendaa Kenkyuu Kai, 2006).

The government's instrumental and inconsistent commitment to gender equality would not lead one to expect it to fund women's/gender studies programs. However, it did fund two programs, purportedly to boost the global competitiveness of higher education. The funding was certainly a cause for celebration for feminists, but it also raised questions about how government funding and globalization might affect higher education as a site of feminist practice.

These queries led to the present analysis, which reviews current thoughts on globalization and education and examines a government-funded women's/gender studies program. It is hoped that such an analysis can facilitate a more in-depth understanding of the production of feminist knowledge and identify areas of concern for the future development of academic feminism in Japan.

To provide a background to the present analysis, the paper first discusses

government initiatives in and public reactions to gender equality in education, women's/gender studies in higher education, and government educational policies and globalization. Next, the extant literature on globalization and education is reviewed, based on which specific questions that guide the current analysis is identified. Details of the data and analyses are then presented. The conclusion summarizes the findings and discusses ideas related to the future development of women's/gender studies in Japan.

Gender-Equal Policies in Education and Backlash¹

As laws were passed for gender equality at work, there began to be changes in gender-biased practices in primary and secondary schools, including the elimination of separate roll calls for and ways of addressing boys and girls, approval of sex education by the Ministry of Education, and coeducation in home economics in middle and high school. In 1995, the Tokyo Women's Foundation called for the implementation of "gender-free education", and the National Women's Education Center published *Women's Studies Study Guide for a Gender-Free Society*. Local governments followed suit. The key term, "gender-free," however, became a target for scathing attacks not only on gender equality, sex education and feminism but also on the very use of the terms "gender" and "gender-free". Concurrently, there was an emphasis on differences between men and women. A few books assailing feminism and gender equality were published in the mid-1990s, and there was a noticeable increase in news magazines in attacks on gender equality, separate surnames for wife and husband,² and sex education. In 2000, Tokyo inserted in the preamble to the Ordinance for Gender Equality an affirmation of differences between men and women. In 2002, the Cabinet Office announced that the use of the term "gender free" was not appropriate. At the local government level, a poster with the message, "gender equality promotes sex crimes", was

made in Fukuoka City in 2003. Other cities and prefectures followed in its footsteps, demanding a repeal of the gender equality law itself and reverting to gender-biased practices in schools, such as in Tokyo in 2004 and Niigata in 2003.

In the midst of such hostility against gender equality, the government gave a handsome grant to a women's/gender studies program through the Center of Excellence (COE) program. To appreciate its implications, it is important to first understand women's/gender studies in higher education and the circumstances under which the funding was made.

The Development of Women's/Gender Studies in Japan

According to Hara (2004), the first women's studies courses in Japan were offered to advanced undergraduate students in 1974 in Sophia University. However, rather than increasing the number of undergraduate courses, women's/gender studies developed further in research centers and graduate schools. Two major women's studies associations were founded in 1977 and 1979, and by the late 1990s, there were research centers and institutes in 13 institutions (Hara 2004). Their number continued to increase in subsequent years. Josai International University offered the first Master's degree in Women's Studies in 1996, and various institutions also offer PhDs with a women's studies/gender studies concentration in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Years later, in the spring of 2005, the first undergraduate major in Gender Studies in the country began to be offered at International Christian University, in the Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies (pGSS) under the auspices of the Center for Gender Studies established in 2004.

Independent of the presence of a women's/gender studies program, an increasing number of courses were being offered in various institutions. Surveys of Academic Affairs offices showed 2456 courses in 609 institutions in 2000, a three-times increase in the number of courses from 1996 (Tachi

2002). The increase in number was not matched by an increase in diversity of the courses as most were connected to “family” or “work”, and far fewer were about other social issues or systems of inequality, such as politics, economics, race, ethnicity, class/stratification, sexuality and so on (Tachi 2002). An earlier analysis of 517 courses found that the majority merely added women into conventional courses or focused on “women’s lives” without challenging or transforming extant knowledge (Khor, 1996).

To summarize, women’s/gender studies has had a presence in Japanese higher education since the 1970s. However, its presence has been defined less by diverse undergraduate courses or women’s/gender studies majors than by specialized research at the graduate or professional level. This structural niche that women’s/gender studies seems to have found in higher education is reflected in the social respectability, visibility or even international reputation bestowed on some prominent feminist scholars, and perhaps some programs. This global visibility might well be one reason why the government gave a grant to a women’s/gender studies program—to showcase the global nature of Japanese higher education.

Globalization, Government Policy and Funding of Women’s/Gender Studies in Japan

Meyer (2000) conceptualizes modern globalization in terms of increases in political and military interdependencies of nation-states, economic interdependencies of nations-states and international firms, interdependence of expressive culture through global communication, flow of individuals, and flow of instrumental culture. In considering the connection between globalization and higher education, Ueno (2007) likewise focuses on the expansion in the international flow of information, money and people, particularly researchers and students, and also the increased use of the English language and its growing significance.

Arimoto (2002) points out that the Japanese university system has been

founded on the basis of internationalization: the university model had been adopted from abroad and students were sent overseas. However, now it is being called to align itself with global standards.³ There is indeed a long history in Japan of the implementation of policies to promote internationalization and then globalization (Arimoto 2002). The 21st century COE program, which began providing grants in 2002 and took on an explicit “global” character as Global COE (GCOE) in 2007, followed in this tradition to “cultivate a competitive academic environment among Japanese universities by giving targeted support to the creation of world-standard research and education bases (centers of excellence).” It aimed at “raising the standard of both education and research at them,” so as “to elevate Japanese universities to the world’s highest echelons, while fostering people of talent and creativity who will be qualified to assume roles as world leaders” (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, n.d.).

The idea of “world” or “global standards” is frequently embedded explicitly or implicitly in policy statements or programs promoting globalization in higher education, and yet it remains unclear what these standards are. Arimoto (2002) refers to the “rest of the developed world” as a reference group, aligning “global standards” with essentially Euro-American or “Western” standards. The concept of “excellence” in the Center of Excellence program is also a term frequently invoked in neoliberal rhetoric. In the bestseller *In Search of Excellence* about “excellent companies”, Tom Peters and Robert H. Waterman (1982) intend such terms as “excellence” and “innovation” to be measures of business success. Singh, Kenway & Apple (2005), for example, identify these as neoliberal goals and see their influence on education in the use of performance indicators to align educational goals with a neoliberal global agenda. Through the implementation of these goals, state control can be realized and internal competition among educational institutions promoted.⁴ These tendencies constitute what Readings (1996) has called the corporatization of the

university and are consistent with the rationale laid out by the Ministry of Education and Sports in their funding policies. The neoliberal rhetoric embedded in these tendencies, however, does not capture all the effects of globalization on higher education, especially when one looks closely at the production of knowledge.

Globalization and Higher Education

Higher education institutions are involved in the production and consumption of knowledge. Questions therefore arise in the context of globalization as to where the centers of knowledge production and consumption are, which knowledge is legitimate, and who produces, interprets, and consumes knowledge.

Meyer and his collaborators, in what has been named World Society Theory, argue that models of progress—universal mass education; proliferation of human rights for women, sexual minorities and the indigenous population; and advances in the natural sciences—are widely sought after and adopted by nation-states that vary greatly in economic resources and circumstances (Meyer, 2010a; Meyer 2000). The adoption of these models in itself, however, does not necessarily result in real progress; indeed, “decoupling” of legislation and practice is the norm (Meyer, 2010b). World Society theorists strive to distinguish their perspective from a realist interpretation that sees the world as comprised of actors that are defined and structured by inequality. Meyer (1987) does concede that the world society as a “broad cultural order” has “explicit origins in Western society” (p. 41). However, he and his collaborators emphasize the lack of the operation of power, defining power narrowly as coercion or even brute force (see Schofer et al. 2012).

Without dismissing the insights of World Society Theory or taking a realist perspective, it is clear that the lack of symmetry in contribution between “the West” and the “non-West” to globalized “legitimated models”

cannot be dismissed but instead requires closer examination. Postcolonial and other critical interpretations on globalization offer valuable alternative perspectives that can generate questions to guide the present analysis, especially in the context of higher education.

Connell (2007) argues that the colony/metropole relation is important in the production of knowledge, and that there is a tendency to locate theory in the metropole even in the post-colonial period. Cognizant of the critique of Eurocentrism in postcolonialist scholarship, Chawla and Rodriguez (2011) emphasize that the demarcation of privileged and marginalized perspectives cannot be separated from gender, race and nation (see also Abou-El-Haj, 1997). Therefore, rather than a simple division between the colony and the metropole, the non-West and the West, or the South and the North, one needs to pay attention to differences within each component in every pair of contrast. Further, a privileged perspective means not only a dominant perspective but also the position of a subject, in contrast to that of an object to be observed, theorized or researched. Connell (2007) argues that sociological theories on globalization are Northern theories: researchers from the North theorize and research on the South, but they do not learn from the South. Similarly, Ueno (2007) recounts a remark in a joint US-Japan project made by an American researcher: "the U.S. for theory, and Japan for data" (p. 534). Such a demarcation, Ueno argues, is indicative of Orientalism (Said, 1978 (2003)).

The popularization of English is seen as one constituent of globalization in higher education in Japan (Ueno, 2007). English language education has indeed become more central in higher education, and a number of universities even offer academic programs taught solely or primarily in English. Tikly (2001) notes that the spread of English has not only contributed to Western hegemony but also allows for the formation of counter-hegemonic discourses.⁵ Similarly, Ueno (2007) argues that the inevitable spread of English is not a one-sided process, and neither is it

equivalent to a total endorsement of education in the English-speaking world.

Guiding Questions for the Present Analysis

By examining research in diverse fields, the foregoing review helps identify a few questions for the present analysis with respect to the production and consumption of knowledge, and the type of knowledge that is produced.

Drawing on the insights of World Society Theory and cognizant of the low consciousness of gender issues in Japan, we can ask if “core fields” like the natural sciences are given priority to boost the legitimacy of women’s/ gender studies.

Paying attention to power inequality, we can explore if the colony/ metropole, non-West/West, or the South/North divide is maintained in the production of feminist knowledge such that feminist scholars and theories from “the West” are privileged over those from the “non-West”. Indeed, since the government grant was connected to bringing Japanese higher education and research to meet “global standards,” it is plausible that scholarship produced in the West is legitimated over that in the non-West.

Further, we need to explore if Japan is an object rather than a source of theorization. Going beyond the “West”/“non-West” divide, we can investigate if an asymmetry is also present between Japan and other Asian nations such that the latter is primarily a source of data to be used and processed by scholars in Japan.

World Society Theory also argues that globalization consists in de-emphasizing national uniqueness, except in such matters of expressive culture as literature. If it were coupled with placing Japan in the object position, an emphasis on national uniqueness could facilitate an Orientalist approach that exoticizes Japanese culture (see Ueno’s (2007) observation cited above). Separately, observers of Japan have pointed out that

throughout history, the very process of internationalization had the ironic effect of making Japan more nationalistic (Befu, 1983). Likewise, Lincicome (1993) shows that Guidelines for the High School Course of Study in the late 1980s bore the imprint of Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro's views. Internationalism was to be fostered by cultivating "tomorrow's cosmopolitan Japanese" who was expected to develop a "thorough knowledge of, and respect for Japanese tradition". The "cultivation of a Japanese consciousness" was therefore the foundation, or indeed prerequisite, for a student's development as an internationalist (p. 146). All these considerations would suggest that an emphasis on Japanese expressive culture, such as literature and art, is not inconsistent with globalization. At the same time, can we expect a feminist critical perspective to forestall an exoticization or nationalist rendition of Japanese culture?

Turning the concept of "de-coupling" in World Society Theory around, we may inquire as to the extent to which women's/gender studies could "couple" real changes with governmental ideological endorsement of globally legitimated equality goals by taking up critical issues neglected by the government.

Source of Data

The 21st century COE program that provided grants under the Ministry of Education and Sports sought applications from PhD programs in universities or research institutes or equivalent organizations. Among the 44 (humanities and interdisciplinary/comprehensive/new areas) applications approved in 2002, 51 (social sciences and interdisciplinary/comprehensive/new areas) in 2003, and 28 (new areas) in 2004, two applications were directly related to "gender", namely the "Gender Equality Law and Policy: Gender Law and Policy research center" of Tohoku University (approved 2003, in the Social Science area) and "Frontiers in

Gender Research (F-GENS): Global Reconfiguration of 'Woman', 'Family', 'Community' and the 'State'" of the Gender Research Center at Ochanomizu Women's University (approved in 2003 for five years of funding, in interdisciplinary/comprehensive/new areas) (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, n.d.). The present analysis focuses on F-GENS, the more comprehensive and interdisciplinary of the two gender programs funded.

The eight volumes of *F-GENS Frontiers of Gender Studies Journal* constituted the data for analysis. Volumes 1, 3, and 7 published in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 respectively were general reports on the projects and various activities organized in the respective years; Volumes 2, 4, 6 collected open submission journal articles; Volume 5 included two separate publications, with one focusing on reports and the other research papers; and Volume 8 focused on the works of junior researchers.

The objectives of the program were stated in the opening pages of Volume 1 and on their webpage:

- "1. innovation of a gender studies rationale that responds to issues imminent in the globalizing world;
2. highlighting an inter-disciplinary gender studies that can re-think aspects of pre-established disciplinarity in light of the findings of gender studies;
3. the invention of a gender studies that is the consequences of inter-Asian dialogue and rooted in the historical experience and systems of thought current in this part of the world;
4. and finally, the establishment of an inter-Asian network of gender studies that can facilitate exchange of scholars and contribute to the promotion of future generation of scholars."

The stated objectives located an interdisciplinary gender studies in the

global context, and emphasized the making of a “new” gender studies rooted in Asia. While consistent with the COE rationale, these objectives also indicated recognition of the domination of “the West” in the production of knowledge and the importance of grounding gender studies in Asia.

F-GENS was composed of four projects, each of which will be described briefly below.

“Project A: Gender Equality, Cultural Diversity and Public Policy” aimed “to investigate the conditions and public policies necessary for creating a society in which both gender equality and cultural diversity are valued” in Japan, and also Asia, through political networking with gender scholars in Asia and elsewhere.⁷

“Project B: Reproductive Labor, Work and the Economy” focused on empirical research, specifically “the ways in which the economy in Japan is responding to the causes and effects of the accelerating decrease of birth-rate” through “examining the increasing flexibility, diversification and instability of employment, the configuration of paid and unpaid work, and the distribution of money, time and space in people’s daily life.” Comparative studies of Japan and other Asian economies were to be conducted so as to “formulate alternative policies regarding birth-rate, family, social welfare and economy from a gender perspective.”⁸

“Project C: Body, Medical Care, Science and Technology” aimed at “creating new knowledges” to address “issues of sexuality” by examining “perceptions of body, reproduction and sexuality from a gender perspective” and also “gender biases intrinsic in bio-medical research”.⁹

“Project D: Theories and Representations” aimed at re-examining the concept of gender so as to explore “a new theoretical perspective addressing the current geopolitics of the local and the global, and going beyond the dichotomy of West vs. non-West”. The focus was on “critical reading of cultural representations of gender” in the English- and French-

speaking areas, and critiques of colonialism, imperialism, and globalization were also mentioned.¹⁰

The projects, at times in collaboration with each other, organized a variety of activities, from symposiums and publication of journal articles to informal study groups and research field trips.

The present analysis does not attempt to systematically code the data, given the variety of activities involved and the unevenness in details and precision reported. Instead, examples will be teased out from the activities and events organized by the four projects in the tenure of the COE to shed light on the concerns identified above, namely, the source of theory, the positions of the subject and the object in theory and research, and the topics taken up.

Analysis: The Knowledge that was Produced

(1) The source of theory:

Was “the West” the primary source of “Theory” and theorization? Were the theories developed in “the West” taken as universally relevant and applicable?

One way to approach these two analytically distinct but related questions is to see where “theory” stood out, and where the “theory” or “theoretical construction” was based in the projects. The focus here will be primarily on Project D, which was organized explicitly around theory construction, and secondarily on Project C.

Project D organized a symposium on the theme of “The Current State of Gender Theories and Analysis of Representation: Collusion and Offence/Defence with respect to State, Capital, Representation”, and included such presentations as “Body and Gender in Visual “Art””, “Modern Nation-State and Gender”, “Homosociality and Representation”, and “Representations of Gender in the Post-War Emperor System and Americanism”. None of the presenters were invited from overseas. One presentation discussed

homosociality in the context of American movies and used English language sources. A postcolonial perspective was adopted in the analysis of artwork produced in different socio-historical contexts, invoking a critique of mainstream Eurocentric approaches to art. Two presentations that analyzed the state were contextualized in Japan: one used Japanese sources and interrogated the representation and interpretation of post-war Japan in an American text, while the other undertook a critical analysis of the emperor system in Japan and ended with a summary of an American feminist scholar's critique of feminist thoughts about the family.¹¹ The latter presentation made uncritical and non-contextualized references to concepts and critiques rooted in the Euro-American context, an approach that could result in universalizing knowledge that was developed in a specific socio-political context and further legitimate gender theories produced in the Euro-American world. Such an orientation arguably undercut the stated objectives of the F-GENS program and specifically those of Project D. Further, while a critical stance was obviously present in the presentations, it was directed at mainstream Eurocentric scholarship and not at critical theories and concepts that could nonetheless be equally Eurocentric.

In addition to the symposium, Project D also hosted eight lectures. Those engaging in historical analysis or analysis of representation resisted the tendency to universalize observations from a specific Euro-American context, purposefully contextualized the subject analyzed, or directly challenged mainstream Eurocentric approaches. For example, one lecture on feminism by an American historian stood out as being socio-historically contextualized. While the lecture was basically about feminism in the United States, it also included examples from outside of the United States so as to avoid generalizing from the United States to the rest of the world. The response to the lecture was likewise contextualized — the speaker invoked historical issues and showed a consciousness of her positionality

in Japan. An analysis of photography and art looked closely at the socio-historical context of the production of a particular work, bringing into the analysis issues of race and colonialism. Another drew on Vietnam folklore and rejected a linear analysis common in mainstream Euro-American scholarship. However, others departed from this critical sensitivity. For example, after a discussion of film-making based on her own experiences, an American film-maker casually used “we” and “our society” in an attempt to raise questions for discussion with the audience, notwithstanding that the audience did not share the same “society” and might or might not be included in the category “we”. Insignificant as it might appear, it is worth remembering that feminist analysis did begin by asking a simple question as to who “we” represents.

Lectures that were theoretical in nature were contextualized in Euro-American theoretical traditions. Concepts, from psychoanalysis for example, were drawn on as if they had universal applicability.¹² Generally, questions asked in response to the lectures stayed close to the texts used and focused on the meaning of concepts. Since concepts are abstract by definition, and theories are constructed on the basis of connection between concepts, it is difficult to critique the Eurocentrism of any theory within the theory itself. One can critique Eurocentrism only when one interrogates the context in which the theory is produced or applied.

These examples showed the difficulty of realizing Project D’s goal of critically reading Euro-American theories and developing a new theoretical perspective. The consequences of falling short of the goals cannot be underestimated as “theory” commands a higher respect than empirical work in the academe. Some presentations by scholars based in Europe or the United States did show an awareness of the “politics of location” (Rich, 1986). However, the more abstract the analysis or the more theoretical the lecture, the less visible the context of theory production tended to be. Theories and concepts would then become universalized, inadvertently

validating the West as the source of knowledge. The very nature of Project D also means that theories produced in a Euro-American context were not contested by those developed in a non-Western context. Further, while participants in the project adopted critical approaches to analyzing the production of knowledge, the critique was directed at mainstream Eurocentric scholarship rather than critical gender theories. Therefore, the “new theoretical perspective” that was expected to emerge from studying Euro-American theories still remains to be developed.

Project D started their activities with a research/study meeting on works by Japanese scholars on “post-state, post-family discourses”, which apparently legitimized gender theories developed in a non-Western context. However, all the readings in the following year were Anglophone Studies and centered on gender/sexuality theories developed in Euro-American contexts. The discussions apparently focused on understanding the respective texts; if there were critiques, they stayed within the text. It is therefore not clear how these readings could lead to the development of a new perspective beyond the West and non-West division. The choice of readings was understandable given the goals of the project; however, the way the Euro-American theories were studied was apparently not conducive to realizing the goals of the project.

Another project that took up theories was Project C. While a variety of topics related to the natural sciences and women’s body were taken up in research activities and symposiums and talks hosted by this project, an American feminist scientist’s work was obviously a source of knowledge and basis for learning. Indeed, a research/study group was organized around her work in the project, and five scholars provided formal comments on a lecture this scientist was invited to give. Her work provided a framework to conduct various empirical studies in both Asia and Europe. For example, this scientist’s analysis was used as a model to study the research of a Japanese woman scientist, as well as the relationship between

information technology and education in Malaysia in connection to gender and ethnicity. Similar to how Euro-American gender theories were taken up in Project D, the work of a scientist from “the West” was apparently taken as applicable and useful to other social and historical contexts.¹³ Perhaps in the field of science, this feminist scholar was *the* key figure and it was inevitable that her work was central in the exploration of gender issues in science. Nonetheless, the centrality of her work did serve to further legitimize “the West” as a source of scholarship.

Considering Projects C and D for this question of whether the source of knowledge was located in the Euro-American contexts, the answer is in the affirmative. Overall, the critiques of Eurocentrism seemed confined to mainstream scholarship, whether by invited scholars from overseas or those based in Japan. Such critiques seemed not to be extended to critical gender theories generated in the same Euro-American context, affirming the centrality of Euro-America for the development of gender scholarship in Japan.¹⁴ This centrality conveyed the idea that such scholarship produced in the very specific socio-political context of Euro-America is relevant in Asia. Direct, but subtle, mechanisms of universalizing Euro-American knowledge included a lack of critical awareness of the potential particularity of such knowledge and in the casual use of “we”, “our society” and similar terms that indicated universal reference. Comments and questions in response to a presentation at times helped thwart such universalizing tendency and re-contextualize the discussion. The inclusion of dialogues among scholars from different locations in the global hierarchy of knowledge production, especially theory production, would have moved the project closer to its laudable aims. The point here is not about emphasizing Asian particularity, but about avoiding universalizing the West.

(2) The Positions of the Subject and the Object in Theory and Research

To continue to pursue the foregoing issue about the source of theory but to foreground issues of relations and hierarchies, the analysis in this section explores whether there was a pattern that defined “the West” in a subject position that looked at the world and the non-West as an object to be theorized or a source of data to be analyzed. Similarly, given the historical colonial relationship between Japan and some Asian countries, one can explore if the latter occupied the position of the object in the production of knowledge by Japanese scholars.

Project A was largely empirical and contextualized in Asia, and therefore Asia, rather than any Euro-American societies, was featured as a site of empirical research. There was however no clear indication of a tendency to draw theories from Euro-American scholarship and data from Asia, even though in one instance when theories were read, it was works written in English that were taken up.

There were an open seminar and a talk that placed Japan in the more familiar position of being compared to the USA. However, despite the title of the seminar, “Law and Gender: Comparison between Japan and the US”, there was actually no systematic attempt at comparing the two countries. Importantly, in the talk on the re-education of male perpetrators of domestic violence subtitled “Learning from the American Experience”, there was neither any attempt at “learning” from the USA nor any rhetoric that represented the United States as being more advanced than Japan. Two male activists from the United States talked about their experiences in the groups they were involved in, and the Japanese male activist commentator similarly talked about his own activist group. All three presentations considered here were therefore grounded in their respective legal and activist contexts and defined by a mutual exchange of experiences and knowledge.

The comparison of Japan with Asian countries, rather than with the

United States as in the two examples noted above, placed Japan squarely in the Asian context. At the same time, the impression of Japan as being “similar” or “comparable” to other Asian countries might ironically have precluded an examination of the power relations between Japan and other Asian countries. A focus on South Korea, in examining the so-called “comfort women” issue during WWII and Japanese Korean soap operas fandom today, provided an opportunity to examine the historical and current relations between Korea and Japan and allowed for a discussion of power relations. At the same time, these investigations were not a formal part of the project as its emphasis was on current collaboration and connections.

The “Asia” mentioned in Project A’s agenda was inclusive, encompassing countries from all parts of Asia in various research activities. However, while research topics parallel to those in Japan were taken up in the research on South Korea and Taiwan, research teams composed of overwhelmingly Japanese academics focused on migrant workers when other Asian countries were the sites of research. This division inadvertently perpetuated a narrow, and one may say stereotyped, image: South East Asian countries were defined overwhelmingly by their export of labor, whereas East Asian countries were allowed more complexity in gender-related matters.¹⁵ Therefore, while there was no clear division of some Asian countries as the source of data and others as the source of theory and analysis, there was a distinction in how a country was characterized. A country could be defined narrowly by a primary problem that connected it to other countries, or it could be allowed multidimensionality in how gender was played out.

It might be instructive here to add some observations of the conception of the “global”, given the rationale of the COE program.

Sub-project A2 under Project A, “International Migration and Gender,” reflected a grasp of the global as the international movement of (female) labor, especially within Asia. Despite some consideration of reproductive

labor and multiple globalizations, the focus was on “labor” as an economic entity. The aim in sub-Project A3 was the construction of local-sensitive development and gender policy, and the “global” was understood primarily as a conglomeration of specific areas that included Africa, the Middle East, Oceania, and Southeast Asia. However, despite the emphasis on “development,” a variety of issues were taken up, from standard development issues like irrigation rights, to community and conflict, social changes, women’s careers, and so on.

Project D referred to the “global” explicitly, unlike the other three projects. As noted above, it did show an awareness of the domination of the English- and French-speaking worlds in gender theories and the need to understand them in their socio-historical contexts. While this in essence particularized the English-/French-speaking world by contextualizing it in the local as well as the global, the actual activities consisted more in learning about these theories than in challenging them or constructing new theoretical perspectives.

The three F-GENS symposiums that cut across the projects can also be examined for clues to the subject/object positions in research and theory. The reliance on Euro-American sources varied across presentations in the first F-GENS symposium on “Globalization, Violence and Gender.” The only theoretically oriented presentation drew almost solely on Euro-American concepts and theories. Among the other presentations, Asia was featured primarily as a site for empirical research, as indicated by the focus on Asia in the panel study (Beijing, Seoul, and Japan) and on Asia and Afghanistan in the empirical studies of violence. Therefore, the symposium as a whole positioned “Asia” as the object of analysis and Euro-American scholarship as a source of concepts and theories. Somewhat related to the issue of object/subject position is the extent to which the West is used as a reference point, or indeed, a yardstick. This “western centered” orientation was shown in the keynote address in the second F-Gens symposium, “Asia

and Gender Studies in the Post-Cold-War Period,” in which a Chinese scholar invoked the West of the past as a parallel to the current situation in China.

(3) The topics that are taken up in the four projects and symposiums:

Besides exploring the topics taken up in the four projects, the analysis here will also examine various claims derived from extant theories reviewed above. As noted above, the World Society Theory claims that the natural sciences are legitimated as indicators of progress in the world and that an emphasis on national uniqueness, with the exception of elements of the expressive culture, is generally discredited in favor of universalistic models. A postcolonial perspective would instead question if an emphasis on the expressive culture would render Japan an object of analysis. Therefore, this section will assess if there was an emphasis on the natural sciences and aspects of the expressive culture of Japan.

Among the four projects, Project C focused on the natural sciences. While this focus on science and women bore out the expectation of World Society Theory, which argues that science and the advancement of women are legitimated as markers of progress in the world, it should be noted that conventional science was approached critically in this project. Further, the topics taken up in Project C went beyond conventional issues of gender inequality and actually undercut the supreme legitimacy of science by showing “science” as a historically and socially constructed institution.

Subproject D-3 under Project D focused on the connection between the construction of the modern nation state and gender representations, including analyses of Japanese literature across time and disciplines to explore the connections among various gender representations in the society and how they were maintained or altered according to changes in historical and social conditions. The topics covered in the lectures organized by D-3 included war (war and gender, the memory of war);

women as subject in literature; sexuality; and representations of Koreans in Japanese literature. World Society Theory would anticipate this focus on “Japanese literature”, an element of the expressive culture, even in the context of globalization. However, contradicting postcolonial concerns, while a foreign scholar was invited for lectures on contemporary Japanese literature, the research activities as a whole did not show a pattern of an Orientalist view of Japanese culture or positioning Japan as the object of analysis.

The themes of the three F-GENS symposiums are also relevant to the discussion here. The first F-GENS symposium was entitled “Globalization, Violence and Gender”. Violence was discussed in the context of sexual harassment and domestic violence in international and Japanese laws in the keynote address, violations of (women’s) human rights in Afghanistan in conflict situations, rape in the case of Korean “comfort women” during WWII by Japanese soldiers, visual art where women were represented as perpetrators as well as victims of violence under militarization and conflict with an explicit reference to Japan, and the sexual order and configuration of violence in the Abu Ghraib case. Another session focused on various aspects of gender inequality in a comparative panel study of South Korea, China, and Japan, and the connection of gender inequality to globalization and/or violence was explicated. The theme of the plenary session was “‘Globalizations’ in the Reproductive Sphere”, and presentations took up the relationship between economic globalization and declining birth rates, the international commodification of reproductive labor, as well as violence embedded in fertility treatment, the commodification of the egg, and the idea of self-determination related to sexuality and reproduction.

The presentations listed in the above paragraph were critical of government policies, highlighting, for example, inadequacies in sexual harassment and domestic violence laws, and the “unproblematization” of fertility treatments. They also showed conceptualizations of globalization

and violence that were broader and deeper than conventional ones. Going beyond exploring the meaning of violence in academic parlance, some directly challenged government stances, such as a presentation on sexual slavery that focused on the testimonies of former sex slaves (“comfort women”) and the critique of militarization embedded in the visual images of violence.

The second F-Gens symposium organized around the theme of “Asia and Gender Research in the Post-Cold War period” included a range of topics that defied easy classification. The third F-GENS symposium was entitled “The Boundary of the Family: The Politics of Representation, Body and Labor”. A scholar invited from South Korea delivered a special presentation on family and the law in her country. Other presentations focused variously on family and the law in the United States, the concept of the family, reproductive technology and the dissolution of the “modern family”, and globalization and householding. A session on the construction of new research frontiers from Asia around the social and cultural effects of reproduction and technology included the following presentations: the international commodification of housework and care work; a comparative analysis of Beijing, Seoul and Japan on technology, labor and reproduction; the construction of knowledge related to “gender” in the Internet in Japan; and representation and violence in Japanese popular literature and culture.

In addition to the research activities considered so far, a total of 66 articles (research papers) and four research notes were published in the F-GENS journals (volumes 2,4,5,6, and 8). One third of them were analyses of texts, including mostly literary works mainly from Europe, especially Britain, and the United States. Just under one third of the articles were analyses of problems, policies and patterns of interactions in the family and/or work mostly in East Asia, including Japan. The rest were about political and cultural changes and the construction of gender in Europe and Asia; social movements in Asia; science and medicine in Japan,

Germany and the United States; education; development; violence; and conversation/interaction in various cultural contexts. Two additional articles were on feminist theories, both centering on theorists in the English-speaking world.

The foregoing analyses show that first, the empirical analyses in the projects were organized around mainstreamed gender issues, such as family and work, primarily in Japan and other East Asian countries. Second, since Euro-American texts still constituted the primary basis for the analysis of gender, one could say that “the West” still remained the main source of theories and ideas.

Conclusion

Situating the F-GENS program in the “global context” in which it was funded, the foregoing analysis raised questions related to global inequality in knowledge production. In this conclusion, the key findings are summarized and thoughts for further development of women's/gender studies indicated.

In general, “Asia” was prominent in the program. Asia was placed solidly in the stated objectives as a reference and a context. In empirical research activities, there were differences in how various Asian countries were approached: East Asian countries were allowed more complexity than Southeast Asian countries. With respect to theory, the long history of the domination of the West in knowledge production might have been so ingrained that despite the best of intentions, the various projects inadvertently accentuated the centrality of the West in theory construction and source of ideas.

With respect to the conception of “Asia,” further collaborative effort beyond the funding period in an expanded Asian network could bring up more diverse research issues. This would result in more complex conceptions of gender issues in various Asian countries, narrowing the gap

between how East Asian and Southeast Asian countries had been approached in the program.

With respect to theory construction, reading Euro-American theories did not seem to lead to new theory construction beyond the West/non-West divide. There is much to learn from these gender theories, but to make the most of these theories, one needs to be acutely aware of the particular socio-political and historical contexts in which the theories were developed and how the theories negotiated such contexts. One way to accomplish this is to do what the COE program purportedly endeavored to do – bringing in scholarship developed through historical experiences and current thoughts in Asia. This would mean reading a larger number of gender theories developed in the Asian context and interrogating Asian scholarship that uncritically applies Eurocentric theories to Asia. Such a practice would not only decenter “the West” as the source of theory and knowledge, but would also contextualize gender theories developed in Euro-American contexts.

The eight volumes of F-GENS journal testified to the tremendous effort invested by a large number of people in pursuing highly laudable goals. It was undoubtedly a major achievement, and many, including the author, have personally benefited from the program. Obviously, the analysis undertaken here was not meant to diminish any of these accomplishments but was motivated by a simple desire to further advance gender/women’s studies in Japan, to make it even more relevant to a larger number of people.

- * The author would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their careful reading of the manuscript. A sabbatical leave (2011-2012) granted by Hosei University made this research possible.

Footnotes

- ¹ This section is based on the reference materials (section 6) in Nihon Joseigakkai Jendaa Kenkyuu Kai (2006).
- ² The family registration system (*koseki*) requires that one last name of a married couple to be registered as the official family surname, and typically the husband's name is chosen as the family name (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2012).
- ³ Writing about Japan nearly three decades ago, Befu (1983) pointed out that the process that Japanese called internationalization, or *kokusaika*, has come to stand for processes previously subsumed under "westernization" (*seiyouka*), modernization (*kindaika*) and liberalization (*jiyuuka*). In Japan, there does not seem to be any significant analytical difference between internationalization and globalization, especially with regard to the significance of state effort at implementing policies with the avowed aim of globalizing education. In the context of education, "internationalization" seems to be used interchangeably with "globalization", with the latter being the favored term today, as perhaps partially indicated by the rise in departments and programs in universities with "global" in their names.
- ⁴ Ball (1998) puts it this way: "performativity provides sign systems which "represent" education in a self-referential and reified form for consumption. ... [M] any of the specific technologies of performativity in education (total quality management, human resources management, etc.) are borrowed from commercial settings" (p. 123).
- ⁵ For research and discussion of the spread of English, see Appleby (2010), Singh et al. (2005), and Jones (1998).
- ⁶ The description of data draws on materials available originally in English and in Japanese. Quotations are taken directly without modification from English materials. Citations for materials referred to in this section are given in the section "Source of Data" at the end of the paper.
- ⁷ The three subprojects under include A1, which focused on "policy studies in the field of gender equality in Asia"; A2 on "international migration and gender configuration in Asia"; and A3 on research connected to the construction of "local-sensitive gender and development policies".

- ⁸ The four sub-projects focused variously on “declining birth rate, gender equality in employment and the distribution of time, space, and money” (B-1), “gender statistics and gender index” (B-2), “related research for panel survey” (B-3), and “panel survey on gender equality index” (B-4).
- ⁹ The six subprojects included “C-1: Perception of ‘Body’ and ‘Sex/Gender’ in ‘Asia’”; “C-2: History and Policies of Science and Technology from a Gender Perspective”; “C-3: Bio-medicine and Gender in the Age of Post-Genome”; “C-4: “Development” and “Reproductive Health and Rights””; “C-5: Women’s Perception on Body, Cultural and Social Changes of “Menstruation, Pregnancy, Child Birth and Menopause”; and “C-6: Study on Diverse Sexualities,” which was centered on junior researchers’ research group on health/sexuality and gender.
- ¹⁰ The subprojects included “D-1: Local and Global Production, Acceptance, Critique of Literature on Gender and Cultural Representation in English Speaking Areas”; “D-2: Theory and Analysis of Visual Representation based on Gender”; “D-3: Interrelationship between Formation of the Modern Nations States and Gender Representation” through analysis of representation in Japanese literature. In addition, D-4 aimed at creating a database on cultural representation.
- ¹¹ A presentation from a Project D participant in the cross-project second F-GENS symposium focused on the cinematization of Yukio Mishima’s novel in Japan, and likewise drew on Euro-American concepts and theories.
- ¹² Similarly, in the third F-GENS symposium, a presentation on the concept of the family moved from concepts generated in the Euro-American contexts to an unspecified “we,” assuming the unproblematic applicability of the concepts. The idea of the “modern family”, and indeed modernity itself, while institutionalized in the Japanese academe, has been criticized for its universalization from a narrow European context (Oyewumi, 2004; also Oyewumi, 1998). This critique was not explicated in the presentation.
- ¹³ As shall be elaborated in the next section, there were indeed research activities built around Asia, but they revolved around the ethical problems of cloning, making Asia (in this case, South Korea) the object of research.
- ¹⁴ In a report on the research activities in Project A-2, the author noted that area studies scholars were critical about the Eurocentrism and universalism embedded

in development policies and practice, and that development practitioners and gender researchers were concerned about the violation of gender equality in emphasizing local customs and structure. At the same time, while the former were concerned about the apparently Eurocentric terms such as “(third world) women” and “empowerment”, the latter were concerned about how these would just become empty terms and depoliticized in the course of development.

¹⁵ Indeed, in Project C, lectures and research/study meetings covered various issues related to women’s employment and family in China, South Korea as well as Japan.

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Data source

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Volume 1: 2004 (March)

Volume 2: 2004 (September) (special issue on open submissions)

Volume 3: 2005 (March)

Volume 4: 2005 (September) (special issue on open submissions)

Volume 5: 2006 (March) (research papers issue)

Volume 5: 2006 (March) (reports issue)

Volume 6: 2006 (September) (special issue on open submissions)

Volume 7: 2007 (March)

Volume 8: 2007 (July) special issue featuring junior researchers

Links to F-GENS materials in English (accessed December 27, 2013):

http://www.igs.ocha.ac.jp/f-gens/about/index_e.html (Objectives)

http://www.igs.ocha.ac.jp/f-gens/projects/A/index_e.html (Project A)

http://www.igs.ocha.ac.jp/f-gens/projects/B/index_e.html (Project B)

http://www.igs.ocha.ac.jp/f-gens/projects/C/index_e.html (Project C)

http://www.igs.ocha.ac.jp/f-gens/projects/D/index_e.html (Project D)

政府資金による女性学 / ジェンダー・スタディーズプログラムにおける 知の生産の分析 ダイアナ・コー

本稿では、グローバリゼーションと高等教育に関する先行研究のレビューに基づき、高等教育における知の生産について、何をもとに理論が作られているのか、理論面および研究面での主体と対象の位置がどこにあるのか、そしてグローバル的な文脈におけるジェンダーに関わるテーマとしてどのようなものが扱われているのか、という課題を導出した。これらの課題を検討するために、日本政府から資金を得た女性学 / ジェンダー・スタディーズのプログラムを分析した。その結果、プログラムの目的では、知の生産における「西洋」による支配が認識され、日本をアジアの中に位置づけようとする試みがなされていることがわかった。実際の活動では、必ずしもこれらの目的が達成されたとは言えないが、今後に向け、いかに「西洋」を周縁化し、「アジア」の中で知の生産が行われる方向に進めることができるのかのヒントを見ることができた。

Keywords:

欧米中心主義、日本の女性学、日本のジェンダー研究、
COE (Center of Excellence)、日本とアジア