

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

## DIJ Social Science Study Group



July 2, 2014, 18:30

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### ***Japan's Single Women and the Disembedding Economic System***

In the midst of its trilemma of declining fertility, hyper-aging society, and decreasing population, Japan has recently been witness to a cultural phenomenon called *konkatsu*, or “marriage hunting activities”, whereby an increasing number of single women (and men) proactively utilize events and networks to widen their communicative sphere and gain access to prospective spouses. On the other hand, casual gatherings of solidarity called *joshikai* (“girls-only gathering”), where unmarried and childless female friends gather for cathartic companionship, have become so conspicuous that a quick search for this term on a Japanese online search engine produces 948 million hits in 0.19 seconds.

It is my hypothesis that the *konkatsu* and *joshikai* public spheres are manifestations of the unwed, childless women’s agency within Japan’s contemporary sociopolitical, economic, and labor structures that are at once demanding and dismissive of these women. The new subjectivities apparent in such agency hint at an emerging shift in Japan’s cultural identity. Through analyses of government statistics, ethnographic research in *konkatsu* and *joshikai* sites, and forty in-depth interviews with unmarried women aged 25 to 34 who predominantly utilize both of these sites, I would like to shed light upon this micro-macro link that sits behind Japan’s current demographic crisis.

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The DIJ Social Science Study Group is organized by P. Holdgrün and C. Hommerich.  
All are welcome to attend, but registration ([hommerich@dijtokyo.org](mailto:hommerich@dijtokyo.org)) is appreciated.

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