

Tokyo at 10: establishing difference through the friendship networks of women executives in Japan

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Despite a significant increase in the number of white-collar female workers in post-war Japan, scant attention has been paid to the importance of Japanese women's social relations that are work-related, and unconnected to the family or the local community. This article examines how two groups of Japanese women with professional careers innovatively mobilize their after-work friendship networks as a strategic site for mitigating the disappointing gaps between their expectations and actual experiences, and for negotiating a greater sense of self-worth and self-esteem. It argues that work-related relations for women can prove rewarding in their own right, and that work can also shape their understandings of self and of friendships, as women respond to transformations to the broader social, economic, and political conditions that shape their experiences.

All six of Mayumi's¹ friends had arrived at the bar in Akasaka by 10.30 on the last Thursday evening in June 2009 to celebrate her 'new-found freedom'. The 42-year-old human resource manager had eventually mustered enough courage to divorce her husband of fifteen years and become a single mother, like her own mother and several of her friends who were present that evening. This would not have been possible without the encouragement and support of many women in *Wain-kurabu* ('Wine Club', a pseudonym), who had over the years listened to stories of Mayumi's marital strife; advised her on how to make peace with her husband, who was against her regular overtime work; helped her with work-related tasks; provided refuge for both mother and child on the numerous occasions after Mayumi had fought with her husband; and helped her finalize the divorce proceedings. Indeed, she had much to thank her friends for. As the women raised their glasses to wish Mayumi well in her 'new life' free from her former husband's temper and verbal abuse, tears began to roll down her cheeks. However, knowing how sensitive her friends were to references to sisterhood and to excessive displays of gratitude and affection, she quickly wiped her tears, and smiled, as she raised her glass to thank them. Following a brief discussion on a weekend trip together, the evening's conversation soon shifted to more sombre topics, such as the impact of the global financial markets on Japan's economy and the efficacy of new financial services. The gathering ended

earlier than usual, at nearly 1 in the morning, and the bill was split equally among the women.

A week later, I joined a separate group of women executives who call themselves *Nomi-kai* ('Drinking Club', also a pseudonym) at an upscale, fusion-style Asian restaurant in Tokyo's Ginza district. Nine out of the total of thirteen women were present, making it *Nomi-kai's* first big gathering that year. The big turnout was due to several reasons. Michiyo had on her friends' advice enrolled in a part-time MBA programme, despite objections from her boyfriend, with whom she had co-habited for seventeen years. Hinano, married with no children, had secured a better job as executive treasurer with the help of her friends in *Nomi-kai*, and could continue to support her husband as a full-time artist. Hiroko, a divorcee who works as chief corporate strategist at an American software company, was leaving Japan for yet another overseas assignment: this time, a six-month secondment to her employer's head office in New York. However, the economic recession at that time had generated feelings of insecurity about their employment, and several had already begun to search for new jobs. Despite their professional qualifications and experiences, the women, who were aged between 37 and 57, teased one another for being 'too old' (*toshi-sugi*), 'too senior' (*era-sugi*) in their positions, and 'too expensive' (*taka-sugi*) in terms of the levels of salary they were earning. Still, they remained confident and optimistic, having proven their resourcefulness in exchanging business contacts and introducing jobs to one another in the past. There was indeed much to discuss that evening, which turned out to be as intense, lively, and long as most of their previous gatherings. Like the women in *Wain-kurabu*, the nine women in *Nomi-kai* also split the evening's expenses equally.

The above were among the countless gatherings the two groups had had since the early 1990s (see Appendix for how the women met), when nine women in *Nomi-kai* who were co-workers and three women in *Wain-kurabu* – Mayumi, Kaneko, and Toshiko – who were working for a separate employer each organized themselves into an informal network to exchange resources and help one another find new jobs. The emergence of the groups was necessitated, on the one hand, by a spate of corporate restructuring and bankruptcies triggered by the collapse of Japan's bubble economy that was threatening the women's careers and independent lifestyles, and, on the other, by the inability of the few recruitment agencies that existed at that time to help white-collar workers with a mid-career change. Despite having all subsequently found new jobs elsewhere, new challenges generated by a prolonged economic recession prompted the women to continue their after-work gatherings, and to gradually snowball in size to comprise a total of thirteen women in *Wain-kurabu*, and fourteen in *Nomi-kai* today (both figures exclude the ethnographer).

When I first met these women executives² in 2002, the two networks were still as instrumentally important to them as they were in the past. While they resembled also the many pragmatic social networks of many working adults in Japan, and elsewhere, that I knew, the women had also become firm and loyal friends. I was therefore not surprised to learn that one group refers to itself as a 'friendship network' (*furendo shippu nettowaaku*), and the other 'networking friends' (*nettowaakingu tomodachi*).³ Following more than sixty months of fieldwork, however, it gradually became apparent that both groups of women perceive their relations as more than the mere conflation of the instrumentality of a social network and the intimacy of friendship. By scrupulously and strategically developing certain collective practices to stress the

importance of the mutual recognition of equality and independence in their relations, the women are indicating their desire to rewrite their gendered identity and friendship away from conventional notions of womanhood and social relations. By insisting on paying an equal share, for example, as well as by shying away from excessive expressions of affection and avoiding fictive sisterhood,⁴ the women are reinterpreting the meaning of 'instrumentality', 'affection', and 'reciprocity', as well as 'womanhood' and 'friendship'.

This article examines how the women innovatively mobilize their friendship networks as a strategic site for negotiating new notions of gender, self, and identity. It explores how salaried work – having a professional career, to be more precise – has shaped their understandings of self and friendships, which are based on specific values such as equality and independence; how the women's collective practices in turn affirm their desired self-identity; and how all these reflect their struggles to redefine a gendered self and friendship in unconventional ways. In doing so, this article argues that friendship can be based on equality, free choice, and affection even in a society that is generally considered to be hierarchical, but the meanings of these terms are subject to the specific ways in which people conceptualize them and interpret their significance to their friendships.

Clearly, such a study faces a considerable amount of challenges, the biggest of which is how to understand the women's relations meaningfully when they do not fit neatly into existing portrayals of women's friendships in Japan, and given also that the social relations of Japanese women with professional careers are under-researched. Since it lies beyond the scope of this article to address the diversity of issues involved in studying the two friendship networks, I will therefore focus on the more pertinent issues of the role of the self in friendship, and on how friendship that is closely linked to self-making and identity production can simultaneously be 'instrumental', 'affective', and 'strategic', as understood by the women themselves.

The study of friendship, as some scholars have noted, is 'haunted by the problem of definition', since 'relationships of friendship do not necessarily map neatly on to local conceptions of kin and non-kin' (Killick & Desai 2010: 1). To Evan Killick (2010: 47), subsuming friendship under one all-encompassing notion of non-kin ties, as a general way of relating, or 'relatedness' (Carsten 2000), would obscure key aspects of non-kin relationships. As his study of friendships in Peruvian Amazonia showed, variations of friendship can exist even within one society, with some individuals turning non-kin ties into close bonds of kin-like relations, and others veering away from kinship and basing their friendships on independence and autonomy (Killick 2010: 47).

In this article, I take 'friendship' to refer to non-kin relations formed by persons who are unconnected by blood or marriage, though I am not implying that all friendships would remain as relations that are not based on or likened to kin relations. I also follow Robert Paine (1999: 39-40) in assuming that perceptions of friendship are predicated upon self-understandings, though I disagree with him that the verification of one's own self is problematic because one has to consider whether the 'self' is one that has been 'given' by society, or that which individuals themselves have 'made'. I argue instead that notions of self can include both ideas constructed by society and those that individuals have constructed for themselves, and that both could also change over time.

In discussing the 'self' in this article, I am not attempting to re-engage with the protracted anthropological debates about whether the self is an autonomous entity typically perceived as the 'Western' model of the 'individual', or if it is about the Durkheimian 'social being' – or the Maussian concept of the 'non-Western person' – whose sense of identity and individuality are presumed to be dominated and determined by social roles. Rather, I use the 'self' interchangeably with the 'individual' to refer to someone as a 'subject' or 'agent', whom Sherry B. Ortner describes as having the capacity actively to shape his or her own 'modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, and fear', which are at the same time also being shaped by 'social and cultural formations'. As Ortner notes, '[P]eople (try to) act on the world even as they are acted upon' (2005: 34). There is thus a dynamic interplay between, on the one hand, human freedom and agency and, on the other, the structural constraints and opportunities that exist, respectively, to inhibit and enhance them.

I concur with James G. Carrier that a meaningful understanding of the role of the self in friendship must examine the notion of the self beyond the restrictive Western/non-Western dichotomy, and consider friendship as 'a way of thinking', or as a means for people 'to think of and act toward each other' (1999: 34-5). To use a particular model of the 'self' in analysing friendship would be to overlook the fact that ideas of friendship and the self are 'cultural elements' that 'exist in a broader social, political and economic context' (1999: 30-1). As Carrier points out, the general perception in Western societies that an individual is an 'autonomous self', which is viewed as necessary for people to engage in 'spontaneous expression of autonomous sentiment, emotion and affection' in order to become friends, is a recent concept that has emerged with rising capitalism to differentiate friendships from involuntary, impersonal relations based on economic transactions (1999: 27). Since this notion of the self was constructed for 'males and the middle classes', and not to refer to individuals who are denied entry to the exchange-based, social networks of the privileged in society, such as 'females and the working classes' (1999: 35), to apply this idea of the self to understanding friendship in a non-Western society such as in Melanesia, where selves are seen as constituted through social relations⁵ (Strathern 1988), would render people such as the Melanesians as incapable of becoming friends (Carrier 1999: 30-1).

As Magnus Course (2010: 154) also posits, in his ethnography on the friendships of an indigenous group in Chile known as the Mapuche, the notion of the 'autonomous self' is not 'unique to the West', and the 'autonomous self' can at times emerge through friendship in non-Western societies. Friendships are said to be central to the Mapuche conceptualization of the person as an individual, which is based on individual autonomy, voluntarism, affection, and a 'rejection of the constraining aspects of kinship', hence resembling 'the stereotypical Western model of friendship'. When exchanging wine, which is intended for establishing ongoing social relationships, the Mapuche people are simultaneously also affirming themselves as 'true selves' (Course 2010: 155). This article draws from Course's ethnography as an example to illustrate the possibility of imagining, if not also affirming, personal autonomy through friendship.

Furthermore, this article argues that it is also important to consider friendship in terms not of the instrumental/affective opposition, but of how people conceptualize – and re-conceptualize – the specific meanings of 'instrumental' and 'affective', and to understand that friendship could incorporate both these qualities, as well as be

strategic: that is, possess some significant links to people's needs and desires. As indicated by Michael Strickland's study of the same-sex and same-age friendships of some young Chinese men, the boundary between 'instrumentality' and 'affection' in friendship can be unclear, since selfhood can in close relationships become inseparable from, and even 'subsumed into, one's own interests' (2010: 106). While motivated by the individual self-interests, the Chinese men strategically conceptualize their instrumental relations as fictive brotherhood as a way of dealing with problems of loyalty that have been generated by an increasingly capitalistic society (2010: 106). Friendship thus depends on the particular ways in which people perceive its significance and relevance to their needs and desires, and also the broader social, economic and political conditions that have shaped those needs and desires.

While anthropologists today recognize the importance of opening up the definition of friendship 'as widely as possible' to 'draw out the social importance of these types of relationships and the things that they offer' (Killick & Desai 2010: 15), studies on Japanese women's social relations have to date remained rather limited in scope. Many have extensively portrayed Japanese women as socializing in their domestic roles as wives, mothers, and caregivers (e.g. Borovoy 2005; Lebra 1984), and narrowly interpreted their non-kin relations as secondary and instrumental to the welfare of children, the family, and the local community (e.g. LeBlanc 1999; Roberts 1994). Little attention has thus been paid to the importance of Japanese women's social relations that are unconnected to the family and local community, to understanding what these associations mean to them, and how women's friendships can prove rewarding in their own right.

Statistics have indicated that there have been significant shifts in women's work patterns in Japan in recent decades, with more women working as salaried employees, and fewer as family workers. In 1975, nearly 60 per cent of Japan's total female workforce of 19.3 million were company employees, while 40 per cent were family workers (MIAC 2008). By 2006, 86 per cent of Japan's total female workforce of 25.5 million were company employees, while only 14 per cent were family workers. Yet, women managers in Japan still account for approximately 10 per cent of all managerial positions in large Japanese corporations, despite having tripled in percentage terms between 1982 and 2003 (Rebick 2005: 118). Improvements to women's economic positions could have led many to devise strategies and ideas about self away from domesticity and traditional notions of gender, and to reconfigure their social relations in the arenas of salaried work (e.g. Ho 2008). However, since conservative norms still exist, and many white-collar female workers still face various challenges from working in a gendered environment, many could also have turned to relations unconnected to the workplace, the family, or the local community to help deal with problems of self-perceptions and questions of identity (Ueno 1990: 288-9; Yokoe 2008: 11-13).

As Dorinne K. Kondo notes, understandings of self in Japan may be closely linked to gender, but they can also be 'strategic assertions', or 'terrains of contest', which must be understood with reference to 'the larger movements of what we could call history, politics, and the economy' (1990: 9-10). Her study of a small artisan factory in Tokyo in the 1980s shows how part-time female workers resist being marginalized and 'make themselves central figures at the workplace' by devising various strategies, including enacting conventional gender identities and practising 'culturally appropriate meanings of gender' (1990: 298-9). While I agree with Kondo that selves can indeed be

'crafted in the processes of work' for Japanese women, even if their sense of self is intimately tied to prevailing notions of gender and is not usually associated with salaried work (1990: 300), I also contend that contradictions and ambivalence can emerge from this process of 'crafting', since perceptions of self may not always be consistent or clearly defined.

The two friendship networks⁶ in this study are examples of the new types of sociality that have emerged in Japan in the past three decades to help women deal with the various challenges they face in their working lives, mitigate the disappointments they have experienced, and to realign some of the asymmetries – perceived and real – in their lives. I have chosen to study *Wain-kurabu* and *Nomi-kai* because they are the most exclusive and enduring among the several social networks in which I have participated. While a comparison of different social networks would certainly show a greater diversity in the ways in which working women in Japan form social relations, many are comprised of superficial, casual, and loosely connected relations, and the turnover rates of their participants are also rather high. To incorporate these other networks would render impossible a focused, systematic, analytical, and meaningful study of the friendships of women with professional careers. A study of two groups comprising a total of only twenty-seven women with professional careers is indeed small, and the women's views and practices are also not representative of those of other career women in Japan. None the less, it provides fresh insights into the particular values and experiences that a particular generation of women share with one another, and also how work shapes, and is in turn being shaped by, the women's values, desires, aspirations, and self-perceptions, as well as the importance of the specific social relations they have established. In doing so, this article elucidates the changing significance of work, gender, and friendship in a post-industrial society such as Japan, and contributes to the broader anthropological discussions on friendship.

The importance of collectivity to affirming a meaningful sense of self

Nomi-kai and *Wain-kurabu* began informally during the early 1990s for the practical purpose of helping the women stay employed. Values such as equality and independence have gained in importance over time – to constitute the basis of their relations, and become a significant part of their interactions – as the women increasingly share more of their experiences, frustrations, disappointments, and desires with one another, and gradually also develop intimate bonds of friendship. While their collective practices can be interpreted as expressions of the women's dissatisfaction with the hierarchical nature of social relations in Japan – a depiction that has been documented widely (e.g. Allison 1994; Befu 1974; Nakane 1967) – they do not imply that the women are against all existing social practices in Japan. Even today, few women are able clearly to define what equality and independence really mean. Many do, however, have clear ideas about what would constitute inequality and dependence. Even then, their efforts at keeping their relations free of inequality, hierarchy, and dependence are often confronted with difficulties and mired in contradictions. While desiring a new sense of self and identity, the women are often merely inverting conventional gendered practices, and not inventing new forms of gendered behaviour. Many of their collective practices, for example, are either mirror opposites of existing practices, or merely explained as 'un-Japanese': that is, as 'different' from what the women perceive as behaviour typical of the *senjyō shufu* ('full-time housewife') and *sarariiman* ('white-collar male worker'). They are

thus mostly symbolic rather than literal. Yet they are not random ideas conjured up from the women's imagination, nor are they patterns of behaviour that are unrelated to reality. Rather, they are the outcomes of scrupulous thought, and rooted in the women's own lives, representing their collective responses to their varying experiences of inequality and unfairness. Many are pragmatic arrangements that have been given explanations in order to provide consistency and coherence to the women's sense of self, and to help reorder their inner lives. Where there are inconsistencies or contradictions, it is because the women are at odds with themselves for desiring to redefine a new gendered self away from culturally constructed notions of gender, and also for not wishing to oppose existing norms too overtly.

On the evenings in June 2009 described at the beginning of this article, both groups split their expenses equally regardless of how much or little each woman had consumed. Paying for others and incurring indebtedness are said to be necessary for forging long-term, reciprocal relations, both in Japan (Befu 1974: 114) and elsewhere (Strickland 2010: 111), but there are individuals who deliberately choose to deviate from dominant cultural practices to avoid the threat of the limitless demands that could be made by unequal relations (Killick 2010: 61). I was told that while *Wain-kurabu* and *Nomi-kai* had initially adopted *warikan* ('paying an equal share') for the practical purpose of avoiding the tedium of keeping checks and balances, the practice has over time acquired the symbolic significance of democratizing their relations.

However, the meaning of egalitarian relations that *warikan* represents can vary rather widely among the women. For Fujiko, who earns considerably less than most of her friends in *Nomi-kai*, and hence cannot afford to pay for an entire evening's expense, which typically costs about US\$200 per person, *warikan* is comforting because it does not remind her of the differentials of income and occupation among the women. Kaneko, by contrast, acknowledges that for a group of close friends to practise *warikan* may project them as mere acquaintances, but she prefers to see it as symbolizing the reciprocal relations she shares with her friends in *Wain-kurabu*. These are said to be based on choice, and on the exchange of the 'immaterial' (*hibusshitteki*), such as business contacts, knowledge, experiences and emotional support. To exchange the 'material' (*bushitteki*), such as money and gifts, as one does with co-workers, family members, and relatives, would impose obligations and reinforce hierarchy among the women. That *warikan* is symbolically significant as a means of differentiating the women's relations from various other types of relations is perhaps best encapsulated by Michiyo, who likens *warikan* to the 'Western style of going Dutch'. By this, she means the women are relating to one another as equals and as independent individuals, and projecting themselves not as 'un-Japanese', but as 'modern, cosmopolitan businesswomen'.

Why is it important for the women to explain a mere practical arrangement as democratizing their relations, or even as 'Western'? Analysis of another of the women's collective practices, their use of first names, might clarify this. Most Japanese would typically address their family members and friends by their first names with the intimate suffix *-chan* or *-kun*, and other people – including co-workers and acquaintances – by their family names followed by the formal suffix *-san*. However, the women in *Wain-kurabu* and *Nomi-kai* almost always address one another only by their first names, dispensing with all suffixes and making no reference to their family names. I was told this is a 'habit' that many women have cultivated from years of working in foreign

companies, where they are addressed only by their first names. As some women explain, English has become the lingua franca for business in Japan today, and since all the women are proficient in this 'language of international business', using this Western form of address – as well as English expressions and business jargon in their conversations – is thus 'natural'.

I have little doubt that many women do use English in the workplace on a daily basis, especially those who work for foreign companies. Having gone out drinking on numerous occasions with several women and their co-workers, I have also heard them address one another by their first names only, especially in the presence of foreigners. Yet, despite their proficiency in English, a third of my informants have never worked for a foreign employer, and hardly use any English in the workplace. Interestingly, all the women would adopt the conventional and polite way of addressing others when interacting with friends outside their respective groups, and several women have even remarked on the oddity – albeit initially – of such an 'un-Japanese' practice. While there is a certain degree of fun and relaxation as they drop occasional English words into their conversations, and tease one another over their rather imprecise pronunciation and even odd ways of using certain English words, the fact that the women use English most frequently within their respective groups, and avoid using their family names and job titles only with one another, suggests that there is a more serious element to this. Since the English language is less hierarchically structured than Japanese, it frees the women from having to be constantly aware of the embedded positional rankings among them. As with *warikan*, it is about democratizing their relations; in this case, by equalizing the differentials in their job positions and marital statuses, which in turn permits them to relate to one another as individuals, and not as someone's wife or daughter. Like *warikan*, too, this enables the women to imagine and project themselves as 'un-Japanese', and hence 'different'.

If appealing to what is 'Western' reflects the women's desire to equalize relations and establish difference, it also represents their voices of protest against a society that is perceived as not having accorded them their rightful place. *Warikan* and the use of first names are thus part of a repertoire of tools which facilitate the reordering of the women's inner lives, by mitigating their feelings of alienation and rejection, which many have experienced from years of working in a gendered environment, and during a period of rapid transformations within Japan. The women have long perceived themselves as 'different', ever since they began working in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and as part of the first generation of educated women in post-war Japan to be given the rare opportunity to pursue management-track careers in unprecedented numbers at the pinnacle of the country's economic success. This opportunity promised them the ability to develop life trajectories that were different from those of their mothers, many of whom became housewives upon marriage, while those who had jobs worked as ballet dance instructors, calligraphers, school teachers, and part-time medical writers, and not in a corporate environment with professional careers. My informants were also different from many working women in Japan at that time, who were in lowly paid secretarial and administrative jobs (Ogasawara 1998: 49), or in 'pink-collar jobs', such as hairdressing, nursing, and teaching children (Lebra 1984: 148; Waswo 1996: 148).

Launching their career at the height of Japan's economic success led the women to term themselves 'children of the bubble', destined to participate directly in the centrality of the modern economy, and work as equals, or near equals, with their male

counterparts. Not only did they internalize the discourses on independence, self-discovery, and self-fulfilment that proliferated in Japan at that time,⁷ but they were also able to realize them. However, their dreams, aspirations, and sense of difference soon turned into disillusionments, disappointments, and frustrations when Japan's bubble economy eventually collapsed. A large number of Japanese companies were forced into bankruptcy or to undergo massive corporate restructuring, and job positions held by women were among the first to be made redundant. Many women began to question the usefulness of their education and professional experience, while others experienced problems of self-esteem and identity conflicts.

Recognizing the need to survive in a gendered work environment, especially during the prolonged economic recession that has lasted even till today, the women adopted a pragmatic attitude: of working *along with*, and not *against*, the system. This meant enduring unfair practices in the workplace, and not confronting their employers, or appealing for greater gender equality under the protection of Japan's Equal Employment Opportunity Law 1986.⁸ Many women also took active steps to look for a new job elsewhere when the work environment became unbearable, which at times entailed accepting a lower position and salary. Two-thirds of the women gradually joined foreign companies, where there were more favourable promotion prospects, better opportunities to assume responsibilities, and a greater exposure to international business practices than was the case in Japanese companies. However, this also meant there was 'no turning back' (*modorenai*) to working for Japanese employers, many of whom are said to perceive individuals – particularly women – who have grown accustomed to Western work ethics and practices as incapable of acclimatizing themselves to working in a Japanese environment. The women themselves may prefer not to work for a Japanese employer, but to have their job applications declined by recruitment agencies and potential Japanese employers, and their choices of employment curbed on these grounds, further exacerbated their sense of abandonment and alienation.

Following years of working in foreign companies, many women gradually develop their aspirations, and also associate their identities, more with the foreign, modern, and cosmopolitan, and less with what is perceived as 'Japanese'. Adopting 'un-Japanese' practices, or merely explaining them as such, perhaps allows these women to mitigate their feelings of abandonment, as they reinterpret their experiences to make them meaningful. Even if several women have never worked for a foreign employer, and 'Western' practices do not mean as much to them as they do to many others, few women consider non-Japanese practices and values as undesirable, especially in today's globalized business environment. As Shiori from *Wain-kurabu* says, what is important is not whether their collective practices could actually establish equity in their relations, or if they are truly 'Western', but that they enable the women to believe in the possibility of being 'different'.

Desiring difference is thus not a fleeting wish, but stems from some real experiences – in varying degrees – of unfairness, alienation, and abandonment. The ability to attain difference, or merely the perception of difference, is thus critical to realigning some of the asymmetries in the women's lives, managing their sense of self-worth, and restoring their self-esteem. As Carrier rightly remarks, friendship is 'part of a larger cluster of social and cultural practices' which encourage this development (1999: 35), and is likely to emerge when people 'think that they can pursue their survival in the appropriate way or that they ought to be able to' (1999: 36). *Wain-kurabu* and *Nomi-kai* might have been

formed for practical reasons, but they have been maintained and transformed to meet the changing needs of the women, as they respond to changes to the wider social, economic, and political conditions that shape their perceptions of self and their pursuit of finding a meaningful place for themselves in Japanese society. Salaried work has thus instilled in them the significance of the values of equality, independence, and difference, which form the basis of their sense of self, and their relations with one another. There is indeed an intricate link between understandings of self and ideas about friendship, as Paine (1999: 39–40) has noted, but the women's self-understandings are shaped by both changes to the broader social and economic environments, and ideas that they themselves have constructed over time in response to those changes (Ortner 2005: 34).

Each of the friendship networks also moves in synchronization with these transformations, by changing from a mere social network for exchanging resources to advance the women's careers, to a comfort zone for them to share their experiences and aspirations, and a strategic space for the pursuit of common values and desired self-identity. Given that a number of the women's collective practices are possible and meaningful only within *Nomi-kai* and *Wain-kurabu*, and would otherwise be considered unacceptable, and even ridiculous, by many people in the wider Japanese society, their respective friendship networks are critical to facilitating the affirmation and continuity of a meaningful and coherent self, or to the emergence of their 'true self', as Course (2010: 170) has noted of the Mapuche people.

Affirming self through the collective construction of and differentiation from symbolic others

Even if the women's notions of their 'true self' are based on difference, and are not clearly defined, the ability to share with other like-minded women similar values, needs, and experiences helps them negotiate a stronger sense of self so that they may cope better with the challenges they face in their working lives. Apart from adopting *warikan* and addressing one another by their first names only, the women in both *Nomi-kai* and *Wain-kurabu* scrupulously devise various other collective practices to differentiate them from various categories of symbolic *others*, particularly *shufu* and *sarariiman*. However, contradictions can often arise, partly because the women are at odds with themselves for desiring difference without over-extending the permissible parameters of existing norms, and partly owing to the inability to extricate themselves from culturally constituted notions of what it means to be a 'good woman', prevailing perceptions of gender that many women often adopt when evaluating their own sense of self-worth.

Returning to the evenings described earlier would illustrate these better. As I explained, it was a rare, big turnout for *Nomi-kai* in June 2009, though only six out of a total of thirteen women could make it to *Wain-kurabu*'s gathering that month. While both gatherings occurred in Tokyo's busy business districts, they were quiet and secluded spots. That these business executives have busy, erratic schedules makes it impossible for all the women in each group to meet at an appointed time, or even on a given evening. Neither *Nomi-kai* nor *Wain-kurabu* organizes its gatherings on a regular basis, such as fixing them on a particular day of each month. And since a workday is often long and stressful, the women also prefer to meet in relatively quiet places where they can unwind as they eat, drink, and talk for hours, and generally avoid crowded and noisy popular establishments. At the same time, their seemingly

fluid, flexible, and spontaneous arrangements also betray the scrupulous and conscious efforts that both groups have made to differentiate their gatherings from the after-work drinking activities of many white-collar workers, who often congregate on a regular basis, and at reasonably priced bars and restaurants that are conveniently located near the workplace. Both groups rarely visit the same place twice, doing so only when two or three women decide on the spur of the moment – often very late at night – to meet somewhere convenient and familiar, either because they have some urgent issues to discuss with a friend, or simply to have ‘a quick drink’ before heading home. Several women attribute this to their desire to acquire ‘new experiences’ and ‘new tastes’ in cuisines and beverages that are not commonly found in other restaurants, which also means these items are usually priced above the average. There is certainly an element of what Theodore Bestor describes as the ‘delicate and intricate crafting of identities as connoisseurs’ (2004: 153) in the women’s consumption patterns, which are also aimed at differentiating their gatherings from those of the average *shufu* and *sarariiman*, or at least the women’s own perceptions of how the latter organize themselves.

The issue here does not appear to be as much about being different from *shufu* as it is about the discomfort of being perceived as behaving like *sarariiman*, for the obvious reason that many housewives do not have the legitimation frequently to stay out late on weeknights as *sarariiman* do. The women are clearly different from *shufu*, given that their occupations and economic position permit a greater autonomy. Yet they are also ambivalent about their autonomy. *Wain-kurabu*’s gathering in June 2009, for example, properly began at around 10 in the evening, when all six women eventually arrived at the bar in Akasaka. Despite ending at nearly 1 in the morning, they said it was an ‘early night’, compared to many other occasions when they would drink till the early hours of dawn, even on weeknights. Many women see their demanding careers as entitling them to some much-needed ‘personal time’ (*jibun no jikan*) and ‘personal space’ (*jibun no kūkan*), especially when their gatherings take place as infrequently as once every month or two, and actually occupy a small portion of their time away from home. Since most of them are required to drink with co-workers and business associates as often as thrice a week, and given also that social drinking is widely accepted in Japan as a necessary part of work for white-collar workers, their gatherings fit well into the women’s daily routine of work-drink-home, and are easily legitimized as an extension of work.

Moreover, being both the producer and consumer of their own money enables many women who are married to be co-contributors to the household, and to negotiate fairly egalitarian arrangements in the home. Several women – along with those who are single and divorced – even see themselves as equally entitled as Japanese men to ‘play’ in the public arena (e.g. Allison 1994; Linhart 1998), by engaging in voyeuristic activities in entertainment establishments such as visiting host clubs, where male hosts entertain and serve female clients, and strip bars, where the strip dancers are male (Ho 2008: 45). None of the women had adjourned to any of these places in June 2009, though several from each group – single, married, and divorced – have on many other occasions proceeded after the main gathering has ended, and in small groups of two or three, to a strip bar or a host club.⁹ These women executives are certainly aware that housewives, too, visit these entertainment places, and I also happen to know of many who do. But since a visit to a host club easily costs each woman at least US\$2,500, it is beyond the means of the average *shufu* to visit these establishments as

frequently as these executives, who command annual incomes in excess of US\$90,000. It is certainly liberating for these business executives to appropriate male play in male space, and redraw existing gender boundaries by redefining the meaning of 'play' in public space to include voyeuristic activities for women, even if these experiences are commercially induced, sporadic, and short-lived. That they keep their voyeuristic activities to themselves, and do not divulge them to anyone outside their respective networks, also heightens their experience of pleasure and excitement, and reinforces the importance of their relations as a strategic space for realigning the gender asymmetries in their lives.

The need for 'self-policing' in the pursuit of difference

Yet the women rarely drink alone in public till very late, and neither have they ever drunk themselves into a stupor, despite the copious amount of alcohol that they often consume together. On the evenings in June 2009, for example, the six women in *Wain-kurabu* consumed a total of six bottles of wine, while the nine women in *Nomi-kai* drank five bottles of champagne, four bottles of wine, and a few glasses of cocktails. The total amount of alcohol consumed was obviously not insubstantial, especially when many women had had a prior drinking engagement. I am aware that several women would occasionally drop by a bar alone for one drink or two after work, but few have done so till dawn.

Why would these liberated business executives be afraid of drinking alone when they have a stressful professional career as legitimation? Several women say they do not want to be perceived as 'pitiful' (*kawaisō*) by drinking alone, though many others point out that drinking alone in the public sphere late at night is still not widely accepted of women in Japan even today. Granted, the Japanese media have persistently portrayed women who drink alone as lonely, incapable of coping with the stress of working life, or, worse, as alcoholics, representations which many scholars have also noted (see Gotoh 1989; Higuchi, Matsushita, Maesato & Osaki 2007). It is indeed understandable that these business executives do not wish to be labelled as 'lonely', 'incapable', or 'alcoholic', but, at the same time, their fears also reflect their awareness of the limits of permissible behaviour.

However, given that social drinking in Japan is widely noted as binding individuals in reciprocal relationships, and the amount consumed as determining the level of intimacy and trust among individuals (Allison 1994; Befu 1974), why do these women managers also need to exercise self-control when drinking with their friends? The exchange of drinks is clearly a dominant activity of both friendship networks, and is certainly perceived by the women as strengthening their bonds of friendship. They would often challenge one another to drink large quantities and a wide variety of alcohol, yet they still managed to stay composed and sauntered their way out of bars and restaurants on many occasions. When asked why they have never drunk so much that they vomit and pass out on the streets, or are required to be carried into a taxi, a number of women jokingly said they could hold their drinks better than many Japanese men. Several others explained that the bonds of their intimacy are not measured in the same manner as the group solidarity of Japanese men, who drink for the sole purpose of getting drunk, as many anthropologists have also noted (Allison 1994; Linhart 1998). Yet the women's reservation seems also to highlight their acknowledgement of the unequal standards in Japanese society that evaluate the behaviour of men and women differently, and their acceptance of women's subordinate position

relative to men. They may have crossed the private/public divide and entered the public realm of salaried work, which also entitles them to legitimize drinking as an extension of work, and even be considered by many to be as independent as men, but both salaried work and social drinking in Japan have always been symbolic of masculinity, and never of femininity. As several women themselves have acknowledged, women cannot drink themselves half-blind or collapse unconscious on the street as many *sarariiiman* often do, simply because the liberty that Japanese men have to 'behave badly' in public is not equally accorded to women, who would draw harsher criticisms from others, and are hence required to protect their self-image, especially when they drink in public.

Their fears are not unfounded. Several of my informants' husbands, male co-workers, and superiors have told me that while it is daunting to see a group of successful and independent women discuss business and politics, and drink as much as men do, such behaviour is also viewed as inappropriate and unbecoming of women. These are perhaps among the reasons why none of the women's husbands or male partners has ever participated in their gatherings, and they would also leave the house when the rare few gatherings take place in the home. While there are a variety of reasons for why the women have chosen to compartmentalize their friendship networks, one of them is certainly to avoid being labelled as 'bad women' by others.

Such a concern has led both *Nomi-kai* and *Wain-kurabu* to turn away several 'first-timers' to their gatherings, and excommunicate several regular participants. I have never met the two women who 'dropped out' of *Wain-kurabu*, but was told that one had the habit of getting herself so drunk that she would often become argumentative, while the other regularly burst into tears after several drinks and demanded comforting. I have, however, spoken to Etsuko several years after she had withdrawn from *Nomi-kai*, and was told that she was so drunk on numerous occasions that she had to be carried into a taxi, and even accompanied home by several of her friends. After several women began avoiding *Nomi-kai* gatherings, and some others excused themselves for leaving early, Etsuko realized she was no longer welcome and decided voluntarily to 'drop out'. Despite empathizing with Etsuko's need to vent her work frustrations, many of her friends also viewed her behaviour as spoiling an evening of relaxation, and as unduly imposing upon them the burden of having to provide care, which would in turn lead to dependence.

However, ostracizing someone on the ground of uncontrollable drinking points to more than eliminating the burden of providing care, or the threats of creating dependence in relations. It also highlights the women's sense of insecurity and ambivalence about their self-identity. Etsuko's behaviour might have been unacceptable to her friends for the reason that she had caused herself and others much embarrassment, and even broken her promise to respect their egalitarian relations, but the real threat that her behaviour had posed was to exacerbate the women's deeply seated insecurity about being 'women'.

The difficulties of being 'women' in Japan

I had on one occasion heard four women discuss Etsuko's 'departure' from *Nomi-kai*, when Hinano expressed regret that Etsuko seemed to have left the group permanently. The others also said they were sad to have 'lost' a friend, but they were none the less relieved for being free from dealing with someone whose behaviour had threatened to devalue the sense of self-worth and self-esteem that they had worked hard to develop

over the years. Michiyo had worked for eight employers over a twelve-year period before she eventually found a permanent position several years ago, which was due largely to many employers having adopted the government's neoliberal economic policies on flexible labour by replacing permanent positions with short-term, contractual ones. In addition to competing with workers who are younger, cheaper, and more energetic, Michiyo and the others say that women of their generation further face the predicament of having to prove themselves as equally capable as men in performing tasks, and in commanding respect from their subordinates as superiors. Satomi then added that she had felt slighted when, despite having performed better at work than her male co-worker, she was twice told to 'pass over' a promotion to a male co-worker for the simple reason that she was a woman, and single, while the latter was a father of two and was said to need the promotion more than she did.

Dealing with uncontrollable drinking is thus the mere tip of the iceberg of difficulties the women face in their struggle to assert a stronger sense of self and find a meaningful place in Japanese society. Adopting *warikan* and first names may help the women establish egalitarian relations, and organizing their gatherings in a fluid and irregular manner may help differentiate them from various symbolic *others*, but these practices do not help the business executives deal with the problem of being 'women': that is, of being perceived as 'emotional' (*kanjō teki*), 'weak' (*yowai*), and 'dependent' (*ate ni suru*). In order to avoid being perceived in this light, and to also not further marginalize themselves in the workplace, the women feel compelled to adopt various strategies of self-management even when they are among friends. Among the various strategies they have adopted are to avoid fictive sisterhood and to shy away from openly expressing their affection and emotions. While markedly different, many of my informants conflate both the practice of fictive sisterhood and overt expressions of emotions and affection as posing similar threats of introducing hierarchy to their relations, and projecting them as emotional, dependent, weak, and hence incapable of handling tasks as well as men can.

On the evening in June 2009 described earlier, Mayumi had held back her tears and refrained from expressing her gratitude to her friends in *Wain-kurabu* to avoid being teased for being 'emotional' and 'weak', and so as not to generate any awkwardness among them. Mayumi has often wished she could express her feelings and affection for the others spontaneously, especially as she is an only child and has come to regard her friends in *Wain-kurabu* as sisters. She has felt uncomfortable about suppressing her affection for her friends for a long time, but she has gradually begun to appreciate the importance of exercising emotional control and avoiding expressions of dependence. Mayumi has become a more independent and confident woman today because her friends have helped her overcome the problems of low self-esteem and a bruised self-image that she suffered for years prior to her divorce.

Like Mayumi, several women in *Nomi-kai* have also become more conscious about maintaining such a self-image by refraining from excessive expressions of affection and emotions, and by not practising fictive sisterhood. Two pairs of sisters, for example, have even adopted nicknames for each other, and are today also addressed by these nicknames by all their friends in *Nomi-kai*. This often causes much amusement among the women, which suggests perhaps that they are opposed not so much to the expression of affection and intimacy as to the explicit articulations of emotions in such a way that would threaten to position them in obligatory, dependent, and hierarchical relations, as being addressed directly as an 'older sister' or a 'younger sister' would.

However, several women are indeed particularly averse to references to fictive sisterhood and direct expression of affection, for varying reasons. Kaneko, who many women in *Wain-kurabu* regard as one of their ‘heroines’ or ‘role models’, was forced by circumstances to be the sole breadwinner of a family of five in the mid-1990s, after her husband became seriously ill and quit his job as engineer. She kept two jobs for years to meet the costs of her two children’s education, and the medical expenses of her husband and his elderly mother. Her father had left all the land he owned to his two sons when he died, while Kaneko – his only daughter – was given a small sum of money, which was spent as quickly as she had received it. Given the low salary she had as a junior accountant at that time, Kaneko was constantly short of funds, and had on several occasions turned to her siblings and relatives for help. Instead of receiving the assistance she needed, Kaneko was either refused a loan on the grounds that she could never repay her debts, or made to promise that she would repay with a considerable amount of interest. Embarrassed and distraught, and tired too of begging and crying, Kaneko plucked up ample courage to ask her friends in *Wain-kurabu* for help. She later found not only the financial assistance she needed, but also trust and emotional support from her friends, who neither demanded interest on the loans they extended to her, nor cast doubt on her ability to repay. Kin ties are certainly not relations that Kaneko considers to be desirable today. The struggles she has endured in the workplace have also taught her to not show her need for emotional comfort or affection, as she would otherwise be perceived as weak and dependent. While Kaneko dislikes being labelled as a ‘true *sarariman*’ by her husband, and also as *otō-san* (‘father’) by her co-workers, for having provided well for her family as a Japanese man is expected to do, she prefers these references – which project her as a tough and capable person – to those that present her as a ‘mere woman’ (*onna dake*), and hence as someone who is emotional, dependent, and weak.

Kaneko’s case may be extreme, but her views are rather representative of those of many others, who perceive kin relations as obligatory, and hence as ‘burdensome’ (*mendōkusai*), as relations that impose necessary indebtedness, such as those that require one to pay for others or to reciprocate materially. Friendship, by contrast, is based on one’s own free choice, and is hence valuable and meaningful. While emotional or affectionate expressions do not necessarily amount to the formation of kin ties, they are nevertheless perceived as similar, as is uncontrollable drinking, because such behaviours necessarily impose on one the burden of having to care for another, hence threatening to bind one in a dependent relation, as fictive sisterhood would. Like the young Chinese men in Strickland’s study (2010), the women in this study also turn to same-sex friendships as a strategic means of mitigating some of the challenges they have encountered in their lives. However, unlike the former, who conceptualize instrumental friendship as fictive brotherhood as a means of coping with the loss of solidarity among people in an increasingly capitalistic environment, the Japanese women shun away from fictive sisterhood to mitigate the disappointing gaps between their expectations and actual experiences in their working lives, simply because fictive kinship does not fit in with their overall agenda of pursuing a greater sense of self-worth and self-esteem in a gendered environment.

However, this is not to say that the women’s relations are distant, formal, or even devoid of emotions. On the contrary, they are rather affectionate and playful, and their gatherings, too, are often lively and humorous. Instead of directly expressing their affection for one another, they choose to do so in a manner that would better reflect

them in the image that is congruous with their desired self-identity as equals, and as independent women. I have also seen several women cry in front of their friends, though these were rather extreme circumstances, when frustrations at work or at home were unbearable, or when they were moved by stories of the hardships of their mothers. However, both groups of women would quickly regain their composure, and these emotional moments would be followed by reflections on their own struggles to maintain their economic independence, and on how they have overcome various difficulties despite the harsh working environment. As these women have defined the instrumentality of their relations and reciprocity in terms of the immaterial exchange of resources and expertise rather than by the conventional means of paying for others, so, too, have they conceptualized the affectionate aspect of their friendships differently: that is, in terms of recognizing their mutual equal and independent status. These women shy away from fictive sisterhood and excessive expressions of affection and emotions, and adopt instead practices such as *warikan* and the use of first names only, because each of these practices forms an integral part of their personal, and collective, desire strategically and symbolically to rid their relations of dependence, hierarchy, and any form of incongruity with the egalitarianism they seek in both their friendship and a meaningful sense of self.

Conclusion

I began this article by agreeing with Carrier (1999: 34-5) that friendship could perhaps be considered as 'a way of thinking', and also with Paine (1999: 39-40) that ideas about self can be intimately linked to those of friendship. I have so far demonstrated that the women's friendships are indeed about 'a way of thinking', specifically about constructing and narrating a coherent self, which is based on values shaped by work. Culturally constituted notions of gender and gendered relations certainly play an important role in influencing the women's ideas about the self and friendship, but the women themselves also construct and reconstruct their own perceptions of self and the meaning of their friendships as they respond to transformations to the broader social, economic, and political environments (Ortner 2005: 34). Understandings of self and friendships are thus interdependent, since they mutually shape each other and reinforce each other's significance as people's experiences, needs, and desires change. As Carrier aptly notes, notions of self and friendship are indeed 'cultural elements' (1999: 36), which exist not on their own, but in a broader social, economic, and political context. At the same time, they are also what Kondo (1990: 9-10) describes as 'strategic assertions' by people, who seek through them to contest the meanings and significance of their experiences, and to reorder their lives.

To the extent that the women's respective friendship networks enable and enhance the 'crafting' of self, they create the possibility for the women to negotiate and renegotiate the boundaries of culturally constituted notions of womanhood in Japanese society, and to affirm their desired sense of self. Even though the women's efforts at 'crafting selves' are at times ambivalent and problematic, and their desire to establish friendship on the basis of equality and free choice is more idealistic than real, the difficulties they face stem both from their desire to rewrite a new gendered self within a restrictive and gendered environment, and also from their contradictory desires to seek recognition from the very same social system from which they also wish to extricate themselves. However, that the women are able strategically to 'craft' their respective friendship networks over the years as a parallel universe to other aspects of

their lives clearly shows that it is not impossible for people to establish new forms of sociality that go against the more conventional types of relations in society. In offering the women a differentiated temporality and spatiality to re-engineer collective practices and affirm their desired sense of difference, their friendship networks also become a transcendent site for resisting, contesting, and challenging existing limits to self-definition, which in turn helps reposition the women from the margins of Japanese society.

That such possibilities could occur, and are also meaningful, only outside the realm of kin relations and beyond relations connected to the workplace further highlights the importance of friendship to meeting the varying needs of individuals. In a post-industrial society such as Japan, where work patterns are rapidly changing, and where communication technologies are also constantly transforming the meaning of work, family, and social relations, it is impossible to underestimate the importance to individuals of social relations outside the realm of kinship, the workplace, and the local community. As Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman (1999: 16) remark, 'new types of sociality' could emerge in a 'globalizing but complex and contradictory world whose cultural and social boundaries are constantly being transformed' (1999: 16). For any study of friendship to be meaningful, and the meaning and importance of friendship to be understood, it is therefore important that attention is paid to the particular conditions that have led to its emergence and developments, and to the motivations, ambiguities, and contradictions of people in forming certain types of non-kin relations.

NOTES

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¹ All the informants' names in this article are pseudonyms used to preserve their anonymity, and on a first-name basis, to reflect the actual manner in which the women address one another.

² I refer to the women as 'managers' and 'executives' interchangeably in this article to indicate that they possess not only senior managerial responsibilities at work, but also the authority to influence business decisions.

³ I have followed my informants in describing their respective groups as 'friendship networks'. By 'network', I refer to the general connectedness of people with personal, and not impersonal, connections.

⁴ In this article, I use 'fictive sisterhood' to refer to kin-like relations among women who are not related by blood or through marriage.

⁵ The Melanesians, to put it simply, are described by Marilyn Strathern as 'dividuals', or persons composed of multiple social relationships in which they engage, and are hence different from 'individuals' in the West, who are perceived as 'unique entities' (1988: 13).

⁶ I first met Michiyo from *Nomi-kai* in January 2002 in the Tokyo office of my former employer, a multinational corporation based in Hong Kong, when I was sent there to work on a business project. I met Kaneko from *Wain-kurabu* several months later through another co-worker, who attended the same high school as Kaneko. It was not until a year later that the two women eventually told me about their respective friendship networks and invited me to participate in their after-work drinking activities for the first time. Since then, I have participated in a total of 105 gatherings: 56 *Wain-kurabu* and 49 *Nomi-kai*. I also conducted personal interviews with all the twenty-seven women, and made seven home-stays of one-week duration each with seven women and their families. All except three of my informants are university graduates, though all of them possess at least one professional qualification. All the women are fluent in English. Many have

travelled outside Japan extensively, mostly owing to work, while nine have lived abroad for many years. Eighteen women came from fairly well-to-do families, and their fathers were either professionals – doctors, dentists, lawyers, judges, and business executives – or high-ranking civil officers, merchants, and landowners. Of the nine women whose parents are divorced, seven were brought up by single mothers. In terms of their marital status, three women in *Wain-kurabu* are single, while five are married, and five divorced. Six women in *Nomi-kai* are single, four are married, three are divorced, and one is a widow. Seven women in *Wain-kurabu* are mothers, while there are only four mothers in *Nomi-kai*.

⁷ A series of discourses emerged in Japan in the early 1980s, through educational reforms and in corporate policies, to encourage individuals to pursue *jibunrashii seikatsu* ('one's own kind of lifestyles') and *jikohakken* ('self-discovery') (Mouer & Sugimoto 1986: 196).

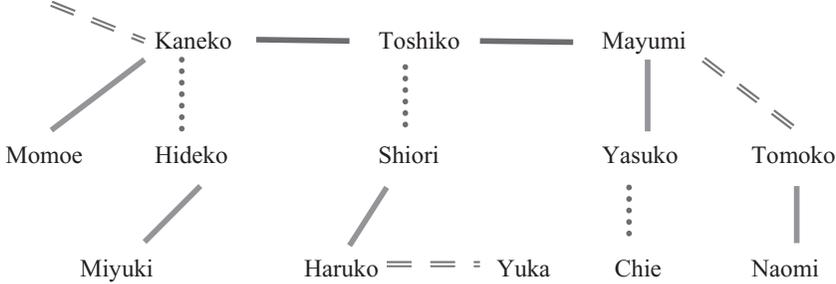
⁸ The Equal Employment Opportunity Law (*Danjo Koyō Byōdōhō*), which came into effect on 1 April 1986, requires all companies to include all full-time employees – male and female – in their systems of lifetime employment and seniority-based promotions (Ōwaki 1987: 229), but it has been said to be ineffective in eliminating gender discrimination in employment policies and in actual practice (Honda 1984: 119).

⁹ During the course of my fieldwork, I noticed a burgeoning in the number of such establishments in districts such as Ginza and Shinjuku, where many advertisements for hostess clubs were replaced by those for host clubs.

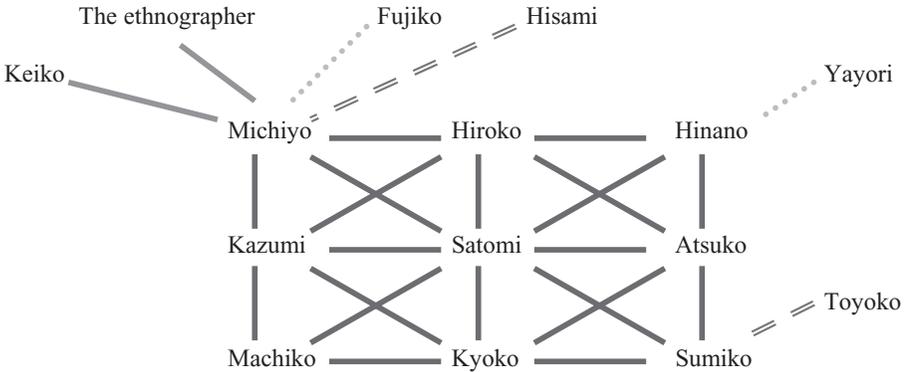
APPENDIX: HOW THE WOMEN MET

WAIN-KURABU

The ethnographer



NOMI-KAI



Key:

- The first group of co-workers
- Subsequent co-workers
- Participants in work-related events, including conferences and business functions
- == = Participants in leisure and other social activities
- Sisters

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Tokyo à 22 heures : marquer la différence par les réseaux d'amitiés des femmes cadres au Japon

Résumé

Malgré l'augmentation significative du nombre de femmes parmi les employés « en col blanc » dans le Japon de l'après-guerre, l'importance des relations sociales liées au travail et non à la famille ou à la vie de quartier de celle-ci n'a guère suscité d'intérêt. Le présent article étudie la manière dont deux groupes de femmes actives japonaises mobilisent de façon novatrice leurs réseaux d'amitiés « d'après le travail » pour en faire un site stratégique où elles peuvent atténuer l'écart décevant perçu entre leurs attentes et leur vécu et négocier un sentiment amélioré de valeur personnelle et d'estime de soi. L'auteur avance que les relations de travail des femmes peuvent s'avérer gratifiantes par elles-mêmes et que le travail peut modeler leur perception d'elles-mêmes et de leurs amitiés, au fil des transformations des conditions sociales, économiques et politiques générales qui façonnent leur vécu.

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