

Abstracts

What Causes Inequality? Trends in Inequality in 2010's

Kayoko Ishii (Keio University)

After the late 2000's, according to the recent official statistics, income inequality is decreasing in Japan, and at the same time the average income is also decreasing in total. This paper reviews the previous studies, and discusses the factors of income inequality. It points out that the rising number of non-regular workers, task polarization in the labor market, and "generation risk" have lowered the average earnings, and additionally, changes in family structures have led to income inequality among the households.

This paper also investigates the dynamics of income in the 2010's using the Japan Household Panel Survey. Besides the fact that the average earning is decreasing compared to the previous generation, the significant growth of female labor force participation as non-regular workers, especially among women with low earning husbands, implies the possibility of equaling the household incomes.

Inequality in Transition into Managerial Positions: From the Perspective of Intergenerational and Intragenerational Social Mobility

Hirohisa Takenoshita (Keio University)

This study explores the ways in which institutional arrangements of the education and labor market are linked to the transition into a managerial position among people from the perspective of intergenerational and intragenerational social mobility. Previous literature disaggregated the process through which class advantages are transmitted across generations into three parts: differences in educational attainment by family background, transition from school to work, and work-related career trajectories in the labor market. Given this distinction, previous studies investigated how institutional arrangements played a role in producing advantages or disadvantages in access to specific positions or resources. Meanwhile, previous studies lack a comprehensive viewpoint to grasp how institutional arrangements are linked to the whole process of intergenerational social mobility. To fill this gap, this study focuses on transition into a managerial position because a chance to attain such a position would presumably depend on labor market institutions, as has been discussed considerably by prior studies of inequality. Firm-based internal labor markets that are found in large-sized organizations, labor market segmentation between large and small firms, institutional linkages between schools and labor markets, and the role of schools in screening employees in organizations should be considered as institutional arrangements that shape people's chances in transition into a managerial position. This study explores how these institutional arrangements are linked to the transition of male workers into a managerial position in Japan

Does Disparity Truly Affect Subjective Well-being?

Kunio Urakawa (Kyushu University)

The term well-being fundamentally represents a state in which an individual's liberties and self-fulfillment are ensured in society. It also represents a situation in which they are in a physically, mentally, and socially favorable condition there. In recent years, analyses of well-being have been conducted actively among various countries and international institutions. Such studies have predominantly sought a measure that grasps aspects of well-being based on individuals' subjective perceptions and feelings. This study examines important policy tasks for Japan from the perspective of people's subjective well-being because research of determining factors related to subjective well-being and its socioeconomic effects has accumulated in several fields of academic study, and because data related to subjective well-being are used frequently to measure monetary values of notable non-market goods such as public goods and environmental goods. Particularly, this study investigates how disparity is associated with people's well-being, reflecting the Japanese situation in which political management toward disparity and poverty, which are attributable to income, housing, and labor conditions, become important policy

issues. Research on subjective well-being has led to the discovery and reconsideration of people's traits and behavioral principles that were previously overlooked in society. This study therefore presents important implications for the improvement of public policy and the establishment of more favorable societies.

Demographic Transformation and Economic Inequality in Japan

Sawako Shirahase (The University of Tokyo)

The aim of this study is to examine economic inequality in Japan in relation to demographic transformation, represented by the country's aging population and declining fertility rates. I focused on household structures and the relationships between household members, comparing data from 1986 and 2016 to examine the changing trends over the last 30 years. The data I analyzed in this study was taken from the Comprehensive Survey of People's Living Conditions conducted by the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare. For the analysis, I selected households with elderly members aged 65 and over and households with unmarried members aged 18 to 34 residing with their parents. The results of this study showed that, for households with elderly members, changes in household structure are closely related to growing economic inequality in contemporary Japan. The decline in the number of three-generation households and the growth in the number of one-person and couple-only households play key roles in the declining economic status of people aged 65 and over. On the other hand, the household structure of families with young, unmarried people living with their parents has remained largely unchanged over the last 30 years. However, the economic relationship between unmarried children and their parents has changed, with the children being more likely to benefit from co-residence than their parents. In sum, it is critical to examine changing demographics and household structures in a society when attempting to explain growing economic inequality. The case of Japan provides a pertinent example, as such a demographic transformation has occurred within a relatively short period of time.

Networks and Social Stratification

Mitsunori Ishida (Waseda University)

The purpose of this paper is to organize network studies about disparity and indicate a perspective. Firstly, I investigated the relation between networks and getting status. People using a personal network in their job search did not get a high status or high income. In other words, a personal network does not contribute to the widening disparity directly. Secondly, I investigated the influence of social stratification on personal networks. The result showed that higher status people had more diverse networks. Therefore, there is a disparity in the form of personal networks. Finally, I examined network homophily in marriage. The result was that university graduates married others having the same educational background. Given the above points, it is highly necessary to consider the effects and form of people's networks while incorporating the disparity perspective.

Interpretation of Unreasonable Disparities and Remedies Based on Article 20 of the Labor Contract Act

Chikako Kanki (Rikkyo University)

This paper analyzed the current situation concerning interpretation about the legal principle prohibiting "unreasonable disparities" of terms and conditions of employment between regular workers and irregular workers. The crucial legal provisions are Article 20 of the Labor Contract Act established in 2012 and Article 8 of the Part-Time Workers Act revised in accordance therewith. These provisions aim to correct unreasonable disparities in consideration of three elements; (1) job contents (both in terms of contents and extent of responsibility accompanying the job) , (2) the scope of change in job content and arrangements and (3) other circumstances. Because of their ambiguity, the interpretation of how to consider these factors and how to judge unreasonableness are controversial, and court decisions vary. Those provisions aim at balanced remedies according to differences and should be distinguished from the anti-discrimination principle. In the ongoing process of "equal pay for equal work" guidelines and enactment

of the Part-Time / Fixed-Term Workers Act, the question remains as to how to embody remedies according to differences. As has been taken into consideration in court decisions, labor-management consultation processes in advance should be emphasized in evaluating unreasonableness. Construction of labor-management autonomy could lead to true remedies.