

# Chapter 5

## Gender and Sexuality in Japanese Education: From Gender Disparity to Intersectional and Multiple Gender/Sexualities



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**Abstract** This chapter examines both traditional and recent studies that pursue the central question of gender and sexuality studies in Japanese sociology of education: how gender and sexualized power relationships are constructed at school and among youth in Japan. The thread of these studies is woven through the depiction of three theoretical focuses: gender disparity, gender construction, and the intersectionalities and multiplicities of gender and sexualities. These studies work hand in hand to explore still-persistent gender disparities in education, invisible gendered constructions in the organization of Japanese schools, and the multiple and intersectional interplays of gender, sexualities, and other axes of power relations. Although this chapter does not cover the whole picture of gender and sexuality studies in Japanese sociology of education, this chapter aims to introduce the rich body of Japanese gender studies in education, which in turn will shed light on how the construction of gender and sexualities is intertwined with its specific systems, social context and relationships, and cultural practices. Gender and sexuality studies in Japan could move from the periphery to the theoretical center of the field of sociology of education and serve as a driving force for understanding Japanese youth and education. This chapter hopes to contribute to this move.

### 5.1 Introduction: Educational Attainment and Beyond

This chapter depicts both the established tradition and the developing trend of gender/sexuality studies in Japanese sociology of education. Japanese education has attracted much attention from outside for its excellent academic achievement and its distinct cultural practices. Many studies have depicted Japanese education as a well-oiled machine for reproducing Japanese cultural norms such as groupism, harmony,

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and cooperation (e.g., Peak 1993), which these scholars believe leads to Japanese students' high academic achievement (e.g., Singleton 1993). In recent years, however, a monolithic view of Japanese education has become increasingly difficult to support. Japanese education has become an arena of conflicts between various norms, and gender is at the core of those conflicts.

In spite of the rich tradition of gender studies in sociology of education in Japan, surprisingly little literature has been introduced in English (with the exception of Brinton 1988 and few others). This chapter has two objectives: providing an overview of the main tradition of gender and education in Japan, which pursues the causes of gender disparities, and describing important recent studies in the field. For the first objective, I rely heavily on a number of reviews of studies of Japanese gender and education that trace and analyze the field's development (Amano 1988; Kanda et al. 1985; Mori 1992; Nakanishi and Hori 1997; Taga and Tendo 2013). These reviews agree that the strongest tradition in Japanese studies of gender and education has focused on the central question of the field: Why does gender disparity persist? To date, this line of research has examined Japanese school systems, textbooks, teaching, overt and hidden curriculum, and classroom interactions to determine how gender disparity is produced and reproduced in education. In doing so, these studies have formed the mainstream of Japanese studies of gender and education. This line of research is mainly based on the philosophies of first- and second-wave feminism, such as liberal feminism, radical feminism, and Marxist feminism, concerning issues such as equal access to education, restrictive gender roles, and masculine domination over schools.

Recent developments in gender and education studies in Japan, however, have shifted the focus from gender disparities to gender constructions and to the multiplicities and intersectionalities of gender/sexualities. Many recent studies pursue different sets of questions from traditional gender disparity studies to reveal various forms of masculinities/femininities/sexualities and how these forms intersect with other inequalities, such as class and ethnicity. These studies explore, for instance, how masculinities and sexualities play a crucial role in constructing gender dynamics of schools or how class and ethnic minorities construct their gender identities in their social world. These studies illuminate the detailed processes of how gender and sexualities are dynamically constructed hand in hand with other forces of subject formation, based mostly on feminist poststructuralism, third-wave feminism, and intersectionality theories.

In US and European studies of gender and education, the field's central concern has shifted from gender disparity to gender construction. As Ringrose (2007) and others explain, as girls' grades started catching up with those of boys in the 1990s, even in the so-called boys' subjects, such as math and sciences, a political backlash arose in the media, academia, and society to undermine the accomplishments of gender disparity studies in the 1970s and 1980s, claiming that feminism was no longer relevant in this postfeminism era. Scholars of gender and education counter the backlash by stressing that women's subordination remains substantial and unequivocal, but at the same time, they question existing gender disparity studies

for having treated boys and girls as two monolithic groups (namely, as white middle-class girls and boys) and for having used a liberal feminist framework: how girls can catch up with boys in their educational and occupational attainment. Gender and education scholars state that there is much more to explore in gender studies than educational attainment, and they need to expand their perspectives to examine gender not as a category but as being momentarily constructed in the “new gender regime” (McRobbie 2009).

In Japan, on the other hand, because of the stubborn persistence of gender inequalities in many aspects of education, gender disparity studies still constitute the mainstream of the field, while the recent trend is only just developing. Moreover, in many cases, there is no clear-cut distinction between gender disparity studies and gender construction studies, which coexist hand in hand to tackle specific gender issues in Japanese cultural and societal contexts; therefore, the distinction I make in this chapter is sometimes a mere convenience. As I explain in this chapter, Japanese studies are not merely following the path of western studies. Each academic society harnesses its particular composition of the field, and the development of each field is deeply related to its specific context. The illuminations of Japanese gender and sexualities in their specificities will help in understanding the diverse contextual factors of gender and sexual construction and, in so doing, will shed light on how the construction of gender and sexualities is intertwined with its specific systems, social contexts and relationships, and cultural practices.

In the following sections, I will first examine gender disparity studies – a driving force for the development of the field of gender and education in Japan. Second, I will describe the important line of qualitative research about the processes of gender construction within Japanese schools through the hidden curriculum. I consider these studies to contain features of both gender disparity studies and gender construction studies. Finally, I will describe the recent development of gender/sexualities and education studies, which veered its attention from gender disparity to gender multiplicities and intersectionalities. As mentioned above, although this trend is not yet fully established in Japan, discussing this new trend will offer perspectives on where this field is heading and will contribute to laying the groundwork for the future development of the gender/sexuality studies in Japanese education.

Before discussing Japanese gender studies, I note that a complete review of the field is beyond the scope of this chapter. This chapter merely traces one thread of Japanese education and only a handful of studies regarding the central question of the field, which is how gender and sexualized power relationships are constructed at school and among youth in Japan, and, as a result, inevitably excludes some important works in the field. Moreover, instead of summarizing a large quantity of studies, I have chosen to extract the qualitative essence of some field-forming traditional and recent studies and, in so doing, will show the theoretical importance of Japanese studies of gender education. This qualitative thread, I hope, will show the richness, difficulties, and complexities of Japanese gender studies in education and provide important insights into its bright future.

## 5.2 Gender Disparity Studies

In this section, I will first introduce gender disparity studies – the strongest tradition of Japanese gender and education studies to date – which have pursued their inquiry into the reasons and mechanisms of gender inequalities in Japanese education from institutional, historical, and interactional perspectives. The main purpose of these studies is to explore how gender disparities in educational and occupational attainments are maintained and reproduced in Japanese education. As Kanda, Kameda, Amano, and other prominent pioneering scholars of gender and education explain in their review article (Kanda et al. 1985), studies of women were conducted as early as the 1950s, but these studies were not necessarily produced through feminist lenses, and “the studies of women out of social concern” sprang out slowly through the 1970s and 1980s, significantly impacted by internal and international feminism movements, such as the International Women’s Year in 1975.

Mori (1992) traces and analyzes the development of the field of gender and education in Japan by dividing it into three periods: (1) the period before the impact of women’s studies (the 1950s and 1960s), (2) the period after this impact (from 1970 to 1985), and finally, (3) the transition period from women’s studies to gender studies (from 1985 to 1992, when the paper was written). In the first stage, researchers examine women’s situations not necessarily from the perspective of women’s issues but as a factor that arises in the analysis of mainstream themes of sociology of education, such as occupational attainment and work division in villages. The second stage, affected by women’s movements, defines a clearer goal for research: the improvement of the status of women. In this period, the number of studies rose sharply, and the themes of research diversified to cover career and educational paths, higher education, female teachers and scholars, occupational education, and motherhood. In the third period, Mori explains, much qualitative research stresses the need to take the gaze of scholars inside schools to understand the intricate cultural and social processes of gender construction, which had been hidden as matter-of-fact school practices.

In the following sections, I will first review the main themes and findings of the first and the second periods of studies, as defined by Mori, and then describe in detail the studies in the third period, in which the perspective of gender construction emerges.

### 5.2.1 *Gender Disparity in Occupational and Educational Attainment*

One of the most traditional topics in the field of Japanese education and gender is the mechanism that prevents women, even with college degrees, from continuing and advancing their careers. In the 1970s and 1980s, women with university degrees were still a minority (12.3% in 1980, for instance, less than one-third of the male

equivalent), but the rising population of female college graduates made professional women visible as a category, especially after the Equal Opportunity Act came into effect in Japan in 1985.

Many scholars of women and education were keen to reveal the difficulties women face in pursuing their professional careers, and these scholars turned their focus to teaching from very early on because it is a field where women outnumbered men starting in the 1960s but struggled nonetheless. Those studies found that persistent norms about sex roles in Japanese society prevent female teachers from developing their careers. Female teachers in Amano's study (1976), for instance, show strong motivation to continue their work but occupy the bottom rung of the power ladder at school, rarely receiving promotions to administrative positions, and yet they are satisfied with their lower status. Amano states that what consigns female teachers to a lower status is the strong societal expectations for women to be exclusively responsible for housework and child-rearing. Many scholars identify this strong gender norm as the greatest impediment to women's career development.

What exactly are Japanese norms for women's roles? Scholars such as Yamamura (1971) stress the prevalence of the norm called *ryousai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother), which is a pivotal component of Japanese society and culture. Koyama's (1991) study reveals that the image of a good, devoted mother has historically been the principal aim of Japanese women's education, which has always been treated differently from men's education. Nakayama (1985) problematizes "feminine socialization," which ensures that women will acquire the traditional norms of sex roles and *ryousai kenbo*. As a result of this socialization, even when women seek higher education, they tend to aspire not to a professional career of their own but to have a partner with high status, and even when they seek a career, they assign less value to income, status, and power than to helping and getting along with others. This is the reason, Amano states, that women's education does not necessarily lift their social status. This phenomenon applies to female university teachers who have just as many publications and other accomplishments as their male counterparts but remain as a long-term part-time lecturers (Nakagawa et al. 1982). Researchers posit that "feminine socialization" and "female sex roles" such as *ryousai kenbo* drag women's social status down not only in the case of teachers but also of other occupations, such as nurses, even after implementation of the Equal Opportunity Act. Kameda (1977), based on her study of junior high school and high school girls, reveals that girls' occupational identity tends to develop in the transition from junior high school to high school, and their mother's occupational status has a strong influence on their career choice. Kameda concludes that proper occupational education is a solution to combat the strong "feminization" processes.

Japanese gender research in the field of sociology of education thus started out exploring the obstacles for working women but then turned its direction to the educational system, which seemed to produce and perpetuate the strong traditional norms about female sex roles. Amano (1986) observes from her historical analysis that Japanese education has served women not as a status-obtaining function through their own careers but as a status-representing function through marriage. Researchers argue that even the rise of female participation in universities does not help women

in the labor market because the educational system itself is gender segregated. Women tend to go to junior college and women's universities, major in "feminine" fields, such as home economics and humanities, enter "feminine" work fields, and stop working upon marriage or childbirth. More recent studies also focus on the still gender-segregated Japanese educational system. Nakanishi (1998) conducts an extensive quantitative research on the system of the "female track" in high schools. To this day, many junior high and high schools are sex-separate schools, and boys' schools tend to be more competitive. As Yoshihara (1998) points out, girls and boys are screened through different systems in Japanese education.

Women today are still underrepresented in various professions, politics, and education in Japan, making Japan an outlier among developed countries. Recent governmental statistics show that only 14% of faculty members at Japanese universities are women, with high concentrations in less competitive universities and junior colleges, in lower status, in part-time positions, and in "female" fields – 50% in home economics and 7% in the sciences. The report concludes that this tendency is a result of women's greater burden in family and child-rearing, but Kikuno (2013) points out that 48% of female part-time faculty members at a university where she conducted research are single and living below relative poverty, which disproves the perception of the typical female part-time lecturer as being married and working on the side of her family life. Thus, gender disparity in career and education as a research topic is still imperative in Japanese society today.

### 5.2.2 *Gender Inequalities at School*

From the late 1980s, researchers started turning their attention from women who internalize feminine roles to the educational system that inducts women into traditional roles. Amano's influential article (1988), *The current issues about 'sex (gender) and education': The continuation of the hidden 'realms,'* contributes to the theoretical shift in the field: women to the mechanism of inequality and sex roles to gender relations.

Education, compared to family, labor markets, and politics, is a field where inequalities between the sexes are hidden by the strong control of "the illusion of equality." Schools in modern-day Japan are considered to be generally a meritocratic institution. Students are supposed to be judged on the basis of grades and abilities regardless of sex. In this arena, women are believed to choose freely and voluntarily the sex "track" in higher education – sciences and for male students and humanities junior colleges for female students – and to use university degrees as status-representing function for marriage. But is this really true?

(Amano 1988)

Amano discusses the need to shift the research focus from "equality in educational opportunities" to "equality in results" (the shift that American and European gender studies made earlier) and to examine the hidden mechanism of Japanese schools that produce gender inequalities. After Amano's review, and especially after

the World Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995, Japan experienced a movement to fight against gender discrimination at school from diverse groups: feminist activists, lawyers, teachers, and scholars. This movement has been labeled gender-free (*jendā furii*) education, meaning education that is free from gender bias. "The association for examining schools from gender perspectives" was established in 1996, and the "National Network for Freeing Schools from Gender Bias" was established the following year. Researchers got together with teachers, activists, local government officials, and concerned citizens to discuss how to examine and eliminate systematic gender discriminations at Japanese school, resulting in many edited volumes (e.g., Kameda and Tachi 2000).

The topics the movement focused on first were the "explicit" hidden curriculum, such as sexist textbooks, gender-segregated school practices and disproportionate power status, and school organization by gender. After the mandatory gender division for electives – home economics for girls and shop for boys – was finally phased out in 1993 and 1994, all formal gender discrimination seemed to be eliminated, but researchers insisted that Japanese schools were still saturated with gender discrimination based on long-lasting beliefs about "*tokusei kyouiku* (gender-specific education)." Inspired by gender studies in the USA and Europe (e.g., Delamont 1980), Japanese scholars revealed both universal and cultural-specific forms of discriminations. Japanese textbooks are overwhelmingly written by male authors and peopled by male characters, and even a story about a tomboy ends with the girl becoming girlish and happy. School uniforms, gym clothes, school bags, and school materials (red for girls, blue for boys) were differentiated according to gender. Class rosters, which are used not only to call roll but also to group students for school activities, were segregated by gender, with boys first. Those gender-specific practices have recently become problematized again from the perspectives of sexual minority students, which I will discuss later. Girls are prevented from exercising leadership in many ways; the chief students for the school assembly and sports festivals were all boys, and teachers tended to assign girls with supplemental chores. These divisional practices contributed to the maintenance of the divided gender spheres that Amano identified (1988), channeling women into the female sphere.

### ***5.2.3 From Gender Disparity to Gender Construction: Cultural Practice of "Hidden Curriculum"***

Along with the gender-free movement, gender scholars in sociology of education started examining not only the "explicit" hidden curriculum, such as sexist textbooks and school organization, but also the "implicit" hidden curriculum, such as teaching practices and classroom interactions. Many influential studies in the west and elsewhere explored these themes (e.g., Sadker and Sadker 1994), and Japanese scholars, too, revealed, through in-depth qualitative research, how implicit hidden curriculum plays out in the specific culture, context, and organization of Japanese

schools. This line of research is what Amano and other reviewers considered as necessary for exposing the system of hidden gender bias reproduction in Japan.

Mori (1989) revealed the complex hidden curriculum of Japanese schools, which is embedded in its cultural and organizational context. Japanese preschool teachers in his research often divided girls and boys, but did not consider the division to be related to gender socialization. They used gender categories to maintain order in the classroom, not necessarily for promoting gender socialization. Teachers considered the gender category as a natural framework for children and a useful resource and strategy for teachers, but Mori argues that teachers' frequent use of the category brought about unintended gender socialization.

Miyazaki (1991) conducted an ethnographic study at an elementary school to examine this process of unintended gender socialization. The majority of teachers in this study explained that they separated girls and boys not as a means of gender socialization but as an effective tool to control and organize a large number of students, because students know which gender they are supposed to belong to and they can rapidly separate themselves into those groups. Miyazaki's research was conducted before the concept of gender had been introduced to schools, and some teachers explained that they deliberately divided girls and boys to educate them differently with different messages. Most teachers, however, denied the intention of gender socialization and willingly participated in an experiment to rid their instructions of gender categorization, but once they did, they found themselves having trouble organizing their students. Mori and Miyazaki thus show how gender is naturalized and intertwined with the organizational feature of Japanese large classrooms.

Kawakami (1990) revealed another process of gender discrimination embedded within the Japanese school system through examining how teachers are evaluated for promotion. Taking on the role of overseeing a school sports club contributes significantly to promotion within a school because the tremendous time commitment required to carry out this role demonstrates loyalty and devotion to the school and students. This basis for evaluation is not stipulated as a gendered standard, but in effect it is, because female teachers are excluded from overseeing sports clubs and, consequently, do not have this valuable opportunity for advancement within the school. Thus, seemingly universal organizational principles are gendered, and the resulting disproportionate gender ratio of managerial positions ends up serving as a hidden gender lesson for students.

Kimura (1997) explored yet another process of "implicit" gendered hidden curriculum through her research at a Japanese elementary school classroom. Most Japanese classrooms are composed of a large number of students (up to 40) who undertake group activities throughout the day, cleaning the classroom together, serving and eating lunch in the classroom, and participating in sports and other school competitions as a team. Kimura found that boys talk more than girls in class, a similar finding of Sadker and Sadker (1994) and other western scholars who examined gender disproportion in classroom interactions. In Kimura's study, however, this tightly-knit classroom system plays a role: The classroom is a field of constant power dynamics where boys try to undercut girls' power by making fun of



and questioning their statements in class and by silencing them, and when teachers try to help girls take leadership, the boys criticize female teachers' favoritism of girls. Miyazaki (1993) too, following the lead of western gender subculture studies (e.g., McRobbie 1991), documenting the dynamic construction of gender relationships at school, how four main groups – studiers, geeks, normal girls, and Yankees (delinquents) – at a girls' high school construct different types of femininities at school, and through criticizing one another's construction of femininities, negotiate what desirable femininities are.

These studies revealed intricate cultural and organizational practices of gender at Japanese schools and in doing so contributed to changing gender-separate practices of Japanese education. Currently, some obvious forms of gender discrimination, such as gender-separate rosters, have been abolished. Despite these accomplishments, or rather because of them, Japanese education faced a severe backlash against the movement of “gender-free (freeing school from gendered bias)” education at the turn of the century. The ruling (Liberal Democratic) party established the “Research committee on extreme sex education and gender-free education” and argued that the idea of “gender-free” is dangerous and harmful to traditional family values. Home economics textbooks that discuss gender equality were criticized. Many local governments questioned and cut back sex education at school and even banned books with the word gender in their titles from public libraries. Japanese gender scholars argued against this backlash by pointing out how intimately gender is intertwined with nationalist agendas to keep women at home (e.g., Asai et al. 2006).

As I mentioned above, gender studies in the west, too, experienced a backlash in the media, academia, and politics when these studies suggested in the 1990s that girls had caught up with boys in academic achievements. It is interesting to note that in Japan, however, a backlash occurred not against actual changes in educational achievement or even against efforts to uncover and remedy gender gaps – which indeed had not even taken place – but rather against the mere attempt to change discriminatory practices and traditional gender roles in education. In the face of this backlash, gender scholars in the USA and Europe reevaluated their stance, which tended to be based on liberal feminism and the dichotomy of a girls-vs-boys framework, widening their perspectives by going beyond educational and occupational achievements and seeking to establish their theoretical basis on feminist poststructuralism, third-wave feminism, and the theory of intersectionalities. After the damaging backlash movement, Japanese gender scholars have taken a similar path, which I will introduce in the following sections.

### **5.3 Gender Multiplicities, Sexualities, and Intersectionalities**

In the age of globalization and neoliberalism, it is necessary for gender studies to go beyond the simple dichotomy of gender and to closely look at gender multiplicities. Gender studies need a perspective that sees through multiple power relationships, which remain hidden

behind the façade of superficial equalities that were talked up following women's "liberation" and feminist "victory". (Taga and Tendo 2013: 139).

Taga and Tendo (2013) point out at the end of their review article, quoted above, that Japanese gender studies need a sharp theoretical turn to deepen the analysis of multiple power relationships that are pervasive in the new era. Women are to take the blame for their failure because of their "free choice" and "self-accountability (*jiko-sekinin*)," while hidden mechanisms deprive them of power. In 2013, Taga and Tendo found almost no article in the field of Japanese sociology of education dealing with sexualities and intersectionalities of the new power regime. Since then, however, Japan is undergoing significant societal and academic changes. In this section, I will introduce (1) a group of gender studies that adapt the framework of feminist poststructuralism, which played an important role in introducing a theoretical turn in gender and education studies; (2) studies of masculinities and sexualities, which show the complex composition of gender; and (3) studies based on intersectionality theories, which deal with multiple axes of inequalities.

### 5.3.1 *Feminist Poststructuralism and Japanese Education*

Taga and Tendo (2013) point out that Japanese gender studies are less theoretical compared to their counterparts in the west – or at least that their theoretical stances are less clearly stated – and that theoretical development is crucial for the advancement of Japanese gender studies in education. Nishitai (1998) and others argue that feminist poststructuralist theories are useful for the development of Japanese gendered studies of education. Some researchers have stated clearly since the 2000s that their studies are based on this theoretical stance.

Otaki (2006), for example, employs Butler's theory on the making of the gendered subject, which is the application of Althusser's notion of appellation. Otaki's thorough ethnography reveals how Japanese toddlers are made into gendered beings at preschool and how the appellation is related to preschool classroom practices. Right after the 3-year-old children in Otaki's research enter the preschool, most of them do not respond when called upon by teachers to form gender-separate groups (e.g., "Come here, girls!"), but through classroom practices day after day, the children gradually came to understand that they belonged either to girls' or boys' groups. Otaki recounts that when a group of boys got into a TV animation series called *Serious Rangers* and pretended to be characters in that series, the boys' speech and behavior became masculine, and their recognition of their gender solidified. Otaki concludes that such everyday interactions between teachers and children and among children construct children into gendered beings.

Fujita (2004) bases her ethnography at a Japanese preschool on the theory of feminist poststructuralism to explain preschoolers' negotiations with gender categories. She argues that most research focuses on how schools construct gender-separate practices, but students, and even preschoolers in her study, avidly engage themselves in gender boundary building. These children use the dichotomy of gender

categories and stereotypes prevalent in the media in their daily “gender play (Thorne 1993),” such as when they play pirate and princess, and mock and correct each other’s gender-crossing behavior. But these gender-building practices are not “internalized” by these preschoolers. They construct a gender boundary moment to moment by crossing and reinforcing it at the same time, for example, when a girl defends her preference for a “male” color by arguing that that is the color of vegetables mothers cook and when another girl uses masculine language to introduce her boyfriend.

Hatano (2004) takes up the poststructuralist feminist inquiry in the judo club of a junior high school by examining the spatial negotiations of girl and boy club members. Although female and male students practice together, the gender-divided space is maintained through everyday practice, and male students occupy space three times as large as female space despite the numbers of female and male members being roughly equal. The spatial division is challenged when female students step into male space, but the challenge is negated by a persistent myth of “male superiority of physicality.” The judo system ranks females and males differently, and even when female students excel, they are paired up with younger, weaker male students.

Gender disparity studies overlooked sports, as explained by Hatano. Iida and Itani (2004) argues that Japanese physical education values competitive sports and muscle strength and in turn creates the myth of men’s physical superiority, which has slipover effects to broader gender norms. Educational attainments are only a part of the gender system in school, and it is important that we examine other powerful means to construct gender norms, such as sports, without assuming the preexistence of the category but, instead, revealing how the category is created, maintained, and challenged in the moment-to-moment gender constructions of school life.

### ***5.3.2 Masculinities and Sexualities in Japanese Education***

#### **5.3.2.1 Masculinities in Japanese Education**

Since the 1980s, the concept of masculinity has been an important analytical tool that transformed the basic understanding of gendered power dynamics across western societies. Connell (e.g., 2006) criticizes the notion of patriarchy for simplifying gender relations and proposes to analyze more complex gendered power relations between men, women, and sexualities. He argues that it is important to understand how multiple masculinities are practiced every day in myriad ways and how a normative masculinity acquires and exercises power through different institutions, such as the media and politics. Education is one of the main institutions of masculinity making, Mac an Ghaill (1994) posits, and school is an apparatus in which teachers, regardless of their values, be they conservative, liberal, or neoliberal, convey different versions of desirable heterosexual masculinities through which boys learn how to become a heterosexual masculine subject.

In Japan, men's liberation movements (*menribu*) started in the mid-1970s. Many groups sprang out from the movements, such as "Association for childrearing men" and "Men against prostitution-solicitation in Asia." These groups, influenced by women's liberation movements, reflected men as both the oppressor and the oppressed in Japanese society. The former group, for instance, problematized Japanese men's overwork and embedded identities in corporations and asserted that while women are deprived of their right to work, men are deprived of their right to family life.

In Japanese academia, masculinity studies got underway in the 1990s by exploring how different masculinities play out in Japan's heavily gendered society and how men oppress and are oppressed in various realms such as politics, family, sexualities, and violence. In the field of sociology of education, as Taga and Tendo point out in their review article (2013), masculinity studies are grossly underdeveloped, to the point where a single scholar, Taga, can be credited with stressing the theoretical importance of masculinity studies in education. Several important studies have been published, however. Taga's life history interviews (2001), for instance, reveal how the interviewees try to meet the norms of desirable masculinity and how they experience conflicts in doing so. The interviewees perceive normative heterosexual masculinities in sports clubs, the seniority system, and classroom relationships at school and try to practice masculine language, body, and mannerisms but end up experiencing identity conflicts. In contemporary Japan, masculine and sexual norms are in flux, varying in different contexts and relationships in society, which makes a desirable masculinity even harder to acquire.

Miyazaki (2004), based on a longitudinal ethnography, explores gender-crossing linguistic and social practices of Japanese junior high school students. It is easier for girls to use masculine language than it is for boys to use feminine language: Girls were often able to use masculine language as a means for attaining popularity and power, but boys were ridiculed, bullied, and stigmatized as homosexual when they crossed the gender border to act and speak in a feminine manner. Feminine boys were placed at the bottom rung of the tightly-knit classroom relationships and had to defend their feminine practices moment to moment through their tactful linguistic practices. Miyazaki shows that masculinities and femininities are not directly attached to boys and girls but are intertwined and work hand in hand to constitute gender power relations at school.

In examining the historicity of the formation of Japanese masculinity, Uchida (2010) takes his analysis further than just describing what constitutes a desirable masculinity. Through extensive analysis of popular magazines for boys from Japan's modernization period (starting in the 1880s) to World War II, Uchida defines the ideal of Japanese masculinity as "weakness phobia," a phobia of weakness and an obsession not to be judged weak. Weakness phobia is not just a component of a masculine identity, but a driving force of the Japanese nationalistic agenda. During times of war, a desirable masculinity for *shounen* (boys) was defined and redefined in terms of the principle of weakness phobia, by contrasting desirable Japanese masculinity with gentle *shoujo* (girls) and by assigning undesirable masculinities to war enemies, such as "sexually ambiguous Koreans." Military schools and the

media flooded 14-year-old *shounen* soldiers with this weakness phobia to prepare them for supreme violence and untimely death at war. Shibuya (2013) also reveals from her historical analysis that not only femininity, but also masculinity, was used to promote a nationalistic agenda. At the turn of the nineteenth century, during Japan's modernization period, boys' sexual activities were suddenly considered to be against the national agenda of producing efficient human capital. So pressing was this concern that schools took extreme measures to control boys' bodies and to suppress their sexualities. As these studies show, it is imperative to analyze masculinities in the broader historical and national constructions of gendered and sexualized power relationships in Japan.

### 5.3.2.2 Sexualities in Japanese Education

Sexuality issues in Japan are on the verge of changing. Gender identity disorder (GID) caught public attention in 2001 because of a popular TV drama series featuring a character with GID, followed by medical and political attention and reform in the early 2000s, but public knowledge about sexual minorities as a whole was very limited until recently. Starting in 2015, Shibuya and setagaya wards in Tokyo and five other local governments implemented partnership legislation. A number of *manga* featuring sexual minorities have been published. The media attention devoted to and the social visibility of sexual minority issues have surged. At the same time, sexual minority bashing has not gone away, as seen in the disapproval by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of once-approved school textbooks that mention same-sex partnership and diverse families (Kato and Watanabe 2010). And sexual minorities continue to be caricatured as transsexual *onee* (big sister) in the media (Maree 2013).

In the field of education, there remains much work to broaden understanding of the difficulties faced by sexual minority students and to create supportive environments for these students. The government issued a notice in 2016 advising public schools to be considerate to sexual minority students by establishing a support team and by protecting these students from bullying. There are only a handful of studies in the field of sociology of education regarding sexual minority students so far, although such studies are being done as I write this article.

In the USA, on the other hand, as early as in the late 1980s, difficulties facing LGBT youth became an urgent issue after the US Department of Health and Human Services published a report showing surprisingly high suicide rate among LGBT youth – 30% of suicide are committed by LGBT youth (Perrotti and Westheimer 2001). From then on, the number of studies exploded, and the implementation of LGBT-related policies increased in the USA. In Japan, such statistics became known only recently. Hidaka and Operario (2014), based on a large-scale survey of Japanese GBQ men, found high levels of attempted suicide (15%) and anxiety (70%) as a result of many experiences of being bullied at school (83%). Now is the time for Japan to conduct in-depth research and establish thorough support systems and detailed policies to protect sexual minority students.

In the field of sociology of education, several studies have revealed the difficulties Japanese sexual minority youth face at school. Dohi (2015) analyzes the accounts of eight transgender youths and how they experienced conflicts between what they want to be and what they are required to be at school. Their conflicts often stemmed from gender stereotypes and divisions at Japanese schools, such as school uniforms – part of the gender socialization machinery described in the hidden curriculum studies I mentioned above. For example, an FTM (Female-to-Male) student could not bear wearing the school-issued skirt uniform. The FTM student came out, obtained permission from the school to wear pants, and then contributed to the school’s changing uniforms so that students can choose uniforms regardless of their gender. Gender categories confront sexual minority students every day at Japanese schools and form one of the many red lines that affect bullying, dropping out of school, and school refusal.

Imai & Yamada (2008), based on interviews with sexual minority students, reveals that Japanese schools assume that sexual minority students are nonexistent. Not only do these students have very few opportunities to learn about sexual minority issues, but they also receive negative messages about sexual minorities from peers and teachers, evidence of the strong heteronormatism that undergirds the operation of Japanese schools. Sixty percent of the research participants in Imai’s study have heard discriminatory remarks such as *okama* (faggot), *homo*, *kishoi* (disgusting), and *otoko-onna* (dyke) and 30% from teachers. Students and teachers consider these words to be jocular and are blind to the fact that these words hurt and are discriminatory. Pascoe (2005) finds that these remarks are not only homophobic but are also a constituent of a complex system of gender power relations. Californian male high school students in Pascoe’s study censor and control one another’s desirable masculinities through their daily joking rituals of homophobic “fag” discourse and, in doing so, construct gendered power relations. A research participant (Kato and Watanabe 2010) echoes these findings, explaining that teachers use “fag” discourse to build friendly relationships with students and homosocial bonding, which in turn shows that sexualities and masculinities crisscross within a specific context and relationships at school.

### 5.3.3 *Intersectionalities in Japanese Education*

Intersectionality is a theoretical tool to analyze how multiple axes of societies, such as gender, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity, and disability, intersect in constructing social inequalities (e.g., Collins and Bilge 2016). Intersectionality has been widely taken up in recent years not only by scholars in the USA and Europe but elsewhere too and not only in the fields such as sociology, political sciences, and history but also by human rights activists, teachers, and government officials to deal with the complex issues of inequalities.

The idea of multiple axes of inequalities is not entirely new. As Collins (1990) argues in her monumental book, *Black Feminist Thought*, mainstream feminism, which at the time tended to deal only with white, middle-class women, should include class and racial axes for analysis. Marxist feminists state that “sex class,” which locates women in the lower class in the sexual division of labor, is an important analytical category. Many Japanese gender scholars in the field of sociology of education, too, point out that they tended to focus on themes related to their immediate middle-class concerns, such as higher education and teaching, and analyze the intersections of gender and class from the perspectives of radical and Marxist feminisms.

The notion of intersectionality, originally coined by Crenshaw (1989), has picked up these feminist concerns and has been expanding rapidly since the 2000s. The feature of this new theoretical turn is its analysis of multiple factors that are deeply intertwined, mutually influencing and simultaneously constructing one another. For example, a woman might not only be just a woman but Arab, French, immigrant, young, and deprived, like the teenagers in Tetreault’s research (2008) in the poverty-stricken outskirts of Paris, who resist both French racism and sexism and traditional North African gender norms by dressing like male gangsters. Multiple axes reside in every person, supplementing, reinforcing, and contradicting one another in constructing her social relationships and subjectivities.

The theory of intersectionality has not yet been discussed in the studies of Japanese education, but some important studies have come out, seeking to understand the complex relationships between the plural axes of society. It is imperative to pursue the gender-class axe in Japan, where young women are more and more inclined to fall into poverty under widening economic disparity. Uema (2015) interviews at-risk female teenagers who engage in the sex industry in Okinawa and finds out that even for young women who drop out of school, their supportive friendship network from school serves as a safety net when young women cope with extreme sexual violence at work. The stories of young women in danger of being beaten while fellating in the dark and entertaining men while bleeding after an abortion show the tremendous difficulty of their negotiations over their identity, body, and dignity and the deep intersection of poverty, gender, and sexual violence at the bottom of the social ladder.

Tokunaga’s ethnography (2011) explores the gender-ethnicity axe, which is becoming an increasingly important issue in Japan. The meaning of “home” is complicated for the five Filipino-born young women at the center of Tokunaga’s study. These women migrated to Japan as a result of their mother’s earlier move to Japan for economic reasons. These young women spoke fondly of their closely-knit extended family and safe home in the Philippines, to which they could not imagine returning because of economic conditions. In the economically more stable Japan, on the other hand, they are faced with the traditional Japanese gendered norms of their stepfathers and are alienated by the Japanese perception of Filipina as sex workers. They are ethnicized and sexualized simultaneously, or in other words, they are sexualized through their ethnicity. Located in impossible realities, they

romanticize the USA as their future home and thus navigate difficult borderland negotiations.

Kojima (2006) discusses how Brazilian girls resist Japanese schools that encourage prim and proper femininities by using their maturity and sexual charm, while Sugiyama (2005) depicts Brazilian girls who completely erase any trace of their sexual charm to become pristine Japanese girls. These girls' negotiations with Japanese schools show that their ethnicity is always translated into their sexuality no matter how they negotiate, just like the economically stricken girls in Uema's study who are exposed and exploited as sexual beings. Thus, gender and other axes of inequalities influence and reinforce one another in complex ways.

## 5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the theoretical trends of gender/sexuality studies in Japanese sociology of education, which deal with gender disparity, construction, multiplicities, and intersectionalities. As stated earlier, this chapter focuses on gender and sexual relations at school and does not do justice to the wide range of topics in these fields. This chapter demonstrates, however, that for close to half a century, many gender scholars in Japan have challenged gender disparity at school; have examined the mechanism of gender construction in specific contexts, relationships, and organizations; and have started exploring the intricate interplays of gender in its multiple manifestations of femininities/masculinities/sexualities and with other inequalities such as class and ethnicity.

Japanese gender studies now need to move from the periphery to the theoretical center of the field of sociology of education, as a position occupied by gender studies in the west and in other parts of the world. The construction of gendered power relations should be examined not only with other unexplored forces of subject formations, such as race and disabilities, but also with other crucial social phenomena discussed elsewhere in this volume, such as bullying, harassment, school refusers, and *hikikomori*. As Pascoe (2005) and others show, bullying is tightly connected to the building practices of desirable masculinities at school, and as many sexuality and education studies reveal, sexual minority students are alienated from school to the point of dropping out. A close examination of the intersections within gender/sexualities, and between gender/sexualities (Paechter 2006) and other cultural, economic, and political grids of society, will make a tremendous theoretical contribution to sociology of education and in doing so will serve as a driving force for understanding today's youth navigating a difficult new era.



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