

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ Tokyo)

DIJ Study Group



September 27, 2024, 6.00pm (JST)

Fathers Need Friends: Changing Paradigms of Sociality and Family Engagement among Japanese Men Involved in Parenting-Focused Groups

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The ideologies associated with fatherhood in Japan are changing rapidly in tandem with shifting beliefs about desirable family relationships and work-life balance. Japanese society has begun to expect that men's familial responsibilities will move beyond the basic provision of steady incomes and include active participation in domestic labor. While many Japanese fathers aspire to be strong presences in their children's lives, these men often cannot locate in their own emotionally distant fathers any role models for paternal involvement. Current fathers of young children therefore remain confused about what men's domestic engagement looks like. They ask themselves: What does it mean to be a father in contemporary Japan? How does one learn more about child care, especially when the overwhelming amount of parenting information targets mothers? Can fathers find inspiration outside their families, such as by forming supportive relationships with other parents?

In this talk, I explore how some Japanese fathers are pursuing answers to these questions. In doing so, I draw upon more than two years of ethnographic fieldwork among parenting-focused groups in the Greater Tokyo Area, and I consider what these answers might mean for families, the communities in which they live, and wider society.

Evan T. Koike is a Project Assistant Professor at the Tokyo College research institute at the University of Tokyo. He received his Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of British Columbia. His work examines shifting parenting ideologies and sexual identities in low-birthrate Japan.

About:

The DIJ Study Group is a forum for scholars from all disciplines conducting research on contemporary or modern Japan. The event is open to all.

This session is organized by Carolin Fleischer-Heininger.

Onsite only event:

For onsite participation, please register via email to fleischer-heininger@dijtokyo.org until Sept. 26, 2024.

Venue:

DIJ Tokyo: <https://www.dijtokyo.org/access/>