The concepts of gender equality and multicultural diversity suggest at once the need to create legal and political practices that affirm the equal value of individuals, all the while being attentive to differences that might unduly penalize or tax them in their daily lives as a result of formal or informal kinds of discrimination and prejudice. The paradox of many contemporary liberal democratic states lies in the contradictory space between their presumed legitimacy as constitutional democracies with protections against discrimination, and their ongoing failure to practically advance the "democratic constitution" and material promise of those citizenship protections.

The current paper seeks to explore the challenges of gender equality and multicultural realities through a critical reflection on the theoretical promise and practical pitfalls of democratic citizenship in general, and of the implications for post-disaster reconstruction plans in Japan in particular. I will draw upon two bodies of literature that have provided international leadership on the intersections of gender equality, multiculturalism, and democratic politics, namely: feminist political theory and critical democratic theory. I make a point of mentioning the fact that we are dealing with democratic societies, and in particular advanced constitutional democracies. The challenges of "gender equality" and "multicultural diversity" have most openly been taken up by advanced industrial democracies that profess allegiance to a set of constitutional rules of democratic self-government founded on the principle of the equality and liberty of each individual, and that this ought to hold true regardless of the ascriptive sexual or diverse cultural characteristics of each legal subject. Moreover, I focus on the concept of democracy because it implies a set of legal, political, and institutional "preconditions" that often remain under-theorized by political actors and social scientists, and therefore lead to uncritical assumptions about the existing quality of the democracy in so-called advanced societies.

In her feminist and anti-racist critique of contemporary democracies, Iris Marion Young has described social justice as "the institutional conditions for promoting self-development and self-determination of a society’s members". The current reflection is similarly interested in the theoretical frameworks capable of addressing the complex relationship between the multiple and mutually constitutive markers of political identity (nationality, race, gender, mother tongue, age etc.)
that practically affect the quality of democratic citizenship. Moreover, we are interested in exploring the institutional conditions of self-development and democratic citizenship that can equip citizens to competently practice “gender equality”, and make “intercultural fluency” an established democratic culture in the present and future. The following broad questions motivate this inquiry:

- What is the role of democratic institutions and the law in protecting against the possibility of intercultural violence, sexual oppression, and other formal or informal means by which “difference” is taxed in practice?
- What institutional practices of mutual respect must we publicly adopt in order that a majority of female and male citizens and residents might make the democratic foundation of gender equality a formal part of their own personal culture?
- What institutional practices of intercultural partnership might help the dominant culture respect the idea that residents of minority cultures are equally entitled to influence the rules of political belonging towards “convivial” balance?
- What is the relationship between (elite and grassroots) practices of political representation, including representative self-government, the activity of norm-construction (legislating), and the civic education of citizens into gender-equal, intercultural citizenship?
- How might the post-311 aftermath serve as a window of opportunity for critical reflection on Japanese citizenship, who is considered ‘uchi/soto’ to Japan, and who ought to be included in the support programs, services, and community-building targeted by Tohoku Reconstruction policies and strategies?

In the following pages, I will first outline the deficits of contemporary practices of democratic citizenship in light of existing commitments by countries worldwide, including Japan, towards gender equality and respect for cultural diversity. Secondly, I will outline some of the theoretical blind-spots of the literature on multiculturalism in light of the intersectional complexities of contemporary identities. Third, I will describe the complex intersections of contemporary political identities by tracing the core tensions between equality and difference that have been best theorized by feminist scholarship. This will highlight a core challenge for contemporary democracies of not only deconstructing outdated categories, but also of inscribing anti-essentialist readings of those identities (gender, race, culture, nation) into the law so that they foster solidarity across groups. Fourth, I will relate the aforementioned concerns of political belonging to practices of democratic self-government to suggest that we re-value representative democratic decision-making bodies as the practical sites wherein all citizens (elite and grassroots) may be educated into practices of power-sharing, and forced to gain competency in gender-equal, intercultural practices of mutual respect. Finally, these theoretical and practical insights will be applied to the current context of post-311 Tohoku reconstruction to assess what implications can be discerned at this historic moment in the history of Japanese citizenship.
Much of the mainstream literature on “democracy” derives of a Western tradition of political philosophy that assumed the rights and freedoms of the individual to be in tension with the needs of the community. These discussions remained silent and/or inadequately dealt with the kinds of exclusions that have stigmatized a broad cross-section of citizens and residents from being full members of the body politic. We can think of exclusions based on sex/gender, sexual orientation, race, and indigeneity, but also of nationality, age or physical ability. Many of these distinctions continue to be used to deny the rights and freedoms of many citizens and residents within contemporary democracies. In theory, constitutional democracies on all continents are expected to enhance the efficacy and scope of their gender-equality practices and/or multicultural practices in order to live up to their constitutional and international commitments. Within international law, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) constitute the legal commitments of countries to be held accountable for the failure of domestic policies to redress discrimination against social groups that have been historically marginalized by and through domestic laws and policies. The adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action (United Nations 1995) by over 180 countries, announced a broad-based political commitment to the realization of full participation and substantive equality for women as a cornerstone of good governance. The adherence of 75 countries to the United Nations Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression, the advent of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples reflect the changing normative frameworks and democratic ideals underscoring the boundaries of our national and international communities, the notion of political belonging and citizenship, cultural and corporeal identities, the role of social group membership, and the democratic value of diverse ways of being in the world.

To monitor the progress of governments worldwide, multilateral organizations, such as the United Nations, produce the Human Development Report with ever more numerous and increasingly nuanced indicators of persistent inequalities. Yet, the past three decades has seen the advent of neo-liberal counter-discourses confirming formal legal equality as the endgoal of democratic citizenship; as such, these discourses dismiss the ongoing political influence of class, gender, race, culture, language, socio-economic status, indigeneity and disability upon the experience of citizenship. As neo-liberals and neo-conservatives like to suggest, if formal equality has already been largely achieved in the texts of constitutions, then democratic mechanisms of inclusion, such as affirmative action or specific programs aimed at overcoming systemic forms of discrimination are unnecessary or obsolete. The irony of the past three decades of democratic “progress” is that governments have increasingly signed on to international conventions that proscribe concrete governmental and proactive legal interventions to eliminate systemic forms of discrimination, and
then have failed to honour those commitments when faced with conservative discourses asserting the achievement of “equality” and the arrival of a post-patriarchal, post-colonial, post-oppression era.

II. Multiculturalism Theories: Some Disciplinary Blind-spots

The dominant international literature on minority rights, democratic institutions and political representation has traditionally focused on consociationism, nationalism, and minority nations or cultures; as such it focuses upon various distinctions between the group-based rights of, for example, indigenous peoples, minority nations and ethno-cultural minorities within multicultural societies. Leading theorist of multiculturalism, Canadian philosopher Will Kymlicka has acknowledged the shared theoretical lineage of these national/cultural concerns with issues of gender-based self-determination, however, establishing democratic rights of self-government for women and immigrants has not figured at the heart of his inquiries. Rather, Kymlicka initially grounded the normative legitimacy of democratic rights of certain groups in the migration patterns establishing white-settler societies such as Canada; he disaggregates the group-specific rights of the “old” minorities from “new” minorities. This narrow definition of the normative grounds for democratic rights to political self-representation produces an analytical and normative blind spot to concerns raised by groups such as women, ethno-cultural minorities, permanent residents, migrant workers, persons with disabilities, and young adults, whose democratic rights may not be linked to the traditional parameters of territorial concentration, migration, or national/cultural groupness. Territorial/migrant-based analyses therefore tend to advance an essentialist view of “nationhood”, “culture”, and “minorities” that allow for definitions of the group’s specificities and unique characteristics to be defined and monopolized by the views, interests, and ascriptive characteristics of the dominant leaders within the group/nation. Yet the inherent right of non-territorial groups of individuals to democratic self-government clearly predates modern conceptions of the nation-state.

Within the British context, Paul Gilroy’s post-colonial use of the term “multicultural conviviality” presents similar theoretical problems as he remains overly fixated on the monovocal concept of race and on the effects of racializing discourses alone. There is little analysis of the ways in which race and culture intersect with oppressions inflected by class, gender, ability, or sexual orientation. Despite his deep appreciation of the devastating effects of racism, Gilroy asserts a rather naïve and teleological confidence in the grassroots flourishing of respectful cooperation in the daily relations of intercultural co-existence in the United Kingdom. It is an analysis that is politically aware of the power of racism, and yet advocates depoliticizing proscriptions for action that deny the constructive political role that racialized identity might play in overcoming existing forms of racism in practice. Not only does he favour the discursive and institutional dismantling of racially-inflected forms of political identity, but he also fails to critically reflect on what institutional conditions might support the grassroots flourishing of multicultural conviviality in the future, such that it might exist by design, rather than by tempestuous good fortune. Akin to Judith Butler’s critiques of the category
of “women” as a political identity for feminist movement activism, Gilroy challenges the legitimacy of racialized identity to figure as a “democratic” project through which marginalized groups might seek democratic self-determination and empowerment.

Moving now to the Japanese context, John Lie traces the influence of Japan’s imperial past and post-war discourse in masking the centuries-old realities of multi-ethnicity that has contributed to nation-building in Japan. As with Michael Wiener’s collection on minorities in Japan, the deep interconnections of multi-ethnicity, multiculturalism, and minority realities remain the dominant focus, with the political implications of gendered and class-inflected migration left largely under-examined, suggesting that ethnicity, culture and/or race pose the only challenges to the realization of democratic conviviality among citizens/residents. For her part, Yasuko Takezawa speaks of tabunka kyosei to describe the cooperation amongst Japanese, Chinese and Korean residents in the aftermath of the Hanshin earthquake in Kobe. Although there is little exploration of other categories of identity besides race, Takezawa does connect her discussion of multicultural conviviality to emerging discourses on “local citizenship” and of the increasing importance of political suffrage to foreign residents in Japan; this, she argues, is identified by local foreign residents as a means of institutionalizing practices of convivial community-building that can ensure them a less precarious situation in the future. Reflecting more comprehensive intersectional analyses, the important fieldwork by Sunhee Lee in the Tohoku region, and the research by Chris Burgess in Yamagata both illustrates the context of globalization and increasing migration of foreign women to Japan to become wives in the rural areas. It highlights issues of democratic self-determination and political suffrage for not only their racializing, but also their gendering and inter-generational implications.

As an analytical tool, the failure of many multicultural theories to be attentive to the diversity internal to each nation, culture, or minority, and to underscore the importance of competing interpretations of groupness that emerge from gendered, class, and generational differences, weakens the purchase of these theories. They fail to provide sufficiently nuanced guidelines that can equip legislators and policy-makers to take stock of the broader diversity and intersecting oppressions confronting its population. With this in mind, it would seem that the institutional reconstruction of democratic citizenship in ways that practically account for, but does not thereby reify various political identities, remains at the heart of inquiry for gender studies, multicultural studies, multinational democracy, globalization studies, law and policy studies, and democratic theory and practice.

To help clarify the terms of the debate and the tensions between various strategies of empowerment, we will look to the literature that has developed extensive expertise in analyzing the complexities of diverse citizenship: feminist political theory.

III. Feminist Theories: Equality and Difference?

In Gender in Political Theory (1999), Judith Squires develops a useful typology of feminist theory around three concepts, “equality”, “difference”, “diversity”; these concepts are likewise central to contemporary debates and interdisciplinary research on the impact of
“gender”, “multiculturalism” and “migration/globalization” on democratic citizenship. In the following section I will briefly resume the core orientations of each of the three currents within feminist theorizing, as they relate to the concepts of “equality”, “difference” and “diversity”.20 Thereafter, I will focus on the “diversity feminist” contributions that help us understand the complex relationship between democracy, self-determination and political identities (gender, race, culture, etc) inflected with ascriptive characteristics.

Distinguishing between sex and gender, the first current of feminist theorizing built upon social constructivist approaches within an “equality feminism” that sought to construct gender as a cultural product. In this view, gender difference was seen as an effect of sexism used to legitimate inequality between the sexes,21 rather than an effect of an ontological difference. This first current was organized around a strategy of “equality” and sought the “inclusion” of women within existing political structures that were presumed to be (and ought to remain) “neutral” to sexual differences. The project of inclusion aimed at asserting that gender ought not to be politically relevant, in theory and in practice.22 Despite attempts to distinguish between the facticity of sex and the construction of sexist gender differences, the strategy of gender neutrality resulted in a common measure that still looked strikingly like male dominance in practice.

Rejecting the notion that assimilation to the male model could ever be empowering in practice, the second family of feminism organized around the concept of women’s “difference” and argued that equality was being conflated with “sameness”. Mobilizing around strategic “affirmations” of the feminine and celebrations of women’s “difference”, they aimed to critique and re-articulate what had historically been coded as weakness, inferiority and the source of subordination. The goal was to “reverse” patriarchal values that denigrated women’s differences from men by celebrating those “nurturing, peace-loving, intuitive and emotional qualities” unique to women.23 It was hoped that the strategy of reversal might unleash a re-ordering of the public sphere to make it more open to women and positively aligned with the qualities flowing from women’s experiences.

Squires notes the tremendous political significance of the arguments advanced by equality feminism and difference feminism. At the same time, within immigrant-receiving, colonial/white-settler societies, and/or where national experiences were internally diversified by the presence of important minorities, such as Canada, the purchase of both equality feminism (liberal feminism) and difference feminism (radical feminism) relied on a presumed “sisterhood” that denied many important disparities amongst women. For example, within the Canadian and American contexts, the past forty years saw challenges to these universalizing feminist theories, and to mainstream feminist movement activism, from black women/women of colour24, indigenous women25, Québécois feminists26, postcolonial feminists27, lesbian feminism28, women with disabilities, to name just a few. The result of these counter-critiques has been that most contemporary Canadian and/or Anglo-American feminist theory and feminist movement activism has moved away from the singular sex/gender focus and no longer speaks of womanhood, but rather of “diverse women”.

Invoking a strategy of epistemological “displacement”, the political strategy of “diversity feminism”, the third current of feminist theory identified by Squires, has been to “displace” the categories of sex and gender in order to unleash the inherent “diversity” that is masked by hegemonic understandings of gender and sex as a natural
binary that correlates with the bodies of women and men. This third family of feminist theorizing is interested in the relational construction of gender through power, language or discourse. In this context, “gender becomes a fundamentally political category” that no longer presumes sex to be foundational, nor posits a causal connection between sex and gender, however culturally elaborated. This had led to a questioning of the vocabulary and political category (“women”) around which feminist activism ought to organize.

In “Current Controversies in Feminist Theory” (2003), Mary Dietz proposes a typology of feminist theory that builds upon Squire’s typology and further disaggregates “diversity feminism” into two tendencies: the diversity-tending current and the deconstructionist current. This allows Dietz to examine the strategies pursued in relation to how each theorizes democracy: associational democracy versus agonic democracy. Theorists within the associational approach (Iris Young, Anne Philips, Melissa Williams, Nancy Fraser, Seyla Benhabib) are said to “begin with politicized identity and then theorize (democratic) politics in terms of the proliferation, negotiation, and coordination of multiple intersecting identities, selves, or groups”. Conversely, the agonic approach of diversity feminism (Chantal Mouffe, Bonnie Honig, and Judith Butler) sees politics as a practice of articulation wherein singular identities, such as “women”, or even multiple identities are “constantly vulnerable to contestation, transformation, and destabilizing maneuvers as performativity”.

Whereas the “associational democracy” theorists focus on understanding processes of exclusion (gender, racial, cultural) so as to re-construct the institutional and practical means of realizing democratic empowerment, the “agonic democracy” theorists focus on deconstructing the categories upon which exclusion has historically been organized. Both offer important theoretical insights to the practices of multicultural conviviality and gender equality. For the second current, as with Gilroy and Butler’s advocacy for deconstructing gendered and racialized identities, the focus is on abandoning the categories of belonging/exclusion to better account for the contingency of identity, leaving us in a deconstructive limbo without a common vocabulary to challenge past exclusions, nor the tools to practically re-construct an alternative future. For the first current, the focus is on challenging the power of past/existing conceptions of belonging/exclusion, and re-constructing alternative political interventions and legal obligations that build upon anti-essentialist conceptions of those categories of belonging. Both currents hesitate to acknowledge that institutional practices of representative democracy are themselves contingent, engaging in a process of norm-production that is simultaneously deconstructive (past norms) and reconstructive (emerging norms). As such, to be genuinely representative, representative democratic praxis must be constituted through the consistent performance of self-representation by a diverse cross-section of politically salient identities, including historically excluded identities.

The following section will propose an alternative understanding of democratic self-government and decision-making bodies in an attempt to work through some of these theoretical and practical challenges.
IV. Representative Democracy as a Citizenizing Praxis

Dietz argues that feminist political theorists have been “engaged in debates about what it might mean to conceptualize a feminist political praxis that is aligned with democracy but does not begin from the binary of gender.”\textsuperscript{34} I have argued above that these central tensions are likewise present within the literatures on multiculturalism and minorities within minorities, both of which are struggling to re-conceptualize multicultural practices in ways that do not presume the unity of “culture”, nor begin from a reified binary of majority/minority positionings. Similarly, within the literature on nationalisms, multinational democracy and asymmetrical federalism, there is a struggle to re-conceptualize political belonging without the homogenizing tendencies of the “nation”. Be it “gender”, “culture”, or “nationhood”, each of these disciplinary currents is struggling to find alternative practical foundations that can lay the groundwork for a more dynamic relationship between equality, difference, and the multiple identities that require material reconstruction and practical self-determination through contemporary democratic citizenship and representative decision-making institutions.

To what extent are political rights and political representation essential to having a “say” over one’s destiny and the conditions of cooperation pursued by the political community in which we live? The theory of citizenship developed by T.H. Marshall (1950) underscored the importance and interdependence of various kinds of rights within democracy in the evolution of civil, political and social citizenship\textsuperscript{35}; this has led to important critiques and insights as to the differential impact and rates of enjoyment/acquisition of those rights and liberties by various groups within society,\textsuperscript{36} as well as the impacts of legislative, public policy, and welfare-state structures\textsuperscript{37} of the late modern state.\textsuperscript{38} Historically, women, immigrants, and in the context of contemporary globalization, foreign residents and temporary workers, have gained partial access to certain aspects of social citizenship; their relationship to civil and political citizenship has been tenuous at best. To the extent that these groups remain systematically under-represented within contemporary (local, prefectural, national) representative democratic institutions and/or are practically denied membership either legally or symbolically (in terms of the political imaginary), their demands (phrase deleted) for democratic inclusion and/or increased political representation must be understood as a plea for belonging and “a say” over the destiny of what they consider to also be their political community. It constitutes a demand for access to the spaces of ideational contestation wherein the legal, political and socio-economic partnerships of the political community will be institutionally deliberated and determined.

In her discussion of the politics of representation, Yeatman reminds us that not only “power over”, but all forms of power can be mobilized to produce both democratic and undemocratic ends.\textsuperscript{39} Ironically, the formal existence of constitutional democracy is no guarantee that decision-making bodies will only be used to advance democratic ends. (phrases deleted) Democratic citizenship requires practices wherein all of the key constituencies of a polity may enjoy a relatively equal proportion of “power over” one other, relatively equal access to resources that support the “power to” realize self-developmental projects, and as Frazer and Lacey further nuance, they require a relatively equal exercise of “power with”\textsuperscript{40} one another through decision-making institutions. Not only do practices of power-sharing...
serve to normatively and symbolically establish the equality of diverse citizens and residents, but more pragmatically, they force diverse citizens with multiple allegiances to confront one another and work through their differences in debates, discussions and exchanges that are likely to be both difficult and rewarding – that both divide and unite members of diverse walks of life around shared goals and aspirations. Working together across differences, within democratic institutions, city councils, community boards, local advisory committees and school boards, is the foundational means of democratically securing the outcomes that we seek separately, and also collectively. Working together across our differences is a praxis that increases the likelihood that attention will be paid to the perspectives, needs, and practical realities confronting all those with whom we collectively share a political destiny, but whose difficulties we may otherwise have very little awareness, limited understanding, and especially, for which we have insufficient levels of empathy. James Tully defines these pursuits to be “practices of citizenization”.41 These types of civic engagements and deliberative activities practically educate us into our responsibilities and roles as citizens; they lay the groundwork for the associational ties of solidarity and the respectful ties of democratic dissent that are necessary if we are to fashion a gender-equal and interculturally competent population, by democratic design. In short, to achieve gender-equal citizens, and intercultural respect, our democratic culture must be grounded in the mundane reality, daily practices, and ritualistic routines of working across our differences within decision-making and deliberative engagements with diverse others, from the kitchen table through to the cabinet table. And as with all other skills and competencies, only practice makes perfect.

The points raised hereabove must seem quite obvious, even intuitive to human nature and democratic culture. Yet rather than tackle ongoing democratic exclusions, the systemic over-representation of dominant (sex, race, language, religion) groups of citizens within democratic institutions has largely gone unchecked within advanced liberal-democratic states, particularly within G-8 nations. To return to our second question: What institutional practices of mutual respect must we publicly adopt in order that a majority of female and male citizens and residents

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Electoral System</th>
<th>Quotas*</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>% W</th>
<th>% M</th>
</tr>
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<td>22</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Legislative</td>
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<td>94</td>
<td>13.6</td>
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<tr>
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<td>None</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>89.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Inter-Parliamentary Union, Women in National Parliaments (31 July 2012), Geographic Regions, Ace Project, Global Database of Quotas for Women

* Party-based quotas, if set at a significant level (40%+) and if enforced with the same consistency as legal quotas, can have the same impact. They both foster a gender-equal culture within the party and work to generate net increases in gender-balanced electoral teams. In Germany, all competitive parties have quotas that are applied consistently.
Within a pre-disaster context, Japan’s striking under-performance in the area of gender-balanced governance has not gone unnoticed. Indeed, the failure of successive governments to ensure that political parties take meaningful steps to achieve gender-balanced candidacy is in evidence. Rather, largely symbolic efforts to adopt a target of 30% women only in advisory councils is problematic. In the case of Japan, the law that had previously established a male monopoly over political mandates was only reformed some 56 years ago. Since 1946, the male monopoly has only been slightly diminished in practice, as reflected in Table 1. In 2012, men’s over-representation continues with a clear hegemony over 81.4% of the seats in the Upper House and fully 89.2% of seats in the Lower House. We may clearly see that Japanese political parties have yet to acquire any meaningful competence in terms of gender-equal practices of party leadership, candidate recruitment, and electoral power-sharing at the national level, not to mention the prefectural and municipal sites of decision-making. This makes it more difficult for women to ensure that their realities and perspectives are adequately represented within the halls of power. Our own qualitative interviews with women members of the Japanese House of Representatives confirmed the importance, to female citizens, of having access to a female parliamentarian, and that women parliamentarians were specifically solicited by female residents to carry forward and represent their concerns within the formal political channels of deliberation and decision-making (Steele 2006-07). From the perspective of civic education, in-group hegemonies over decision-making institutions make it more difficult for women and men in Japan to regularly witness and directly experience practices of gender-equal partnership that might further nurture their own personal cultures towards gender-equal fluency.

• What institutional practices of intercultural partnership might help the dominant culture respect the idea that residents of minority cultures are equally entitled to influence the rules of political belonging towards “convivial” balance?

A more politically contentious issue, the fulfillment of campaign promises that would confirm voting rights for special permanent residents is a relevant area of democratic practice that can begin to foster democratic practices of intercultural competence and political belonging. Objectively speaking, the ongoing exclusion of special permanent residents from having a formal say in the political destiny
of Japan strikes as a particularly unfair ‘tax’, given that access to Japanese nationality and processes of ‘naturalization’ are not easily obtained. In an era of post-colonial drift, where significant diaspora communities have resided in Japan for generations, it seems remarkably unfair to incur all of the burdens of the law, and yet none of the rights of democratic inclusion and representation; local suffrage in municipal and prefectural governments would seem to be a minimum ‘practice’ of democratic citizenship that could affirm the contributions of special permanent residents to the polity, and within decision-making bodies, create opportunities for intercultural understanding. In 2006, the Vice Minister of Justice released the “Report on the Future of the Acceptance of Foreigners Project”; the eighth recommendation was as follows, “The Japanese government needs to consider the demographic diversity of the resident foreigners so that they can contribute to the pluralism within Japan without disrupting Japanese society.”

Indeed, if we apply Tully’s conceptions of “civil” subjects versus “civic” citizens, the impact of colonial pasts and contemporary globalization upon many G-8 countries, including Japan, is such that increasing numbers of diaspora minorities, marriage migrants, and/or temporary workers-become-immigrants constitute net increases in the numbers of “civil” subjects – those who are maintained for purely instrumental and economic ends, with a corresponding net decrease in the numbers of “civil” citizens – those with the legal capacity and political right to shape the democratic future of the nation. Borrowing from the language of ancient Greece, as a result of both formal laws and informal processes of discrimination and exclusion, the populations inhabiting post-colonial contemporary democracies, such as Japan, are increasingly divided into “citizens” (liber – endowed with political rights of self-government) and “slaves” (servus). This growing imbalance increases the numbers of individuals who may be said to be democratically “unfree”, and simultaneously diminishes the substantive freedom of the democratic society itself.

The excesses of these kinds of monopolies over power lead to the waning legitimacy of democratic institutions, fuel voter cynicism, contribute to lower voter turnout and thereby weaken the mechanisms of electoral accountability. Democracy becomes superficially sustained through electoral practices whereby mandates of representation are confirmed by smaller and smaller proportions of the citizenry to an unrepresentative selection of candidates who, even collectively, fail to demonstrate intercultural competence and gender-sensitive insights into the core needs of the population. What is our evaluation of “democratic citizenship” and what is our criteria for judging whether or not a society is “free” when increasing numbers of the population are subjected to a way of life that yields precarious access to social/economic citizenship and/or that offers little to no access to political citizenship?

In a pre-disaster context, the abovementioned hegemonies over political power by dominant masculinity and dominant Japanese ethno-racial nationality exacerbate and sustain systemic inequalities; given that women constitute a majority of the population and that they oversee much of the primary care needs of children and a significant elderly population, the under-representation of women’s perspectives can have highly detrimental costs for up to three fourths of the polity. In a post-disaster context, these democratic deficiencies combine with the impacts of ‘natural disaster’ to dramatically intensify existing vulnerabilities to the ‘man-made disasters’ of economic precarity, legalized dependency, and political domination. The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters” observed that
“Disaster risk arises when hazards interact with physical, social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities” (2005: 1). Indeed, it is this tragic combination of natural and man-made disasters that works to threaten the most basic of democratic ends: livelihood security, human dignity, and even the equal moral worth of all individuals.

VI. Risk Reduction, Diverse Citizenship, and Democratic Power-Sharing: Preliminary Implications for Post-311 Tohoku Reconstruction

The United Nations World Conference on Disaster Reduction held symbolically in Kobe, Japan in 2005 constituted an important moment when participating governments affirmed the need for attention to concerns of both human security generally, and gendered perspectives specifically. Of the eleven “General Considerations” that were affirmed at that conference, commitments to gender perspectives and cultural diversity figured fourth and fifth in the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters. The prescriptions were as follows:

(d) A gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, and education and training;

(e) Cultural diversity, age, and vulnerable groups should be taken into account when planning for disaster risk reduction, as appropriate;45

In 2005, the Japanese Government’s “Basic Plan for a Gender-equal Society” named the importance of incorporating disaster prevention, and the “Basic Disaster prevention Plan” mentioned the need of a gender perspective. Ironically, the results of the 2008 Japanese Survey of the National Governors’ Association revealed that fully 100% of the individuals appointed by the 47 prefectural and 1747 municipal governments to head an evacuation center (post-disaster) were male; disaster management and evacuation center leadership was understood to require a masculine skill-set.46 The andro-centricity of these appointments hardly constitutes an institutional measure that could ensure a gender perspective is “integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes”. When placed in dialogue with the Survey of men and women living in the Evacuation Surveys post-311, the 2008 NGA Survey confirms a distinct gender gap in the “priority areas” identified by governmental respondents with respect to the types of issues that might preoccupy the populations living in evacuation centers post-disaster.47

In the Hyogo Framework’s “priorities for action” identified under the subheading entitled, “Resources”, the Report lists three areas for which Japan’s action between 2005-2011 would have been key in the aftermath of 311. Notably, on page 7 of the Report, there is an affirmation of members’ commitments to the following:

(e) Assess existing human resource capacities for disaster risk reduction at all levels and develop capacity-building plans and programmes for meeting ongoing and future requirements.

(f) Allocate resources for the development and the implementation of disaster risk management policies, programmes, laws and regulations on disaster risk reduction in all relevant sectors and authorities at all levels of administrative
and budgets on the basis of clearly prioritized actions.

(g) Governments should demonstrate the strong political determination required to promote and integrate disaster risk reduction into development programming.

As late as 3-4 years after the Hyogo Framework, the track record of the Japanese government remained dismal, with the Gender-equal Society Basic Plans 2008 and 2009 both having budgets that effectively allocated 0 yen to concerns relating to ‘Disaster and Reconstruction’ (Yamaji 2009: 45). In short, not only was there a failure to understand the distinct priorities that emerge from the gendered perspectives or cultural diversity of the population, this breadth of human experience and the various social and caregiving contributions of women failed to be adequately understood and appreciated. Not surprisingly, these crucial human resources failed to be harnessed adequately to reduce risk and human suffering, and to be formally mobilized and empowered to share in the responsibilities of deciding and guiding post-disaster response and reconstruction strategies that meet the needs of the population.

What are the practical consequences for a population when their government fails to promote and then maintain a political cultural endowed with gender-equal practices and intercultural competence? What are the implications of these democratic failures in the face of natural disasters that impose widespread trauma and loss of historic proportions? What are the unique needs of societies, such as Japan, wherein gender-based stratification of roles continue to limit the breadth of “knowledge” and “understanding” available to leaders acting within institutional cultures that are disproportionately androcentric in form and content? Indeed, it would seem obvious that societies with highly stratified gender-based roles are in the greatest need of gender-balanced leadership, decision-making, and grassroots implementation of public policies and services.

Not surprisingly, in the immediate aftermath of 311, a feminist network was created under the leadership of Domoto Akiko and Hara Hiroko as a result of growing concerns that the realities and perspectives of diverse women might not effectively reach the ears of decision-makers. Without an adequate organization and renowned representatives who could explicitly amplify the voices of women, it was felt that women’s specific challenges might be left unaddressed, and unsupported by recovery and reconstruction policies. Indeed, one month after the triple disaster, the Reconstruction Design Council established on April 11th 2011 included only one woman among the 15 appointees. The “Principles of Reconstruction” announced by that Council on May 10th focused on economic recovery, and completely failed to identify gender equality as a cross-cutting challenge and pre-established commitment for disaster reduction. Nor was there evidence of a gender-sensitive analysis of the health, welfare, environmental and educational challenges that lay ahead (Hara 2012). Within just three months of the triple disaster, the Gender Equality and Disaster Network’s resourceful response was to convene women’s organizations and women’s groups working in the affected areas for a Symposium on the theme “Disaster/Recovery and Gender-Equality”. Following the Symposium, the members of the Organizing Committee formed the “Gender Equality and Disaster/Reconstruction Network” and have continued their advocacy activities. Held on June 11th, the 3-month anniversary of 311, this foundational Symposium publicly aired the concerns of women to help put them on the political agenda.

Three core demands were put forward to the Japanese Government: 1) actively promote
women’s participation in decision-making; 2) ensure that disaster prevention and restoration measures included commitments to gender equality; 3) create mechanisms that would allow affected parties to participate in the formulation and implementation of Recovery Plans. These demands were met in part within the content of the “Basic Act on Reconstruction’ being adopted on June 24th, 2011. Point (2) of the Basic Philosophy outlined the need to respect “the opinions of the residents in the disaster-afflicted regions” and take into account “the opinions of a wide range of people including women, children and the disabled persons.” Point (ix) of the “Basic Guidelines on Reconstruction’ affirm that “From the standpoint of gender equality, women’s participation will be promoted in all aspects/organizations of the reconstruction process.” Under “Human Resources Assistance to support of municipalities”, point (4) aims to “Improve the environment that is likely to reflect opinions of women, children, youth, elderly people, the disabled and foreigners in the process of town-building, for instance, through appropriate composition of coordinating meetings or similar conferences.” The extent to which the national government has facilitated the mainstreaming of these gendered and intercultural concerns remains contested.

Indeed, one year later, the Gender Equality and Disaster/Reconstruction Network deemed it necessary to host a second Symposium, held on June 22nd, 2012, to raise the lack of a gender perspective in reconstruction strategies focused on economic revival, employment, and community development. These ongoing demands for inclusion have been conveyed by the mobilization of grassroots through to elite women’s activism in the name of bearing witness to the diverse realities of women in the affected areas: pregnant and nursing mothers, women health care practitioners and volunteers who stayed on the front lines to offer support to those in dire conditions, the elderly and persons with disabilities, as well as foreign women whose lives had been established in Japan through marriage migration to Tohoku. Arguably, there has been a keen sensitivity within this Network, as with other post-311 mobilizations of women, to the vulnerabilities of various groups, and to the need for solidarity with these marginalized voices and bodies, to publically re-affirm their right to socio-political belonging and status as “uchi” to the Japanese political community.

VII. Conclusion

The current paper has attempted to explore some of the theoretical and interdisciplinary challenges of supporting advanced democracies to establish institutional practices of gender equality and cultural diversity so that their populations, from the elite-levels through to the grassroots, may acquire competency in intercultural respect and gender-sensitive cooperation. In advanced G-8 democracies, as in Japan, further research is required to document the various democratic deficits that persist: experiences of formal exclusion of non-Japanese residents, local-to-national policy failures that merely pay lip service to gender equality, conscious decisions to allocate zero public tax revenues into critical national responsibilities such as disaster prevention and gender equality, the failure to publically document and address the systemic expulsions of many different “bodies” from a “Japanese social imaginary” wherein primarily male Japanese
nationals are exclusively empowered to be the protagonists of the nation. With some of these research goals in mind, a new interdisciplinary Network of scholars (based in Japan and Canada) have been collaborating to combine their research insights towards a preliminary reflection on “The Post-311 Challenges and Opportunities of Mainstreaming Gender and Diversity in the Priorities and Planning of Tohoku Reconstruction”. A first Workshop was held in Victoria, Canada in June 11, 2012, some 15 months after the triple disaster, and exactly one year after the Symposium of the “Gender Equality and Disaster/Reconstruction Network”.

Building upon the insights from law, political science, public policy, sociology, anthropology, and geography, the Preliminary Report, entitled, “Gender, Diversity and Tohoku Reconstruction; Post-311 Challenges and Opportunities” will be launched in late February 2013, on the eve of the second anniversary of 311. Extending the tremendous work undertaken by the “Global COE on Gender Equality and Multicultural Conviviality in the Age of Globalization” of Tohoku University, this international Network and many other scholarly and grassroots organizations are mobilizing to hold workshops, symposium, and conferences across Japan. These educational, and indeed, “citizenizing” efforts underscore the crucial importance of social science research, interdisciplinary conversations, and evidence-based law and policy reform recommendations; if and when elected leaders decide to rigorously “take stock” of the systemic inequalities, irrational discriminations, and multifarious democratic deficits that are crippling the freedom of the polity, there will be no shortage of empirically-founded insights to guide future legislative reforms.

Ideally, the memory of 311 will not simply be linked to the tragic loss of over 19000 lives, the nuclear devastation, and the destruction of livelihood economies and communities along the North Eastern coast of Japan. With reflection and political action, ideally the legacy of 311 will reside in the ways in which Japanese governments, political parties, hand-in-hand with women’s movements and civil society, were successful in charting a new course for Japanese citizenship for the century to come. This legacy would speak to the practical steps taken by democratically elected leaders to listen to, honour, and politically empower, the tremendous diversity of perspectives, realities, and bodies that constitute the Japanese political community. If there is any democratic progress to be gained from the post-311 reconstruction era, it will be grounded in a critical reflection and realization of who is and was already apart of Tohoku, and therefore who ought to be practically welcomed into the body politic and decision-making processes of the nation. Democracies worldwide would do well to learn from the tremendous challenges and opportunities that 311 has imposed upon Japan and to learn with humility from this unimaginable calamity, and from the tremendous wisdom and citizenizing praxis that has been manifest in much of women’s mobilizations in the aftermath of 311. In sum, it is our belief that Tohoku Reconstruction is first and foremost a window of opportunity for democratic reconstruction, institutional diversification, and civic revitalization, a window of hope that the women of Tohoku, and their allies across the country, are fighting hard to keep open.

Selected References


Notes
1 I wish to thank Professor Mari Osawa for the insightful feedback she offered for this manuscript.

11 The term “self-government” is used to insist upon the fact that the concept and practice of representation within political philosophy too often focusses on the representation of others, when it is first and foremost a practice of self-representation, including within democratic institutions. For these nuances of ‘self-representation’, see Steele 2009.
20 Squires’ typology is grounded primarily in Anglo-American feminist political theory, and as such , it does not situate the feminist literature coming from Japan. For a discussion of contemporary Japanese feminist theorists, such as Chizuko Ueno and Yayoi Okano, and how they might be situated within this conceptual framework, see (eds.) Amano Masako et al, (2009) Shimen Nihon no feminizumu 2: Feminizimu Riron (Feminism in Japan 2: Feminist Theory), Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
22 Squires: 117.
23 Squires: 118.


29 Squires: 60.

30 Butler 1990.


32 Dietz: 419-20.

33 Dietz: 420.

34 Dietz 2003: 419.


46 Japan National Governors’ Association Survey 2008, XXX; Presentation of Domoto Akiko at the Fourth Study Group of the “Gender Equality and Disaster/Reconstruction” Network, Tokyo, August 7, 2012.


49 The initial collaboration of feminist scholars and women’s organizations was invested in the formation of a “Disaster, Reconstruction and Gender Equality Conference Organizing Committee”. Co-organized with the “Disaster, Human Security and Gender Committee” of the Science Council of Japan, following this initial June Symposium, the “Gender Equality and Disaster/Reconstruction Network” was formally created as a feminist coalition of individuals whose aim was to engage in strategic political advocacy towards law and policy reform. See GCOE (2011) Symposium Conference Proceedings, 1.


52 Basic Guidelines for Reconstruction, 14.