

From Intentional Injustice to Symbolic Violence: A Case-Study of Japanese Elites

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1 Intentional Injustice

The principle underlying *Equality of Opportunity* requires that social positions are formally equally available to everyone in a given society.¹ This principle implies that social inequality originates from the exclusion of one or more specific groups of people from the acquisition of one or more social positions on the basis of one or more grounds. When we reflect upon the situation of persisting gender inequality, racism, and discrimination against sexual minorities, among other examples of inequality, the process of inclusion through Equality of Opportunity may be seen to still require considerable effort to bring it to fruition. In this paper, I would like to address a substantive aspect of social inequality, namely the distinction between the elite and the masses, between experts and laymen, that I suggest framing as the inequality existing between a meritocratic elite, defined in part by its higher level of education, and a relatively less well-educated middle class that is effectively excluded from the benefits enjoyed by the elite. This relatively new form of social inequality originated particularly from the inclusive nature of social competitions in post-industrial society. Since the 1970s, Equality of Opportunity has been re-interpreted as *Fair Equality of Opportunity (FEO)* whereby 'equally talented people have an equal chance to attain social positions',² and FEO has been used to justify a range of integrative social policies.

In countries regarded as emerging economies, such as India, the new middle class has emerged by accumulating cultural capital through education.³ In advanced industrialized countries, investment in education is viewed as a key factor for members of the middle class to reproduce their class positions.⁴ Access to education plays thus a central role in that investment in education contributes to expansion of the middle class in emerging economies, and leads to the reproduction of the middle class in advanced industrialized countries. Investments in education are tied to life chances (Rivera 2011; cited in Lamont 2012: 202), especially for members of the middle class. In the field of social mobility study, general increases in standards of living have often been misleadingly represented as being indicators of increased social mobility. The membership of the middle

¹This definition may be found in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/equal-opportunity/> (accessed 14 April 2014).

²This definition is given in Sachs (2012). The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy introduces it as a type of substantive Equality of Opportunity. It requires that all have an opportunity to become qualified. The same section introduces FEO as follows: 'Equality of fair opportunity is satisfied in a society just in case any individuals who have the same native talent and the same ambition will have the same prospects of success in competitions that determine who gets positions that generate superior benefits for their occupants.' See <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/equal-opportunity/> (accessed 14 April 2014).

³The expansion of the labour force in the IT sector is taken as a case in Sridharan (2011). The members of the new middle class are characterized by possession of academic degrees and employment in the emerging sector in India. See also Baviskar and Ray (2011).

⁴Lamont wrote that middle class parents 'appear to be ever more eager to prepare their children for a world of increased competition', and therefore investment in education is essential for reproduction of their class positions. See Lamont (2012: 202)

class in countries with expanding economies is growing rapidly.⁵ Arguments have been advanced that suggest that increasing social mobility and a proliferation of liberal democracy as a form of government can be viewed as a cause and effect relationship. However, as Sugimoto (2010) has demonstrated, when everyone's standard of living is improving, while it is easy to believe that there is increasing social mobility within a society, in fact, when the standard of living of both the upper strata and lower strata of a society are simultaneously improving, the hierarchical structure of that society ultimately remains unchanged.⁶ It is a rather new phenomenon that the field of social mobility study approaches the expansion of middle class with a critical perspective (Shirahase 2014; Baviskar/Ray 1993: 3-5).

2 Symbolic Violence

Bourdieu (1991; 1996) defined *Symbolic Violence* as a class based social selection, which remains invisible. The idea of Symbolic Violence indicates that fair selection, whose original aim was to deconstruct the power structure of the past and to increase social mobility, in fact, contributes to the reproduction of class positions. Contrary to the social inequality caused by social exclusion, symbolic violence is possible when the nature of social selection appears inclusive. Bourdieu's research on French class society in *Distinction* (1984: 2010) and in *State Nobility* (1996) is formulated in his *habitus theory*. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) explain *habitus* as follows:

Habitus is a structuring mechanism that operates from within agents, though it is neither strictly individual nor in itself fully determinative of conduct. Habitus is, in Bourdieu's words, 'the strategy generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situation [...] a system of lasting and transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks.' (1992: 18)

Habitus functions as principles of the production of practices, and their characteristics are differentiated according to sex, social origin and also country (Bourdieu 2004: 42). In *Distinction* (1984: 2010), Bourdieu shows how the members of each social class differentiate their taste, dispositions and practices from the rest of society in France. In this framework of habitus, he shows the mechanism of the reproduction of class based social inequality, concealed with the logic of the fair selection of naturally talented individuals in France, i.e. *symbolic violence*. Specifically, in *State Nobility* (1996), Bourdieu shows the mechanism of the reproduction of upper class position in terms of culture through the education system in France. The French education system evaluates students, who are comfortable with and sensible to the upper class culture, as naturally talented; and consequently, students from the upper class have greater chances to obtain academic degrees from prestigious universities. Academic titles function as life-long certifications of competence in a meritocratic society, and consequently students from the upper class are more likely than others to obtain well-paid jobs⁷ and reproduce their class positions.

⁵Francis Fukuyama took up the statistics that 'the estimated size of the global middle class by 2030' will be 4.9 billion 'up from 1.8 billion in 2009, according to the European Union' in an article in the Wall Street Journal in 2013. The number of people who consider themselves as members of the middle class is rapidly growing in the countries with new economies such as in China, India, Turkey and Brazil. (Fukuyama 2013)

⁶Sugimoto based his argument on his observation of the expansion of the middle class in Japan from the 1970s until the burst of the economic bubble in the late 1980s. Interestingly, this expansion of middle class, endorsed by a general increase of living standards, was a state-lead phenomenon in Japan. Also see Vester (2003: 33).

⁷The economic profitability of a French academic degree is high; it is more likely than not for higher degree holders to obtain better-paid jobs. In the case of Japan, the economic profitability of academic degrees is low; however, higher degree holders are more likely to obtain more prestigious jobs (Takeuchi 1995).

3 Criticism

The criticism of Bourdieu's Frenchness derives from the fact that we cannot really be convinced by his detailed analysis of French upper class habitus. Bourdieu's detailed analysis of class-biased social selection was highly French specific resting upon, for instance, 'good' taste in literature, music and political views. It is difficult for those of us who are not French to confirm his results, specifically because we are not familiar with the French upper class habitus. In addition, Bourdieu's body of works gives his readers a rather static view of social class. The criticism of habitus theory for its incapacity to explain social mobility and societal changes⁸ is relevant to the fact that Bourdieu did not develop a systematic methodological tool to confirm the existence of the reproduction of habitus.⁹ This rendered it difficult for other researchers to examine the cultural reproduction process he suggested, and to make comparisons over different time periods.

4 Implication of *Milieu* approach on cultural contexts

Since the 1980s, there have been a number of projects to construct a systematic methodology based on Bourdieu's work.¹⁰ Geometric Social Space Analysis (cf. Kondo 2011), for example, is posited on Bourdieu's account of habitus, and quantitatively reconstructs the distribution of social spaces. The *milieu approach*¹¹ reinterpreted Bourdieu's theory of habitus based on Durkheim's concept of milieu.¹² These new methods of analysis not only greatly contribute to show that the applicability of Bourdieu's Habitus theory to other cultural context¹³, the re-interpretation of concepts also helps to show habitus' characteristics as '*not permanent but persistent*'.¹⁴

Vester's (2003) *milieu approach* explains individual social mobility¹⁵, in terms of the crossing of hierarchical class boundaries, and as changes in moral value and symbolic meaning, rather than as changes in occupation and life style. Change either in the amount of economic capital or in the amount of cultural capital functions as a *milieu differentiation*, not in *habitus change*.¹⁶ In other words, individual change in one type of capital does not necessarily result in upward or downward social mobility, which would mean crossing the hierarchical boundaries of social classes. If individual change in economic capital and cultural capital does not result in upward or downward social mobility, as previous social mobility studies have argued, the expansion of the middle class does not necessarily indicate a more egalitarian society. On the contrary, a social change,

⁸For examples of such criticism, See Vester (2003) and Gorski (2013).

⁹This was intentional, because of his emphasis on reflexivity in sociology. In *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (2004), Bourdieu argues that the concept of habitus is more a method than a theory and he wished his readers to read his *Distinction* and *State Nobility* as exercise books.

¹⁰For examples of such works, see Vester (2003), Kondo (2011) and also Lamont (2012).

¹¹The milieu approach has been developed in Germany under the influence of Bourdieu's works and the British cultural studies supported by the Volkswagen Foundation since 1987. The development of the approach aims at making it possible to apply Bourdieu's thoughts to other national contexts than the French (Vester 2003: 25-26).

¹²The concept of milieu connects 'the occupation and the culture of individuals'. In his work, Vester (2003) redefined a set of concepts; *social class* is an aggregation of social practices, *habitus* is a totality of the internal and external attitudes of individuals, and habitus functions as a generator of social practices. See Vester (2003: 24).

¹³The Sinus Institute has applied the *milieu approach* to 28 countries over the last 30 years, and its methods and data have been continuously updated. See Sinus Institute (2014): <http://www.sinus-institut.de/en/solutions/sinus-meta-milieus.html>.

¹⁴Quoted from Wacquant (2005: 316). To identify the milieu compositions in a society, Vester's works are based on materials produced by the Sinus Institute in Germany. Based on the large number of samples, the Sinus Institute visualizes and quantifies the distribution of milieu in a given society. Their surveys are helpful to grasp, firstly, the metastructure of a society, and secondly the milieu of focus in relation to other *milieu*. See Vester (2003).

¹⁵Individual social mobility has the premise that the social situations of others remain rather stable.

¹⁶In this sense, social mobility studies, whose methods focus chiefly on the occupational dimension of society, do not fully explain societal changes. See Vester (2003).

which can be exemplified as a general increase in standard of living¹⁷ or the trend towards mass education¹⁸, is explained as resulting in *habitus transformation*: while the hierarchical relationship between each class habitus remain unchanged, the characteristics of each class habitus transforms over time.

Elites remain different from the lower classes in their possession of the most rare, the most valuable and most sought after goods (Bourdieu 1996: 118). Meritocratic selection legitimizes hierarchical differences between the middle class and the upper class. However, the *milieux approach* does not enter into discussion of change in the hierarchical habitus structure. In summary, the *milieux approach* contributes to show the fluctuation of each milieu characteristics, but it does not explain where and how social mobility originates.

5 Interrupting effect of *Fair Equality of Opportunity*

I suggest that the ideas of the legal philosopher Benjamin Sachs (2012: 323) regarding the substantive understanding of *Fair Equality of Opportunity (FEO)* may help us to solve this problem. Since the 1970s, political scientists have used the idea of *FEO*, which was strongly influenced by John Rawls' *'A Theory of Justice'* (1971), to legitimize social policies.¹⁹ Sachs (2012) pointed out that substantive *FEO* lacks any specification of two essential variables, that Sachs calls *currency* and *timing*.²⁰ He argues that it is necessary to specify these two points in order to ask a valid question about fairness.

Specifying the *timing* for obtaining equality of opportunity²¹ contributes to preventing social systems from maintaining social inequality caused by 'accident of birth' *e.g.* innate illness, race and social class.²² Also, during a lifetime, a prior result of social competition should not influence a later result of social competition (cf. Sachs 2008; 2012), because that would mean that social competition becomes increasingly unfair over time. When specifying *currency*, Sachs wishes to demonstrate that certain social goods, such as education and health care, should not be open for competition. The possession of such goods greatly affects the conditions for individuals who take part in social competitions. Policies, which justify social competitions with *FEO* but without any specifications for *currency* and for *timing*, therefore, embody the great risk of concealing the systematic reproduction of social inequality over time.²³ In this sense, contrary to Rawls' idea of *FEO*, Sachs suggests that substantive *FEO* results *in itself* in having an increasing impact on individuals' social backgrounds and on the results of social competitions.

¹⁷In countries with emerging economy, for instance India, the new middle class emerged by accumulating cultural capital through education. The expansion of the labour force in the IT sector is taken as a case in point by Sridharan (2011). The members of the new middle class are characterized by their possession of academic degrees and employment in the emerging sector in India. See also Baviskar and Ray (2011).

¹⁸In advanced industrial countries, investment in education is viewed as a key factor for members of the middle class to reproduce their class positions. Lamont wrote that middle class parents 'appear to be ever more eager to prepare their children for a world of increased competition', and therefore investment in education is essential for reproduction of their class positions. See Lamont (2012: 202).

¹⁹Sachs (2012: 324) explains, 'the principle of fair equality of opportunity encompasses the principle of careers open to talents, which itself justifies social policies such as antidiscrimination laws.' In his essay, he is more concerned with the sort of *FEO* that goes beyond the opportunity of a career

²⁰'Equality of what?' It is also a question that Sen asks in his *The Idea of Justice* (2010: 292). Sen's starting point is also a criticism of Rawls' work. What Sachs calls *currency* in his essay indicates variable X in 'opportunity for X', See Sachs (2012: 326)

²¹Agreeing with Arneson, Sachs (2012: 325) defines opportunity as 'a chance of getting a good if one seeks it.'

²²Shirahase (2014: 7) agrees that inequality in opportunity is caused by 'differences that no amount of 'effort' or 'talent' can alter, which are beyond the individual's range of control or choice, that the sense of an unreasonable wrong comes in'.

²³He proceeds to show that the idea of *FEO* results in practice in unequal results of social competitions over time in various fields *e.g.* education, social welfare and medical care. For details of his arguments, see Sachs (2012).

Inequality in What and When? This question leads us to answer how and when social inequality in the possession of symbolic capital occurs. The accumulation of cultural capital through education and the accumulation of economic capital via jobs are strongly connected, but they do not happen at the same stage of life. When various kinds of capital are understood as resources available to meet unknown risk in the future²⁴, the accumulation of symbolic capital can be understood in terms of a sense of security²⁵.

I argue that *FEO* results in and simultaneously justifies inequality of outcome over time. From a structural perspective, *FEO* has been used as a justification for social policies. These social policies do not solve political problems deriving from unequal outcome of social and economic competition in any moral sense, but do settle them by using policies that treat citizens as free and equal. The different outcomes of social and economic competition resulting from the different abilities of agents lie beyond the concern of neoliberal capitalism. In everyday life, members of different *milieux* interpret and experience these policies differently. (cf. Shore 2012: 92) For both a well-off milieu and an under-privileged milieu, *FEO* functions as a justification for the individual's social position.²⁶ The benefit of winning and the cost of losing competition for a sense of *security* are internalized and individually endured and consequently social inequality is reproduced symbolically between the dialectical relationship between structure and agency.

6 Elites and consensus democracy

The post-industrial countries show a strong tendency towards the consolidation of power²⁷ in the hands of the small number of elites²⁸, concealed behind the ideology of liberal democracy. Liberal democracy embodies the so-called *utopian fallacy*²⁹; on one hand, democracy aims at integrating different interests in a society, but on the other hand liberalism aims at promoting individual freedom.³⁰

Higley (2012) observes that the goal of liberal democracy indirectly contributes to creating a social milieu³¹ of 'free people'. The members of this milieu share positive attitudes towards liberal values particularly because they have benefited from liberal practices, and therefore they are comfortable with liberal values. However, there is no possibility for the milieu of 'free people'

²⁴Shirahase (2014: 9) wrote, "(T)he important thing about the wealth possessed at any one time is that it represents the resources available to meet risk contingencies that might arise in future". Bourdieu's concept of *capital* suggests that this definition of the wealth can be re-interpreted in terms of symbolic capital.

²⁵Here I use the term *security* in the sense of stability, predictability and life security.

²⁶Bourdieu (2004) explains the symbolic violence: "(T)he poor are not just immoral, alcoholic and degenerate, they are stupid, they lack intelligence. A large part of social suffering stems from the poverty of people's relationship to the educational system, which not only shapes social destinies but also the image they have of their destiny."

²⁷For this trend, see for instance a recent report on the eighty-five richest people in the world. Oxfam reports that since the 1970s, the rich have acquired increasingly strong influence in the political field, and successfully modified the economic system in favour of their own interests. See <http://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressrelease/2014-01-20/rigged-rules-mean-economic-growth-increasingly-winner-takes-all-for-rich-elites>.

²⁸Different countries have developed different structures of elites depending on specific contexts; each independent nation-state has an independent elite structure and, such differences are associated to different political practices. See Higley and Burton (2001).

²⁹Higley writes, "[influential schools of Western political thought] have been reluctant to rule out any desirable political goal as impossible since WW2." Higley (2012: 351).

³⁰Higley (2012: 356-357) observes that maintenance of the ideology of citizens as being free and equal is only possible on the basis of elite politics; recent liberal democracy, especially in the post-industrial countries, has a strong elite basis.

³¹In his paper, milieu is not specifically defined. He writes, '(T)his is a milieu in which people deal with each other as equals and in which no one claims for him or herself, nor expects to accord to others, systematically greater difference or higher privilege' and, 'a social milieu in which persons are free and equal in active roles'. See Higley (2012: 361-362).

to include everyone in a given society.³² It does not mean that I disagree with Rawls' (1999; cited in Sen 2010: 11) observation that 'there are many liberalisms and related views'. I mean that there is a social space where people, who possess liberal values because of their possession of the competitive social goods, gather. As the number of such goods is limited, the number of liberals who possess such social goods is also limited. Keller (1971: 271) wrote, 'increasingly people have equal opportunity to achieve unequal statuses'. For Keller, however, the unequal statuses of individuals are justifiable because diversity, in itself, is a form of freedom. In a society with equality of opportunity, people have equal right to compete and to achieve unequal status in a society; only a limited number of people can benefit from liberal competition. This idea of a social milieu of 'free people' shares a similarity with Vester's idea of *privileged milieu*.

Pareto's theory of the *circulation of elites*³³ assumes that regime changes occur when one group of elites is replaced by another group of elites. However, it is increasingly clear that the replacement of a group of elite does not happen; the elite structure transforms itself and persists.³⁴ In post-industrial countries, there is a strong tendency towards *elite differentiation* and *elite integration*. In a country with high degree of *elite differentiation*, elite structure is characterized by networks of diversified organizations and functional specializations. In countries where there exists a high degree of *elite integration*, elites compete for power within a common rule. Political conflict is regulated so as not to disturb underlying political stability. What is apparent from the increasing degree of *elite differentiation* and *elite integration* is that there is no particular person who is responsible for formulating a specific policy.

Policies are negotiated among the elites on the basis of consensus 'on behalf of people' (cf. Higley 2007: 13). Lijphart (1991) points out that majority rule as a theoretical premise of democracy is flawed in practice. In fact, if the democratic political system is to be able to contribute to constructing equality in a society through the political empowerment of individuals, the unequal power structures of the past must have already been deconstructed. One of the most common types of research of social inequality focuses on describing the prevalent unequal distribution of social goods³⁵ for a certain group of people, e.g. the working class, minority groups, or the retired population. Some research exerts effort in finding out the causes of such inequality. Reflection on the complexity of policy formulation processes in the liberal democratic countries, however, suggests that it has little use in finding out who has an intention to do someone a social injustice.

In the field of elite study³⁶, the nature of the relationship between elite and class remains

³²Meritocratic selection embodies class bias, because the talented are sensible of and comfortable with the upper class habitus. Using Sachs' terms, we can sum up Bourdieu's research as follows: individuals compete for higher social positions, and the results of social competition accumulate during an individual's lifetime when living in French Society. Opportunity for education is open for competition, and academic titles function as a life-long certification of competence. As *timing* is not specified in FEO, the theory of fairness conceals the inequality deriving from individual differences at birth. In Bourdieu's thought, this inequality may be identified, in an over-simplified manner, as social class at birth.

³³For his entire theory of the circulation of elites, see Pareto ([1901] 1986).

³⁴In the field of elite study, however, the nature of the relationship between elite and class has remained unexplored (Keller 1991). Wright C. Mills (1950) asserted the importance of a separation between class theory and elite theory so as to overcome confusion between different terminologies such as ruling class, elites and political class. Since his influential paper appeared, the two major schools of elite theory - functionalist and moralist - have endeavoured to determine the nature of the elite in a society without touching upon that society's class structure. Meritocratic elite election functions as a justification for social inequality, especially because of the belief in the equality of opportunity. See Bottomore (1993) and Higley and Burton (2001: 195).

³⁵By social goods, I mean goods that are imbued with social values in terms of cultural, economic, social and symbolic capital - e.g. academic titles, access to health care, and capital. It should be noted, however, that the value of social goods is society specific. For example, Bourdieu showed that academic titles from the ENA in France carry high cultural value; however his observation does not mean that academic titles necessarily have the same social value in Japan.

³⁶The term 'elites' became widely used in the late nineteenth century Europe, and after 1930 in the US and the

unexplored.³⁷ Wright C. Mills (1950) claimed the importance of separation between class theory and elite theory so as to overcome confusion between different terminologies such as ruling class, elites and political class.³⁸ Since his time, the major two schools of elite theory – functionalist³⁹ and moralist⁴⁰ – have endeavoured to determine the nature of the elites in a given society without touching upon the society’s class structure. Making a link with Bourdieu’s research to show that the selection and legitimization of a meritocratic elite serves as a justification for the reproduction of class structure, bolstered up by a widespread yet questionable belief in equality of opportunity, I suggest there is clearly need for a further research.

7 JAPAN

Japan’s rapid economic growth beginning in the 1960s and continuing to the late 1980s, was stated under the so-called 1955 system, characterized by close collaboration between the political, administrative and business fields. Japanese business enjoyed stable development, backed up by a seniority wage system and lifetime employment. Reflecting the relatively small income gap within the country, and the rapid expansion of a middle class consciousness, a number of scholars, both foreign and domestic, contributed to the creation of an academic discourse on Japan as an *egalitarian society*.⁴¹ However, after the bursting of the bubble economy in the late 80s, a new public discourse regarding Japan as a *disparate society*⁴² has gained strength⁴³. Moriguchi and Saez (2008: 714-716), and Shirahase (2014) introduced the view that the current trend in Japanese inequality research is to deconstruct the myth of Japan as an egalitarian society, especially since the publication of Tachibanaki’s *Nihon no Keizai Kakusa (Economic Inequality in Japan)* (1995).

The bursting of the economic bubble also resulted in the collapse of the 1955 system. Since that time, the opportunity for obtaining social security in terms of employee benefits has become increasingly scarce. Because the provision of employee benefits is costly, private companies are becoming more and more reluctant to offer employee benefits⁴⁴. Differently put, only large corporations can afford employee benefits, and even in these large corporations the number of positions to which employee benefits are attached is consistently diminishing. The privatization initiative

UK. The term owes its popularity to the work of the Italian scholar Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941), who systematically studied elites for the first time, and established elite study as a branch of the social sciences. Since his initiation of the field, a number of scholars have engaged themselves in the search for the elites. See Bottomore (1993), Keller (1991)

³⁷Keller (1991: 19) lists the unanswered basic questions in elite study. They are as follows: Do the elites really exist and if so, who belongs to them? How many elites exist within a given society at the time? What is the nature of the relationship between elites and classes? What determined the prevalent patterns of selections of elites? How many elites are there in this period and why? It is important to note that Keller herself could not give any satisfactory answers to the questions she enumerated.

³⁸See Bottomore (1993), Keller (1991) and Hartmann (2007).

³⁹Functionalists define elites as individuals who have achieved a high social position in business, politics or the academic field, regardless of their social backgrounds. Their achievements are only based on merits, and the prestige of being a member of the elites derives only from position, not from the individual herself. See Bottomore (1993), Keller (1991) and Hartmann (2007).

⁴⁰Moralists define elites on the basis of their moral superiority. This view derives from the understanding of elites in ancient Greece posited by Plato and Aristotle. See Bottomore (1993), Keller (1991) and Hartmann (2007).

⁴¹Shirahase (2014: 3-4) identifies Murakami (1977, 1984), Tominaga (1977) and Sawyer (1976) as contributors to creating such an academic discourse.

⁴²*kakusa shakai* in Japanese.

⁴³At least, it seems so in quantitative terms. From 1970 to 1986, the number of *Yomiuri Shimbun* articles retrievable using the keyword ‘disparate’ is 221. The *Yomiuri Shimbun* is one of Japan’s major daily newspapers. From 1987 to the present-day, the number of articles is 5,924. By way of comparison, the number of articles retrievable using the keyword ‘inequality’ from 1970 to 1986 is 39. From 1987 to the present-day, 538 articles have been published in the *Yomiuri Shimbun*.

⁴⁴Pension Fund Association (2014): <http://www.pfa.or.jp/jigyo/tokei/shisanunyo/jittai/index.html>.

undertaken by the Koizumi cabinet (2001-2006) made it legally possible for employers to employ workers without providing them with employee benefits.⁴⁵ This trend is expected to continue with the policy of privatization envisaged under the umbrella of '*abonomics*'. In 2014, Prime Minister Abe stated in a speech that he aims at the privatization of the energy and medical industries by 2020.⁴⁶

The application of *milieux approach* to analyzing Japanese society is still severely limited.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Kondo's research (2011) shows the applicability of the Social Space Analysis of Bourdieu to the Japanese context. Higuchi et al. (2010) have applied the *milieux approach* developed in Germany to explain the lack of a Green Party in Japan, based on the political attitude of the left-libertarian *milieux* in Japan. These two pieces of research present us with the milieu of 'free people' in Japan, in which people possessing high economic and cultural capital were shown to be more likely to agree with statements⁴⁸ that are affirmative to liberal democratic values.⁴⁹

Kondo's Social Space Analysis shows when we focus on their views on equality, members in the milieu of 'free people' are more likely to deny the existence of any influence of an individual's social background, be it social class or gender, to the results of social competition. On the other hand, people with relatively low levels of economic and cultural capital are more likely to agree with egalitarian statements.⁵⁰ They show a tendency to agree that inequality comes into existence 'at birth'. When we focus on fairness, different milieux experience *FEO* differently. The privileged milieu is more affirmative to liberal competition and uses it as a legitimization of their higher social positions. The less privileged milieu points out the unfairness of the competitions. Interestingly, they place more emphasis on the correlation between meritocratic selection and their social position; they seem to be aware of the interrupting effect of *FEO* at different timings. According to the milieu analysis of Higuchi et al., the privileged milieu shows an overall negative attitude towards any form of political participation.⁵¹ If the milieu of the liberal value is less likely to vote, how can we account for the fact that the current government maintains that it pursues liberal values?

The Japanese elite structure is characterized by its high *differentiation* and *integration*.⁵²

⁴⁵Together with the privatization of the postal banking system, which had long been the financial basis for the Japanese pension fund, the Koizumi Cabinet reformed the structure of the pension system itself. It abolished the pension system as based on length of service, and introduced a new system which determines the amount of pension based on individual contribution based on ability, called the *Defined (Employee) Benefit Plan and Defined Contribution Plan*. Pension Fund Association (2014).

⁴⁶See Prime Minister Abe's speech at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland in January 2014. Available at: http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/96_abe/statement/2014/0122speech.html (accessed 3 April 2014).

⁴⁷The lack of theoretical foundation and strong segmentation existing in the field of Japanese studies has kept the understanding of social inequality in Japan limited. See Harootunian and Sakai (1999). To date, there are only two results of research undertaken using the *milieux approach*.

⁴⁸They are more likely to answer positively to the following questions: 'Japan is egalitarian', 'Opportunity of education is fairly distributed regardless of individual family background', 'It is less likely that the gap between individual incomes will widen in future', 'Distribution of wealth should be based on individual ability', and 'It is **fair** to compete for social positions'. (My translation)

⁴⁹The liberal attitude is supposed to be affirmative to the existence of social competition based on ability. See Kondo (2011: 172-174).

⁵⁰They are more likely to agree with the following statements: 'Japan is suffering from social inequality', 'Job opportunity is heavily dependent on which university people graduate from', 'It is more important to reduce inequality than to protect fair competition', and 'It is a responsibility of the state to reduce social inequality through taxation on the rich'. (My translation)

⁵¹According to Higuchi et. al, political affiliation with the Green Party in the U.S., U.K., Germany, South Korea, and Taiwan is highly correlated to the left-libertarian political view, which is supported by the milieu of high economic and cultural capital in these countries. Japanese left-libertarian political view is also strongly related to the milieu of high economic and cultural capital. However, the milieu's political participation is very low.

⁵²Higley and Pakulski (2007) mention Japan, as represented by former prime minister Koizumi, as a country

The elite-based democracy 'on behalf of people' in Japan tends to reflect the value systems of the elite, especially because there is no-one who considers that it is their responsibility to stand up for the will of the majority. Since the early 1980s, the family backgrounds of students at Tokyo University have become increasingly wealthy. Tokyo University is the most prestigious university in Japan. Possession of an academic title from Tokyo University has long been the necessary entry requirement for recruitment into the national ministries and higher management positions in business.⁵³ As I mentioned previously, the study of the elite in relation to its class background has not yet been attempted, although the Japanese elite strongly manifests characteristics of the milieu of 'free people'.

Japan, as a case study, requires considerably more detailed inquiry. However, research thus far shows the applicability of the *milieu approach* and the concept of *FEO* as research approaches. The presented preliminary results support my hypothesis that the mechanisms of inequality reproduction are similar for all post-industrial countries, although the characteristics of inequality are country specific.

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with a strong elite structure, that has increased its complexity over time and has integrated into global power cartels, similarly to the U.S. under the George W. Bush administration, the U.K. under Tony Blair, Germany under Angela Merkel, and France under Nicolas Sarkozy.

⁵³See, Rothacher (1993). Bourdieu (2004) and Hartman (2007) agree that Tokyo University has a very similar social function to that of the ENA in France.

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