

Recreating Separate Spheres Across Not-So-Separate Worlds: Gender and Reeducation in Japan, Germany, and the USA after World War II

Conference at GHI PRO Berkeley, February 20 -21, 2020

Cosponsored by the GHI and University of Erlangen-Nürnberg

Conveners: Jana Aresin (Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg), Heike Paul (Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg), Claudia Roesch (GHI Washington)

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List of Participants:

Nikolai Blaumer (Thomas Mann House, Los Angeles)
Katharina Gerund (Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg)
Sonia Gomez (University of Chicago)
Mire Koikari (University of Hawai'i)
Akino Oshiro (Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg)
Tomoyuki Sasaki (William & Mary College)
Michiko Takeuchi (California State University, Long Beach)
Kathryn Tolbert (Washington Post, Bethesda MD)

Soon after the end of World War II, American occupation forces began to reeducate and democratize the former enemy nations Germany and Japan in order to turn them into allies in the emerging Cold War. Many reeducation campaigns were directed towards women, turning them into democratic citizens at a time when gender norms within the United States underwent a transformation process that moved especially white middle-class women *away* from breadwinning jobs and the public sphere into a suburban domesticity.

In order to trace these transformations and their inherent paradoxes, the two-day workshop „Recreating Separate Spheres Across Not-So-Separate Worlds: Gender and Reeducation in Japan, Germany, and the USA after World War II“ took place at the GHI Pacific Regional Office on the UC Berkeley campus from February 20 to 21, 2020. The conference revisited reeducation programs to investigate the underlying policies through

the lens of gender norms and in a comparative perspective. The workshop also focused on different medias of circulation such as magazines, films, and literature.

In the first presentation, MIRE KOIKARI discussed different versions of new domestic lifestyles in the English language *Okinawa Graphic* magazine. The magazine connected Okinawan readers with Okinawa diaspora communities in the United States, Hawaii, Latin America and the Japanese mainland. Koikari discussed a home story of the American high commander and his wife, reports of school lunches that switched from a rice based to a wheat and milk based diet, and features on the Japanese Empress Michiko to demonstrate how images of domesticity strengthened ties to both U.S. occupation forces and mainland Japanese culture. Meanwhile cover photos and advertisements in the magazine showed women in traditional Okinawan dress enjoying and employing modern appliances.

Following Koikari, JANA ARESIN presented her on-going dissertation project on women's gender norms in American and Japanese women's magazines. She divided women's representations in these magazines into four archetypical female roles as workers, political activists, consumers, and educators. Women as workers were young women before marriage, while married mothers assumed the role of educators for democracy in their nuclear families. The focus in the magazines, however, was on the role of women as consumers, claiming that women would gain political power through consumerism by learning how to handle money and control their own and their family's finances. Thus, the magazines advocated homemaking as a profession and promoted the concept of modern domesticity that assigned women the role as homemaker and educator in a compassionate marriage while their husbands fulfilled the role of single breadwinner.

In contrast to Aresin, MICHIKO TAKEUCHI focused on transnational networks of working women in Japan and the U.S. Tracing the similarities between postwar Japanese

declarations on women's work and American communist women's demands for working women in the interwar period, she was able to recreate networks of Japanese and American social reformers since the interwar period. Japanese women activists were especially active in the International Labor Organization and formed networks with international reformers there. The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in Tokyo became a networking hub to bring US reformers like Jane Addams, Margaret Sanger or Alice Paul to Japan. Some of these activists, who visited and worked with Japanese feminists in the interwar period, later became involved with reconstruction and NGOs in postwar Germany.

Switching the focus towards male gender norms in postwar Japan, TOMOYUKI SASAKI presented his research on the role of the Japanese army in the postwar society. He showed that the army acted as an agent of the Japanese welfare state as it offered job opportunities for unemployed and uneducated men in rural areas who were left behind by Japan's postwar urban industrial boom. By bringing men from the overpopulated Kyushu to the underpopulated Hokkaido island, the Japanese army acted as an agent of local welfare and development. On Hokkaido, enlisted men engaged in civil engineering projects, provided fire stations, disaster relief and helped farmers who had lost sons with the harvest. Therefore, the army, perhaps inadvertently, became a well-appreciated civil society institution in postwar Japan. At the same, these politics of displacement also produced other effects and led to tensions between soldiers and the local population.

In the last presentation of the first day, HEIKE PAUL moved to postwar Germany and the negotiations of women's role and domesticity there. She investigated postwar literary work by progressive author Irmgard Keun, who had praised the "New Woman" in the late Weimar Republic in her best-known novels and spent the war years in exile. Her postwar short story "Nur noch Frauen" (1954), which was set in a dystopian landscape where only

women and one man had survived, emphasized feelings of alienation on the part of feminists in the early postwar Germany. In an economy of a scarcity – also of men – the female majority is not liberated and emancipated from both, Nazis and men, but still revolves around men as necessary partners in reproduction. An interpretation of the story suggests that Keun criticizes how women covered up their complicity in the Nazi state by retreating to domestic lifestyles and to their kitchens in post war West-German society, a space which the Nazi regime had also propagated as the right place for women. Paul then contrasts this form of domesticity as retreat to the US version of domesticity epitomized in Richard Nixon's kitchen debate with Nikita Khrushchev and Hollywood films such as *Pillow Talk* with Doris Day and Rock Hudson. She concluded that the American version of domesticity also, to some extent, followed the logic of reeducation through informal social change and popular culture that promised access to modern consumer goods and romantic happiness.

On the second day, SONIA GOMEZ presented her findings on gender norms in U.S. immigration policies towards Japan. In the first part of her presentation, she demonstrated that the Gentlemen's Agreement (1908) between Japan and the U.S. excluded Japanese men from immigrating to the US but allowed Japanese women to enter, if they came as wives and not as workers. This gave way to the figure of the Japanese picture bride, who was married to a Japanese-American man in the US who had only seen her picture – and vice versa. In the second part of the talk, Gomez argued that marriage continued to be a gateway to immigration for Japanese women in the post war era with the GI Bride Act (1948), which was originally intended for service men to bring home their European brides. While the act extended the right of military men to marry whomever they wanted including non-American women, Japanese women only gained access to immigration and American citizenship

through marriage and domesticity. Bridal schools by the Red Cross and the YWCA taught Japanese women American styles of homemaking, fashion, and cosmetics along with English, Civics and Government and fostered the concept of citizenship through domesticity. In the end, this immigration policy meant that in both periods far more Japanese women were able to immigrate to the US than men.

Following Gomez's presentation, the documentary film *Fall Seven Times, Get Up Eight – The Japanese War Brides* introduced three Japanese women, who had married US service men, and their adult daughters. After the film, one of its directors KATHRYN TOLBERT presented her findings from oral history interviews with further military brides that did not feature in the film. She showed that Japanese women had found themselves in-between the American racial lines, especially when they married African American men or lived in the Jim Crow South. Many women ended up in unstable marriages and their husbands eventually left them. Often, they had married men from rural and lower class backgrounds and were isolated from other Japanese immigrants in rural farm communities, where their wishes to partake in an American consumer lifestyle were not fulfilled. Nevertheless, they continued to stay and raise their children as American citizens.

During lunch break, three reeducation films from 1948 to 1952 aimed at German audiences were screened. The first advertised the rationality of the modern kitchen, the second depicted the advantages that electricity had for a Bavarian farmwoman and her husband, the third taught about club life and fundraising by showing how a local women's club in Baden-Württemberg raised money to open a day care center. In her comments on the films, HEIKE PAUL pointed out that these films were part of the second stage of reeducation that did not show cities in rubble or the atrocities of concentration camps

anymore but instead focused on modernization and served to advertise American lifestyles in Germany.

In the final discussions, the question of terminology was raised as German and American sources pertaining to Germany used the term “reeducation” in English or the more negatively connoted *Umerziehung* in German. Sources referring to Japan only used the term “democratization”. This led to the observation that reeducation programs made no references to prewar experiences with democracy in either Japan or Weimar Germany. The concept of *Stunde Null* (Zero Hour) after the German capitulation meant a total break from the past. Also the Weimar Republic was remembered as unstable with regards to the political system and especially with regards to the permissiveness of fluid gender and sexual norms.

Overall, the different presentations referred to three recurring themes: the postwar ideal of domesticity and its function in different settings, the modernization of homes through consumer goods, and women’s participation in civil society. For the U.S. context, the concept of modern domesticity was tied to the nuclear family and the democratic industrial society. In the German context, a similar form of domesticity resonated with backwardness of a different kind and represented a retreat from political participation and thus taking responsibility for Nazi crimes. In Japan, the teaching of domesticity in bridal schools, magazines or advertisement prepared women for immigration and connected rural and marginalized communities to the rapid industrialization of urban Japanese society. The merit of the workshop was that it brought together and helped distinguish different concepts of gender norms and domesticity in a transnational comparison. It went beyond both German historiography, which depicts the postwar years as a conservative and inward looking era, and the American historiography that discusses modern domesticity as the home front

response to Cold War anxieties. The conference showed that American domesticity had transnational implications beyond the famous Nixon-Khrushchev kitchen debate. It promised women in postwar Germany and Japan that a domestic lifestyle would grant them modernization and partaking in consumerism. That would make their lives easier, their husbands happier and grant them civic participation. This was the biggest promise that American reeducation campaigns could make within the Cold War context.

Program:

February 20, 2020

8.30 a.m. Opening & Welcome by the Organizers: Claudia Roesch (GHI), Jana Aresin and Heike Paul (Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg)

9.00 – 10.15 a.m.

Chair: Katharina Gerund (Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Mire Koikari (University of Hawai'i): Re-visualizing Okinawa: Gender, Culture, and the Cold War in The Okinawa Graphic

Coffee Break

10.30 – 11.45 a.m.

Chair: Claudia Roesch (GHI Washington)

Jana Aresin (Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg): Consumers, Workers, Democratic Citizens? Renegotiation of Women's Roles in US and Japanese Women's Magazines, 1945-1960

Coffee Break

Noon – 1.15 p.m.

Chair: Akino Oshiro (Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Michiko Takeuchi (California State University): The International Women's Labor Movement and the US Occupation Liberation Policies on Japanese Women

Lunch Break

2.30 – 3.45 p.m.

Chair: Jana Aresin (University of Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Tomoyuki Sasaki (William & Mary): An Army for the People: Democratization and Militarization in Postwar Japan

Coffee Break

4.00 – 5.15 p.m.

Chair: Claudia Roesch (GHI Washington)
Heike Paul (Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg): Women with(out) Men:
Thoughts on the Construction of German Postwar Femininity

5.15 – 6.00 p.m. Shop Talk and Info Session on Transatlantic Cooperation with Nikolai
Blaumer (Thomas Mann House), Claudia Roesch (GHI), and Katharina Gerund (Friedrich-
Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg)

February 21, 2020

10.00 – 11.15 a.m.

Chair: Jana Aresin (Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg)
Sonia Gomez (University of Chicago): “Goodwill Ambassadors”: Domesticity and Citizenship
in the Post-World War II Making of Japanese War Brides

Coffee Break

11.30 a.m.

Chair: Heike Paul (Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg)
Film Screening + Discussion with director Kathryn Tolbert
Fall Seven Times, Get Up Eight – The Japanese War Brides

12.30 p.m. Brown Bag Meeting: US-Reeducation Films in Germany (Screening + comments
by Heike Paul)

2.00 p.m. Closing Remarks