

Does “constituency facetime” reproduce male dominance? Insights from Japan’s mixed-member majoritarian electoral system

## Introduction

As early as 2005, rigorous comparative research (Norris and Inglehart 2003) empirically debunked the myth that, over time, strong economic development will *naturally* lead to gender-balanced government. In recent years, the ‘problem’ or ‘research puzzle’ has been increasingly re-framed away from the idea of ‘women’s under-representation’ towards the problematization of the (undemocratic) persistence of ‘male dominance’ (Dahlerup and Leyenaar 2013). Men continue to be over-represented in national democratic institutions worldwide. In 2017, the average for women’s representation in Single and/or Lower Houses was still a mere 23.3% worldwide and an even more paltry 19.7% in Asia. Men’s over-representation in Japanese politics sits exceptionally high at 91.7% of seats, 0.1% worse than the 91.6% elected men in 1946 when women gained suffrage. After 70 years of voting rights, we find only 9.3% elected women in the Lower House and 20.7% in the Upper House in 2017. What explains this persistence of male hegemony in the Japanese legislature?

The number of women representatives is affected by both the supply of applicants wishing to run for office and the demands of selectors who choose candidates based on their preferences and perceptions of qualified candidates (Norris and Lovenduski 1995). Would-be candidates must clear four procedural steps or hurdles to gain access to a parliamentary mandate: eligibility, recruitment, selection and election (Norris and Lovenduski 1995: 44). Each step allows ample room for gendered norms to manifest through cultural, socio-economic, institutional and political influences. In fact, several institutional and cultural barriers interact and work in tandem to depress the number of women in the Japanese parliament.

The conventional wisdom to explain why few women do well across those four procedural steps is the lack of resources such as time, money, confidence and ambition (Lawless and Fox 2005; IPU 2008). Within Japanese politics, the saying goes that a career in politics requires the three “ban”: “jiban” (local community support), “kanban” (name recognition/reown) and “kaban” (financial resources). Even when they do overcome these barriers, women still bear a disproportionate share of family and caregiving responsibilities (childcare; eldercare), which constraints what time is available to nurture and develop a successful political career. In Japan, women are consciously evaluating and hearing of the stark incompatibility of family responsibilities with masculine norms of long working hours and indentured service presumed by companies, political parties, and local networks.

The current paper focuses on one of the most important resources that successful candidates need to have: time. It has been known that legislators spend a lot of time at their home constituencies in order to secure their chances of reelection. Vote-seeking activities include constituency services, door-to-door canvassing, and policy explanations, all of which require “presentations of self” in the constituency. Intensity and frequency of “presentation of self” vary depending on the weight of personal vote, electoral margins, and electability (Fenno 1978). The more intense and frequent “presentation of self” is required, the more difficult it becomes for women to run for office due to their time crunch problem. We show that Japan is a typical, and probably extreme, case of highly intensive and frequent requirement of “presentation of self,” which explains the low degree of women representation at the Lower House.

While vote-seeking activities that entail “presentation of self” can be found in many other countries, we argue that “constituency facetime” takes up a substantial share in Japan, which further intensifies physical presentation of self. “Constituency facetime” is defined as activities symbolically inflecting an obligation-based form of constituency caregiving, and that require

intense levels and long working hours of devoted physical presence as performative expressions of devotion to community and local (overwhelmingly male) homosocial elites. We argue that constituency facetime works to symbolically, psychologically, and practically depress women's aspirations and interest in a career in electoral politics. Moreover, once elected at great odds, constituency facetime likewise exacerbates the vulnerability that women MPs face as political outsiders, making it difficult to maintain any semblance of a reasonable family/personal life if one wishes to establish a sustainable life in elected public service.

In the following pages, we first outline the comparative literature on the personal vote, clientelism, and constituency service. Second, we discuss how Japanese electoral institutions formally and informally impact upon the personal vote. Third, we propose the concept of "constituency facetime" or namely, those activities specific to Japanese constituency caregiving. Then, we explore the explicitly gendered ways in which "constituency facetime" requirements impose on legislators in dialogue with qualitative interviews with male and female MPs of the Japanese Diet.

### **1. The Presentation of Self, Personal Vote, and Clientelism**

Legislators spend tremendous amount of time in their home districts when there are elected at the constituency level. Not just during the campaign period, but also between elections, they frequently go back to their constituencies. Time is a scarce resource, yet legislators allocate a substantial share to constituency activities at their home constituencies rather than legislative activity in the capital. What do they do while in their constituency and what drives them to commit to these constituency activities? The seminal work by Richard Fenno (1978) shows that US Lower House members made on average thirty-five trips home a year in 1973. In Japan, MPs of the Lower House usually go back to their constituencies every weekend and stay there when the Diet is not in session. Citing the idea of "presentation of self" developed by Erving Goffman, Fenno (1978: 54) suggests that House members go home to "place themselves in 'the immediate physical presence' of others and then 'make a presentation of themselves to others.'" In order to gain political support from their constituencies, they "present themselves" and try to "win constituents' accolades," through such affirmations as "he's a good man," "she's a good women." (Fenno 1978: 55). He thus argues that "*presentation of self enhances trust, enhancing trust takes time, therefore presentation of self takes time.*" (Fenno 1978: 56).

While the intensity and frequency of 'presentation of self' varies to a great degree among House members, the strong weight of personal vote under US politics certainly provides an incentive to invest in vote-seeking activities within the home constituencies. The personal vote is the portion of a candidate's electoral support that comes from his/her personal qualities, qualification, activities, and record (Cain, et al. 1987: 9). It is thus an opposite to partisan votes. It is known that US legislators focus on particularistic policies to claim personalized credit and build incumbent advantage (Fiorina 1974). But, personal vote-seeking behavior nurtured through constituency activities can also be a strategy, notably used by backbencher MPs in Westminster-style parliamentary systems where partisan votes are said to dominate (Norton and Wood 1993).

Cary and Shugart point out that partisan votes (as opposed to personal votes) increase under FPTP systems. That said, if party leaders do not control nominations due to the influence of primaries or strong local committees, as in the US, then this logic does not hold. The degree of a party leader's control over the necessary resources for reelection (nomination, party label, image and policy positionings) is key. This holds true in Canada where strong central party control over nominations leaves minimal influence for local party elites to choose their nominees. For example, the 2006 federal elections in Canada saw the leaders of both major parties (Liberal and Conservative) unilaterally decide that all incumbents would be re-nominated to their constituencies, leading to 121 of 134 Liberal candidates, and 89 of 99 Conservatives candidates being confirmed by leadership decree (Cross 2006).

But again, even within contexts of strong party discipline, the personal vote can matter.

Norton and Wood (1993: 21) suggest that modern British MPs feel a greater sense of vulnerability, akin to that documented in the United States (Fenno 1978). Norton and Wood (1993) suggest that British MPs work to “compartmentalize” their parliamentary and constituency roles to allow them to maintain voter support and reputation with the local party even when their national party’s policies are at odds with their constituents. Career-minded MPs may see constituency service as a means to re-election, but also and end in itself in securing their profession, particularly for junior members who cannot gain importance within parliamentary and partisan activities in the House (1993: 22). Kam’s (2009) study on the strategy of “backbench dissent” in four Westminster parliamentary systems (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom) points to ways in which “dissent” from party line is used by backbencher MPs to increase name recognition, often in combination with intense “constituency service.” Thus, the comparative literature illustrates the plural ways in which electoral rules interact with partisan factors that both amplify and discourage personal vote-seeking behavior.

To seek personal votes, legislators adopt at least three distinct behavior styles (Mayhew 1974): position taking, credit claiming, and advertising. Position taking sees legislators taking a policy position on national matters to reflect constituency preference. Credit claiming envisions legislators attempting to claim credit for promoting local interests. Typical credit-claiming behavior includes pork-barrel politics, through which MPs channel government budgets to the benefit of the masses in their constituencies, and constituent casework, which allows them to provide individual-level service to specific constituents. Finally, advertising strategies see legislators making the MPs better known to constituents in ways that create “a favorable image but in messages having little or no issue content” (Mayhew 1974:49). Thus, advertising entails frequent direct contact with constituents as well as direct communication through newsletters, posters, social media and mass media. “Presence of self” comes into play when legislators engage with direct constituency contacts to increase their name recognition.

Credit-claiming is an effective means to gain political support at the constituency level. Such behavior has been captured by the concept of clientelism. Kitschelt and Wilkinsen (2007: 7) define “clientelism” as ‘a particular mode of “exchange” between electoral constituencies as principals and politicians as agents in democratic systems. This exchange is focused on particular classes of goods, though the feasibility and persistence of clientelistic reciprocity is not determined by the type of goods exchanges.’ While the classic literature largely assumed the “responsible party government” model of political accountability and citizen voting behavior based on rational choice, this overlooks the patronage-based, party-voter linkage that exists in many countries, including some advanced industrial democracies. Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007: 2) argue that we must situate citizen-politician linkages “based on direct material inducements targeted to individuals and small groups of citizens whom politicians know to be highly responsive to such side-payments and willing to surrender their vote for the right price. Within these systems, votes are not primarily gained from “democratic accountability”, or a politician’s success in delivering collective goods or economic growth, but rather from “clientelistic accountability” maintained by transactions or “direct exchange of a citizen’s vote for direct payment or continuing access to employment, goods or services” (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007: 2).

The electoral system, and the degree of centralized to weak party control over nominations, both dialogue to impact on the influence of the personal vote and clientelism upon (re)nomination and electoral success. The more the personal vote influences outcomes, and the bigger the space for clientelistic accountability, the more likely candidates are to engage in personal vote seeking activities. This can include pork barrel politics, the nurturing of a home style of constituency service, heavy investments of time in local candidate support networks, the use of dissent to establish individual branding and name recognition, and as we will show, the significant performance of long hours of ritualistic constituency facetime to convey devotion to the public wellbeing of the civic life of the community, as well as obligatory filial concern for the

private life cycle events affecting its opinion-leading family dynasties and prominent households.

## 2. Japanese Representative Democratic Institutions

Japan is also known that personal votes loom large. We shall examine the electoral system as well as party structure to gauge the impact of personal votes in Japan. The Japanese parliament is bicameral. Since electoral reform in 1994, the Lower House, or House of Representatives (HOR) uses a mixed member majoritarian system (MMM) marked by the predominance of 275 (initially 300) FPTP seats, compared to only 180 (initially 200) PR seats. The Upper House, or House of Councilors (HOC) uses a mixed system with 48 seats allocated through national list PR (open list) and 73 seats organized into prefectural constituencies whose district magnitude varies from one to six, according to population size. Of the 73 prefectural districts, 32 were FPTPs as of 2016. The term is four years for the HOR and six years for the HOC, with half of HOC members selected in each election. The HOR elections have been held almost every two and a half years, adding uncertain and high volatility due to the *de-facto* discretionary power of the prime minister to suddenly dissolve the Diet.

### *Electoral System of the Lower House*

The Japanese MMM electoral system that is clearly weighted in favour of the zero-sum first-past-the-post (FPTP) constituencies. Candidates are able to run under both the FPTP and PR systems and parties facilitate double candidacy by placing all candidates in the same position on the party list. Thereafter, the allocation of the PR seats is determined by the ‘margin of defeat ratio’ (*sekihairitsu*). To assuage the concerns of nervous incumbents, the best-loser principle of PR seat allocation was adopted, despite the fact that this undermined the goals of creating strong programmatic party campaigns that could reduce the influence of candidate-centered campaigning. Better known as the ‘best loser provision,’ it distributes PR seats to candidates on the basis of the ranking of their performance in their respective FPTP constituencies. The party divides the number of votes the candidate receives by the constituency winner's number of votes to generate this ranking, so as to foster a logic of “merit” in the allocation of the PR seats.

Although the 1994 electoral reform sought to increase programmatic electoral competition between parties and thus diminish the influence of faction-leaders within the large catch-all parties, candidates for the two largest parties, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDPJ) still rely on privately maintained, candidate-centered electoral machinery in their constituencies. In fact, the post-reform electoral system rules lead to the presence of 2-3 incumbents for each constituency, making competition against one’s own colleagues a concern even for winning MPs. In short, there are precious few “safe seats.” When combined with the persistence of a highly decentralized party system, renowned candidates retain marked influence and rely on their own vote mobilizing machinery (*koenkai*), with little organizational support from the party. This institutional context of competition has resulted in a highly masculinized political lifestyle based on the hegemonic prototype of ‘homo politicus’ and that assumes the importance of male homo social networks (Bjarnegard 2015) at both the nationals and the local levels.

According to the classic work of Carey and Shugart (1995), under the old system of SNTV (single-nontransferable vote), Japan ranked high with respect to the influence of the personal vote. Under the SNTV electoral system, candidates had to compete not only against the candidates of other parties, but also against candidates of their own party. As a result, even incumbent candidates belonging to the dominant parties were compelled to develop personalized vote-mobilizing machinery. For the LDP candidates in particular, *koenkai* (individual candidates’ electoral support groups) played a key role in local vote-mobilization through outreach done by spouses, relatives, schoolmates, industry, regional or neighbourhood associations, to a range of business and professional ties to both local and central government bureaucrats.

Scheiner (2007: 276) writes that Japan is “(in)famous for its clientelistic politics, for

which the country's electoral institutions are frequently blamed." Japanese clientelism includes not only the "predominantly business-mediated" form, but also less symbolic transactions. Woodall (1996: 9-10) details Japanese clientelism as "selective allocation of distributive policy benefits by public-sector elites in exchange for the promise of solidarity and mutually beneficial inputs from favored private-sector interests... [including] government subsidies, official price supports and import quotas, targeted tax breaks, regulatory favors in the allocation of trucking routes, and other policy benefits." In light of the one-party predominance of the LDP, Richardson (1997: 260) suggests that the LDP is a caretaker for its clients, especially rice farmers. Arguably this was particularly true prior to the electoral reform of 1994.

If we apply Carey and Shugart's criteria for the impact of the personal vote in Japan's post-1994 MMM system, we would expect a decline in both the personal vote, and the captive nature of clientelistic politics tied to the LDP as party alternance attempts to destabilize the LDP's hegemonic dominance. Some scholars observe a significant transformation in *legislative* activities (Rosenbluth and Thies 2010). For example, Noble (2010) argues that policy outputs have become notably less particularistic. Catalinac (2015) observes that the importance of high politics such as security and diplomacy has increased compared to pork-barrel in campaign messages. With respect to voting behavior, the voter's evaluation of party leaders now exerts more significant influence (Kabashima and Imai 2002) and this may suggest that personal votes have indeed declined (Hamamoto 2007). That said, in terms of *vote mobilization* strategies, there is still little evidence that candidate-centered campaigning has vanished (Taniguchi 2004; Park 2000). Taking the insights of historical institutionalism, Krauss and Pekkanen (2010) argue that the new electoral system still provides incentives for a personal vote strategy.

In practice, the contemporary impact of personal votes and clientelism seems to vary depending on the idiosyncracies of the constituency, candidate, and party label. Intense and high frequency of ritualistic constituency service impacts disproportionately on MPs who experience vulnerability and electoral volatility in their constituency. This affects established LDP senior MPs differently from mid-career and junior LDP MPs. For example, Nakakita (2017) shows the LDP candidates to be polarized. So-called second-generation politicians are electorally competitive by virtue of inheriting both *koenkai* and established name recognition through their political family background and the clientelistic relationships they imply. On the other hand, newcomers rely on the coattails of party leaders and prime ministers, given that their electoral support bases are weak. For the elections of second-generation politicians, the personal vote is likely still determinant, whereas party label matters more for newcomers. And yet, incumbent advantage has in fact diminished since the electoral reform, due to the volatility of the political party system. Kawato (2013) shows that the reelection rate of incumbents is lower under MMM than under SNTV. Second-generation politicians are relatively safe in terms of re-election, but a volatile party system continues to threaten the re-election of other incumbents, motivating them to invest heavily in personal support bases that are autonomous of the party fate.

Following Heitshusen et al. (2005), Tsutsumi suggests that the Liberal Democratic Party, which has enjoyed one party predominant status throughout the post-war era, has largely failed to provide sufficient resources to its candidates, creating incentives for enhanced constituency activities as a means of increasing personal vote. Moreover, Tsutsumi (2009: 66) suggests that due to the lack of clear party ideological and policy orientations, voters have difficulty determining the party's political vision and thus they must still pay attention to the candidate to determine who best reflects their views. Hamamoto and Nemoto (2011) show that candidates have increased their efforts between 2003 and 2010 to cultivate a 'home style' (Fenno 1978) of constituency service, largely due to the volatility of support bases.

The degree of electoral competition likewise affects the amount of constituency outreach or service to supporters and the local community that is required. In general, the weaker the candidate and party label, the longer hours of service invested in the constituency. Due to the double candidacy peculiar to the Japanese version of MMM, 70~80 % of FPTP candidates are

listed on the PR list as well; those who lose the FPTP constituency can still be elected under the PR tier. The LDP and the DP/DPJ usually rank about twenty double candidates at the first ranked position for each PR block, followed by PR-only candidates. This practice gives a heavier weight to the FPTP system, despite the fact that a fairly large proportion of seats are elected under PR (180 out of 455).

The effect of double candidacy is not limited to the double-weighting of the outputs of the majoritarian FPTP tier. By virtue of allowing double candidacy, multiple incumbents emerge from highly contested constituencies as the best loser ‘zombies’ (Pekkanen) get resurrected under the PR list. This positions them to run again under the same FPTP tier in the subsequent election, and thus, there are two, or sometimes three incumbents of the same or different party competing with each other in the same constituency. As a structural factor, then, Japan’s double candidacy system keeps competition levels needlessly high, increasing volatility within each constituency by systemically producing plural incumbents.

The critical role of high candidate visibility in the constituency and strong personalistic support networks have dire consequences for women and newcomers. To gain sufficient political capital and name value in the constituency, time is at a very high premium. What are the implications of these informal dynamics upon women incumbents, and notably upon women aspirants?

### **3. Constituency Facetime**

Existing literature exhibits that presentation of self at the district is required in constituency service (aka credit-claiming), policy explanation (aka position taking), and advertising. There are driven by the motivation of personal vote seeing, but some of the constituency services are public or civic-oriented that is of a non-partisan nature. In contrast, clientelistic services fulfill the personal vote-nurturing objective. Similarly, policy explanation activity also takes place in the context of partisan vote: legislators explain policy and educate constituents about the policy positions pursued by their parties. In addition to these three activities, the literature describes other types of presentation of self such as door-to-door canvassing during non-campaign periods, the organization of gatherings to nurture personal support networks, as well as attendance of wedding and funerals of important supporters and notables in their communities.

For the purposes of advancing a more nuanced discussion of the various facets of constituency activities, to convey the specific constraints observed within the Japanese system, and that we suspect to play out in various ways within countries with similar institutional and cultural baggage (Taiwan, Korea, Mexico, etc), our proposed concept of “constituency facetime” Aims to capture and articulate activities aimed at nurturing the personal vote and that requires high intensity and high frequency of physical presence of the principal (the MP) at specific places and official activities. In so doing, “constituency facetime” hones in on the kinds of ritualistic participation in ceremonies and public performances of devotion to community conveyed through facetime presence at official ceremonies and events related to state or quasi-state institutions. For these kinds of activities, the MP as the principal agent must always be present and no proxy may stand in their place to perform this ritualistic constituency facetime.

Within the Japanese context, copious hours of constituency facetime may be viewed as a primary “currency” through which candidates symbolically demonstrate and re-affirm their devotion to home community, their attentiveness to local male homo social power networks, and their concern for extended filial and familialistic relations to influential households in the constituency. The intensity of constituency facetime and supporter outreach activities varies among politicians, depending on the electoral system through which they were elected and the degree of competition within their constituency. In principal, MPs who are moderately to highly vulnerable with respect to re-election are under intense pressure to be seen to be performing intense and high frequency of constituency facetime at key moments throughout the seasonal and

annual activities.

Japan has an unusually high number of public ceremonies, seasonal festivals, and official events that dominate the civic imaginary, and that also play out with important consequences through the regulation of the calendar within public school education (LeMay 2018). Those events are basically organized by semi-public institutions that were created and maintained to sustain state institutions and power such as public schools, police, fire stations, neighborhood associations, and social welfare organizations. Politicians, national and local, are expected to attend official events that they hold such as school entrance ceremonies, graduation ceremonies, sports day events, summer festivals, sporting tournaments, official year-end parties or new year’s parties, and so on and so forth. Figure 1.0 outlines the varieties of ‘presentation of self’ as they manifest within the Japanese context, and in light of which spaces are overwhelmingly male dominated. This allows us to map where activities defined by our concept of ‘constituency facetime’ show up in practice.

**Figure 1.0 Varieties of Presentation of Self in Japan**

Male-dominated	Advertising / Trust-building	<i>Constituency Facetime</i> outreach, ritualistic attendance at public or semi-public ceremonies, festivals and sporting events, candidate support network ( <i>koenkai</i> ) maintenance	} Vote-seeking
Male-dominated	Credit Claiming	Case work, pork	
	Position Taking	Policy explanation/education	

MPs are often put under pressure to attend such events in order to secure reelection. Attendance sends a message that the MP a) cares about the civic life of the local community, b) shows respect for the existing social order, c) acknowledges the authority of local elites holding official or semi-public positions within the community, and thus d) demonstrates that the MP exhibits the necessary qualifications to serve as a representative of the local constituency. Attendance is obligatory and expected as a ritualistic performance that confirms the MP’s ongoing devotion to official annual rites of passage within the local community. While it might not result in votes, failing to show one’s face and thus attend all such important official activities and events leads to moral condemnation and questioning of the MPs loyalty and sincerity of commitment to the home community.

*Gender, and Performative Practices of Community Devotion*

As a key currency and symbolic indicator of the potential for political success within Japanese electoral politics, what are the gendered implications of MP constituency service activities entailing high degrees of “constituency facetime”? Iversen and Rosenbluth’s (2008) research in the United States highlights the time crunch faced by women running in candidate-centered systems wherein extensive constituency service are critical to local political capital that can deliver votes. All things being equal, given the entrenched gender roles and sexual division of labour within contemporary Japanese households (Tsuya, Bumpass, Choe and Rindfuss 2012), women in Japan face an even more significant time crunch in terms of their ability to balance family responsibilities, careers interruptions due to childbirth, and heavy caregiving responsibilities for both children and the elderly. A 2005 survey conducted by the public broadcaster NHK (Nihon Hoso Kyokai) showed that women spent a daily average of 4.26 hours on housework, compared to 1.38 hours for men (Ishii-Kuntz 2008).

Male candidates are almost always far better placed to invest in this time-intensive networking given that they can out-source caregiving responsibilities and household management

burdens (overwhelmingly to women), without personal guilt nor gender norm backlash from their family and community. As such, both practically and symbolically, male candidates and male MPs in Japan are perceived to enjoy extensive “time freedom,” as well as the “normative freedom” to devote their time, energy, and physical presence exclusively to intense influence-peddling to male homosocial networks within the constituency before, during, and after elections. They can harness all of the advantages within existing patriarchal norms of childrearing and gendered stereotypes that underpin both Japanese masculinity, and also the masculine-style vote mobilization strategies premised on absentee fathering due to extremely long working hours in the public sphere. This perception of “constant presence” and local community devotion serves to remind senior male community opinion-leaders of the candidate’s influence in the region.

Undertaken within the geographical constituency to win the election, constituency facetime is thus essential to consolidating and then sustaining political capital within the community. It entails exceptionally high time investments and regular performances in the constituency to nurture local trust and inspire voter loyalty. Nurturing one’s *koenkai*, local power networks, and thus the loyalty of one’s voting base in the constituency all require extensive facetime appearances. The intensity of constituency facetime and supporter outreach required increases in light of the electoral system’s impact. The requisite amount is said to be the smallest for the closed-list PR seats for the HOR, followed by the open-list PR seats in the HOC, followed by the multi-member constituencies (SNTV) seats in the HOC, and finally, is the highest for the FPTP seats in the HOC and HOR respectively. While both Houses include the FPTP system, constituency facetime and supporter outreach demands are much more taxing for HOR members, given that the constituencies are smaller and the electoral cycles are both shorter and highly unpredictable. Interviewees emphasized how hard it was for office seekers to get elected under the FPTP system of the HOR.

Also working against women in Japan, ensconced parliamentary seniority (primarily correlated with the hegemony of the LDP) seems to be the one mitigating factor that can lead to a reduction of constituency facetime hours. Hamamoto and Nemoto’s data shows that MPs who won four elections or more spent 10 to 20% fewer days in the constituency than those who won three elections or less. It also reveals that non-LDP politicians go back to their constituency even more frequently than LDP politicians, probably to compensate for their weak support base. At the moment, there are only two women MPs in the opposition camp who won under FPTP. Even though progressive parties usually intend to field more women than conservative parties, they have difficulty finding women who are willing to undertake the intensive constituency facetime activities that is often required, even to a greater extent than that of the dominant, more conservative LDP.

Because the level of partisan competition also increased between 2007 and 2012, intensified party competition in the late 2000s has ultimately compelled office-seekers to strengthen their constituency performance and outreach to supporters in the local constituency. Hamamoto and Nemoto (2011) discovered that the frequency of constituency-level vote mobilization activities increased from 2007 to 2010, regardless of party affiliation and seniority. MPs came back to their constituency an average of 40% of the days in a month, whereas, for instance, in the early 1990s, it was only 20% in the case of senior LDP politicians.

A Lower House woman from the Democratic Party noted, “in my constituency, there are three incumbents and thus the election has been very heated. All of us attend the ‘respect the elderly parties’ of the tiny neighborhood associations.” This interviewee mentioned that if she misses an event, the organizer makes a phone call and complains about her absence. Since her other two rivals may attend, there is no way that she can opt out of this importance facet of constituency service.

When asked about how she spends her time in the constituency, one interviewee observed, “You basically have to sacrifice your private life under the FPTP system, working 24 hours a day in politics. She observed that (during the summer festival season), “I attend twenty



festivals a day. I also attend all the neighbor associations' meetings. This week, I made two round trips to my constituency. Under the old SNTV system, for instance, some candidates were able to win just by advocating for the Constitution. It is now impossible to just focus on policy matters."

When we asked about the distribution of energy spent between her constituency and *Nagatacho* in Tokyo, where the Diet is located, she responded that 70% of her energy was spent in her constituency, even during the parliamentary session. Another interviewee from the Democratic Party, who ran in a large multi-member district of the HOC, commented that office seekers under FPTP for the HOR spend 90% of their energy and time in the constituency, whereas she is able to concentrate on policy matters. A male Lower House LDP interviewee whose single-member constituency is in a city outside of Tokyo, commutes every day the two hours to *Nagatacho* (Japan's Westminster) by bullet train. Each morning he delivers speeches outside his station before boarding the train, then returns each evening to attend social events in the constituency. He said that he has given up on having a private life. A female LDP interviewee who switched from the PR tier to an FPTP seat in the Lower House confirmed the higher level of constituency demands for facetime under the FPTP tier. She notes, "I used to spend weekends giving lectures on social security and healthcare issues, but now I can't focus on my policy expertise. I have to attend twenty school sports events per day. I don't have time for policy input."

Cataloguing the ritualistic performances of local participation and clientele-building, "constituency facetime" confines the physical body of the elected MP to the geographic spaces of the constituency, and to the repetitive and highly ritualistic physical presences of the MP's physical self to homosocial networks throughout the constituency. As a performative practice of devotion, it functions as an important currency through which candidates in Japan symbolically demonstrate and re-affirm their loyalty to home community, as well as to largely masculine local power networks and extended filial relations. In so doing, we suggest that the Japanese electoral system exacerbates the patriarchal gendered norms of long working hours and the practical incompatibility of elected public service caregiving with household roles of caregiving. Thus "constituency facetime" symbolically and practically undermines women's access to elected office, thereby actively reproducing male domination and hegemony in electoral politics.

## Conclusion

Within the Japanese context, we observe the persistent influence of 1) personal votes (albeit to a varying degree), 2) incumbent volatility, 3) clientelistic male homosocial capital, 4) the masculine norm of long working hours as evidence of devotion, and 5) ritualistic norms around face-to-face performances of loyal service. We suggest that these combine to form a vicious cycle that marginalizes women from sustainable competitiveness within the system for the short and long term. As an informal institutional barrier to women's representation, the norms and practices of "constituency facetime" underpin the logic of political recruitment and thus functions psychologically and practically to depress women's selection by political parties.

The current article attempts to probe in detail the practical impact of the Japanese HOR and HOC mixed systems generally, and most importantly, the informal campaign norms under the FPTP-driven HOR elections that work to further exacerbate male over-representation across the system. To the extent that elected women internalize and are effective in emulating and assimilating to these masculine norms of political behaviour, their awareness of gender differences across the system is less likely to register in a written survey. Elected women MPs are an unrepresentative sample given that they have already been successfully selected and elected, in part, because they were able to perform the kinds of facetime-intensive, masculine-style activities within male homo social networks necessary to gain incumbency. They reflect the dominant profiles of the 'winning candidate' in Japan. This does not disprove the existence of systemic discrimination against women in particular, but also newcomer women and men, younger men, and those with even 'moderate' levels of caregiving responsibilities. Under the current system, these profiles are either ineligible in practice to compete effectively within the

system or are likely to be unwilling to drop all caregiving responsibilities in order to assimilate to the hegemonic masculine model of *homo politicus*.

Our interviews teased out the fact that the seemingly gender-neutral electoral politics have ample gendered impacts on candidates and elected MPs. Many women respondents pointed out the intensity of vote mobilization activity and unpredictable working schedules, which compelled them to sacrifice their private lives. Campaigning is taxing for all involved, but male candidates are better situated to endure these challenges without having to sacrifice the possibility of a private life and family life. The typical MP travels back and forth from constituencies from Friday to Monday during the parliamentary sessions (January through June, with some supplementary sessions in the fall) and the investment of all remaining time in the constituency. Moreover, once elected, the pressure of long hours of constituency facetime remains ever present. Office seekers must not only be attentive to the facetime demands and concerns raised by the members in their personal campaign machinery (*koenkai*), but moreover, they must sustain intensive facetime service and physical presence at a myriad of local ceremonies, events, or private gatherings, with the hopes that it will generate name recognition, good will, and thus sufficient political capital to garner votes on election day.

We submit that “constituency facetime” and the “time crunch” it drives to extremes, creates more of a barrier to women than other conventional resources such as money, reputation, party support, and ambition etc. In fact, constituency facetime requirements work to indirectly, yet effectively discourage women from aspiring to run for public office, thus depressing the supply of potential women candidates who are otherwise well-suited to serve in parliament, as well as discouraging political parties from recruiting women, based on assumptions of the incompatibility of womanhood and caregiving responsibilities with a successful and sustainable life of public service build upon self-sacrifice and filial devotion to the collective and private wellbeing of constituents.

A key implication of this research is therefore that a diversification of candidates is unlikely to emerge within Japanese society as long the facetime criterion underpinning ‘successful’ FPTP candidacy does not evolve to reflect a more realistic, and arguably, more ethical balance between personal life and professional life. As the primary intermediaries of electoral democracy, Japanese political parties must educate voters and local elites on new norms of constituency service so electoral success is not privatized onto the backs of individual candidates. Without interrogating the gendered norms underpinning electoral competition and constituency service in Japan, the demands of time-intensive constituency facetime paid to male networks and private clients, both the formal and informal institutional practices will continue apace to exacerbate women’s political exclusion from elected office.

For the last 70 odd years of multi-member, SNTV and mixed-PR electoral systems, we have consistent evidence of the ways in which electoral games founded upon informal patriarchal gender norms within the home and public office-seeking work to actively depress competition from women and thus actively subsidize male political monopolies over elected offices. We submit that the use by Japanese political parties of the best-loser provision virtually guarantees that male monopolies will continue within both the FPTP seats and the PR tier as well. By explicitly not harnessing the benefits of PR tier to balance off the narrow particularistic concerns of candidate-centred electoral competition, parties effectively close the window of opportunity for achieving greater representation of women, social diversity, and also national policy expertise. It is a lose-lose-lose for Japanese democracy on all three accounts. Combined with masculine-style constituency performances that services male homo social networks at the local level, the personal votes in FPTP constituencies combine with the best-loser provision to create toxic conditions for aspirant women candidates and even for women incumbents. Rather than provide an entry-point for newcomers, masculinized influence-peddling within the constituency combines with the best-loser provision to generate the *worst* of both worlds (FPTP and PR) for women’s political representation.

The elimination of the ‘best loser’ provision for the allocation of PR seats would be one tremendously important means of reducing the number of incumbents contesting a given FPTP seat. This would decrease the dependence of candidates upon the personal vote, and potentially lead to a diversification of practices of ‘constituency outreach and vote mobilization’ based on policy expertise and governing competence, rather than ritualistic appearances at summer festivals, neighbor meetings, daycare graduations, elderly citizens group AGMs, among other apolitical performances of ‘devotion’ to community. As policy expertise and a diversity of role models of FPTP candidacy and constituency outreach emerge, we might finally see a reduction in the singular importance placed on the long working hours invested in these nefariously gendered performances of “constituency facetime.”

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