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THE GRASS-ROOTS CONSERVATIVE AGAINST GENDER EQUALITY: THE CASE STUDY OF ANTIFEMINISM LOCAL MOVEMENT IN JAPAN

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Abstract

Conservative movements are intensifying advertisement in fierce conflict with progressive social movements in the contemporary Japanese society. In particular, the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform has taken action in terms of revisionism since late 1990s. Conservative groups have held protest movements against gender equality since early 2000, which resulted in drastic impact on the government. These conservative movements have received attention as new grass-roots conservative movements. Oguma and Ueno (2003) suggested that the contemporary conservatives are similar to civil movements by analyzing the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform.

However, field research studies of these movements, especially the protest movements against gender equality have not followed after Oguma and Ueno. It is still an open question how the grass-roots conservative movements against gender equality gain support from people in grass-roots. In this paper, I aimed to develop discussion of the grass-roots conservative movements and to show what makes people get involved in the movements against gender equality. From the aspect of gender, I analyzed a case of a civil association against gender equality in local city in Japan.

Through the analysis and discussion, I showed that the conservative civil association mobilizes human resources from various conservative and religious association to extend their social and political influence and to campaign for increasing public awareness. Moreover, I found that the conservative group appeals the primitive consciousness of female participants by focusing on the topic of "family."

Key words: conservative movement; grass-roots; antifeminism movement; gender equality; backlash

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1. Introduction

In Japanese society, various social movements such as the environmental movement, anti-nuclear power plant movement, consumer movement, or feminism movement have held main positions as a subject of study. However, studies of conservative or right-wing movements have not made much progress. This is the same in the United States, where conservative studies had been conducted mainly in the field of historical science or politics. However, in light of the recent trends of the spread of the Tea Party movement and the increasing influence of the conservative wing, Gross and other researchers (2011) claim that sociological knowledge of such movements has still not been sufficiently constructed.

Although there are historical studies of "*Eirei ni kotaeru kai* (Society for Honoring the Glorious War Dead)" aimed to mold public opinion for the realization of state support for *Yasukuni-Jinja* Shrine in the 1980s (edited by Yamaguchi and Matsuo, 1981), in the field of sociology, studies of the conservative movement have not been conducted except for the study of the Japanese right-wing by Hanji Kinoshita (1951).

Conservative movements gaining momentum from the 1990s onwards changed such academic situations. In particular, the "Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform" (*Atarashii rekishi kyokasyo wo tsukuru kai* hereinafter, referred to as the *Tsukuru kai*) appeared in the late 1990s and campaigned for the creation and selection of history and civics textbooks based on historical revisionism. Additionally, in the early 2000s, many conservative organizations began movements against the Basic Law for Gender Equal Society across the country[1], exerting a social and political influence that was enough to change administrative measures.

Eiji Oguma and Yoko Ueno (2003), who conducted an analysis on *Tsukuru kai*, pointed out that the newly-created grass-roots conservatives were clearly different from the traditional ones due to their network-type structure and their members proclaiming themselves "ordinary citizens."

However, despite the magnitude of the social implications and academic significance of a new conservative movement, empirical studies on case studies of grass-roots conservative movements have not made progress after Oguma and Ueno.

In this paper, I aimed to reveal the reality of the conservative movement by analyzing a case study of an unresearched movement against gender equality, and aimed to show what makes people get involved in these movements. I analyzed a case of a civil group against gender equality, Association A, in Ehime Prefecture (hereinafter 'the Association'). Data for the analysis are from participant observation at the Association and from semi-structured interviews

[1] Typically, movements against "gender-free" in the context of feminism is referred to as "backlash," which means "rebound" or "rocking back," a concept used by American journalist S. Faludi to show the situation of antifeminism in politics or society (Faludi 1998). However, I refer to this as "a movement against gender equality" to consider neutrality and to focus on the level of the movement.

conducted to 23 members (18 females and 5 males) from 2008 May to 2011 March, as well as newsletter articles.

2. Preceding Studies and Problem Identification

2.1. Grass-roots Conservative Movement

The Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (*Tsukuru kai*) drew attention as a new conservative movement in contemporary society. *Tsukuru kai*, a civil group organized in 1997, carries on nationwide campaigns for creating and adopting junior-high school history and civics textbooks based on historical revisionism. Although the adoption rate as of 2009 was 1.6%[2], *Tsukuru kai*'s claims that denied the Nanjing Massacre and the presence of 'military comfort women' provoked public controversy regarding Japan's wartime responsibilities. At present, *Tsukuru kai* and the *Nihon Kyoiku saisei kikou* (Educational Renaissance Institution of Japan) – an organization divided from *Tsukuru kai* – are both in operation. Eiji Oguma (Oguma and Ueno, 2003) revealed how contemporary conservative movements have transformed through the *Tsukuru kai*. Based on Ueno's research at the *Fumi no Kai* (the History Society) in the Kanagawa branch of the *Tsukuru kai* (Oguma and Ueno, 2003), he detailed the novelty of the *Tsukuru kai*. First, he referred to the characteristics of the *Tsukuru kai*'s activities: (1) emphasis on voluntary participation, (2) "loose union" without fixed posts or hierarchical relations, (3) "semi-independent attitude" with respect to an upper organization, (4) the use of the Internet as communication tool, and (5) movements by "ordinary people" who keep their distance from existing political parties.

Second is the mentality of the members. *Tsukuru kai*'s successful campaigning across the nation is largely owed to backing from those who had not been involved in conservative activities in the past. Ueno's research stated that a few elderly male war veterans were members, but that they were a minority. Those who actually lead *Fumi no Kai*'s activities are those who do not have a strong sense of awareness towards the Emperor or the imperial family, who also do not have a strong conservative mentality. Though they do not have a single common denotation to represent themselves, they share a feeling of disgust for the left-wing, the Asahi newspaper, or government bureaucrats. Members of *Tsukuru kai* confirm to themselves that they are not a minority for holding these opinions, but are rather ordinary people through participation in the community.

Tsukuru kai, which possess characteristics that are common to those of civil movements, can be distinguished from traditional conservative movements which are performed based on

[2] The Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, 2009 "Society made statement on adoption result. History textbook of the Society sold over 20.000 volumes! Withdraw an action for copyright from a broader perspective." "The Society Website News Vol. 264" (acquired on Sep. 26, 2012), http://www.tsukurukai.com/01_top_news/file_news/news_264.html).

"supporting the structure of a local community" (Oguma and Ueno, 2003: 3) and defined as "urban populism supported by individuals separated from a community." (Oguma and Ueno, 2003: 3)

2.2. Movement against Gender Equality by Conservative Organizations

From around the year 2000, movements against gender equality by conservative organizations including *Tsukuru kai* became tangible. The Basic Law for Gender Equal Society established in 1999 was a milestone in Japanese affirmative action for females. Mari Osawa, one of the authors of the Law, cites "liberation from gender" and "mainstreaming of gender" as its significance. In the Act, liberation from gender (gender-free) corresponds to respect for human rights irrespective of gender (Article 3 of the Act) and unbiased influence of social systems or customs on social activities of people (Article 4 of the Act), and mainstreaming of gender corresponds to the analysis and implementation of measures from a gender-equal viewpoint (Osawa, 2002: 3). Moreover, the Law stipulates that local governments must develop and implement "measures based on those of the nation" (Article 9). In response to that, many local governments have established the ordinance of gender equality.

Claiming that gender equality or gender-free ideals deny the differences between men and women[3], the movement against gender equality advocates "masculinity and femininity" and "the value of the family." Campaigning involved major media outlets such as "*Seiron*," "*Shokun*!" and the "*Sankei* newspaper"[4], which ignited vigorous debates particularly over the gender-equal administration of local governments. At first, the campaigners tried to stop the establishment of an ordinance of gender equality in cooperation with local assembly members, but gradually, they changed their strategy to active involvement in administrative affairs[5]; for example, the enactment of an ordinance containing an article that accepts the gender differences based on essentialism (Ube city, Yamaguchi) or the establishment of an advisory panel including many experts who are against gender equality as members (Arakawa ward, Tokyo).

Preceding studies clarified the spreading the movement against gender equality by identifying groups and individuals. *Tsukuru kai* and the Japan Conference (*Nihon kaigi*), the largest conservative organization in Japan, are cited as such groups (Ito 2003, Mitsui 2004, Ida 2006). Besides them, the Shinto Association of Spiritual Leadership, the *Shinsei bukkyo kyodan*, the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (*Toitsu kyokai*), and other right-wing

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[3] "'Masculinity,' 'femininity,' and 'housewife' are embraced. Ube City enacts the common ordinance" "*Nihon jijihyoron*" (the issue of July 5, 2002). "*Nihon jijihyoron*" is a newspaper issued by an affiliated publishing house of a right-wing religious group, *Shinsei bukkyo kyodan*, that is engaged in campaigning against gender equality.

[4] Conservative media published many articles of conservative intellectuals, such as "gender equality is an extremely special and radical idea that denies gender differences and regards men and women as a homogeneous being" (Yagi, 2001: 199) or "an unparalleled bad law that destroys Japanese cultures and families" (Hayashi, 2002: 255).

[5] For the case of gender equality administration and the campaign against it of Ube City, refer to Hisako Koshiba (2008), and for the case of Arakawa Ward of Tokyo, refer to Chang Hangneon (2005).

religious organizations have also been raised (Ida 2006). The movement against gender equality is conducted based on cross-sectional networks of these conservative groups (Funabashi 2007).

As for individual advocates, it is presumed that there are two main trends pertaining to them. First, those who support patriarchal family based on gender roles and the "*traditional* conservative ideals that lead to familism in the pre-war era" (Ito 2003: 15). The other is "those who want to confirm that their ideas are ordinary" (Oguma and Ueno 2003) as well as those who regard gender equality as a concept that denies "an ordinary way of living" (Ito 2003, Kitada 2005)[6].

2.3. Problem Identification

In this paper, I presented the following three points as an important issue for the preceding studies.

The first is the necessity to introduce gender viewpoint in conservative movement studies. As is evident from the fact that a majority of participants of *Tsukuru kai* are men (Oguma and Ueno 2003), the main supporting members of conservatism or the conservative movement are perceived to be male intellectuals and participants. In the movement against gender equality, however, more than a few women proclaiming themselves as "ordinary housewives" have been participating (Ehara 2007, Koshiba 2008), so gender viewpoint is required in analyzing the mentality or claims of group participants.

The second is that the 'grass-roots' aspect of the contemporary conservative movements have not been fully understood in the preceding studies. The preceding studies cited Oguma's argument (Oguma and Ueno 2003) since *Tsukuru kai* had also participated in the movement against gender equality. However, only remarks on major conservative media outlets or nationwide organizations like the Japan Conference (*Nihon kaigi*) have been targets for studies[7], which may have caused a discrepancy between the studies' theoretical framework and their targets. For properly understanding the current facet of the movement, researching an actual organization or participants of grass-roots activities is necessary.

The last is refinement of the grass-roots movement studies. Ueno classified the members of *Tsukuru kai* into the following three types (Oguma and Ueno 2003): (1) "a silent conservative citizen" who participates in *Tsukuru kai* to support but not help the management, (2) "a pro-civil movement" that plans and manages activities as well as participates in other political activities including the rescue of abduction victims or campaigns against the *Fufu bessei* (the retention of former surnames after marriage), and (3) "the war generation," who has experienced WWII and holds a traditional and conservative way of thinking. This classification is based on two criteria,

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[6] Besides that, it is believed that there are traditional intellectuals on the liberal side who criticize government involvement in personal areas such as families or homes (Ito, 2003).

[7] Yamaguchi, Saito, and Ogiue conducted interview survey of campaigners against gender equality (2012). However, the interview targets were the head of an anti-gender equality movement group in a local area and a journalist, not those who proclaim themselves as "ordinary people" or have no resources for announcing their opinions.

involvement level and member thought processes, and a consistent analysis of the members of *Tsukuru kai* remains uninvestigated.

Furthermore, just as Oguma said in his paper (Oguma and Ueno 2003), it is necessary to look at the relationships between grass-roots movements and other organizations. On this point, the preceding studies pointed out the involvement of multiple organizations in the movement against gender equality, which gives rise to the consideration that one can observe inter-organizational relationships.

Based on the points mentioned above, I examine Association A, a citizens' group that is active in Ehime Prefecture from a stance of anti-gender equality, as the example for this paper. Through analysis of its newsletter, participant observation at a lecture given by Association A, and interviews with the members, I clarified how the grass-roots conservative movement against gender equality gained support from the grass-roots citizens that claim to be "the ordinary person."

Analysis and considerations were conducted using the civil movement network structure presented by Koichi Hasegawa (1991). Hasegawa considered how domestic public opinion of anti-nuclear power was formed after the Chernobyl catastrophe, focusing on the networking of citizens' groups.

In Japan, movements against nuclear power before the Chernobyl incident were usually limited to areas scheduled for nuclear power plants and their neighborhoods, because negotiation opportunities that were institutionally available for citizens were limited to talks on land acquisition or fishery rights compensations, so the main activists of movements were farmers or fishermen at the areas scheduled for nuclear power plants.

However, this style of movement changed after the incident at Chernobyl occurred. Anti-nuclear power movements involving women caring for children began in large urban areas, which formed networks with support groups in local areas. Hasegawa revealed that there were three types of networking in the citizens' anti-nuclear movement group: (1) network structure within the group, (2) personal network as an activist, and (3) inter-group networking.

Furthermore, as for (1) network structure within the group, he classified the participants of the movement into four types based on the activity participation level: (1) the "constitutive acting group," who never fails to participate in regular activities together with the "leader group," (2) the "peripheral acting group," who irregularly takes part only in big meetings or campaigns for collecting signatures, (3) the "active advocate group" who receives newsletters but only provides financial support such as a membership fee or donations, and (4) the "peripheral advocate group," who irregularly takes part in activities such as meetings, campaigns for collecting signatures, or donations. Hasegawa stated that public opinion against nuclear power plants has been formed through the mutual influence of movement networks, experts, and mass media.

This Hasegawa model classifies the participants of movements based on their activity involvement level. Therefore, by adopting this model, we can enable to visualization of a group

who concretely supports the movement against gender equality, whose participants are thought to be divided into two trends[8].

3. Movements against Gender Equality in Ehime Prefecture

3.1. Gender Equal Administration as the Background

Ehime Prefecture is one of the districts where the anti-gender equality movement has been very actively conducted, and particularly, fierce discussions concerning the enactment of the ordinance were developed in Matsuyama City. With respect to the ordinance for gender equality in Matsuyama City, which was enacted in 2002, the city submitted a partial amendment to the city assembly in September 2003, which drew citizens' attention.

The contents of the amendment were (1) adoption of Japanese translations instead of Katakana English for words such as "gender" or "sexual harassment," and (2) change of description concerning respect for sexuality and reproduction, from "decision by a woman" to "mutual will of man and woman." The (1) amendment proposed that the term "gender" should be replaced by "stereotyped perception of gender roles." Those who opposed the amendment claimed that the translation may limit the original meaning of "gender," and may dilute the woman's viewpoint of reproductive health/rights. Moreover, it was regarded as a problem that the amendment submission process by the city was unclear while the 2002 ordinance was enacted through an open process including a public hearing[9].

The amendment deliberations at the city assembly became complicated, but after invitations of citizen witnesses both for and against it, as well as a series of discussions[10], a further amended bill submitted by an LDP city assembly member was passed in December 2003. As a result, the Katakana English was adopted but the description concerning sexuality and reproduction was changed to "deepening mutual understanding." The ordinance of Matsuyama City is a good example of the woman's perspective for reproductive health/rights being diluted by an amendment. As described above, campaigning against gender equality has gained enough power to amend a municipal ordinance regarding gender equality.

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[8] It is necessary to examine whether a right-wing or conservative campaign can be regarded as a social movement. According to K. M. Blee and K. A Creasap (2010), however, researchers who select conservative movements as a subject of research have been increasing in recent years, and the concept and analysis method that have been developed in the social movement theory so far – framing, political opportunity structure, collective identity, etc. – effectively function in the studies of conservative movement as well.

[9] "Impact of the Amendment Bill of Gender Equality Ordinance of Matsuyama City" "Ehime Newspaper" (Sep. 30, 2003).

[10] They were the first continuous deliberations of an ordinance bill at the Matsuyama city assembly since 1947 when the oldest record can be confirmed ("Continuous deliberations of 2 bills including childcare conducted in the plenary assembly of Matsuyama City" "Ehime Newspaper of Oct. 3, 2003"), and summoning of witness was also the first time after the system was created in 1991 ("Amendment bill of gender equality ordinance, the first witness summoned to the Matsuyama city assembly welfare committee" "Ehime Newspaper of Oct. 21, 2003"). This shows how the ordinance amendment issue of Matsuyama City was complicated then.

3.2. Formation of Association A and its Activities

In 2004, after the amendment of the ordinance for gender equality was passed, Association A, a citizens' group that opposes gender equality, was formed in Matsuyama. Its main activities include lectures (conducted annually, with approximately 150 participants), seminars (conducted semi-monthly, with approximately 10 participants), and the publication of the "*Nadeshiko* Report" newsletter (six reports a year). Its membership is 764 as of 2011, and central members for its start-up are volunteers who observed the deliberations on the partial amendment of the ordinance at the city assembly.

Association A tried to influence a variety of organizations to acquire membership, as will be described later, but it does not have an upper-level organization. The present head of the Association, Y (a woman in her 50s), claims that "it is because we want to avoid being colored by a specific organization, in order to make ours open to all women."

Association A, which does not have influence on a national level, has been using resources accumulated through past conservative movements. It has gathered the attention of citizens by inviting conservative intellectuals such as Hidetsugu Yagi, Shiro Takahashi, and Yuko Sakurai, as well as politicians such as Eriko Yamatani to its seminars, and appealed the validity of its claims by reprinting articles of such guests in its newsletters, as well through information of Ehime prefecture and member postings.

In addition to the activities to raise awareness such as seminars, Association A, which was established after the amendment was passed, has utilized political opportunities. They interviewed an Ehime Prefectural government official regarding the gender equality policy in August 2005 (*Nadeshiko* Report Vol. 7, 2005). In the following year, they held a seminar and invited nine LDP prefectural assembly members along with journalist Yuko Sakurai (*Nadeshiko* Report Vol. 9, 2006), and in September 2007, the Association submitted a suggestion to the Community Development with Citizens Division of Matsuyama City (*Nadeshiko* Report Vol. 19, 2006).

Most noteworthy is Association A's submission of Petition No. 35, or the "Demand to clarify the basic principle regarding operations of the Matsuyama City ordinance of gender equality promotion." This petition was submitted to Matsuyama City by seven members of the Association in December 2007, with cooperation from three city assembly members. It includes items such as "physical and mental differences between men and women should be considered" and "housewives' contribution to society should be appreciated and supported." Another item stated that "study or research on gender studies or women's studies should not be promoted," which drew the attention of researchers in such fields[11]. This petition was adopted at the plenary meeting after one member of the Association was summoned as a witness (December 17, 2007).

[11] As for this petition, the Association of Gender Law announced "a statement saying that they concern about some local municipalities' movements that may impede the development of gender equality society." (Feb. 7, 2008)

3.3. Association A's Arguments of Issues on Gender Equality

Association A cites six points as grounding for their opposition of gender equality: (1) respect for masculinity and femininity, (2) emphasis on the family ties, (3) reviewing self-determinations concerning sexuality, (4) sex education that takes children's development into account, (5) guarantee of freedom of expression, and (6) respect for traditional culture (*Nadeshiko* Report Vol. 1, 2004).

All of them reflect criticism of gender-free perspectives in media –that gender-free ideals deny gender differences like masculinity and femininity, and destroy the family. Other criticisms included: reproductive health/rights as well as sex education encourage free sex, terms such as "*shujin* (head of family)" or "*kanai* (wife)" may become criticized as discriminatory words, and traditional culture such as *Hina-matsuri* (Girls' Day) or *Koinobori* (carp streamers displayed on Boys' Day) will be destroyed. Opinions against gender equality were already seen on conservative media in 2004 when Association A was formed, and they incorporated those opinions as their claims.

On the other hand, claims by Association A include some contents that differ from the criticism of gender free on a nation level media. The reason for establishing Association A was referred to in the article titled "Toward a Society Where Both Men and Women are **Happy**" in the first issue (emphasis made by the author; the same shall apply hereinafter). It started when they held a **simple doubt** regarding whether the idea of gender equality/gender-free, which intends to eliminate gender characteristics and moreover even tries to deny Girls' Festival and Boys' Festival or old tales, can truly make people and society **happy**. They appealed for member recruitment in an early newsletter, saying that "in current society, where long-lasting traditions are vanishing from our lives, the last bastions are 'family' and 'children.' Therefore, the cooperation from many citizens is vital for protecting these bastions against gender-free" (*Nadeshiko* Report Vol. 2, 2004). Also, they criticized gender equality in an article inVol. 13 (2006) titled "Following the Footsteps of Our Activities in the Past Two Years," saying "if it brings **disharmony**, resistance, conflict between generations, or confusion of values to **our real society**, its value can be questioned."

These descriptions mean that Association A raises the issue of gender equality in a different way from that of major conservative media or organizations. The first is that they regard gender equality as a family matter, as shown in the phrasing advocating the protection of the family and children against gender-free. The second is their claim that gender equality is not in accordance with personal happiness or real life. In other words, Association A offered criticism of gender equality from a viewpoint closer to that of individual life consciousness, rather than on a level of social systems or structures.

4. Membership Process of Association A

4.1. Overview of Interviewees

How is Association A's claims of criticizing gender equality on the level of individuals' lives related to the membership process? I aimed to reveal the particulars through interviews with the members.

The survey was conducted on 23 people (18 women and 5 men), and all of them were introduced by the present head of the Association, Y (woman in her 50s). Since Association A is an organization centered on women, I asked Y to introduce as many female members to me as possible at the time of research.

All of the informants, except two, also belonged to another organization: Japan Conference (8), Institute of Moralogy (4), *Tsukuru kai*, Association for Learning Japanese History (ALJH), *Makuya*, *Seicho no Ie*, the Ehime *Sukuu kai* for Victims Abducted by North Korea (2 for each), *Shinsei Bukkyo Kyodan*, *Jinja-cho*, *Shi-yu* society, and a volunteer group (1 for each). Eleven informants belonged to two or more organizations besides Association A. (For characteristics of the informants quoted in the description, see Table 1.)

The basic attributes of the informants showed that 22 of these individuals were in their 50s or older, and 10 women answered as "housewife" to the question regarding their occupation (free writing), which was the majority answer. As for the question regarding educational backgrounds, 11 individuals answered that they attended a four-year university or higher; notably, all of the five men involved had academic backgrounds of a four-year university or higher.

Although I received an answer from Y stating that the interview results concerning age and

Table 1.
Basic attributes of the respondents (extract)

	Sex	Age	Occupation	Final Academic	Group affiliation background
B	M	50s	Teacher	4yr university	Japan Conference, *Tsukuru kai*
C	M	70s	Retired	Graduate school	None
D	F	60s	Self-employed	4ry university	Japan Conference, *Shinsei Bukkyo Kyodan*
E	F	50s	Housewife	4yr university	Japan Conference, *Tsukuru kai*, *Shi-yu* society
F	F	70s	Unemployed	4yr university	*Seicho no ie*
G	F	50s	Farmer	High school	Volunteer group
H	F	30s	Housewife	4yr university	Japan Conference
J	F	50s	Caretaker	Junior college	None
K	F	70s	Farmer	High school	Institute of Moralogy
L	F	50s	Self-employed	High school	Institute of Moralogy
M	F	60s	Housewife	High school	*Seicho no ie, Sukuu-kai* Ehime
N	F	60s	Caretaker	High school	*Makuya*
O	F	70s	Housewife	Technical school	*Makuya*
P	F	60s	Housewife	Junior college	Institute of Moralogy, ALJH
Y	F	50s	Self-employed	N/A	Japan Conference, *Tsukuru kai*, *Sukuu-kai* Ehime, etc.

group affiliation approximately coincide with the tendency of the entire Association, any data excepting those presented in this paper is yet to be obtained. Because the informants were introduced through Y's personal network, they were dominated by middle-aged and senior women.

The classification of the informants using the Hasegawa model (1991) mentioned above showed results as follows: 1 individual belonged to "leader group", 2 to the "constitutive acting group", 2 to the "peripheral acting group", 17 to the "active advocate group," and 0 to the "peripheral advocate group."[12] The title of each informant is that as of 2011.

4.2. Leader Group/ Constitutive Acting Group

The present head, Y (woman in her 50s), is the central person in Association A and is involved in all activities of the Association, from seminar planning to creation and sending out of newsletters. During her stay abroad, she was inspired by foreign friends who were proud of their country, and she read the books of Yoshinori Kobayashi after coming back to Japan. Those experiences triggered her to start taking part in conservative groups, including the Japan Conference, *Seicho-no-ie*, and *Tsukuru kai*. Y established Association A along with B, who is described below. They met each other at *Tsukuru kai*.

The constitutive acting group includes B (a man in his 50s) and C (a man in his 70s). B, a founder as well as the manager of Association A, is primarily active at *Tsukuru kai*, and has been working as a lecturer at various organizations in addition to his activities at *Tsukuru kai*, such as the ALJH, the Institute of Moralogy, the *Shinto seinen kai*, the "Association of People of Okayama Prefecture who Guard the Imperial Court."

Although B's primary concern is history education, he decided to participate in Association A because he considers gender issues as an issue that is directly related to everyone. He says that the number of people concerned over the issue of history textbooks are limited because it is an issue in school education, and for a majority of people, it feels like watching from the ground while two planes, and enemy and an ally, fight. In contrast, gender issues can be likened to a "ground battle" because it is "an issue related to all sorts of people."

C, who has had managerial experience, is in charge of giving lectures or explanations to members regarding administrative or political trends. He immediately decided to join Association A when Y, the present leader, visited him at his workplace. C is an ongoing subscriber of the conservative magazine "*Seiron*," and knew the terms "gender" and "gender-free" from the magazine. He confessed that he was spurred on after seeing a number of books on gender studies displayed on the shelf of a bookstore which made him feel "weird."

[12] As for the fact of non-existence of the peripheral advocate group, the following points can be given as reasons: (1) all of the members pay a fee because Association A adopts a membership fee system, and (2) Y excluded members whose involvement level is low from the interview targets.

4.3. Peripheral Acting Group

D (a woman in her 60s) and E (a woman in her 50s) fell into the peripheral acting group. Both of them were responsible for accounting before, and are currently irregularly taking part in activities.

D belongs to *Shinsei bukkyo kyodan*, in which she was in charge of home-visit counseling for believers for a long period of time. In relation to this, when the issue of partial amendment of the ordinance arose, as mentioned above, she was asked to accept to be a witness on the supporting side. She studied about "gender-free" by herself using materials provided from *Shinsei bukkyo kyodan*. D got to know the present head Y during this process, and got involved in the establishment of Association A.

E, just like B, holds a strong concern over issues in history education. She started studying Japanese history on her own in the 1980s, after having an argument on issues in history education[13] with a Korean student. "Realizing that Japan was not as bad as people claim," she joined *Shi-yu* society and *Tsukuru kai*. E met Y at the Japan Conference, and joined Association A through her invitation.

As for gender equality, E says "I think that the opinion that women are the underdogs or socially vulnerable is absolutely a lie from my experiences," and that "the activities of Association A are largely similar to my own values."

4.4. Active Advocate Group

Seventeen informants were designated under the active advocate group. Their membership processes were roughly classified into two types: (1) they already knew Y, and (2) they were solicited to join at a group which they already belonged to. Their motivation for becoming active in Association A greatly differed depending on the membership process.

Personal Relationships

Informants who joined Association A through personal relationships were F (a woman in her 70s), who had interacted with Y at *Seicho-no-ie*, G (a woman in her 50s) who knew Y through a temple parishioner women's group, and H (a woman in her 30s) as well as J (a woman in her 50s), whose children attended Y's cram school.

F and G, who have a relationship outside of Association A, said that they joined Association A because there was no reason to reject membership. F says that she knew Y has been working hard by herself, so she wanted to help Y within the limits of her ability, and that "family is important." G also said that she had no reason to oppose the activities, so she wished to give a helping hand as much as possible.

[13] In 1982, the media reported that textbook authorization of the Education Ministry did not adopt the description of "invasion" in history textbooks, which triggered protest and criticism from China and South Korea and developed into a diplomatic issue. (Hatano 2011)

H and J became members of Association A after reading the newsletters that were handed out to them by Y, which they use as a valuable source of information. Because newspapers and TV attempt to take a neutral stance, it is difficult to obtain information on "the right-wing," H stated. She regards Association A as a media for obtaining information that is difficult to acquire from mass media. Furthermore, J said that thanks to the knowledge acquired by reading their newsletters, she has come to be able to suspect the authenticity of newspaper articles.

Solicitation at Existing Organizations

Ten informants joined Association A in response to solicitation at another organization which they had belonged to. For example, K (a woman in her 60s) said that she and L (a woman in her 70s) were solicited to join by the former head of Association A, Z, during a meeting of the Institute of Moralogy. The solicitation could largely be summed up with "she asked us to join, so we just decided to do it." M (a woman in her 60s) was solicited by a leader of the *Seicho no ie*, and N (a woman in her 60s) and O (a woman in 70s) were solicited by an acquaintance in *Makuya* who was also a member of Association A.

The informants who joined Association A in response to solicitation at an organization which they formerly belonged to, only payed for the membership. K, who is also a member of the Institute of Moralogy, does not go to lectures or seminars because her home is far from Matsuyama, Association A's base. Her activity is limited to merely newsletter subscription. Also, N, who joined Association A one year ago, has little understanding of what they are campaigning for, saying "to be honest, I have no idea what the claims written in the '*Nadeshiko* Report' are about."

Since many of these informants live in areas remote from Matsuyama, it is difficult for them to take part in the Association's activities, such as seminars or lectures, on a regular basis. For Association A, these members help to increase the number of its members but not to serve as a player of a key role.

Furthermore, these individuals do not truly understand what "gender-free" is, which is the main theme of Association A's criticism. As shown in their answers for my questioning regarding "gender-free", such as "I often hear the term from Y but I don't understand it" (from G) or "I think my understanding of gender-free is superficial, and not at a deeper level" (from J), I could not get a definitive answer.

5. Conservative Movement Banded Under the Name of "Family"

5.1. Characteristics of Association A as a Grass-roots Conservative

How much does Association A coincide with the characteristics of the grass-roots conservative movement revealed in Oguma's book (Oguma and Ueno, 2003)?

First, characteristics that are also consistent within those of Association A are the following

three points: (1) "semi-independent" attitude towards an upper organization, (2) use of communication technologies, and (3) proclaiming themselves as "a group of ordinary citizens" who keep their distance from existing political parties. Association A has relations with a variety of conservative organizations, but it does not have a conscious upper organization in order to mobilize as many female members as possible. Its activities and information are generally reported to members by print, through a newsletter, but a website and blog for the Association have also been created to transmit the claims and activities of the Association to people other than its members. Because it has a similar basic policy concerning gender equality administration to the LDP, Association A communicates with LDP members. They provide cooperation when submitting petitions, but they do not have enough political support to involve them with voting activities. Association A mostly acts as a citizens' group which is rooted in the community.

On the other hand, other characteristics -emphasis on voluntary participation, as well as being a loose union without fixed posts or hierarchical relations, are not applicable to Association A. The present head, Y, is involved in various jobs in Association A and its members are not coerced to support her after they become a member. However, informants joined Association A in response to solicitation by heads of other groups or the former head of the Association, Z, and their membership cannot necessarily be said to be spontaneous.

Although Association A is "loosely unit", it also does not foster relationships between members that would prompt the creation of hierarchical relationships. Though some informants admitted that they have relatively close relationship with other members, most of them had known each other before they joined Association A. E says that she "knew most of the members in Association A beforehand, and their relationship begins and ends with just a nodding acquaintance." In E's case, her relationships with other members had already been created before joining Association A, through other activities or lectures concerning the perception or education of history.

As described above, Association A—an anti-gender equality group in Ehime Prefecture— has both relevant and irrelevant aspects with respect to the characteristics of the grass-roots conservative movement shown by Oguma (Oguma and Ueno, 2003).

5.2. The Existence of Peripheral Organizations

Why are there such differences between Association A and *Tsukuru kai*-the latter of which is the research subject for Oguma? It is deeply related to the existence of peripheral organizations. This interview revealed that a majority of the informants were members of various conservative organizations other than Association A.I considered the relationship between Association A to *Tsukuru kai* and the Japan Conference, which were supposed to be key players of the anti-feminist movement.

Tsukuru kai has a great influence on Association A in the sense of accumulated experience through its activities. Members of the leader group and its acting group, such as the present head

Y, B, and E, were originally members of *Tsukuru kai*. They looked back on the launch of Association A in their newsletter (*Nadeshiko* Report Vol. 13, 2006) by saying that the enactment of the basic law or ordinance came out of the blue because their focus was on the issue of history textbooks and historical perceptions. This indicates that the launch members had been involved in movements with their interest primarily in issues of history textbooks.

In Ehime Prefecture, *Tsukuru kai* began its activities prior to Association A, and history textbooks of *Tsukuru kai* were adopted in 2002 by a unified prefectural junior and high school which was scheduled to open at that time[14]. *Tsukuru kai*'s campaigning experience is regarded as a reason that they could successfully lobby for administrative officials or city assembly members as well as hold large lectures with conservative intellectuals, so soon after the establishment of Association A.

The Japan Conference has a deep relationship with Association A as well. The Local Assembly Members Confederation of the Japan Conference, which is a lower organization of the Japan Conference, appealed for cooperation to adopt Association A's petition as "an ally" on their website[15]. The informants are those who became members of Association A through activities or lectures provided by the Japan Conference, or those who knew each other before the establishment of Association A. The Japan Conference acts as a place for many people to communicate with each other, irrespective of the object of their concern or the presence or absence of belief.

Furthermore, the case of Association A shows involvement of religious groups. Some of the members were originally members of religious groups such as *Seicho-no-ie*, *Jinja honcho*, *Shinsei bukkyo kyodan*, or the Institute of Moralogy. Those groups are based in Association A's active region, and have a great number of believers across a large area. Association A has successfully gained membership by connecting with those groups.

We can see that Association A has been operating through relationships and involvement with *Tsukuru kai*, the Japan Conference, and many religious groups. Then, what made it possible for Association A to gain support, without personal relationships between members, and despite involvement with multiple organizations and the presence and absence of faith? Particularly, what is the reason why the active advocate group, which does not understand the activities of Association A or the idea of "gender-free", stand for Association A?

5.3. "Personalization" of Gender Roles

One thing common to all of the informants is the perception of "gender-free" as a trigger of conflict between men and women, and their feelings of rejection to it. For example, P (a woman

[14] For the process of the adoption of a history textbook of the Society in Ehime, refer to Hirokazu Oouchi. (2003)

[15] The Local Assembly Members Confederation of the Japan Conference, 2007 "Request to lobby the Matsuyama city assembly to adopt the petition concerning the operation of gender equality ordinance" "*Soumou-kukki* - PRIDE OF JAPAN" (acquire on Nov. 10, 2012)

in her 60s) says "I cannot sympathize with "gender-free" because women involved in such activities look like they neglect men or take an aggressive attitude to men, rather than seek for gender equality."

A "harmonized family", presented by the informants, as a counter proposal is a family based on traditional gender roles. G (a woman in her 50s), who has done all the housework for her family as well as child-raising and caring of her father-in-law, says that "family is fundamental to everyone, and a father is the center of a family. I believe that the status of woman today is owed to this structure." E (a woman in her 50s) also says that "a good family is a family in which its members help each other, where the father works and **we, or a mother,** protects her family and raises her children." She also stated that "I serve my husband and my father-in-law the best parts of the meal, better than what the other members of the family get, and I don't think doing this is wrong." For female members who have been engaged in housework, child-raising, and caring as a housewife in a community, gender roles are regarded not as a norm to follow but as a factor enabling them to maintain a peaceful relationship at home, and particularly, to ensure a good environment for their children's growth[16].

As seen in Section 2, in order to protect "the family" and "children," Association A focused on family as an issue of gender equality and presented problems from the viewpoint of daily lives, such as "happiness" or "actual life experiences." However, the reason why gender roles were considered a problem in the concept of gender equality lies in the fact that the aim of gender equality is to weaken the influence of traditional social systems or customs when selecting an individual life style. The target was not restricted to the home but also the workplace and the community. However, the way Association A presents this issue makes the social or normative aspects of gender roles as tied to social systems and structures invisible.

As a result, the female members of Association A regard gender roles as a personal matter that should be judged by each family, as shown through remarks such as "it is a case-by-case scenario" (N) or "it should be decided by each family" (O). As for gender equality that, for such women, "denies" traditional gender roles which is a factor for maintaining harmony at home, they answered that "family is priceless" (F), "a married couple is supposed to grow old together and help each other" (J), and that "a husband and wife should care about each other" (M).

By appealing to simple lifestyle awareness that everyone has in common, such as "a couple should care about each other" or "a family should help each other," Association A gains support from various types of organizations or people, including those that have a sympathy for conservative ideology, irrespective of the presence or absence of belief or different living environments.

[16] On the other hand, more than a few female members admitted to difficulties in taking a gendered role. J (a woman in her 70s) had a hard time with her father-in-law and mother-in-law, but she said "to avoid domestic discord, I always tell myself to listen to the parents' opinions as much as possible."

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I focused on Association A, which has been campaigning against gender equality in Ehime, and revealed that they collected membership through relationships with existing conservative organizations, and gained support from people who belong to multiple organizations, particularly from women, by appealing to their life awareness of family. This is significant because of two points.

One is the presentation of the existence of grass-roots movement against gender equality, which made it possible to show how much reality the ideological claim that "gender equality/ gender-free deny gender differences" has and is recognized by grass-roots people.

The other one is its suggestions to the studies of grass-roots conservative movement. I used Hasegawa's citizens' movement network model (1991) in this paper, and revealed the following: in Association A, people who had an involvement in other groups' activities, including those of *Tsukuru kai*, play a central role in campaigning against gender equality on the grass-roots basis, and a flow of information as well as human resources occurred between the existing large conservative or religious groups to collect members or appeal to their claims. While *Tsukuru kai* is intermittently regarded as a conventional conservative movement, from the example of Association A, the continuity of both organizations is apparent. Additionally, contrary to popular perception that participants of the conservative movement are men, a majority of members of some groups are women, and such groups use the keyword of simple lifestyle awareness regarding family to gain support from individuals or other groups.

The historical transition of the conservative movement since its connection to the modern age is considered to be a future task to tackle. Although description analysis or consideration of the conservative movement has not been conducted as an object of research, it nevertheless has a long history. After rejection of the *Yasukuni-jinja kokkagoji* (defending and maintaining *Yasukuni-jinja* by the state) bill in the 1970s and the Japanese-era-name legislation issue, conservative movements transited from a political campaign whose main activity was lobbying through election campaigning to a national campaign to evoke nationwide public opinion (Miyaji, 1981). *Seicho-no-ie*, *Shi-yu* society, the Institute of Moralogy, and the *Jinja honcho* that were mentioned in the case of Association A are all organizations that have been engaged in national campaigns (Nakajima, 1981b).

How is the development of national campaign by such conservative organizations linked to the contemporary grass-roots conservative movements? Revealing the details is necessary and essential to consider the surge of grass-roots conservative movements.

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