

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

DIJ Social Science Study Group



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Maria Sachiko BAIER, University of Vienna

Haruno KATŌ, Ochanomizu University

Conservative contestations over gender equality and feminism: Discourses and practices

The introduction of the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society (1999) marked the beginning of a new wave of conservative opposition to local enactments of the law, and an intensified campaign against issues pursued by the Japanese women's movement in general. A central feature of this response was the concept of "gender free", originally introduced to eliminate discrimination in schools, but portrayed by conservatives as a "denial of femininity and masculinity" and targeted as a threat to traditional family values. This interpretation has been used as a platform to challenge gender equality policy, sexual education, and gender sensitive education. Resistance to change in gender equality norms is not new, but we now see a pronounced shift in its intensity, scope, and the interplay between diverse actors. In our presentation, we discuss the shift in two fields; media discourse and education. Firstly, Haruno Katō explores resonant frames of perception and rhetoric among various conservative players by applying the "frame analysis" method on conservative magazines and Internet blogs from 1998-2009. Secondly, Maria Sachiko Baier explores how gender democratic schooling in Tokyo was contested at the local sites of schools during the controversy on "gender free education" by discussing two case studies that include qualitative interviews with gender-equal supporters in politics and education.

Maria Sachiko Baier is a PhD-candidate at the University of Vienna / Political Science and was a PhD fellow at the DIJ from February-August 2010.

Haruno Katō is a PhD-candidate at Ochanomizu University / Sociology.

The DIJ Social Science Study Group is a forum for young scholars and Ph.D. candidates in the field of Social Sciences organized by Maren Godzik and Barbara Holthus. All are welcome to attend, but registration (godzik@dijtokyo.org) is appreciated.

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Jōchi Kioizaka Bldg. 2F, 7-1 Kioichō, Chiyoda-ku, Tōkyō 102-0094, Phone: 03-3222-5077.

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