

「女の仕事」から「女」を構築する仕事へ
——労働文化の理論的考察とワークーズコレクティブ
(労働者生産協同体) ——

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沓澤 清美*

本稿は、まず、労働に関するフェミニスト諸研究を再考し、単一の範疇に当てはめることが困難である労働に関するジェンダー論を整理したい。この作業は、従来のジェンダー論が「女の仕事」の特性の目録化と不平等の告発だけに陥りやすい点を指摘した上で、ジェンダー概念が本来持つ流動的な権力の交渉という視点から、労働を分析する必要性を明確にすることを意図している。次に、権力の交渉という視点にたったジェンダー論の枠組みから、近年都市部で盛んになりつつあるワークーズ・コレクティブという女性による労働組織の分析をおこない、作業を通して構築される「女」の一例を紹介する。「女の仕事」への批判として始まったワークーズ・コレクティブは、その生き残りのための様々な活動の中で、お互いを「女」に創り変え、また、再生産していくメカニズムを作りだしている。そこから構築される「女」は、伝統的な女であり、新しい女像でもあると言う点を指摘して、労働のジェンダー構築にかかわる役割の再考を促したい。

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Engendering Gender on Workfloor: A case of women's work collectives in Japan

Since the second wave of feminism in the 1970s, the nature and roles of “women's work” in society have been one of the most researched and theorized areas among feminist scholars. Feminist scholarship, with its unflagging commitment to problematize the received social categories and concepts, has been challenging the androcentric definition of “work” and its conceptual framework that reifies work from other social spheres (Collins and Gimenez, 1990). Specifically feminist researchers show the limitation of the cultural and analytic division of workplace and home, and demonstrate how family, community, and workplace shape the forms of women's work and their consciousnesses, and vice versa (cf. Ginsburg and Tsing, 1990). They also argue that seemingly neutral concepts such as “skill” and “productivity” carry gendered meanings, therefore affecting perceptions of who will be the best candidate for the job (Phillips and Taylor, 1980; Weston, 1990). In this context, Phillips and Taylor in their seminal work on “gendered economics” point out that:

... the classification of women's jobs as unskilled and men's jobs as skilled or semi-skilled frequently bears little relation to the actual amount of training or ability required for them.... Women workers carry into the workplace their status as subordinate individuals, and this status comes to define the value of the work they do. Far from being an objective economic fact, skill is often an ideological category imposed on certain types of work by virtue of the sex and power of the workers who perform it. (Phillips and Taylor, 1980: 79)

Their arguments are well supported when a certain occupation is subjected to historical scrutiny. For instance, positions such as office and store clerks in the nineteenth century were professional occupations for educated men, leading to a managerial position that time. When all forms of office work were expanded after the first world war and became mainly “women's work,” office clerks became unprofessional, low-paid, dead-end clerical job (Phillips and Taylor, 1980). Current feminist research on the globalization of production process also illustrates that multinational companies hire local women for electric assembly jobs, for women have “nimble fingers and tolerance for monotonous

tasks,” and are believed to be naturals at repetitive, detail-oriented, manual jobs (Fuentes and Ehrenreich, 1982). Because women's dexterity and ability to carry out repetitive tasks are considered to be “natural” but not “skills,” they are usually paid the bare minimum.

Common to these research is to reveal that work is itself gendered and allocates women and men into a distinctively different set of labor activities. Gender divisions of labor in workplace are commonly taken for granted that they have provoked little question in these task divisions: women sew what men design and cut out; women serve what men cook; women run machines which men service (Phillips and Taylor, 1980). Feminist research contributes to denaturalize these divisions, and explore the ways in which specific works and roles are given gendered meanings. In searching the basis for why labor is divided to express gender differences, feminists researchers argue that work is a site for instilling and reproducing men's material and ideological advantages over women's labor power (Ferree, 1990). The question remains, however, whether or not work only produces gender inequality; does the production of gendered tasks lead only to the domination of men over women?

The question cannot be answered unless the perspective shifts from focusing on finding out how a particular task is gendered, to how individuals produce and reproduce gender through their work. Here I am applying West and Zimmerman's concept of “doing gender” to workplace (West and Zimmerman, 1987). By emphasizing the processual nature of gender construction, West and Zimmerman argue that it is not enough to “describe” how certain roles and tasks are gendered. The concept of gender construction must include the negotiation over gender boundaries, in which women and men accommodate to, contest, and/or appropriate gendered tasks. Since gender concept is not a ahistorical category, and changes over time, it must be continuously produced ,affirmed, and questioned in various social settings. The workplace provides one social space in which such negotiation takes place.

First, this paper briefly looks at the theoretical overview of women's work and highlights the strength of gender perspective which is informed by the “doing gender” concept. The advantage of the “doing gender” concept is to focus on the fluidity of gender construction, and points out the possibility that though work, people not only reproduce

gender roles and norms, but such normative gender constructions can be challenged through work. Then, through the analysis of women's Work Collectives in Japan, I will detail how the members of one collective, *Sai*, are reproducing “gender script” at the workplace, while working to challenge the very notion of appropriate gender roles for middle-aged women in Japan.

Feminist Perspectives and Gendered Work: Theoretical Overview Linking Household and Market

Feminists' efforts to theorize the relations between women's work and capitalist system are an attempt to challenge the capitalist ideology of separate spheres that presents work and family as an autonomous, separate entity. Specifically Marxist-inspired feminists and researchers paved a way to find a link between household and market when understanding women's labor, and theorized that women's paid and unpaid labor must be understood in its relation to capital accumulation and the reproduction of capitalist social relations (Collins, 1990; Redclift, 1985; Sokoloff, 1980; Hartmann, 1981). These works call for attention on the household as a basic unit of analysis, and investigate women's paid and unpaid work in their relation to the household. For instance, the domestic labor debates in the 1970s illustrate an attempt to explore the link between women's household labor and the capitalist system (cf. Seccombe, 1974; Gardiner, 1975; Smith, 1978). Although there are different positions as to whether housework produces “value” in a Marxist sense, there appears to be a consensus among participants of the debates about the functions of domestic labor and family for capital. One important function is the social and generational reproduction of the labor force without the cost to capital: housework mainly performed by women such as cooking and cleaning serves to reproduce an immediate labor force by providing physical and emotional comforts. At the same time, caring and nurturing of children within the household serves to generate and socialize the next generation of the labor force. The domestic labor debates clarify not only the structural links between women's domestic work and men's wage-work, but also show how such linkage is made invisible by the ideology of women's domestic work as “labor of love.”

Since these debates, the household is proposed as a basic unit of analysis because it

is the locus of consumption and domestic-management in capitalist economy, “in which labor process strategies are formulated and acted upon in accordance with shifting internal and external demands” (Long and Richardson 1978: 189). From this perspective, they argue that women engage in various types of work in and outside the household throughout their lives as a part of the family strategy. Such women's work challenge the androcentric definition of “work” and capitalist ideology that reifies work from other spheres.

Critique of Family Strategy and Gender Perspective on Women's Work

While this Marxist inspired approach demonstrates women's real but undervalued contribution to the household economy and capitalist reproduction, this approach assumes a certain form of gender roles and ideology as given, such as women's domestic tasks and sacrifice for family, and describes them in relation to the social and economic system. One simple question makes clear the theoretical limitation of understanding women's work in this approach: Can family strategy represent an unified interest among family members? Other feminist scholars who emphasize gender perspectives argue that the concept of “family strategy” is itself an ideology that would serve to maintain and legitimate the male-centered, capitalist system (Hartmann, 1981). They argue that, behind the ideology of family strategy - the ideology of co-operative structure of sharing and pooling, women and men often have different interests within the household, and cannot assume the family cohesion as the basis of women's work.

Gender perspective that informs the second cannon of feminist work proposes to examine how the construction of gender involves continuous negotiation processes in all sorts of social settings (Ferree, 1990; Ginsburg and Tsing, 1990). While the Marxist-inspired work assumes gender roles and norms, including family strategy, the gender perspective analyzes the social and cultural matrices of power that create and circulate such constructs. Central to this perspective is the notion that gender is not a natural growth of biological features of individual men and women, but a system of categorization that signifies and inscribes the social relations of power and hierarchical differences (Scott, 1986). Since men and women are like each other in nature, the construction of

gender - maleness and femaleness - as an oppositional category requires social power and control (Rubin, 1974). The fundamental question for the gender perspective is, therefore: Who does the defining for what purpose? How is the ideology of gender maintained and/or challenged? Since gender is not a fixed, but a relational social category, boundaries of gender are ambiguous and open to negotiation as individual men and women interact in concrete social settings.

From this perspective, the emphasis of the study of gender and work moved from identifying the characteristics of “women's work” and the structural factors which shape a specific type of work, to exploring the ways in which social relations of differences and hierarchy are produced and challenged through the work women and men do. One major contribution of this perspective is to demonstrate the ideological and symbolic aspects of work in the construction of gender.

The gender perspective posits that women's paid and unpaid work in and outside the household, therefore, provide one context in which to investigate struggles between and among men and women over meanings and boundaries of gender. In this framework, the idea of family strategy and family cohesion is defined as a cultural prescription which must be analyzed, rather than described: the gender perspective criticizes how the concept of family strategy in a Marxist perspective uncritically accepts the assumption that the members of a household have a unified goal, common interests and equal rewards, with an image of all members having equal call on a collective resource (Wajcman, 1983). The studies of income distribution and allocation of tasks within the household reveal the contested nature of decision making, as well as gender and generational hierarchies within the household (Whitehead, 1984). These studies also show that women engage in income-generating activities including waged work, not necessarily for family, but for personal reasons, such as a sense of independence and having more personal decision making power vis-a-vis other household members. The ideology of “helping-out” (Narotzky, 1990; Cook, 1990), which often used to prove the unity of family interest, does not necessarily reflect women's self-sacrifice for family. Instead, the ideology may be used by women as a way of legitimating and winning approval of household members for women's entry into waged work for personal reasons. In short, far from a unity of interests, the household must be conceptualized as a “locus of struggle”

(Hartmann, 1981).

The notion of household as a site where household members strive to advance their interests guides us to view women's engagement in different forms of activities as providing an occasion to renegotiate the terms of interaction and exchange among household members (Roldan, 1985). To put it differently, rather than being a passive response to family needs and external economic circumstances, women's work is viewed as "a part of the negotiation among household members in the context of option, choice, constraints, and reward framed by individual desire, labor market opportunity and family needs" (Fernandez-Kelly, 1990). With such a perspective, individual women must be viewed as social actors who, while constrained, do measure options, make choices, and try to better their position in social life.

Construction of Gender on Workfloor : Symbolism and Workers' Identity

Viewing individuals as social actors, the issue of consciousness is central to the gender perspective. At the same time, the emphasis on consciousness raising in the workplace brings women's work beyond the realm of economic activities, to that of political activism. In this context, feminist researchers have demonstrated the importance of group context for women's work. Studies of the shop floor suggest that the informal activities focusing on the female life cycle, such as birth of a baby, weddings, birthday celebrations, or sharing family pictures help overcome ethnic differences and link individual concerns and visions with coworkers as women (di Leonardo, 1985; Lamphere, 1985; Westwood, 1985; Kondo, 1990). While women's work culture often colludes with existing ideologies and structures by emphasizing women's roles as mothers and daughters, this creates worker solidarity, and the informal groups can become a wellspring for a resistance strategy against the discipline of the workplace and lead to collective action (Costello, 1985; Saltzman, 1990). Thus, women's formal and informal groups at the workplace can transform their consciousness and lead to challenges of unfair power dynamics both in the workplace and at home (di Leonardo, 1985; Bookman and Morgen, 1990).

While studies of women's work culture underscore the possibility of solidarity by

gender, other studies highlight how divisions of class, race and ethnicity among workers remain a barrier to organizing efforts (Morgen, 1988; Sacks, 1988). These studies suggest that contrary to the assumption of “women's work culture,” women's political consciousness does not necessarily stem from their gender roles as wives and mothers. Their involvement with the community as a member of a specific class or ethnic group may shape their consciousness as a worker, which will in turn affect the course of their political action. The studies also show that people participate in organizing efforts without a clear political consciousness or agenda. The experience in the collective actions itself is a process of consciousness-raising, and the consciousness-raising sometimes can have contradictory effects on group cohesion and on the course of events. Morgen's study of a coalition for a women's health clinic illustrates that the activists who were initially united by common gender issues began to see their class differences during the campaign for the clinic. In the end, the working class activists found class inequalities matter more in their life and left the coalition (Morgen, 1988).

Studies of work culture and social activism illustrate that the issue of consciousness and empowerment involves the complex interrelation of gender, class, and ethnicity. They also enable us to see that the systems of hierarchical differences are often reproduced as people try to challenge the very system that shaped their consciousness. In other words, people simultaneously, challenge, co-opt, and comply with dominant social and cultural systems as they struggle to make sense of the world and to change it. In her study of factory women in Malaysia, Ong portrays such conflicting and ironical processes of resistance and control in the face of economic and social change. The young factory women, who are working in newly developed multi-national companies in Malaysia, begin to capture the attention of communities, media, opinion leaders and the state. The image of factory women, projected as being liberated with high income and the latest fashions, empower some women for the possibility of moving beyond the convention of gender, and do promote the national efforts for industrialization; on the other hand, the same women symbolize the harmful effects of rapid industrialization, especially moral and cultural disintegration. Constructed as having “loose sexuality,” the young factory women have become a symbolic threat to the cultural values on women's chastity and respect for the elders and family. In other words, the course and effects of rapid industrialization in

Malaysia are debated through the image and body of the young factory women (Ong, 1987). Women's groups become in this sense a forum where the competing forces—such as people's ambivalence toward social change, corporate stride for capitalist development, and the state's efforts for industrialization and social stability—collide with one another as a way of working through the cultural and social changes.

The gender perspective outlined above highlights several issues which allow us to rethink the roles of work and labor in society. Work is more than an economic activity, but a social practice that embraces, reinforces, creates, or challenges social norms and social orders. Through work, people confer gender to each other, and at the same time creating a space to resist it. In this sense, workplace is a site where struggles over gender norms and identities are continuously fought and renewed as new forms of labor and social control become necessary. And the struggles are not limited between men and women. Women in different social positions and generations also oppose each other and engage in the negotiation of gender norms among themselves with the hope of creating a better life choices, more power and social recognition. The Japanese women's Workers' Collective is an illuminating case where such negotiation of gender is taking place.

Women's Work Collectives in Japan Challenging Gender Scripts Through Collective Work

The Workers' Collectives refer to a small autonomous work organization, where ownership and control resides in the membership, and each worker has one equal vote determining the entire operation of the enterprise. In the last twenty years when the global economy has accelerated its shift from industrial capitalism to the post-industrial era, there has been a resurgence of this type of work organization in industrial societies, including Japan. Post-war Japan witnesses two parallel developments of the workers collectives since 1970s. Although both groups trace the genesis of their activities in citizen's movements of 1960s and 1970s in Japan and claim their philosophical root in the Rochdale pioneers --- the first successful modern cooperative society in England in the 19th century, each organization has developed independently from each other and has had little contact until recently. These two movements are gender specific and gender

segregated. One camp of the collectives was established under the name of “Workers Cooperatives” in 1979, and the main organizers are men of various age groups, social status and occupation.

The other camp of the workers collectives was organized by a group of women who were active members of a consumer cooperative, the Seikatsu Club Consumer's Cooperative (SCCC). The women's Workers Collectives was proposed as an offshoot of the Seikatsu consumer movement which criticized and challenged the deteriorating effects of rapid industrialization, such as environmental pollution, additives in foods and consumer goods, and higher costs of living. The Seikatsu Consumer's Cooperative, was itself a grassroots activism started by a group of housewives in one community in Tokyo in the mid 1960s, for the purpose of obtaining unadulterated milk at lower costs. In researching why the consumers were buying expensive reconstituted inferior milk, these women found that the milk market was monopolized by a handful of companies and there was no reliable system to check and to insure the quality and reasonable prices for the products they purchased. The basic problem they saw was the hierarchical division of consumer and producer in the market economy, where the consumers were passive targets of the market and had no control over their consumption. Thus, through consumer cooperatives, they tried to promote people's active involvement in choosing a type of goods they wanted, and to create a system that will allow the consumers to take initiative to influence production processes by telling producers exactly what they want. Negotiating directly with local producers, the Seikatsu now has hundreds of their own lines of products, including produce available for their members.

The women's Workers Collectives were proposed in 1982 to bring the idea of consumer cooperatives to another level, by dissolving the division of consumers and producers altogether. The Workers Collectives were projected to provide a place and a means for the members to produce goods and services for and by themselves from the standpoint of consumers. Eradicating the division of labor between consumer and producer through the collectives had a further implication beyond the realm of the market. The initiators of the collectives saw their activities as advancing a challenge and criticism against the hierarchical gender division, which relegates women primarily to the role of passive consumers and to the marginalized position in the sphere of economy.

It was also around this time that increasing numbers of married women in their post child-rearing age were absorbed in the labor market as low-paid, unskilled, part-time workers in the growing service industry in Japan (Ueno, 1987). The women's Workers Collectives were in this context offering alternatives for women who refused to be incorporated into the system as expendable labor. After the birth of the first Workers Collectives in Kanagawa in 1982, the numbers have steadily increased and grown to produce 250 groups, with more than 7000 members throughout Japan at the end of 1998. More than 90% of members are married women between the ages of 35 and 60. Most of them have higher education than the national average, and have little or no wage-work experience after their marriage or the birth of their first child. Their household income and their spouse's occupation suggest that the majority of the collective members belong to middle-class families.

The women's workers collectives and the consumer cooperatives are in this sense a gender and class specific movement. Their motivations to join the movement, the nature of their work, and the issues that they want to address through their collective activities are not separable from the gender structure and ideology of appropriate middle-class women in Japan: their responsibilities as the sole care-takers for their families inculcated in them a keen awareness for the qualities of goods and services; women in the collectives seek socially responsible and meaningful work an activity, because job opportunities for middle-aged women are extremely limited in Japan, and their higher educational background and social status have made it more difficult for them to take just any kind of job. Their involvement in the collectives is in a sense an act of defiance toward their socially ascribed position as middle-aged, middle-class women. It is also an implicit critique of industrial policies and work culture based on, and catering for men's experiences and perspectives.

The Workplace As a Forum for Engendering Gender Norms : A case of *Sai*, lunch-catering collective

On one level, women's Workers' Collectives are an explicit critique of existing society and gender inequality. On the workfloor the members share the individual experiences of

being a mother, wife, and worker, and through these talks, they begin to understand clearly the social grounding of individual experience. Sharing life histories and experiences can enhance their critical perspectives on society as well as their self-confidence. In the course of my research, I heard many people saying, “since I started working at the collective, I learned that there are many things I never thought I could do before. But now I know I can!”

On the other hand, the very strategy of trying to sustain the collectives, thus, keeping the radical politics alive, also tends to reproduce the conservative views of gender and the convention of gender division among the members. One of the lunch-catering collectives, *Sai*, where I conducted participant observation research in 1995, shows this contradictory process of gender construction on the work floor on daily basis.

Sai is one of the oldest and successful workers' collectives in Tokyo. Since 1984, they have been delivering boxed-lunches (*bento*) in their community in Setagaya ward of Tokyo. They rent a small kitchen where women work in shifts of 5 to 6 people per day. *Sai* is large in size in terms of number of workers compared to other collectives in Tokyo. In 1995, at the time of my research, they were selling an average 2,710 *bentos* per month with annual sales of 27 million yen. There were 19 workers at *Sai* including women from diverse generation: the original members were in their late 50s to early 60s; the members joined during the formative years of the collective were in their 40s, and the newest members were in their 30s. They worked side by side in a small kitchen everyday from 9:00 am to 5:00 p.m. with a one hour lunch-break in-between.

These age groups formed three cohorts with distinctive sets of opinions about work and motivation for their collective activities (Kutsuzawa, 1998). *Sai* also hires non-member, part-time workers. Thus, despite the idea of equality among all the workers, this age and status differences in the collective carry with them the differences in skills and commitment to the collective, and pose a complex problem to the collective principle of “equal participation and equality among workers.” The equal contribution of the collective principle can be a burden for those who lack skills and experience when they compare themselves to other workers. On the other hand, for those who have more skills and experience, the equal distribution of work and reward among workers becomes the “inequality of equality,” for they feel that they are not compensated for their expertise.

Because of these differences among workers, potential fissures were ever present on the workforce. On some occasions, one member was sharply and openly criticized for her mistake by another. This created an awkward moment in the small workplace at *Sai*, where everybody present felt the violation of equal status among the members: how could she justify criticizing her co-worker in front of others? The open criticism was interpreted as a display of one's superiority, and the workers commented that nobody should act superiorly to other workers in the collective. Younger workers and part-time workers often felt that they were not given as many skilled tasks and responsibilities as older workers, and that that was a violation of equal opportunity and participation.

Communal Eating: Lunchtime and Collective Identity

In order to alleviate the potential conflicts among the workers and to renew the solidarity and camaraderie among them, women at *Sai* created an informal mechanism that is woven into the everyday activities at the collective. Lunchtime is one such occasion. Everyday at *Sai*, all the workers eat the same lunch together in a circle. The busier the day, the more important it is for the workers to eat lunch together. The act of communal eating is itself a symbolic expression of solidarity: they eat the same foods they had cooked together (cf. Turner, 1957). They exchange comments and ask questions about the foods as they are eating, which enhances the sense of the collaborative nature of their work. Through the sharing of foods, the contributions of part-time workers and the youngest generation are also acknowledged. They are the first to be served, and whatever foods are left over are usually offered to the younger workers.

In addition to sharing foods, lunchtime provides an opportunity to talk about issues of common interest, such as how to handle husband, or to deal with in-laws. Talking and sharing life-time transition events are widely recognized practices for creating solidarity among workers (Lamphere, 1987; di Leonardo, 1985). These are also an important part of lunch at *Sai*, in which workers can overcome their status differences and link their individual concerns as women with those of co-workers. Referred to as the "women's work culture," the women's talk at the workplaces produces a common bond among women, which also acts as a place for consciousness raising among female workers (i.e. Lamphere,

1987; Westwood, 1985; Costello, 1985). Thus, on one level, the women at *Sai* uses their lunchtime for strengthening the collective identity. They consciously choose topics that anyone can relate to, such as community news, T.V. programs, hobbies and fashions.

While these conversations do help to strengthening the common identity as a collective, they also provide a place for socialization of the younger generation where they learn the responsibilities and skills as housewives, reinforcing and reproducing the conventional gender norms and roles. Nuclear family has become the most popular household pattern among the young generation. With the absence of in-laws who used to teach the details of running a household, the younger generation often seeks advice from the older co-workers for various problems they face at their home : the best way to pickle cucumbers from scratch; nutritious late-night snacks for a child who is studying for an entrance examination; how to deal with husbands who come home late after drinking. Some of the younger women in *Sai* commented that one advantage of working at *Sai* is to learn the art of household-management and traditional home-cooking (*ofukurono aji*) from the older generation. Although there is a flood of information on this issue through the mass media such as cooking shows on T.V. or how-to-books, the younger generation finds that such media information is too diverse. Whenever they need more personal and “authentic” opinions, young workers at *Sai* often turn to the older workers for advice and suggestions. Older women were also eager to help and give advise to the younger workers, for they felt that they were given the opportunity to show their wisdom and accumulated experiences as homemakers.

This advice emphasizes the role of women as care-givers and underscores the value of women's abilities to be attentive to other people's needs and comforts. Instead of questioning and debating why family's welfare must always comes first, lunch-time talks and daily interaction among workers at *Sai* tend to affirm the normative gender roles by bringing domestic issues to the center of their concerns. In other words, while the idea and practice of work collectives is a critique of women's position in the labor market and the market economy from the perspective of women, the convention of gender roles also infiltrates into the younger generation and is reproduced on the workfloor on daily basis.

Conclusion.

This paper starts with theoretical frameworks of gender and work, and reevaluates the contributions and advancements made by feminist scholarship in this area of research. A clear understanding of theoretical strengths and weaknesses is essential for framing research questions and viewpoints one employs in social and cultural analyses. And the feminist scholarship, bearing the flag of a critical practice, should be subjected to a continuous and rigorous self-evaluation, so that it can continue to offer a critical perspective that enables us to look at society afresh. This point is all the more important in the area of work and gender, since women's roles in waged and unwaged work are changing rapidly as they are drawn into global process of economic and social restructuring (Napels, 1998).

Workers Collectives are considered to be one of the most viable forms of work for women in the period of economic restructuring. Women in many societies are increasingly disadvantaged in the formal labor market and lack organizational resources to be self-sufficient and to start their own businesses. Pooling resources and working in-groups provide women with much needed social and financial resources. Working with other women who have similar outlooks and concerns also can be an empowering experience, leading them to involvement in activities for ending inequalities and prejudices as well as for improving their living and working conditions. In this respect, feminists, activists, and NGOs who are concerned with improving women's status and rights advocate collective forms of work group as a means for women's economic self-sufficiency and empowerment (Mayoux, 1988; McCormack, Walsh, and Nelson, 1986).

Some elements of women's workers' collectives in Japan present such radical potential for challenging the male-centered work pattern, industrialism, and gender inequalities in society. The close observation of a collective from within reveals however a much more complex picture of women's work in society. The Japanese women's collectives criticize gender norms on the one hand, and reproduce them on the other, through the very efforts to sustain the collective. I argue that this paradoxical process is the most prominent feature of gendered work: Gender norms and identities provide both constraints and resources for individuals in forging social life. Individuals enter into work relationships as gendered person/workers with constraints imposed on them by certain

「女の仕事」から「女」を構築する仕事へ

expectations and responsibilities-- those considered to be appropriate under gender norms. This does not mean that people accept gender scripts uncritically at the workplace. Instead, the work process itself can posit continuous challenges to the norms in order for individuals to broaden their life choices.

Women's work collectives in Japan emerged as a response to social constraints imposed on middle-class, middle-aged women. For women in the Japanese work collectives, however, their gender identity as housewives enhance the basis of solidarity. They consciously and unconsciously evoke the identity of housewife at the workplace in order to alleviate the potential fissure among themselves. This allows them to sustain their activities within the male-dominated, inhospitable business world.

If the reproduction of gender norms on workforce is inevitable, are women's efforts in the work collectives simply a coping mechanism to make the intolerable conditions of gender inequalities bearable? Do their efforts to carve out a social space for themselves in fact function only to maintain the same unequal gender relations by containing women within a separate gendered system? These questions bring us back to the notion of "doing gender," in which the boundaries of gender are continuously enforced, realigned, and redefined in social processes. Some of the collective members in the younger generations become critical of the ways in which the older generations reinforce the traditional gender norms. Their criticism may lead to more progressive organizations. In fact, new collectives are more explicit about their goal toward gender equality. These are organized by younger women who come to question the older generations in the collectives, and have decided to organize independent collectives. They are also trying to recruit male members, for they believe that truly egalitarian work organizations should include both genders and make an effort to break down the gendered boundaries through inclusion.

付記：本文中の*Sail*は、グループのプライバシーを考慮して仮名とさせて頂いた。また、ワークス・コレクティブの調査には、日本国際交流基金と米国シグマ・カイ社会科学財団から多大なご協力を頂いた。ここに感謝の意を表したい。

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