

CHAPTER 8

Performing Contradictions, Performing Bad-Girlness in Japan

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I have been teaching media production workshops to teenagers in reform and correctional facilities in various parts of East Asia since 2000. This chapter will focus mainly on the issues raised during my teaching at a girls' reform institute in Japan in 2002.¹ This public institution operates like a school, devoting part of the girls' time to a regular high school curriculum, but with more emphasis on discipline and conformity. The girls, who have committed diverse levels of offense, reside at the institute and are not allowed to leave it. The group selected by the institute to participate in my workshops ranged in age from twelve to sixteen and consisted of girls considered most "difficult"; they were not studying in the main curriculum and therefore had "spare" time to be in my workshops. Most of them had been at the institute for years, except for one girl, who had just arrived the week before.

In 2002 I was invited by the artist-in-residence program funded by the Japan Foundation to be a visiting artist in Sapporo, Japan, for three months, where I was asked to create an art piece and participate in an exhibition to be held at the Hokkaido Museum of Contemporary Art. I used the opportunity to ask to teach a series of media workshops, in photography, video, and sound, in a female juvenile reform facility and to create artwork together with the girls there. After a long process of negotiation with the institute, I was able to conduct workshops for five girls, twice a week, each session lasting three hours, over a period of a month; I was also granted the permission to have the girls' faces photographed.

I interviewed all the girls and gave them access to media production equipment including digital cameras, disposable cameras, video cameras, and sound recorders during and outside class time. I also provided guidelines for several exercises. Unlike the usual types of activities planned and designed by staff at the institute, my workshops included tapes not previously screened and censored by higher authorities, and the girls were able to use media production equipment outside class. Seeking to tackle several intersecting problems through amalgamating strat-

egies of media analysis, sociocultural critique, art education, and artistic production, my project transgressed traditional disciplinary boundaries, as well as boundaries between “practice” and “theory,” through utilizing my multiple resources and interests as an educator, an artist, and an academic. One of my intentions was to explore and understand how young women in such a socially marginalized context would devise their own negotiations with media representation in ways that would enable them to experience themselves as authors and performers of their lives. Through their negotiations, I searched for practices by which they might possibly recast themselves in a light different from that in which they have previously been cast. As McQuaide and Ehrenreich say of the incarcerated woman: “To see [her] only as the prison creates her is to falsify her and to reduce her to her current social status” (1998: 243). I was trying to understand how opening up forms or ways of representation might shed light on issues of subjectivity in relation to disempowered gendered subjects in Japan, on possible forms of resistance, negotiation, and agency among young women conventionally labeled as “bad girls,” in relation to formations of globalized and localized capitalism in Japan.

There were several dimensions to this project. It was, first and foremost, an emotionally intense learning experience for me as a researcher and educator to catch a glimpse of these individuals’ lives; some of my findings form the basis of this essay. I learned much more about myself through the bonding that gradually developed between myself and the workshop participants. On the final day one girl made the following video about my departure:

Tomorrow is the last [day] with Y. C. It’s sad that it’s ending. Very sad. By all means, come again. And work hard and take care of yourself, too, for your own self. For you, and those that have helped me, I seriously want to work hard. Not only for my own sake, but also for those around me. [Eyes to camera.] It’s been really fun doing Y. C.’s videos [repeats from a different angle facing the camera]. Please come again.²

Alongside the media and cultural analysis, the video and photo images are an integral part of the project. Although not following a traditional “life history” approach, the video, photo, and audio works produced by the participants during these workshops are testimonies of their lives in inventive ways: the participants explored ways of speaking to themselves, to each other, and to an audience out in the world through me as a medium, ways that were not made possible for them otherwise. The workshops were a collective creative experience, in which I first gave the participants clear, though minimal, parameters for producing their self-representations, showed them samples that have been done before in similar environments, discussed with them their ideas, and taught the techniques needed. For the still camera work, I asked them to represent themselves to people “who want to get to

know them.” For the audio and video work, I asked them to narrate their “best memories,” to describe their hobbies, the music/films/books they liked, dreams they had had, and what they wanted to do/become in the future. I also asked them to write two video letters to themselves five years from now. In addition to these exercises, they could add whatever they wanted. Then I passed out the media tools to the participants and collected them within certain timeframes. The participants were allowed to use the equipment without much interference from the staff of the institute and in absolute privacy. The staff were not allowed to see the works produced unless the participants let them, while I got permission from all the participants before and after the exercises to show these works publicly in other cultural contexts, with my own selection, juxtaposition, and editing.

Since I have been conducting similar workshops in other parts of Asia and will continue to do so, I showed the girls in Japan works done previously by girls in similar situations. These become mirror images for the young women in different contexts to register each others’ and also their own humanity.³ They could see that they were not alone in their confined worlds. These mirrors also speak powerfully against the prevalence of stereotypical images of delinquents as “criminals,” often internalized as a stigmatizing self-image by the teens themselves. The cumulative method of screenings gives the workshop participants a conception of how their works will appear to future audiences. It also gives them an imaginary audience or community with which to communicate. I believe that the creative moment is most fruitful when the workshop participants, who have been deprived of many rights of freedom, choice, and privacy, most of which we outside the criminal justice system tend to take for granted, begin to register that they have an opportunity for self-(re)definition as well as an opportunity to imagine their existence beyond their immediate environment, that they may possibly communicate with people otherwise inaccessible. In my workshops, I combine methodologies from visual self-ethnography, art education and therapy, media, and cultural theories of representation to explore new ways of interrogation in order to more effectively respond to the questions and problems presented or epitomized by the teens themselves in their predicament.

Abjection

I tried to protect the identities of the girls by not telling people where they came from when we went outside on special occasions. However, the girls themselves did not necessarily see this as a problem and would tell people unashamedly that they were from the “Reform Institute.” That really pisses us off!

When I was at a high-security juvenile correctional facility in Macau, one staff member complained to me about the difficulty of keeping the girls’ identities “a

secret.” In my experience working with the girls who have been locked up and silenced in these institutions, their desire to communicate with me, telling me who they are, why they are there, and what they have done, is often met with strict institutional regulations that aim to produce shame in them about their differences from an imaginary social and sexual normalcy. The Macau staffer’s complaint exposes bluntly the differences between the ways these institutions look at the girls and how the girls look at themselves. Operating on a shaming discourse in the name of protection, the institutions perpetuate the disempowerment of the girls, by marking and closeting their differences from those who are assumed “normal” (and therefore socially superior to them), thus exiling the girls to the position of the abject. As Bruce Frederick (1999) points out, most incarcerated young people tend to suffer from the so-called “revolving door” effect—they are released from detention centers only to be returned to them again—due to the “closed doors” that these youngsters face in society as a consequence of their first detention. I have come to realize through this project that this revolving-door effect similarly applies to many kinds of marginalized positions, including people of nonnormative genders and sexualities, sex workers, and incarcerated girls, in the sense that the notion of shame evoked produces a predicament of permanent abjection as “not-yet-subjects” (Butler 1993: 3). The process of abjection uses the illusion of education, “reform,” therapy, or the possibility for betterment to justify incarceration or closetedness while it simultaneously creates conditions for “never-subjects,” who are forced into a kind of social, psychological, and/or emotional immobility because exposing or changing their conditions would render them even less as subjects. The correctional institutions’ failure to achieve their educational or reform goals is partly a result of their inability to register the girls’ identities as they are performed socially and privately because these identities are closely linked with the registration, revelation, and embodiment of the social contradictions in these societies.

The institute in Hokkaido sought to build an entirely artificial environment segregated from the outside world geographically and culturally. Although close to a city as metropolitan as Sapporo, it is not located within walking distance of any urban environment. Anything that smacks of the material culture is denounced. One day I brought in a teen magazine, some manga books, and some CDs that the girls had told me they liked so that we could discuss them. When I said that I wanted to loan these items to the girls for one day so we could have further discussions the next day, the institute administrators refused to let me. When I asked the girls what or whom they missed most, one told me it was her computer, because they were not allowed any computer access in the institute. Some of the presumptions on which these institutions operate reflect and perpetuate the presumptions that have sent the girls to the institutions in the first place.

Sexed Bodies in Shame

Scholars have argued for over a decade that the majority of young women drawn into the criminal justice system are there not because they have committed offenses but rather because of “concerns about their perceived sexual behavior and/or because they are seen to be ‘at risk’ of ‘offending’ against social codes of adolescent femininity” (Hudson 1989: 197). In this the authorities are guided by ideologies that invest female bodies with “dangerous sexual powers” (Faith 1993: 1; see also Carlen and Wardaugh 1991; Worrall 1999). Kerry Carrington (1994) has argued that society controls the unacceptable sexual behavior of men through controlling the sexual activities of girls. During my workshops in Japan, the girls were forbidden to talk about why they had been arrested and sent to the facility. When I asked them how they got there, they were under pressure to seek special permission to respond from the social worker, also known as “sensei” (teacher), who watched us during class.

Q: What did you do?

Hitomi: I can’t say. What should I do in this case, Mr. K?

Q: Why? You can’t say it?

H: Running away from home and . . . (to Mr. K) . . . is it okay [to speak]?

K: I think it will upset her if she tells the “strong” part of the story.

H: No, I can talk properly. I can talk. Well . . . it is stealing bicycles and *enko*.

While Hitomi resisted her sensei’s repressive and paternalistic overprotection of her feelings by insisting on speaking for herself, my interpreter was so embarrassed by this response that she could not translate it for me verbally, but instead showed me her electronic dictionary, which said “prostitution.” Gradually I learned that about half of my workshop participants had been arrested due to acts related to “*enjo kōsai*,” also known as “*enkō*,” literally translated as “assisted companionship” or “compensated dating.”⁴ Difficult to translate, the term is often seen by U.S. feminists as a form of teenage prostitution and then framed as a form of child abuse or survival sex, where girls, as victims, are forced by pimps into sexual acts in order to survive. Most of the contacts for *enjo kōsai* in Japan, however, are made via “telephone clubs,” where girls use their mobile phones or computers to call into chat rooms to arrange for meetings with potential customers directly. The girls and the customers themselves fix a date to meet and agree on the details and price of the desired social or sex act.

Criminologists Meda Chesney-Lind and Randall Shelden point out that in the U.S. juvenile justice system, when girls are committed for real or supposed prostitution, the institutional milieu, also driven by the protectionist rhetoric, is often ori-

ented toward “protecting the girl from the street, the customers, and the pimp” and generally toward the “salvation of fallen girls” (Kersten 1989: 36, in Chesney-Lind and Shelden 2004: 224). While they powerfully question the U.S. “courts’ historic commitment to the jailing of large numbers of girls in conflict with society and on the streets” (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 2004: 230) and argue for decriminalization of status offenses, less institutionalization, and less monitoring of sexual behavior of girls in the U.S. context, they fail to register the need of similar changes in Asian contexts: “One sees clearly in these countries the wretched interface between sexual and economic exploitation. In an increasingly global society, young Asian women are being reduced to expendable, sexual commodities to feed the jaded appetites of prosperous males” (50). Jennifer Liddy, an American freelance writer and a high school teacher in Japan, after interviewing several of her students whom she suspects are engaged in *enjo kōsai*, concludes:

These girls are victims. Sufferers of poor choices, of a pedophile who can come and shell out paper for young bodies and escape justice. These girls are prostitutes in one of the richest countries in the world. They are sucked into having what everyone else has and their need for it is like a drug. Brand name buys the reputation. The want for their young bodies rises each month.⁵

Because no pimps or visible exploiters appear in these young girls’ narratives, Liddy feels a need to reposition the girls as victims of global capitalism, as pathological products of consumerism and materialism. Similarly, the institute I worked with in Japan positions itself as “rescuing” the girls from being “victimized” by the sex industry and their customers.

This kind of mainstream media attention paid to the phenomenon of *enjo kōsai* in early to mid 1990s in Japan provoked an international outcry against the “problem,” while serving to further police and colonize the private sphere of bodies and sexualities in the name of upholding statist values in the disguise of morality.⁶ In the Japanese anti-*enkō* discourse, shame and moral panic are often interlinked with nationalistic sentiments: “Media make it look as though every teenage girl is doing *enjo kōsai* in Japan. It’s [the] same old stereotyping and overgeneralization. I’m ashamed of the problem.”⁷ As Lees remarks, adolescent socialization for girls, in the form of “(hetero)sexualization,” is fraught with discontinuity and contradictions. Girls’ femininity has to be regulated constantly according to cultural ascription, while at the same time their identities as persons in their own right have to be developed in contradiction to this. This kind of socialization, in forms of abuse, seeks to “control single girls and steer them towards marriage as the only legitimate expression of sexuality” (1989: 31). Rika Sakuma Sato points out that the commodification of *shōjo* (girl) in Japan is a result of the sexual prohibition on the male demanded by the capi-

talist economy, which “defines the relationship between the market and the family” (1998: 39):

The consecration of the purity of women and children is at the basis of the cult of domesticity, an ideological foundation of the modern bourgeois family. Therefore, what is significant about the spread of schoolgirl prostitution in Japan is not the behavioral change of the female adolescents, but the breakdown of the fundamental prohibition on men. The breaking of the taboo should undermine the very status of men as guardians of the family against the terror of the market. (39–40)

Notions of (Euro-Americanized) Japanese modernity—including Japanese self-imaginary as a democratized, urbanized, highly industrialized, and capitalist nation-state whose population growth depends on monogamous, consensual marriages and reproductive sex—need to carefully *prescribe* the denial of contradictions produced by notions of modernity; the contradictions, as I have come to realize through this project, are found in forms and expressions of sexualities that remain as taboos and are criminalized.⁸ By consciously packaging and cashing in on their bodies as domesticated *and* sexualized objects/subjects, could these young women be seen as directly exposing and challenging the binarism of the family and the market required by modern capitalist nationhood? Could acts like *enjo kōsai* be read as ways in which girls devise their own sexualized, socialized, but non-marriage-oriented forms of identity by turning the patriarchal and capitalist laws of the fathers and the bosses on their heads?

“I’m Not Pure” versus The Pure Nation

668dd32f1abfd949d369caec87645fd9
ebruary The song and music video “Goodbye Summer Boy,” sung by Aya Matsuura, former member of Morning Musume and an idol for all the girls in my workshop in Japan, figures a complex web of purity, lies and silence that both illuminates and contests the dominant national sexual imaginary. The music video of this song features Matsuura in schoolgirl uniform, with wet hair. The lyrics go as follows:

I’m not as pure a girl as you think
Goodbye Boy
Most likely the lie will be revealed for what it is
Because of that I can’t say anything
Goodbye Boy.

Living with the nationalist rhetoric of harmony and modernizing progress, postindustrial Japan is a society with a rapidly declining birth rate and increasing divorce

rate. "More marriages are ending in divorce, more families are single-parented, and more women are staying single and childless" (Allison 1996: 174). The state apparatus produces and strictly regulates a social order in which sex for pleasure remains fetishized, while reproductive sex marks the moral nation. Allison has argued that the popularization of *shōjo* in the public imaginary as a sign of, and for escape from, reality outside one's comfort zone refers to the role once assigned to and assumed by mothers in the matricentral family life of Japan. I would go further to suggest that the popularization of the fetishized *shōjo* as a sex symbol can also be read as a social need to respond to and depart from the hegemonic statist bondage of marriage and motherhood, both of which also signify adulthood and therefore degenerated sexuality. The collective desire to consume signs and bodies of young girls, and the conscious marketing by girls of their own bodies in public and in private, can also be seen as such responses. Young girls' selling of their own bodies to older men simultaneously replaces and rejects the chauvinist ideals of motherhood, while embracing the modernist construct of the consumer child and both utilizing and embodying the capitalist logic of brand management to upset Japan's own modernist myth of the labor-free child ("the lie will be revealed for what it is"). *Enjo kōsai* rejects the nationalist logic of reproductive sex yet upholds the capitalist logic of hedonistic and individualistic consumerism. In such light, *enjo kōsai* can be seen as an inventive lifestyle that embodies, enacts, and performs many of the contradictions acutely felt and lived by young women in Japan today and as a response to the social changes and ideological apparatus they have internalized and need to utilize for their own benefit and for survival.

Why did *enjo kōsai* raise so much moral panic in Japan, furthering the cause of controlling young girls' bodies? The modernist capitalism of Japan has constructed growing up as a process of rapid degeneration, denigrating childhood into a fetishized fantastical realm of purity and innocence, and old age into a void of spent utilitarian value, so old men and young girls are placed in powerless positions while they are ironically at either end of an economic spectrum.⁹ The fetishization of young girls translates into commodification and sexualization of them, especially by older men, who are considered to be "castrated by society." In order to be innocent and pure again, one sleeps with the innocent and pure. This contemporary enterprise of young girls and the responses it elicits epitomize the convergence of several dominant social fears embedded within the intersections of the contradictory forces of capitalism, nationalism, and chauvinism. These fears include having to address adult male self-hatred, because it is so bound to the work ethic that drives the Japanese modernist discourse forward for the "good" of the nation, the fear of women and children who are engaged in sexual acts for pleasure and not conforming to reproductive-oriented ideologies of heterosexist marriage, and last but not least, the fear of the teenage female body perceived by the state apparatus and the patriarchy as be-

coming uncontrollable. While all of these fears have been produced by late capitalism, the first fear contradicts male supremacy and the last two upset the logic of the growing nation and of chauvinism. The state's investment in regulating the sexuality of children and teens is founded on a self-contradictory paradigm of claiming innocence *for* them while at the same time denouncing their sexuality as inherently dangerous and therefore evil. Sabine Fröhstück studies how the formation of sexology as a discipline is closely related to the building of an imaginary nation and the nation's demand for social control in Japan's modernization process:

On the one hand, children were to be protected from both their own (unconscious) desires and the corrupting dangers of modern society—since a “fallen society” threatened to destroy the education of children. . . . On the other hand, the national body had to be protected from those children who could not be protected from indulging their desires and who thus became mentally and physically diseased. (2003: 59–60)

When girls use their bodies to skillfully and playfully act out this paradox of being sexual and innocent at the same time, and employ this effort to strengthen their material base and enrich their sexual and social experiences (Ho 2001), they become the social scapegoats, the national “problem” to be condemned.

Childhood as Trope

Although the girls in my workshops ranged between fourteen and eighteen years of age, the institute reminded me repeatedly, as in these instructions, that I should address them as “children”:

When you display works that show children's faces at exhibitions in Japan,

1. Please notify us in advance.
2. Please use the expression “Work(s) produced in full cooperation with the children” and never use the word “institution.” . . .¹⁰

However, as can be seen from the following remarks from one of Hitomi's video letters, many of these young women yearn to be independent and to be seen as grown up, precisely so that they can help and care for the people around them.

I hope to be able to help my mother, but I worry if I'll be able to do that. I want to get over my emotional dependence and go out into society. Here at sixteen, I'm doing my best to make that happen.

Chika voiced similar yearnings in her video letters:

I hope to be self-reliant. I want to be able to stand on my own feet, to find my own way and choose things by myself. That is the type of person I want to be.

While the girls resist being confined in the institution of childhood (which is how their being under “care” is justified), the use of these reform facilities to (re)establish childhood as a stable and “safe” institution in Japan can be seen as a way to tighten the state’s control over young bodies, denying them their rights to define their own gender and sexuality and to individualize their process of growing up.¹¹

In the overall paradigm of Euro-American modernity, current panics about youthful disruption are often mixed with nostalgia for the previous generations, so that “youth” is simultaneously a metaphor for renovation and progress on the one hand, and for turmoil and social crisis on the other (Emler and Reicher 1995). Could it be the case that noncompliant children, instead of being incapable of transmitting “traditional values”—as if these values are static and nonchangeable—are actually actively participating in and sensitizing others to the contradictions embedded in social changes? These young people have become the scapegoats for being “a biological explanation for a breakdown in social relationships” (James and Prout 1997: 12–14), hence the development of the discourses of the “lost generation,” “contaminated values,” and so on, in order to justify their being put under more social control. In this era of a globalizing first world that comes with a third world inside, widespread economic uncertainty, unemployment, and decreased public services have drastically affected minority communities, including children and teenagers. Norma Field (1995) argues that the cultural construction of childhood is rapidly disappearing in Japan, due to the logic of ceaseless production that becomes endless hours of schooling and homework in the educational system. According to Field, it is the logic of global capitalism, mediated by the nation-state, implemented by the schools, articulated with certain historical values and practices, and legitimized by notions of traditional culture that propels the contemporary loss of childhood in Japan. She positions the work ethic and the need for social conformity, programmed by the logic of global capitalism, as the binary opposite of the creative, exploratory play associated with “modern childhood.” Satoshi Kotani also has criticized the impact of materialist capitalism on youth; he characterizes Japanese youth today as “passive politically and socially” and “bound by a sense of resignation” (2004: 39). However, what is modern childhood if not also a culturally and historically specific construct that helps to regulate and perpetuate the supposed adult work ethic of modern man, who earns and consumes in order to keep his child from laboring while simultaneously training her/him to become a dependent consumer? Can the reconfiguration of sex as a business—with the aid of many electronic and media tools no doubt—also be seen as a means to actively pursue a form of social change and a way of saying no to “resignation”? Instead of sighing with nostalgia that childhood has disappeared in

Japan when children all become laborers and consumers, and that sex becomes only a commodity bought with work, I suggest that exactly because labor-free and sex-free childhoods are mythical constructs very much defined by a universalizing, modernizing discourse, childhood in Japan today is being redefined in its own cultural-specific, material, and glocalized context, as much by the children and young people themselves as by others. I have found that it is precisely in the teenagers' "deviant" relationship to global capital and the ideological and legal operations of their nation-state, in acts like *enjo kōsai* that landed the girls in reform and correctional facilities, that I have seen the most spontaneous "play" at work. These teenagers have reworked the binary opposition of work versus play, challenged the necessity for egalitarian love in sex, and explored new forms of human bonding not defined by marriage and statist, reproductive-oriented sex.

Growing up enmeshed in global capitalism, young people today nurture, internalize, and express an intimate relationship to material and consumer culture. An integral part of their identities is constantly informed and produced by the nation's capitalist development but may also contradict and challenge that same nation's self-image of moral acceptability. The fact that social scientists around the globe working under the legacies of feminism and Marxist social critique have difficulty acknowledging and encouraging the possibilities of agency in teen sex work helps to perpetuate the ideologies of sex being inherently shameful, and thus in need of being sublimated into something else.¹² This failure also perpetuates an ideology of childhood as a privileged site for innocence, spontaneity, play, and freedom, also a historically limited construct inseparable from the globalizing forces of a Euro-American-centric discourse, experienced in highly concentrated forms in East Asia under the auspices of accelerated capitalism. The overarching moral imperative of reading young people as inherent victims of material culture renders it impossible to register the potentiality of young women using their bodies and their access to material culture to realize their subjectivity and reconstitute their sexualities through localizing and individualizing forces of global capital, which could also be read as forms of resistance against its homogenizing forces.¹³

Embodying Popular Culture

Acts like *enjo kōsai* are closely connected to other forms of behavior associated with notions of deviance that are then used to justify punishment by the shaming discourse and other forms of exclusion. When I asked the girls in Hokkaido if they liked to sing or dance, the girls all started to tease one girl, Hitomi, whom I found out later had a reputation of wanting to dance all the time, despite the fact that, according to the head of the institute, her previous school had expelled her "because she danced too much." So one day I brought in Hitomi's favorite CD,

the very popular, all-girls group Morning Musume performing “Shabon Dama.” The song goes:

You're the one I love.
I've never been in doubt
but I'm a girl. O girl,
he always controls my emotions
I said I liked you from the bottom of my heart.
I'll do everything for you.
Tell me if I was wrong.
C'mon, c'mon, please.
I'm talking to you!
Cut off the power!
You know that I liked you
and you asked me out, right?
You like me!!!
Yes, hold me tight! Hold me tight!¹⁴

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In the “Shabon Dama” music video, the girls from Morning Musume are dressed up in hyperfeminine clothes, as sexualized, desirable objects to be consumed, while at the same time, they slowly turn their bodies towards the audience in a rather aloof and detached manner, to convey a sense of inaccessibility, which of course further commodifies them as objects of desire. Hitomi knew this video by heart. I asked Hitomi to dance to the song, and the way that Hitomi danced contrasted sharply with the representation of the female body as marketed by the teen music industry. Her own dance reconfigured the power dynamics of the song in such a way that her young gendered body manifested a forcefulness and a form of body heat that was rather out of control while at the same time quite autonomous and individualized. While the Morning Musume girls collectively waver between being inaccessible and energetic, Hitomi fully inhabited the lead singer's performance—she looks directly at the camera when speaking between sections of song—and the lyrics' potential in being dominant and submissive *at the same time*, in knowing, announcing, and in fact demanding her desire to be desired (“I'm talking to you! Cut off the power! You know that I liked you and you asked me out, right?”). The combination of demanding desirability, being out of control, and exhibiting autonomy constitutes a kind of teenage female sexuality that not only defies normative femininity but also contradicts—talks back to—her gym uniform, one of the tools originally used to regulate and manage the teenage body within the educational and state apparatus (McVeigh 2000). The playing, performing, and body management seen in Hitomi's singing and dancing, not unlike the girls engaged with *enjo*

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kōsai, can be seen as a form of resistance against the omnipresent official gaze (*seken*), as more “active” versions of the seemingly more “passive” ones often noted by scholars (McVeigh 2000: 43–44; 2002: 185–202), including *tobokeru* (pretending not to know or feigning ignorance), “rudeness,” speaking without sounds, lack of motivation, or simply absence. Seen in this light, is the active expression of the desire to be desired among young women in these societies an act to be punished after all, while globalized capitalist societies advocate and welcome such positions in the form of material consumption?

In devising their own forms of resistance and inventing ways to express their subjectivity, the outcast girls with whom I worked use the rituals of consuming, internalizing, and/or transforming popular and material culture to manage a kind of playfulness and spontaneous expression to counterbalance the puritanical, capitalist work ethic that is imposed on them. Reform facilities work them very hard: one of my biggest problems in the workshops was the fight for time. Their “teachers” constantly told me not to give them “too much homework” because their schedules were already totally packed every day. The kind of play that the girls invented by appropriating the language of pop and material culture can be seen as a kind of repetitive yet creative, consumerist but non-utilitarian, emotional and physical work they were performing on themselves and on others to internalize and negotiate with the logic of globalized nationalist capitalist economy, whose ideological structure the educational system and the juvenile justice system both serve as socializing agents to rationalize, normalize, and manage. In this light, bodily acts like *enjo kōsai* and compulsive dancing and singing can be seen as forms of resistance in which the girls work to transform themselves playfully into consumable objects in order to gain stronger consuming power in a hegemonic material economy.

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ebruary Similar forms of challenge posed to the work/play dichotomy are abundant in the popular culture that girls grow up consuming today. In a DVD known as *Idioms TV Comic: Kotomic* (2003), featuring Miki Fujimoto and Aya Matsuura, the two popular teen idols use word play, feigned ignorance, and illiteracy to poke fun at Japanese idioms and proverbs as well as at the patriarchal *seken*, all of which aim at ensuring the work ethic, patience, and complacency within the capitalist economy, among other things. In an episode where they play “maids”:

Aya complains about their salary, as compared to the wealthy people they work for.

A: . . . but *tsume ni hi o tomosu*.

Miki imagines from the literal sounds of the words: fire on one’s fingertips makes one feel cool. Miki takes time to enjoy what she sees.

Announcer: Actually it means that although someone is wealthy, they are still worried about everything.

This episode, while mocking the Japanese proverb in normalizing and therefore perpetuating the capitalist logic of unequal power relations, also suggests a rather creative albeit laughable position of the laborer as turning masochist, in this case, for her own enjoyment. The internalization and transformation of, and negotiation with, the capitalist logic simultaneously takes place from and within the position of the worker here, performed by teen idols easily identified and consumed by teenage girls who also live through such negotiations. Part of the “fun,” of course, is caused by the irony of presumably rich teen idols acting as “maids,” which considerably dilutes the possible class critique involved. Viewers’ consuming this irony further reinforces the hierarchical contrast between the idol singers and the domestic workers, at either end of the social ladder, and further channels the viewers’ desires into wanting to become or be like the idols.

Nonnormative Genders

Female offenders have been traditionally represented as either lacking in femininity (“masculine in appearance”) or having too much of it (“attention-seeking or promiscuous”) (Worrall 1999: 38). Chesney-Lind and Shelden (2004) have found that educational programs in U.S. correctional facilities tend to emphasize traditional feminine pursuits like home economics, cleaning, and gardening. In Hokkaido, when I asked the girls to give me a tour of the facility, they showed me the rooms where they were taught cooking, sewing, tea ceremony, and pottery, again mostly activities that seek to (re)socialize/heterosexualize them into modes of normative femininity. But when I told them on the first day I got there how I failed all my home economics subjects in high school, they were all jumping up and down, eager to tell me they also had the same experiences. In contrast to the ways the system sets out to demarcate the girls into a class of delinquents (supposedly distinct from a university professor like myself), I was constantly reminded that we shared very similar positions as adolescents having to fight traumatic and at times impossible battles with social control.

One of the exercises in my workshops was to write a series of short video letters to themselves five years from now, describing their current selves to an imaginary future self. One fifteen-year-old participant, Chika, recalled in her video letter how she wished she had “toughed it out” by not fighting with her previous teacher, for it was part of the reason she was incarcerated. In another video she made when I asked her to talk about anime and manga characters she liked, she said she liked *Metal Gear Solid* because there was a character, Snake, who was a good fighter:

It’s exciting. Anyway, fighting in the game, killing people—but it isn’t killing; it’s about the fighting. I’d like to be strong. I don’t like being weak. I want to grow

stronger and stronger, to become “cool girl” [flexing her arm muscles in front of her camera].

When asked whom she wanted to fight, Chika said “bad people.” When I asked if they were here in this facility, Chika smiled and said she could not say more. When the girls took pictures of each other in the workshop, they were all eager to show each other (and me) how cute and yet how tough they were, creating images of themselves that conformed to and yet simultaneously upset the stereotype of feminine adolescence in Japan: *kawaii* (categorically similar to cute but not the same), happy, healthy, but gentle and submissive young women often marketed by mainstream media.

Normative Self-Disclosure

Using media for the purposes of self-disclosure today carries multiple implications in our globalized social environment that is filled with U.S.-influenced media. Nick Couldry analyzes the form of actively looking for and constructing self-disclosure in American media as a form of contemporary ritual, expanding the boundaries of the private experience by submitting that experience to the power dimensions of the mediation process. Instead of submitting one’s voices and inner being to the authority of the priest, doctor, or therapist, one submits today to the authority of media. These media rituals of self-disclosure build on and reinforce a “general spread of the languages of confession and therapy” (2003: 116) and create spaces of therapeutic significance to the participants. Confessional, therapeutic, and self-disclosure models seek to redeem deviance through naturalizing a set of uneven power relations. Participants in narratives of self-disclosure are often placed in positions of victimization and pathologization, and through the act of self-disclosure, they engage in a process of normalization, of self-cleansing, achieving the possibility of becoming good again and thus capable of assimilation by and into the community of onlookers. The normalization of the narrative self is constituted by the very presence of this “normal” spectator, while the narrative of the normalized self reinforces the assumed normalization of the spectator. In confessing to the media, one submits oneself to the scrutiny of the social gaze and consents to the cleansing effect offered by the supposed moral authority of the social collectivity. On the one hand, these narratives of self-disclosure may challenge the idea that the storyteller’s position is shameful by making the position more visible. Yet on the other hand, visibility also serves to reinforce the positions as shameful by granting the public a position of normativity and moral righteousness from which to judge, regulate, and punish.

The normalizing power to judge, regulate, and punish the outcast in Japan is, however, manifested more in veiling than in disclosing. All of the reform facilities I

have negotiated with have expressed much difficulty in allowing me to let the girls show their faces to the camera. I was further told by my translator, an art journalist, that she could not recall ever seeing any media representation in Japan that shows faces of female delinquents under age twenty. According to both her and the staff at the reform institutes I have visited, self-disclosing devices revealing the girls' identities are considered harmful to the girls themselves, with or without their consent, because of the stigmatization they would face after release from these institutes, if this information were exposed. These strategies of representation—claiming to “protect” the girls, but speaking for and through them—are mobilized by a shaming discourse that further abjectifies and disempowers them by depriving them of the basic right to choose forms of self-disclosure and self-representation. In other words, these strategies that claim to normalize the girls and “protect” them from being identified as deviant in the future in fact shield society from seeing its own internal contradictions and contribute to the revolving-door effect for all nonnormative subjects.

“A video letter to my future self” was designed as an exercise of potentially imagining, describing, remembering, and also self-disclosing. One parameter set up for this exercise was that the letters could be written as “secrets for now,” that the girls could choose to limit viewing of these videos to themselves, to me, and to people on the outside who could only be accessed by me and not by them. This parameter granted the girls the right to deny the workers at the facility, the girls' peers, and their families access to these self-narratives. In this fashion the girls could imagine themselves speaking to people considered “normal” without the scrutiny of those who “know” that they are different. Almost half of the girls in my workshop chose to disclose a self to the camera that had been marked by a physical difference that is denounced as a site of shame by the social collectivity: scars from self-injury.

Disclosing Self-Injury

Chika showed her wounds on her wrists and told the camera how she had hurt herself; Hitomi also had a scar on her wrist; Manami showed a *konjo-yaki* scar, a kind of injury made to prove one's toughness, often under peer pressure such as a gang situation. Chika rolled up her sleeve, put her wrist in close-up to the camera, then said with a straight face:

Look at this [shows a scar on her wrist]. Do you remember this? I made these marks [on arm] with the desk, etc. Many teachers told me not to hurt myself like that. But actually at first, I read a book called *Life*. Watching my blood running and enduring it, I thought, “If I can do this, then I could endure a lot of things.” Now that I can't cut my wrists here, I vomit instead. If I can't do anything for myself, then I can't endure anything.¹⁵

Hitomi said: “I hope this scar will go away by the time I reach twenty-two [shows scar on wrist]. Hopefully, I’ll be happy. I hope I’ll be able to remember to care for people, and live that way in society.”¹⁶

Through a deliberate showing of these acts of self-injury that talks back both to confessional television aesthetics and the dominant shaming discourse, these videos seek to upset conventions of normative femininity, adolescence, and social normalcy, seek to build a community of abject subjects, and in fact abjectify any viewers assumed normal or not, thus perhaps creating major discomfort in the viewer who has assumed him/herself to be normal. Before the workshop, a teacher there told me that Chika had been “very emotional” since her arrival, and had been hurting herself, but again, we were not allowed to discuss this in class. After the workshop, I conducted an interview with the same worker, and he particularly emphasized to me that he did not want his interview to be shown next to any images of the girls showing their scars. This sense of normative fear and shame around women’s acts of self-injury echoes the shame and caution conveyed by narratives of women who have had experiences of self-injury in the United States: “Some women are too ashamed even to tell therapists that they repeatedly, secretly injure themselves at home and at work. Self-injury appears to be the most taboo subject to talk about, the last secret a woman is willing to disclose” (Hyman 1999: 23). Grounded in classical feminist ideals of egalitarian sex, Hyman implicitly positions these women as abject because, constructed by their childhood experiences of sexual abuse, they seek out unequal power relations that bring them pain and also pleasure in their sexual experiences. This reading and contextualization of the narratives explains and reinforces the shame and stigmatization women living with self-injury experience.

Through the narratives of the girls in Japan, I was led to experience a form of self-representation that suggests a rather different relationship to pain and injury, and to shame and sex, which is similar to forms of “performance of pain and injury” that Chris Berry has discussed in relation to the Taiwanese film *Viva l’Amour* directed by Tsai Ming-Liang. Berry relates this to a formation of subjectivity that “enables and demands a particular kind of spectatorial relationship” (1999: 158) that is related to the Japanese affective term *amae* (its meaning being close to “the desire to be indulged”). As Berry notes, *amae* is similar in structure to narcissism, but *amae* is seen as a positive quality in Japan, whereas narcissism is seen as negative and regressive in Freudian psychoanalysis. Fran Martin concisely recaps Berry’s insights in interpreting the film

as a deliberate, public laying bare of injury before spectators with the implicit idea that the revelation of this injury will evince an active response in the spectators so positioned: a sympathetic response—in Berry’s terms, a kind of “loving” one—that is precisely what the characters lack and crave. (2003: 224)

It is noteworthy that this “sympathetic response” is not designed to evoke a sense of pity or shame *for* the subject. She further expands this study to shed light on other representations of abjectified sexual subjects in Taiwan, including representations of *tongzhi* or queer-affiliated cultural producers like those of novelist Qiu Miaojin:

How can one interpret, and what insights might one salvage from, representations that to some extent abjure the sassy celebration and proud assertion of *tongzhi* identity to linger instead on the “negative” elements of shame, pain, depression, alienation—in short, subjective injury—which, they seem to suggest, are in some way constitutive of the subject of the *tongxinglian*? (Martin 2003: 244)

The public revelation of a constitutionally wounded *tongxinglian* self in Qiu’s fiction, in Tsai’s films, and in the *tongzhi* masking tactic could be understood precisely as an attempt to reconstitute the interpersonal bridge between the *tongxinglian* subject and the social collectivity, even as it is also a tactic whereby the social collectivity is held to account for that subject’s injury in the initial shaming (Martin 2003: 245). The self-representation of subjective injury, according to Martin, foregrounds the ways the social collectivity has contextualized and constructed the abjectified sexual subject, while at the same time seeks to rebuild a dialogic relationship between the normative collectivity and the abjectified subjecthood. The representation of suffering and pain, according to Berry, foregrounds an *inadequacy* of communication—thus demands to be indulged further. Drawing from these inspirations, can viewers perhaps see the videos made by the girls in my workshops in a similar way? Instead of the girls’ stories being normalized as in the context of religious confession or mainstream talk shows, can viewers become assumed participants in the collective wounding and indulgence of the abjectified self, and through the girls’ acts of self-disclosure and performance be placed in the position of the abject as well, thus allowing reconstitution of a new interpersonal bridge between the abjectified subject and the social collectivity? In contrast to the women living with self-injury in the United States, none of the self-representations made by the incarcerated girls show that they are ashamed of their acts of self-injury. Rather than putting herself in the position of the victim—a deviant self who has been abused and needs to be healed, corrected, or rescued—Chika offers a social critique of heteronormativity in her society right after she shows her marks of self-injury: “I can’t stand to see how men get close to women to talk to them; men touching women when they hand you things, etc.” Self-injury in this case could be read as an affirmative act that enables the teenager to formulate a critical relationship to the society around and *within* her: “If I can do this, then I could endure a lot of things. . . . I cannot sit around doing nothing.”

Making one's body "malfunction" by throwing up or slitting one's wrist, according to Chika, can be seen as a sign of showing her strength, being able to stay sensitive to the world around her, the proof of her being alive, to counter-balance the forces of complacency in the workaholic, capitalist, and material culture that put teen idols and teenagers to sleep constantly. Before Chika planned her video, I showed her videos made by girls in similar situations. So her video was done within a context of articulating and prioritizing a language of subjectivity by making presence to each other, rather than making oneself visible to those in positions of power. It is exactly the refusal and failure of those in social positions of power to register the subjectivity embedded in these acts, stigmatizing and silencing them, that have isolated the girls and brought them to where they are.

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Conclusion

Young women today, heavily guarded and wounded by glocalized capitalist, modernist, paternalistic, chauvinistic, and nationalist values, often find themselves punished for acts and behaviors in which they seek to explore creative ways to perform their subjectivity in response to their societies. Through stigmatizing these young women's behaviors, isolating them, and then further stigmatizing the isolation itself, the nation-state and its conspirators refuse to register and address how the behavior of these women relates to the society's shaming discourse and the always already woundedness and abjectness of the social collective selves. Through these possibilities of self-representation, disempowered subjects use media to simultaneously disclose, register, and problematize the *always already* sexualized, materialized, and wounded selves in glocalized societies and foreground the ways social and legal forces in these societies conspire to de-sex, de-materialize, and wound subjects while simultaneously requiring them to veil their wounds through stigmatizing the exposure of woundedness. Through photographs, videos, and audiotapes the girls in these workshops narrate and perform a shame that talks back to the shaming discourse produced and perpetuated by the legal-social ideological apparatus and demands a reexamination of the power relations that position their audience—judges, policymakers, law enforcement officers, teachers, social workers, and the presumably good men and women as well—to simultaneously question their roles in the abjection of the girls as well as to see themselves as being abjected also. These girls' "shame/*xiuchi*" is therefore also "no-shame/*wuchi*" of the entire social collectivity and the mutually producing contradictory relations in-between.

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Notes

1. Some of the names of the workers at the institution have been changed to protect their identities. Special thanks to David J. LaPorta, Satomi Fukutomi, and Eiko Saeki for helping me with the translation.

2. From Chika's video letters.

3. The need for "mirrors" for stigmatized subjects echoes the stories in P. Johnson (2003) and Pierce-Baker (1998). Pierce-Baker wrote: "I needed a mirror. The ones available were all distorted. I now know that I was not as alone as I thought. There were, in fact, other black women looking for themselves in mirrors—equally without success. All of us were looking in the glass silently" (1998: 83).

4. *Enjo kōsai* is not a phenomenon unique to Japan. It has been a widespread "offense" quite common in other parts of East Asia, including Taiwan and Korea recently. Before it was coined as such, the "problem" of young women using their sexuality in exchange for material benefits had probably always existed in many cultures. In researching juvenile delinquency in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, Irving Epstein wrote: "Female delinquents are more likely to be incarcerated for sexually promiscuous behavior, theft, and activities less violent than those committed by males, contributing to a double standard that occurs internationally." <http://www.iwu.edu/~iepstein/Jd.pdf> (accessed on 5/10/2007). Such data from Japan were not available to me, but comparing the group I was working with in Hokkaido with data available from Chinese contexts suggests some striking similarities.

5. *Newsweek*. PR Newswire (8/10/2003) www.prnewswire.com (accessed on 12/12/2003).

6. For example, the feature news story "She's Only a Little Schoolgirl" (as told to Kate Drake), "Sex in Asia," *TimeAsia.com* (2001). <http://www.time.com/time/asia/features/sex/sexenjo.html> (accessed on 12/10/2003).

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ebrary 7. Web user "Ayuka" wrote to <http://www.japanguide.com> (signed and dated 4/25/2001) (accessed 12/11/2003).

8. Bland and Mort (1984) discuss expressions of sexualities like "amateur prostitution" that were coded as undesirable practices according to puritanical notions of modern nationhood.

9. Yamamura (1986) has traced how the historical "sanctification of the child" is linked with old beliefs seen in Japanese folklore, later modified by Meiji importation of western modernization, and this has resulted in the somewhat contradictory mixture of ideas today about child purity, adult inferiority, and the emphasis on discipline.

10. "Important Guidelines to be Observed," handed to me at the reform facility in Japan regarding my right to exhibit works produced by the participants in the workshops.

11. For example, Shaheen and Spence (2002) use the argument of childhood as a site for "innocence, curiosity and energy" to advocate for parents "taking charge," in the name of "protection." For discussion on the ideological construct of childhood in the

Euro-American context, see Holland (2004); Heinze (2000); Jenkins (1998). For moral panic with regard to the “youth crisis,” see Davis (1999).

12. See Flowers (2001); Tattersall (1999); M. White (1994). Also see media representations on teen sex work in Asia: *Sisters and Daughters Betrayed: The Trafficking of Women and Girls and the Fight to End It* (Chela Blitt, 1996, video) about sex work in Nepal, Thailand, and the Philippines; and *The Selling of Innocents* (Ruchira Gupta, 1997, video) about teen sex work in India, for example.

13. According to Aaron Tang Ming-pun (1990), a social worker as well as the officer-in-charge of Noncustodial Offenders Services, the Society for the Rehabilitation of Offenders in Hong Kong, those who have committed “offences against public morals” are characterized as follows: “Influenced by undesirable social surroundings and have weak personal/moral judgment, these kinds of offenders are often highly materialistic and pleasure-seeking yet reluctant to earn by working. Consequently, many of them will join the ‘street-people,’ offering their bodies and souls for monetary gains. In addition, many females who are addicted to illegal drugs will be unable to work and sooner or later, join their sisters in prostitution.”

14. Lyrics from “Shabon Dama” (Soap bubbles), sung by Morning Musume.

15. Chika’s video letters.

16. Hitomi’s video letters.