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# Rhetoric Of Young Non-Regular Workers In Post-Bubble Japan: A Genealogical Analysis

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**RHETORIC OF YOUNG NON-REGULAR WORKERS IN POST-BUBBLE JAPAN:  
A GENEALOGICAL ANALYSIS**

by

**NORIAKI TAJIMA**

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

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Approved By:

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Advisor

Date

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## CHAPTER 1 A RHETORICAL STUDY OF YOUNG NON-REGULAR WORKERS IN RECESSIONARY JAPAN: AN INTRODUCTION

One day, over a beer at a fireworks-viewing party in Tokyo suburb, I spoke of my concern about Japan's social dislocation with a journalist recently retired from a powerful Japanese newspaper. He confided that he, too, was deeply anxious about the nation's passive acceptance of failure; its bankrupt banks and corporate malfeasance, rampant political corruption, and the rising pessimism of its people. "Half the people don't know how bad things are," he told me. "The rest are in denial."

Michael Zielenziger. *Shutting out the Sun: How Japan Created Its Own Lost Generation*. New York: Vintage, 2006. Print. 13.

David Harvey comments that Japan was "the powerhouse of the global economy" in the 1980s ("Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction" 33). In that time, the Japanese economy, known as Japan as number one, was said to be more vigorous than any other industrial nation with its robust growth rates, top-notch manufacturing technologies, and thought-out human resource management. Due to these factors, Japan was a good economic partner with the United States; however, for the same reasons, Japan in the 1970s and 1980s became a far more important threat to America's preeminent position in the global market than it is now.

While Japanese people were once ironically called economic animals in this time, they were also said to have a strong sense of egalitarianism. For instance, British business magnate Bernard Eccleston notes in 1989 that "for over 25 years opinion surveys conducted actually by the EPA [Economic Planning Agency] and the Prime Minister's Office show that between 80 and 90 per cent of respondents considered themselves to be middle class" (162). Also, the

Japanese public once recognized its society as classless because it has fortunately avoided major discussions or conflicts over class, poverty or capital distributions.

However, Japan's stable economic growth ended about two decades ago when the asset and estate bubble burst in 1991. Most notably, the burst firstly plummeted the Tokyo average stock price from 38915 yen to less than twenty thousand yen in a year, triggering a number of economic consequences. For instance, the asset prices fell significantly; several major bank companies playing speculative businesses went bankrupt; and many companies have turned down their aggressive growth policies to defensive safeguarding ones. Since then, the slow economy has eroded companies' and investors' capitals, causing industrial bases to escape to foreign countries and a number of domestic citizens into poverty. The *New York Times*, for instance, describes that those under the poverty line—those living under twenty two thousand dollars a year as outlined by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development—amounts to twenty million, occupying 15.7 percent of the nation now, many of which are among young generations (Fackler A6).

Their low living standards are most directly due to particular types of employment contracts. Since the end of the World War II (WWII), Japanese working culture has clearly standardized regular full-time status, and discerned it from other non-regular statuses. Called *seishain*, a regular working position has been assumed to be for male breadwinner husbands in nuclear families, whereas a variety of non-regular positions was assumed to be for auxiliary income earners—that is, other family members such as housewives, seniors and students. As such, a *seishain*, a combination of *sei* or formal and *shain* or company member, is assumed to stay in the same company for the long term, most likely an entire working career from age eighteen or twenty two to fifty five, or now sixty or sixty five. Accordingly, *seishain* workers

have enjoyed very good benefits such as ample job-training opportunities, employment stability and (almost) promised salary increases; the legacy that Japanese companies were collectivist, egalitarian and with high cooperative spirit was established in this particular culture.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, non-regulars are usually paid hourly- or daily-based wages with no employment securities or welfare and with little chance of promotions. While they are called differently in Japanese language according to gender, age and the types of contracts, recent neoliberal deregulations have been clearly delineated them as perennial working forces supporting *seishain* workers in their working places. Therefore, Standing notes that Japan once had “a relatively low level of income inequality, . . . but inequality runs deep in terms of status hierarchy and has been intensified by the proliferating precariat” (8-9). In this sense, non-regular positions in Japan demonstrate the recent rise of “the lower class” centering young generations (Slater n.p.).

Indeed, Japan has constantly increased the proportion of non-regular workers since the bubble burst, and now they occupy as much as one third of the entire domestic working forces (Brinton 22). More specifically, 15-24 years olds have saliently received the influence, as male workers’ non-regular proportions increased from eight per cent to thirty per cent from 1991 to 2013, and as female workers’ proportions almost quadrupled from ten per cent to almost forty in the same time period (Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training 53). Mostly, this is because the most common corporate strategy against slow economic trend was either to give up providing prospective high school and college graduates with *seishain* status, or to switch these positions into a variety of newly invented cheap, disposable non-regular positions. Furthermore, in Japan,

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<sup>1</sup> On the legacy of Japanese company culture, please see Abegglen; Abegglen and Stalk; and Vogel. Yet, these benefits are in many cases limited to male *seishain* workers; on gender structure of Japanese employment system, see Gottfried, *Reproductive*.

the job-market for the already-graduated is clearly segregated, much smaller, and job applicants are generally assumed to equip with some skills by their prior regular jobs. Therefore, young generations have been most vulnerable to corporate austere human resource policies.

Consequently, Japanese precarious workers have gathered attentions by sociologists and anthropologists.<sup>2</sup> Typicall, they frame the workers as an example of global precariat<sup>3</sup> issues; Guy Standing, for instance, comments that “[t]he most striking example is the withering of Japan’s salaryman model” in the regard that “companies have put a freeze on hiring youths in lifetime positions and have turned to temporary contracts.<sup>4</sup> Paid much less, the temporaries are denied training opportunities and benefits” (17). Specifically, their average wage is only forty per cent of those paid to regular full-time workers, and with no biannual bonuses worth about twenty per cent of total pay (Standing 41). Furthermore, Song Jiyeoun notes that Japanese non-regulars are particularly dangerous for they lack the social safety net (1014). Concurring with Song, Standing also notes that “the precariat [in Japan] lacks all those rewards, which is why income inequality is so seriously understated” (9). Furthermore, Japanese post-WWII working culture has disabled many of the beneficial functions of labor unions, so many of them cannot exercise collective bargaining rights (Harvey “Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction” 33; Song 1014); and “there has been little evidence until very recently of young jobless Japanese taking to the streets to march in protest over the fact” that their available jobs are low-paid, short-term and

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<sup>2</sup> For instance, Allison; Brinton; Fu; Gottfried “Precarity”; Slater; and Song.

<sup>3</sup> Precariat is a combined term of qualifier *precarious* and noun *proletariat*. It has been used in the context of contemporary labor relations to refer to laborers with precarious security. It heralds a formation of new precariat class by the changing nature of mass workers’ jobs from factory manufacturing to temporary-based, cheap labors (e.g., Standing, 7-8).

<sup>4</sup> To be clear, the model is said as being “withering” to refer to its scarce availability for them; yet, most of already hired “salaryman” regular workers’ positions were protected. For more details, please see Chapter 3.

without job security (Brinton 182). In short, these literatures have described Japanese young non-regular workers as being both economically and democratically deprived.

Youth unemployment and poverty is a problem all over the world now. Most recently, International Labour Organization's *World Employment and Social Outlook 2015* notes that "the youth unemployment rates reached 13.0 per cent in 2014, which is almost three times higher than the unemployment rate for adults" (21). Accordingly, many of them face similar or even severer situations than Japan. For instance, *EuroStat Newsrelease* notes in May, 2015, that youth unemployment rates in financially constrained nations such as Greece, Spain and Croatia are all above fifty or forty per cent ("Euro Area" n.p.).

Whereas I acknowledge that these nations have their own characters and contexts of this problem, this study focuses a Japanese case. This is because, I claim, the following three characters make Japan a distinctive case. First, the heteronormative and paternalistic employment structure of Japanese working culture has formed an interesting relations between the neoliberal Japanese state and current Japanese young male workers. As said above, male high school and college graduates until the bubble burst once enjoyed stable and secure *seishain* positions. However, after a few periods of what some have called the "ice age" of employment, that is, the period in which very scarce positions of *seishain* workers are offered in the job market for new graduates, non-regular positions are becoming a de facto employment contracts not just for high school drop-outs and high school graduates; but many college graduates start their first job career with no *seishain* contract (Slater, n.p.). In this short period of time, Japanese male youth experienced involuntary precarity.

Second, as we will see in Chapter 3, even though the companies treated male young workers as such, the domestic public has circulated a lot of rhetoric about them being "lazy,"

“incompetent,” and even “parasitic” to their parents and the society. These rhetorical manifestations newly emerged in the last two decades demonstrate that Japanese youths have been drastically changing their collective subject or public status. Because this seems not seen much elsewhere, I, a rhetorical scholar, decided to delve into the Japanese case.

Third, and furthermore, contemporary domestic culture’s cruel character to the poor makes Japan an interesting case. Whereas the Japanese society was once said to be egalitarian and classless, the two-decade recession has caused an adversary move in both company culture and general public. That is, while most domestic companies has entitled membership to *seishain* workers and protected their working culture of collectivism, mutual-assistance and egalitarianism within themselves, their managerial strategies have become increasingly conservative and defensive as they quit hiring new *seishain* workers. Not surprisingly, these individual company decisions have made young workers’ job experience very different; for instance, Caporale and Gil-Alana’s investigation in 2012 found that, among the twenty four countries across Asia, Australia, Europe and North and South America, unemployment persistence “is particularly high in Japan”—that is, recent Japanese youths have a very hard time getting out of jobless once discharged (7). Furthermore, this mood seems to have spread to the entire society and now suggests even a cruel aspect, as the Pew Research Center’s international survey on public sentiments against the poor reveals that, among thirty four countries of survey, “the Japanese are least likely to support a safety net” for economically disadvantaged people; about “six-in-ten (59%) agree that looking after the very poor is the government’s responsibility, and just 15% completely agree” (Kohut, Wike and Horowitz 18).<sup>5</sup> Combined with the

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<sup>5</sup> They include the “completely agree” within the “(mostly) agree.” These figures are substantially lower than many other industrial nations, including Britain, France, Italy, South

second point, a particular mode of rhetoric that treats young and non-regular working populations in the recessionary period, these research results imply that Japanese young workers have experienced substantial changes on their discursive unities in the last twenty years or so.

As these three factors suggest the distinguishness of the Japanese case, the Japanese case also shares an important aspect with the issue of youth precarity over the world; an effect of neoliberal market-fundamentalism. Sociologist Nakanishi, for example, points that the Japanese case is an instance in which there was once almost no inter-class politics and struggles (Nakanishi, Yuasa, Kawazoe 100-01). Nakanishi claims that, because there have been very weak labor unions and debilitated socialist and communist backbones over decades, the Japanese public has recognized the issue as being private and familial rather than being public and social (Nakanishi, Yuasa, Kawazoe 99-100). In my understanding, this has allowed a condition in which the state can easily exploit their youth population—that is, advance what David Harvey once called “a process of barbaric dispossession,” or neoliberal deprivation of their private properties and capacities by biopolitical control—of the domestic youths (“Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction” 36). In short, while the Japanese case is distinctive, it is also a part of the world’s youth employment problem.

For a long time, critical, cultural and rhetorical scholars explored how our collective subject has changed in response to the change of the capitalist order. For instance, rhetorical scholar Dana Cloud, incorporating traditional Marxist framework, claimed that rhetoric forms a class identity or consciousness, or what she calls “a little class” (“Rhetoric and Economics” 342-343, 356). John Law argued that the prevalence of spreadsheets—the major technology of simplifying management results—in British companies has changed the subjectivity of rank-and-

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Korea, and the United States, to name a few. All of these countries mark above thirty per cent of “completely agree” and above eighty per cent of “mostly agree.”

file employees (29-31). Rhetorical scholar Ronald Greene offered an idea of rhetorical citizens or citizen-rhetorician as an idea to deal with the prevalent neoliberal governmentality, incorporated post-structuralist notions that deal with capitalism as one of technology of governmentality (“Rhetorical Capital” 329-30). Like this, rhetorical and cultural studies have been interested in how our being is concerned with modes of capitalism.

To this line of scholarly endeavor this study can profitably contribute because the subject of Japanese young non-regular workers offers an example of a rhetorical subject influenced by modern capitalist neoliberal forces in a particular way. That is, as Harvey clarifies, the neoliberal influence is shown in the destruction of the prior institutional frameworks, divisions of labor and distributions, and the power to restore the present class hierarchies in exchange of generating more victims (“Neoliberalism as a Creative Destruction” 23, 29-32). As I argue in Chapter 3, behind the contrasting economic tide has been a series of discourses which confirmed and even applauded the “effective” use of young workers for company management while inventing cheap employment contracts. Likewise, Chapter 4 offers an analysis on how activists’ discourses can contest against the present neoliberal public. As such, a rhetorical study to explore politics of subjectivity over capitalist ideology and neoliberal forces should be a case to understand the power relations at large and our politico-rhetorical agencies.

Accordingly, this study attends to public discourses in recessionary Japan, and explores their signifying practices that legitimizes and retains the present socioeconomic orders as well as attempts to subvert them. Guiding this project, the central questions of this study ask: How does discourse within the context of Japan’s economic decline constitute the cultural conditions and employment status of young workers, and how can they challenge the Japanese neoliberal regime?

The remainder of this chapter first provides a short literature review the main theme of this study, Japanese young non-regular workers as a rhetorical subject. Second, I briefly review neoliberal orientations of the society. Third, based on the discussions I propose specific research questions. Fourth, I outline the method of this study. Fifth, I describe how I outline the following chapters.

### **Rhetorical Subject of Young Non-regular Workers**

Like Foucault found in his explorations of sexuality in France, I understand that recent Japanese society has produced a

multiplication of discourses, . . . in the field of exercise of power itself: an institutional incitement to speak about it, and to do so more and more; a determination on the part of the agencies of power to hear it spoken about, and to cause *it* to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail.

*(History of Sexuality Vol. I 18, italics original)*

As this study demonstrates in Chapter 3, there was an absence as well as flood of speaking about young non-regular workers in the last two decades—and both the absence and the discourses have unique effects in terms of the current modality of their collective subject. And, like Foucault’s work, I speculate that their effects—that is, a constitutive power to regulate their agencies, dispose their public subject, and legitimate their economic status—have formed and reformed their status over the recessionary period. In short, I recapitulate the formation of their collective public subject in the field of power.

In exploring discourses and narratives of young non-regular workers, I maintain that rhetoric is material in this particular regard. That is, rhetoric is material in that it constitutively forms and reforms subjects. Following Foucault, Greene argues in “Another Materialist Rhetoric”

essay that rhetorical practices function as the technology of deliberation; that is, rhetorical practices “stabilize meaning by distributing populations, discourses and institutions onto the terrain of a governing apparatus so that a series of judgments might be made about the art of government” (30-31). Thus, with the logic of articulation, rhetoric is significant in terms of “generat[ing] the possibility of rematerializing the political, economic, cultural and affective structures of public deliberation as sites of rhetorical effectivity” (35). Extending the “Another Materialist Rhetoric” essay, Greene later argues that we should provide an understanding “of how the rhetorical subject might exist as one particular mode of subjectification” as a result of articulations “in specific political, cultural or economic directions” (“Rhetorical Materialism” 50). Using Greene’s framework, this study traces how rhetoric is operated to constitute the current subject of Japanese young non-regular workers.

Specifically, I understand “economic discourses,” the discourses and narrative I analyze in this study, as “a form of representational and technological (i.e., ‘cultural’) practice that constitutes the spaces within which economic action is formed and framed” (du Gay and Pryke 2). That is, understanding economic discourses not just as academic discourses of “economics” but more widely as discourses including the “hybrid disciplines” including marketing, accounting, finance and possibly others that, as a whole, offers a reality of the economic status quo as well as authors’ proposals as a countermeasure against it. Also, I take the discourses always interrelated with those in other related realms such as the political and the popular-cultural. Because this view recognizes the discourses as “political, cultural and economic modes of production” in Greene’s terms, or as “particular material-cultural practices” as du Gay and Pryke’s terms, it enables us to understand how the “rationality of economic management” were

formed and how “certain ethical goals” are articulated with it (du Gay and Pryke 3, 10; “Rhetorical Materialism” 49-50).

Accordingly, I understand the subject of contemporary young non-regular workers as their products; that is, as a focal point of discursive units in the political, cultural and above all the economic. With this in mind, this section reviews the following two elements that have affected contemporary young non-regular workers: (1) the promotion of regular working status in post-WWII Japanese working culture; and (2) public surveillance and criticism of young non-regular workers and non-workers in the recessionary public.

Traditionally, the post-WWII Japanese public has had a monolithic understanding of the *seishain* workers as being committed to their company throughout their entire working career. Hence, within the culture of regular workers has existed a strong sense of collectivism, which recognized individualistic behaviors as being egoistic and unforgiven. For instance, Walter Edwards argues that these behaviors are regarded as being “*wagamama*—selfish, heedless of his interdependence with others, unwilling to recognize and accede to constraints that social relations invariably entail” (126) Likewise, Joy Hendry comments that these behaviors may be even regarded as being immature and child-like (58). As a result, sociologist Huiyan Fu concludes that, “given Japan’s reputation as a corporate nation known as ‘Japan.Inc.,’ [or corporate nation] perhaps nowhere is the importance according to *kejime* [the integrity] more paramount than in the Japanese workplace” (4). Similarly, Abegglen and Stalk concur in contending that regular employees work longer, cause less disputes, and remain smaller days of absence than those in other countries (181-83). While, in Chapter 2, I attend more to historical accounts and their present situations, I would like first to confirm that the Japanese working

culture has a special nuance on regular workers that they are obliged to commit themselves to their companies.

The Japanese working culture that preconditions close ties and the motto of eager engagement has transformed the public recognition of young people and young workers in a certain way as the nation found itself in the mire of recession. Yet, we should be conscious about that fact that this new recognition has been constituted gradually over the course of the last twenty years. The recognition has been made possible by particular discourses, some of which are characterized with particular denominations to designate a certain type of generation, being articulated with the public subject of non-regular workers.

Criticisms against young people can happen everywhere in the world. Yet, Japanese criticisms are unique in two ways; the lack of self-reflexivity and the huge quantity of similar kinds of critiques. While I examine the effects of each specific discourse in Chapter 3, I instead introduce their general features briefly. As sociologist Kitada suggests, “many narratives and discourses on youngsters have been produced mostly based on just writers’ impressions [as opposed to with some experimental or intersubjective proof]” (45).<sup>6</sup> Kusayanagi, media scholar, continues to claim that the public subject of young people received an enormous effect from them because it was rearticulated by particular tensions in the discursive spaces in the last two decades (84). Yet, she also notes that many of these narratives commonly shared a similar tone, similar comprehensions on the elements of the social, and similar imageries of young populations. Consequently, Kusayanagi claims that legitimacies of these discourses have been sustained not by solid proofs but by tones and styles of other similar popular narratives. As Kusayanagi continues:

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<sup>6</sup> Translation of Japanese literature is mine unless otherwise stated.

The categorization of <youngsters> has been used very frequently, and there has been a spree of <youngsters> narratives recently. Now actual youngsters are increasingly diverse; they have different characters and hobbies, different degrees of competencies and potentialities. However, this incoherence has not worked to give up discussing the category. Rather, the incoherence has generated further incomprehensibilities of the young people, and boosted more of the similar kinds to emerge in the public. (84)

In these conditions, discourses and narratives that negatively frame young non-regular workers have dramatically increased.

In summary, I reviewed a few key rhetorical conditions concerning young generations and non-regular workers. While I further investigate what it has historically meant to work with a regular status in Chapter 2, and what kind of particular discourses have contributed to the constitution of the particular subject in Chapter 3, this section documented key factors that have produced a particular concern and criticism about Japanese young workers.

### **Literature Review**

This section briefly reviews relevant literature centering neoliberalism; neoliberalism as truth-making regime, neoliberalism in Japan, and neoliberal force against Japanese young non-regular workers. According to David Harvey, neoliberalism, outlined as a set of economic and financial policies “whose fundamental mission was to facilitate conditions for profitable capital accumulation on the part of both domestic and foreign capital,” has been practiced as a political project (*Brief* 7). As such, neoliberalism has been conceived as a set of pro-market policies such as reductions of public investments, privatization of public services, encouragement of market

investments and foreign investors, among others. Accordingly, Argentina, Chile, South Korea, and United Kingdom, to name a few, are said to be the nations which adopted a neoliberal turn.

However, neoliberalism is also recognized as a set of policy frameworks that industrial nations such as the United Kingdom and United States adopted since the 1970s. In this context, neoliberalism is not limited to a set of economic and financial policies, but more fundamentally it is “the new economic policy regime” that sets the economy as “the overwhelming priority for social organization” (Couldry 4). Neoliberalism in this sense signifies the fundamental shift of social and political principles into the realm of the economy—in short, into market-fundamentalism. Accordingly, neoliberalism is conceived as a force to authorize “a quite different approach to politics and economics which saw market competition as their common practical and normative reference-point, which state intervention in the economy now the aberration” (Couldry 4).

With this definition of neoliberalism, critical and cultural scholars have investigated the force of neoliberalism and explored its discursive effects on people.<sup>7</sup> For instance, Henry Giroux claims that the public education within neoliberal America has disabled the function of public education as “bailouts” of lower-class and minority youth (92). Furthermore, Giroux argues that American neoliberal capitalism has been incorporated with “the popular media and, . . . politicians looking for quick-fix solutions to crime, joblessness and poverty,” and reformed the public image of the American lower-class youth (109). The image of the youth, Giroux continues, has been used to “prompt a public rhetoric of fear, control, and surveillance” (109).

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<sup>7</sup> In addition to the works to be reviewed below, please see, for instance, Brown, “Neoliberalism”; Brown, *Undoing*; Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*; Greene, “Rhetorical Capital”; Grossberg, *Cultural Studies*; Juris, *Networking Futures*; and Nakanishi, Yuasa, and Kawazoe.

Therefore, Giroux concludes that they have been the subject of material-rhetorical exploitation by the neoliberal state governance.

Similarly, Wendy Brown traces how the notion of liberal democracy came to be spoiled in neoliberal America and how, as a consequence, American citizens are now governed by neoliberal rationality. Brown argued that neoliberalism has transformed the idea of democracy from political liberty and the equality among the citizens to “the name of the regime, conforming to the neoliberal requirements,” or “a code word” for aggressive attitudes to “non-democratic” countries (“Neoliberalism” 39, 48). Consequently, Brown claims that neoliberal America allowed itself to attend more intently to rhetorics of patriotism and a “permanent state of emergency” at the expense of public spending and welfare (“Neoliberalism” 52). In short, Brown claims that American citizens were rearticulated both by policing by official agents of the state and by neoliberal interpellations.

Similarly, Cloud studied the efforts of rank-and-file employees at Boeing, recognizing neoliberal forces as obstacles of reclaiming their labor rights. Understanding unions as “the paradigm case of the basic paradox in the rhetoric of social change,” Cloud underscores that unions are now increasingly difficult to organize themselves under the “practice of lean, just-in-time production” in which “many workers operate in smaller, isolated groups, without the experience of shop-floor solidarity and the motivation of shared discontent” (*We* 1, 186). Whereas Cloud described a number of new constraints in a time of neoliberalism, unions at Boeing, her focused group of study, were still able to “negotiate meaning, identity, and control between and among employer, union, and union faction” (*We* 2). As a result, Cloud describes that they, despite their different positions and jobs, succeeded in revitalizing their union activity by integrating their common interest and in regaining their collective bargaining rights at the end.

While the effect of neoliberalism has also been studied in Japan, there is not a great amount of scholarship similar to Giroux, Brown and Cloud's works. Structurally, the smaller number of domestic critics—and more broadly speaking, the smaller number of the entire national population—may have contributed to this tendency, or, what Kitada claims “the intellectual laziness” may have been true in case of the studies of neoliberalism. But above all this is due to the fact that neoliberal ideology has become imminent to the nation's life only recently. As Harvey comments that Japan has avoided the effect of neoliberal market-fundamentalism “under the supervision of the US” and thanks to systems of “full employment, economic growth, and the welfare of its citizens,” it was not recognized as a main exigence to the nation's life, at least until the bubble burst (*Brief* 10).

However, neoliberalism as the new policy regime extensively influenced the Japanese citizens since the bubble burst. In the recessionary years that lasted two decades until now, a variety of deregulations and privatizations have been conducted, as the idea of neoliberalism seems to have deeply immersed within the public. Responding to these changes, scholars have sought to understand not only types of neoliberal discourses but also particular types of population effective by this rhetoric. For instance, Hook and Takeda paid attention to epidemic use of the term *jiko-sekinin*, or self-responsibility or personal responsibility over the last decade. Investigating the use of the term in public criticisms against war hostages caught up in the war in Iraq and non-regular workers in domestic Japan, both of which inflicted the blame on the targeted people's “irresponsible” behaviors and actions, Hook and Takeda claim that neoliberal rhetoric that assign extensive burdens and duties is rampant in recent Japan. Consequently, they conclude that at risk is the state's responsibility to guarantee military security and social security

(97). Also, they claim that Japanese citizens are now demanded to “respond to a new normative framework for understanding their own behavior and relationship with the state” (123).

On the latter instance, Hook and Takeda aptly pointed out the neoliberal force that translated non-regular workers’ all the negative consequences into their personal failure. However, their article-length study primarily uses these populations for demonstrating the prevalent discourse of *jiko-sekinin* in contemporary politico-economic circumstances (113-19). Accordingly, whereas their work speculatively suggests a link between neoliberalism and the precarious life of non-regular workers, it does not demonstrate how the rhetorical subject of young non-regular workers has come to be governed by neoliberal power or how the subject can resist this power.

Elsewhere, Takeda points out an increase of neoliberal rhetoric that promotes “effective” use of female working forces. Especially influential to this tendency, Takeda argues, was the rhetoric of Junichiro Koizumi Administration (2001-2006), for it clearly shifted the public image of women, especially married women, from conventional “housekeeping wife/peripheral worker” to potential paid workers as well as tax payers and social security contributors (164). Recognizing this as a neoliberal change, Takeda aptly claims that Japanese (married) women are now under the neoliberal biopolitical control that regulates them into “productive individuals” (165).

Like the works of Giroux, Brown, Cloud, Hook and Takeda and Takeda, I am particularly interested in how the Japanese the neoliberalism has effectuated the subject of young male working forces and their conditions. However, there has been very little academic research that examines this point. Furthermore, this small body of literature has its own limitations. Other than Hook and Takeda, Yoshimasa Nishida understands state discourses as an “ideologue,”

the embodiment of the state order; Yuki Honda's work, while it is far better than Nishida's, treats media discourses exclusively under Althusser's idea of interpellation. While each of these projects describes market-fundamentalist ideas in their own vocabularies, their research frameworks have limitations. On the one hand, Nishida's research directs our attention immediately to the structural—that is, ideological in Marxian sense—elements, for it assumes that the structure has been *already* established as the dominant structure. In this regard, I share Stuart Hall's concern that these kinds of Marxian frameworks tends to treat the class issue “[a]s if there is no way of thinking about it in a more decentred way” (Hall and Chen 401). That is, as Tellmann aptly states the problem differently, Nishida “establish[es], . . . power, conduct, subjectivity and truth as a field clearly distinguishable and set aside from the study of economic relations proper” (9).

On the other hand, Honda emphasizes the Althusserian idea of interpellation in her scrutiny of relations of public discourses and the subject of contemporary young workers. That is, recognizing youth criticisms as interpellations to the subject, she conclusively enroots these articles as the root cause of the formation of social relations. Yet, perhaps due to the limited length of her work, Honda does not enunciate how these discourses were made possible—that is, conditions of enunciation in the particular discursive formation on a particular moment in Japanese capitalism (167-72). While this study does not claim the exceptionality of Foucaultian and other poststructuralist positions, my interest is to understand the formation of the subject within relations between multiple forces.

In this section, I have briefly reviewed studies on neoliberalism, the Japanese effect of neoliberalism, and on Japanese young non-regular workers in neoliberal Japan. In contrast to the global trend, there exists a small number of studies on the discursive effects of the neoliberal

force on Japan; more specifically, the subject of young non-regular workers has not been thoroughly explored from this particular perspective. Therefore, this study, deploying a Foucaultian lens, attempts to explore the effects of neoliberal forces on recent young non-regular workers in Japan as well as these workers' possibilities and limits to resist these discourses.

### **Research Questions**

Concerning these particular economic and cultural conditions affecting young workers in recessionary Japan, sociologist Kitada comments that public opinions and criticisms on the Japanese youth are the products of “intellectually lazy” people (45). Accordingly, he makes the following suggestion to intellectuals:

It seems to be possible to disarticulate the social rationality that tends to accept the false beliefs [within these works], and contemplate to revise the cultural status quo. Especially on snobbish ones, we [intellectuals] all need to think about this affordability. (45)

Incited by Kitada's call, and given the limitations in previous research on Japanese youth, I pose the following three research questions:

- (1) Under what kind of governing apparatus is the subject of young Japanese non-worker generated and transformed?
- (2) How has the current negative nuances regarding young non-regular workers been cultivated?
- (3) And how, if possible, can current efforts of civil activism contest the negative nuances given their public rhetorical subject and struggle with the dominant neoliberal power?

Setting each of these three questions as overall questions in the following three chapters, this study delves into formations and reformations of the subject of young non-regular workers.

### **Method**

This study is advanced with a central argument that the Japanese post-bubble “democracy” has evolved by the generation of consent via fear and anxiety. We can understand this as a form of neoliberal “crisis management,” in which crises are generated, or, as in the current economic recessions worldwide, in which the state effectively exploits citizens by procuring consent for the privatizations of public institutions, deregulations of employee protections and for the abandonment of welfare protections.<sup>8</sup> Yet, the Japanese post-WWII neoliberalization has been conducted in its own way in their post-WWII culture; it has its own origins, processes and effects. And in the end this study aims to illuminate the subject of young non-regular workers as a focal point of the neoliberalization of Japanese capitalism.

Critical analysis is a method for disentangling the subject of contemporary Japanese young non-regular workers. In conducting the analysis this section clarifies how the study is advanced. First, I outline the study’s basic research framework, a genealogical analysis, and explain how I incorporate the notion of ideology with it. Second, I explain how I operate Althusserian and Foucaultian frameworks to understand the ecompany ideology as well as the subject of young non-regular workers. Third, I explain the choice of texts for the analyses in the following chapters.

***Understanding Ideology and Discourse.*** This study scrutinizes the structure of Japanese post-WWII capitalist structure, while investigating its effects to and relations with the formation of subject by discourses and narratives. Because the latter is my central focus, I use Michel Foucault’s genealogy to understand the development and change of public discourse about Japanese youth, modes of policing them, and the ways the public subject may be struggled by activist efforts. As explained by Foucault, genealogy is

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<sup>8</sup> For instance, see Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*; Beck; Couldry; and Tyler.

an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework. And this is, . . . a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objectives etc., without having to make a reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history. (“Truth and Power” 117)

Thus, genealogy is an inquiry into the constitutive process of a given subject from a historico-cultural perspective. With keen attention to the “historically analyzable practice” of discourses, genealogy is able to uncover discursive practices that make up the present status of the targeted subject (Foucault, “On the Genealogy of Ethics” 369).

Foucault also contends that the subject appears “historically in articulation” when he claimed that subject is a historical construct; a subject existing at a certain point in time innately takes over its past experience, and also that the present subject guidelines the possibility of the subject in future (*Religion and Culture* 165-66). That is, the present subject is “the point where rules of conduct come together and register themselves in the form of memories”; and at the same time it is “the point of departure for actions more or less in conformity with these rules” (*Religion and Culture* 166). Like Foucault, I understand that the subject of young non-regular workers in post-bubble Japan takes over some elements from their past images.

More specifically on the practice of signification in regards with cultural politics, I borrow from Stuart Hall’s notion of articulation. Specifically when Hall discussed an “essential black female subject,” he argues that a subject is essentially a category constructed in the politics of categorizations and public recognitions. Therefore, the subject is the result of confronted meanings. Hall claims that

the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities, . . . compose the category “black”: that is, the recognition that “black” is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed trans-cultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in nature. . . . The end of the essential black subject also entails a recognition that the central issues of race always appear historically in articulation, information with other categories and divisions and are constantly crossed and recrossed by the categories of class, of gender, and ethnicity. (“New Ethnicities” 443-44, italics original)

Like Hall’s explanation of the “black female subject” above, I conceive the formation and reformation of the subject of Japanese young non-regular workers. That is, “he/she” with young non-regular working status is not essentially fixed to his/her physical body or present legal working status, nor does “he/she” comprise a consistent or unitary identity out of it. Rather, “he/she” is within the politics of identification where multiple discourses of economy, legislation, and culture confront and configure with each other. As a result, as Raymond William said, a subject is put into “some convenient formula” and is interpreted by the public; the formula will hold” and the group “become capitalized” in the order of hegemony (319).

A possible objection to using Foucault’s genealogical approach is that it is not properly suited to study economic culture or the political economy, since Foucault was primarily interested in non-economic systems like institutions that governed mental disorders, criminality, or sexuality. On this concern, Nancy Fraser provides a response by explaining how the flexibility of power in post-Fordist economy can be assessed with a Foucaultian approach. For

Fraser, this new form of society can “be profitably analyzable” through Foucault because his methodology allows critics to observe how “power operates as neoliberal logic (167-70). Accordingly, an individual citizen in modern capitalism, as Fraser further explains, is “[a] subject of (market) choice and a consumer of services” that leads to a kind of self-regulation and governmentality (168). As Fraser continues,

this individual is obliged to enhance her quality of life through her own decisions. In this new “care of the self” everyone is an expert on herself, responsible for managing her own human capital to maximal effect. In this respect, the fordist project of self-regulation is continued by other means. (168)

As the “other means” of dominance, capitalist biopolitics has reformed citizens into “flexible selves” obliged to govern themselves in accordance to market-fundamentalist logic. This mode of governmentality, according to Fraser, forces individuals to reform themselves according to the “postfordist model of subjectification” (168). Foucault also anticipated this form of the power in post-Fordist capitalism when he claimed that the economy should be understood in relation to the formation of state rationalities:

[e]conomic reason does not replace *raison d'État*, but it gives it a new content and so gives new forms to state rationality. A new governmentality is born with the *économistes* more than a century after the appearance of that other governmentality in the seventeenth century. The governmentality of the *politiques* gives us police, and the governmentality of the *économistes* introduces us, I think, to some of the fundamental lines of modern and contemporary governmentality. (*Security, Territory, Population* 348)

As Foucault elaborates elsewhere, the economy is a critical concept “even in its theoretical formulation, inasmuch as (and only inasmuch as, but this is clearly a great deal) it points to the government where it had to go to find the principle of truth of its own governmental practice” (*The Birth of Biopolitics* 32). Therefore, utilizing Foucault’s framework enables me to examine the relationship between economic reasons and the constitution of Japanese young workers.

Additionally, genealogy does not merely attempt to unveil the dominant structure or the ruling ideology. By focusing on the constitutive process of a subject, it also illuminates the struggle between domination and resistance, conflicts and confrontations of discursive practices, and the constitution of the subject out of these processes. As Foucaultian scholar Jeff Nealon explains,

subjective phenomenological experience constitutes both the meaning of the present and any possible set of relations to the past. If nothing else holds it together, Foucault’s work sets out to disrupt ‘the promise that one day the subject—in the form of historical consciousness—will once again be able to appropriate, to bring back under its sway, all those things that are kept at a distance by difference and find in what might be called his abode. (16)

In Foucault’s own terms, genealogy “consists of analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategies” (“The Subject and Power” 780). More specifically to the idea of resistance, he remarks that “resistances are in no way external to power, a mere reaction or revolt. Power relations are not a series of binary conflicts, but a mobile network of struggle” (Shiner 390). “As a chemical catalyst,” says Foucault, resistance “brings to light power relations, locate their position, and find our point of application and methods used”; so investigating forms of resistance also serve “to understand what power relations are about” (“Subject and Power” 780).

Accordingly, investigating effects of (re)appropriation and rhetorics of resistance under this framework serves to uncover the preexisting power/knowledge/truth from outside. Therefore, this study, by uncovering both the mechanism of domination in Chapter 3 and the possibility/limit of resistance discourses in Chapter 4, attempts to provide “a better story of an other world” on young non-regular workers in recent, post-bubble Japan (Grossberg “On the Political Responsibilities” 244).

While my primary focus is to understand the status of young non-regular workers, I also try to unveil the ideological formation of Japanese post-WWII capitalism, for it substantially contributed to form what is now known as corporate citizenship in Japanese culture. Because it provided specific negative meanings with non-regular working status, Chapter 2 scrutinizes structural features of Japanese post-WWII capitalism evolved by the idea of *kaisha-shugi*, or companyism, and how it characterized rights to and adequate, minimum standard of living in light of western nations’ debate over welfare statism versus libertarianism in the post-WWII period. In order to understand the politics of articulation between the state capitalism and the subject formation of the standard Japanese nations, I use Louis Althusser’s ideas of interpellation and ideological state apparatus. This is because Althusser offers a clear scheme on how the material (privileged status of *seishain* workers and family roles) is interpellated (i.e., called out) by the ideal (Japanese post-WWII capitalism). That is, discourses for breadwinning father’s employment status are more clearly outlined as “the realization of an ideology” of Japanese capitalist structure, existing as “an apparatus, and its practice, or practices” (Althusser 125-126). In the remainder of the study where I focus on discourses and narratives of young non-regular workers proper, however, I use Foucaultian framework of genealogy because it is a useful means to track the articulation of subjects. That is, it offers a more meticulous conceptual vocabulary

over the constitution of, stabilization of, and struggles over the subject of young non-regular workers.

**Procedures.** In this part I explain how I operate Althusserian and Foucaultian frameworks to analyze the topics of this study. In Japanese post-WWII culture, a capitalist structure that legitimated *seishain* status has long functioned as what Louis Althusser would call an ideological construct. In short, this is what domestic economic scholars and the public called as *kaisha-shugi*, or companyism. According to economist Baba, companyism is “a trinity of life-long employment, seniority system, and enterprise-based unions” (*Shin Shihonshugi* 321-23). Nomura continues to comment that these three systems have increased their presence so much in the domestic culture that they were frequently compared with the “three sacred weapons,” three of the powerful symbols that enabled the Emperor’s reign in the oldest myth of Japan (*Koyō Fuan* 68). Furthermore, Baba does not limit the scope of companyism to systems and status of employment, welfare programs and the form of unions. With the national government’s consistent growth-based economic policies and huge public investments, these three systems effectively linked major elements of social structure and circulated capitals, and they together “formed a particular mode of consciousness in our everyday life,” claims Baba (*Shin Shihonshugi* 320).

Therefore, Althusserian framework of interpellation is useful as far as it is concerned with how Japanese capitalism is operated to form male workers’ norm of attaining *seishain* status, because it is what Althusser would call the “constitutive category” that the Japanese capitalist ideology has legitimated (129). That is, it has long been the “logos”—or the meaning that warranted the primary obviousness—of Japanese capitalist ideology which situated Japanese male workers in *seishain* status (129). Actually, Baba says that companyism represents a

“typical mentality of Japanese [regular *seishain*] workers” because it embodies their expectation to companies, while it demands workers to meet workload to maintain good productivities (*Shin Shihonshugi* 322; “Gendai” 63). Wedded with masculine, hard-working and bread-winning father’s role, *seishain* status has been consolidated over the post-WWII Japan.

Whereas I develop this study under this framework until I outline the relations of *seishain* working status to Japanese capitalism, my focus shifts to the politics over the subject of young non-regular workers. At this point, I conceive the subject not as a mere negative reflection of the companyism ideology but within a constitutive process in the matrix of political, legal and economic formations against recessionary trend. This is because the subject of young non-regular workers has not been configured by “highly structured” ideological formations, or with social relations alone (Althusser 132); rather, as Greene explains with Foucaultian framework, it has been outlined within the multiple and multi-dimensional relations with the economic, political and the cultural; in other words, it is “fluid, playful, antagonistic, and flexible” as well as it has been “cultivated” within the last twenty years Japan (“Rhetorical Materialism” 51-52). That is, I conceive the subject as a point of struggles between the preexisting economic culture—formerly a “ruling ideology” in Althusserian framework—and opposing viewpoints including activist rhetorics. At this point, I reconceptualize the Althusserian interpellation, as Greene says, “as the cumulative effect of a process of (re)iteration and citationality” and recapitulate the companyism ideology not as “the ruling” of the meaning of young non-regular workers but as an instance or a reference point in the politics of meanings (“Rhetorical Materialism” 47).

Materially, I conceive the rhetorical subject of young non-regular workers as a construct of biopower, or the power “to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death” (*History of Sexuality*

*Vol. I* 138). Because non-regular workers have been constrained in terms of far smaller amount of salary and limited access to employment security and welfare services, I understand that they have been inserted bodies into the machinery of their own capitalist structure by the Japanese capitalism's biopolitical control (Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol. I* 140-41). Particularly, whereas they have been a means of maintaining and legitimizing the present hegemonic order of companyism centering *seishain* regular workers, they were also functioned as a "factor of segregation and social hierarchization, exerting their influence on the respective forces of both these movements, guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony" (Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol. I* 141). That is, whereas young non-regular workers have been called "a new class,"<sup>9</sup> they are also the result of, as Foucault says, "the *ratio* for the exercise of the power," as power controls and regulates the landscape of the class boundaries as we see them now ("Power and Strategies" 142).

In summary, I approach the rhetorical subject of young non-regular workers as shaped and recast by the Japanese domestic regime, neoliberal discourse, and policies of employment and labor relations, and with public discourses. In short, the study attempts to understand how the subject has been cultivated in the post-bubble, recessionary domestic culture and how the subject may be possible to resist against the dominant neoliberal order.

**Method Choice.** In advancing the analysis as I outlined in the above section, I pay critical attentions to relevant documents. In Chapter 2, where the "trinity of life-long employment, seniority system, and enterprise-based unions" is outlined, I use literature of economists and historians (Baba, *Shin Shihonshugi* 321-23). After that, I highlight a feature of the companyism ideology in light of the notion of minimum, adequate standard of living. In order to point out the

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<sup>9</sup> For instance, see Slater.

vacuum of these notions as civic rights in domestic Japan, the study interrogates the rhetoric of *Ohira Sōri no Seisaku Kenkyū Kai Hōkoku Sho*, or *Masayoshi Ohira's Proposal: To Evolve the Global Society*, a large report of the national status quo and future published in 1980. Released after the era of high growth rate and industrialization, the *Proposal* offers an idea of stability as a character of the domestic society and suggested it as a replacement with the absence of the notion of economic equalities among all members of the society. Because the *Proposal* remarks a critical turning point for ideological functions of companyism and consequences of financially disadvantaged workers including young non-regular workers, I choose it as a text of analysis here.

In Chapters 3 and 4, where the focus is rather the politics of articulations of young non-regular workers, I turn my attention to discourses on the realms of the public and the popular. Japanese mass media scholars, however, recognize that the domestic media has rarely fulfilled the role of deliberating public issues and exploring the common goodness of the nation (e.g., Hayashi; Katsura; Matsumoto and Aonuma; Wolferen). Please recall sociologist Kitada's comment that many works of youth culture and youth employment have reused the same, already-accepted baseline assumptions and reiterated the same negatively-constructed images of them. Furthermore, Katsura, media scholar, contends that "now the sense of self-discipline and autonomy is even more attenuated against market fundamentalism. Recent journalism should be remarked by low-quality products and the deterioration of public culture" (97). Hayashi, professor of journalism and media studies, continues that "beyond utilitarianism and already shared 'national concerns,' Japanese mass media, . . . do not equip with good ethics of journalism" (31). Therefore, it is the general tendency of the domestic mass media to pick easily digested contents and to frame them in already-informed patterns.

For this reason, I attempt a deliberate choice of texts. Because it needs to reflect not just dominant and ruling ideologies but also counter-ideological statements, I use a set of articles on the domestic economy, labor relations, youth culture and young workers in *Nihon no Ronten*, or *Issues of Japan*, annually published companions on major issues of the nation targeting general readers in Chapter 3. Released since 1992, *Nihon no Ronten* has published a wide range of opinions on political, economic, diplomatic, historical and cultural issues in about seven hundred fifty page volume. That is, *Nihon no Ronten* recapitulates major public topics each year. Particularly unique of *Nihon no Ronten* is that all individual articles have conformed to a couple of common rules: (1) that sole-authored opinion article is consisted of four-page long<sup>10</sup>; and (2) that multiple articles on the same topic, in most cases with oppositional or different viewpoints, are followed by a two-page “Dēta Fairu [Data File]” article which provides background knowledge, additional information, summary statements of prior discussions and debates, and related and offshoot issues.

That is, *Nihon no Ronten* has tried to maintain objective perspective in order to inform critical issues in Japanese society from multiple viewpoints. Actually, the first, 1992 volume’s preface declares its main objective as follows:

Currently, our preexisting values have been changing drastically. In order to understand issues of public controversies and to foresee the nation’s future, *Nihon no Ronten* will publish articles written by top figures of and/or persons directly involved in the given topic. (n.p.)

While *Nihon no Ronten*, like many other public and popular sources, is “always-already trapped” by the domestic regime of truth and knowledge, it still tracks how counter-hegemonic discourses

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<sup>10</sup> A few articles in the early 1990s consist of six pages.

have been positioned and repositioned within the book (*History of Sexuality, Vol. I* 83). So, by using it with other relevant “primary sources” for individual purposes set within Chapter 3, I aim at extracting the formations of public realities, sentiments and ethical standards. In short, I choose *Nihon no Ronten* because it best tries to recapitulate major voices on both (or more) sides of the same, major issues in the domestic public.

In Chapter 4, I draw upon two rhetorics of activists to counter the present negative nuances of young non-regular workers. In contrast to the standard of choosing *Nihon no Ronten* in Chapter 3, I choose activists and their works rather simply; that activists are most outspoken in domestic Japan, that they address the problem most deeply, and that they adopt very different rhetorical styles. By using these works as a point of departure from which to think about material and rhetorical conditions of young non-regular workers, I analyze how their rhetorics can and cannot challenge the present order of neoliberal Japan. The first work is activist Makoto Yuasa’s book *Han-Hinkon*, or *Anti-Poverty*. Released in 2008, the book was rather well received, as it earned two prominent prizes in Japan. One award was for contributions to Japan’s study of economics, international relations, political science, and sociology; and the other was from the Peace and Cooperative Journalist Fund, an annually awarded prize for the most prominent book in domestic and international peace studies and/or cooperative act for global citizenry. Therefore, *Han-Hinkon* is not only his best known work, but it is also known as one of the best sources to understand the domestic problem of peripheral workers in Japan. As is well expected from the domestic reactions to the book, it is written in a traditional and experimental style on why non-regular workers have been deprived and what kind of supports are needed.

The other is Karin Amamiya’s book, *Ikisasero!*, a cry or shout meaning “Don’t Kill Us!” or “Give Us the Right to Live!”. Combined with the subtitle—*Nanmin Ka Suru Wakamono*

*Tachi*, or Young Generation Becoming Refugees—the title succinctly explains the book’s central claim while highlighting the younger portion of the non-regular working population. Because the book was initially published in hard cover in 2007 and then in paperback in 2010, *Ikisasero!* enjoyed a fairly long-term presence in many book stores.<sup>11</sup> Like Yuasa’s *Han-Hinkon*, Amamiya’s book also received Japan Congress of Journalists’ Annual Book Award in 2007. Furthermore, multiple critics accolade this work for representing their sense of anger and frustrations in a style easily accessible to general readers.<sup>12</sup> Overall, the book received high praise, while it was written in a highly performative style.

In summary, this study combines Althusser’s framework of interpellation and Foucault’s genealogy. With Althusser, I try to unveil how the ideology of Japanese post-WWII capitalist distribution structure was consolidated. With Foucault, I explore how post-bubble Japan repositioned the subject of young non-regular workers by reading *Nihon no Ronten* and how the repositioned subjectivity has been challenged by analyzing two activists’ works.

### **Chapter Outline**

In order to advance this study, I set up my contents into four chapters. Chapter 2 firstly describes the systematic and architectural elements of Japanese post-WWII corporate ideology. The Chapter secondly shifts our attention to socio-economic characters of the Japanese capitalist hegemony whether it guaranteed the idea of adequate standard of living as rights of all Japanese citizens. In order to interrogate this, the Chapter reviews the debate of welfare statism versus laissez-faire capitalism in western nations. Based on the discussion, the rhetoric of *Masayoshi Ohira’s Proposal* is examined if and how already-industrialized Japan in 1980 described the

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<sup>11</sup> Like the publication of English books, the release of *bunko* or paperback version after hard-cover edition is by itself an honor for many writers because it means that publishers acknowledged the book for wider circulation.

<sup>12</sup> See Kang Sang-jung’s comment on the postscript of *Ikisasero!* (331); and Kazutomo Goto (42).

contour of their ideology of companyism and attempted to use it for the future of the citizens' economic life. In the end, the Chapter 2 claims that the idea of minimum standard of living has been scarce as citizens' rights, and that the Japanese citizens have imagined the idea of adequate standard of living merely as an outcome of stable economic growth resulted from their unique capitalist structure. I also claim that, as a consequence, the masculine and heterosexual norm that male workers attain a *seishain* status and fulfill a bread-winning role in the family was consolidated.

Chapter 3 analyzes how the contemporary subject of young non-regular workers has been formed in recessionary Japan. Based on the analysis of the systematic and historical conditions revealed in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 interrogates how post-bubble discourses articulated the subject of young non-regular workers. To conduct this analysis, I choose relevant articles on *Nihon no Ronten*, or *Issues of Japan*, as the main text of criticism. By analyzing discourses of domestic economic climate and related topics (i.e., economic measures, layoffs of middle- and old-aged regular workers, and deregulation policies and reforms) and the discourses of both working and non-working young people, I track how the domestic discursive unities have framed and defined young people/young workers. In the end, I argue that domestic media has fabricated the public imagery of young non-regular workers in the way that their precarious and disposable status was legitimated for the convenience of slow economy and the need of flexible working forces in post-industrial Japan.

Chapter 4 draws upon rhetorics and performances of domestic activists on the issue of young precarity from which to think about the malleability and strength of Japanese contemporary neoliberal order. The first half of the Chapter examines Makoto Yuasa's book *Han-Hinkon* and his civic and official (bureaucratic) performance in light of characters of

Japanese neoliberal order. The second half examines Karin Amamiya's book *Ikisaseo!*, centering how her rhetoric attempts to transform the present negative senses attached to young precarious workers. In the end, I argue that each of these activists has their own difficulty in making their political claims legitimate against hegemonic order. I finish this study in Chapter 5 with some concluding observations.

In summary, this study seeks to uncover the historical, cultural and rhetorical reasons that have justified cruel material and rhetorical treatments to contemporary young generations.

## CHAPTER 2 STABILITY IN THE ABSENCE OF EQUALITY: A REVIEW OF COMPANYISM IN POST-WWII JAPANESE ECONOMIC CULTURE

Japan's gross national product has already reached 15%-16% of the combined GNP of the OECD member countries and around 10% of that of the entire world, including the socialist countries. The U.S. economy appears likely to remain stagnant for some time to come. By contrast, assuming that North-South relations remain stable, Japan's economy will no doubt enjoy a growth rate higher than that in the United States, although it will suffer a blow from the second oil crisis. As a result, it is quite likely that Japan will overtake the United States in terms of per capita GNP at some point in the 1980s. The reason behind this differential in economic growth is a gap in productivity increases. With a higher productivity increase rate, Japanese manufactured products will by and large be more competitive on the international market, and Japanese exports will continue to expand faster than U.S. exports. In this sense the positions of the the[sic] two economies are being reversed, and this itself will entail difficult psychological problems.

Jiyū Minshu Tō [Liberal Democratic Party]. *Ohira Sōri no Seisaku Kenkyū Kai Hōkoku Sho* [*Masayoshi Ohira's Proposal: To Evolve the Global Society*]. Tokyo: Jiyū Minshu Tō Kōhō Inkai Shuppan Kyoku [Liberal Democratic Party's Publishing Department], 1980. Print. 323.<sup>13</sup>

Japanese people have described its post-WWII history gloriously, most typically with the accomplishment of being the number two economy of the world in a very short period of the time. This story begins in the early 1950s after the WWII devastation of commercial and

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<sup>13</sup> The translation of Jiyū Minshu Tō's *Ohira Sōri* is from its English version, Nagatomi eds.

industrial infrastructures in almost all major cities when industrial production plummeted to less than ten per cent of the mid-1930s (Hoshino 3). As you can see in the epigraph above, the story reached its climax in the 1980s. The story is typically endorsed by foreign acclaim of the performance of the national economy. For instance, Japanologists James Abegglen and George Stalk commented that,

In a *Forbes* listing of the largest 200 non-US corporations, 61 were Japanese; in a *Fortune* listing of the largest 500 non-US industrial corporations, 146 were Japanese, while 28 of the 100 largest commercial banking companies outside the United States were Japanese, including the top four. (3)

Articulated with these overseas evaluations, the story of economic revival legitimized and glorified the state and the private ecosystem of capitalism.<sup>14</sup>

Understanding the Japanese capitalist system as a hegemonic order of capital distributions, employment contracts and norms, Chapter 2 examines how it has been organized. Because much of the distributional system as well as the company conventions were framed after the political and economic renovations following the WWII, the main task of this chapter is to investigate post-WWII Japanese state policies of capital distribution, private company distribution, and welfare policies. In this chapter, rather than studying specific discourses about young non-regular workers, I aim at exploring the broader logic and the articulation of the art of governing; that is, I search for what has enabled a specific mode of discourses and narratives on family life, industrial structure, and labor relations, and regulated them.

To do this, I divide this chapter into two primary parts. First, I outline the major elements of the norm by calling it *kaisha-shugi*, or companyism. This section describes relevant structural

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<sup>14</sup> Besides Abegglen and Stalk, See, for instance, Vogel, 131-57.

elements of companyism outlined by scholars of economics, history and political science. Each element is a set of standards drawn from laws, rules and customs in post-WWII Japanese working culture. Second, I attempt to illuminate companyism from another perspective in order to understand how the Japanese society has realized workers' rights and freedom. The way of doing this is a critical reading of *Masayoshi Ohira's Proposal*—a governmental document published in 1980 when Japan was already industrialized and achieved the economic stability—in light of the western idea of welfare statism (e.g., Rawls). By that, I aim at pointing out a possible alternative to welfare statist's idea of distributive justice and equality.

To be clear, I organize the second section in this way, assuming that companyism as an ideological apparatus constructed unique notions on what workers are allowed and obliged to do in a different way from western nations, which is most typically demonstrated in discussions of welfare statism and laissez-faire capitalism in western nations. Given the objective of this study, this study is particularly interested in understanding if Japanese working culture endorsed a notion equivalent to John Rawls' idea of distributional justice and equality of all citizens of the society, and if not so, what kind of rights, freedom and future visions Japanese corporate culture has allowed to Japanese citizens. To this end, I hope to prove that, even though Fordist industrialization and social system based on it were experienced by both many western nations and Japan, Japanese working culture severely lacked the sense of distributional justice and equality as civic rights, while a doxastic belief that Japan is a super-stable society and keeps economic growth served as a pseudo-alternative—that is, as an idea that citizens would be able to spend their life in their non-productive periods.

### **Systematic Elements of Companyism: Tax Distribution, Company Wages and Welfare**

Critics have called unique Japanese company structures as well as its enormous effects to the formation of Japan's post-WWII society *kaisha-shugi*, or companyism. Economist Baba, for instance, defines the former sense of companyism as “a trinity of life-long employment, seniority system, and enterprise-based unions” (*Shin Shihonshugi* 321-23). Baba continues to claim that these three systems effectively linked major elements of social structure, and they together “formed a particular mode of consciousness in our everyday life,” (*Shin Shihonshugi* 320). Therefore companyism represents a “typical mentality of Japanese [regular *seishain*] workers” because it embodies the workers’ expectation to their companies, while it demands workers to meet workload to maintain good productivities (*Shin Shihonshugi* 322; “Gendai” 63). In short, companyism as an ensemble of conventional rules and customs in corporate, family, and state levels in post-WWII Japan. While it has been developed and maintained throughout approximately the last sixty years, the political and legal frameworks and rules and conventions were invented in an early period of the post-WWII era, that is, in the era of the Bretton Woods system that pegged a US dollar to 360 yen, Fordist industrialism, high tariff rates, and rapid economic growth (Baba, *Shin Shihonshugi* 28-30; Nomura, *Koyō Fuan* 18-19). Actually, economic scholar Masaru Kaneko finds that each element’s basic patterns started as conventional rules in several companies in key domestic industries around this time—financing, light manufacturing, and publishing. Thus, Kaneko claims that the idea of companyism started in a very small scale, by national leading, elitist companies while it rapidly spread nationwide as a model of good company management (125-30). And as I claim later, even though both global economic order and domestic industrial structures and economic trends have significantly changed since then, a large part of the systematic elements has survived until now. In this tenacity, I view an ideological-hegemonic aspect of companyism.

In order to understand systematic features of companyism, this first section starts with highlighting its major systematic elements. I organize this section based on historian Takahara's emphasis on the role of long-time ruling party's political framework, still incorporating Baba's list of the three elements of companyism, "life-long employment, seniority system and unions divided by industrial sectors" (*Shin Shihonshugi* 321-23). Accordingly, I divide this part into three subdivided portions. Firstly, I explain companyism from the perspective of governmental policies of capital distribution. Specifically, I look at the way that the post-WWII Japanese national government organized frameworks of basic economic policies and distribution of national tax incomes. Secondly, I explore the influence of individual private companies to employees and their families by explicating the impact of their conventions and rules on wage, employment contract and services. To this end, I attempt to articulate the symbolic meaning of companyism to citizens' life. Thirdly, I delve into the effect of companyism on Japanese welfare policies. By these discussions, this section aims at describing major elements of Japanese capitalist order, which should serve as a basis of the analysis in the second section of this chapter.

***Liberal Democratic Party's Redistribution Model.*** After defeat in the WWII, Japan was put under the Allied occupation until 1952; with the Allied occupation force, the newly formed democratic government started to rebuild the nation. While Japan soon started to experience economic growth, behind this growth was a sequence of procurement booms due to events such as the Korean War, Tokyo Olympic Games, and the Vietnam War. These events happened within a very short period of time between the early 1950s and the late 1960s, and they significantly increased the demand for various products from living wares and home appliances to industrial goods. The model that this section describes in this section is organized to meet these demands and maximize the benefits.

The long-time ruler Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was formed soon after the defeat. Since then, the LDP has consistently occupied the majority in both Houses of the Diet, produced most of the Prime Ministers in the entire post-WWII period, and therefore implemented most of the nation's political, economic and diplomatic measures. Accordingly, I refer to the LDP's distribution model as part of the LDP's Keynesian economic policy framework that primarily aimed at reviving the domestic industry and a variety of infrastructures. Setting it as one of the key features, this section explains the basic organization of the model.

The LDP's model has been effectively organized to maximize the growth of industrial infrastructures, and this is unique in terms of the relations between the governments and industrial sectors and companies. The basic framework of the model was organized when, upon the revision of the US-Japan security pact in 1960, the government determined to abandon the possibility of rearmament and focused on expanding their soft power. In this time, Primer Hayato Ikeda (1960-1964) and the former Minister of International Trade and Industry proposed what is now known as the Income-Doubling Plan. The Plan intended to boost domestic demand, enlarge job openings, and eventually multiply citizen's average incomes and develop the nation.

The Plan itself did not witness a notable effect and the execution of the Plan was not completed under Ikeda administration. However, his basic tenet of prioritizing economy was taken over by following Primers. As a result, Ikeda's ambitious plan was by and large realized in Japan; it significantly raised the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), enabled Japan to become one of the advanced industrial nations, and allowed Japan to gain a solid international presence and credibility as a country which achieved the so-called economic miracle.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> By international presence and credibility, I mean Japan's appearance and roles in international meetings such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, and

The LDP's model is made of several key components, including the nation's key industries, allocations of major companies to their main industrial areas, focusing the distribution of tax revenues as a part of public investment, and networking these areas with transportations (Baba *Shin Shihonshugi* 35-89; Takahara "Sengo" 55-62). Firstly, the LDP set key industrial sectors and allocated them in Japanese major cities and industrial areas. For example, auto manufacturing factories in what they now call Toyota City, Aichi prefecture, heavy industries in Tohoku—northern part of the main island—and Kyushu—the south western island of Japan—are a few instances that the Plan encouraged to develop. Whereas the state encouraged their growth by preferential treatments such as low interest tax rating and subsidies, it at the same time tried to develop a system that absorbs as many workers as possible in these industries and secure their positions. In order to realize the above market-oriented growth plans and the protection of companies and employees, the government invented a system that encourage competitions among major companies, while simultaneously allow the risk of individual companies' financial bankruptcy. The system was realized by segmenting companies according their businesses, allocating banking companies to each segment for investment, and by prohibiting both companies and banks from mingling with the other sector. For instance, companies in steel industry were not allowed to make electronic products, or a banking business assigned to steel industry could not invest other unrelated industries. Each of the segments protected companies from the threat of vulture investors and sudden newcomers, allowing for predictable future balances. Thus, "free" competition has been encouraged only among the designated companies.

This system, so-called *gosō sendan hōshiki*, or the convoy system, has guaranteed much safer competitions among designated companies because they have the same rivals and because

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G6 (later G7 and G8) and the United Nations. I also mean the capital hegemony of the Japanese corporations indicated by the rise of the global GDP ranking, the world corporation rankings.

it makes financial remedies easier (120-25). The term convoy system is a metaphor that use the idea of a navy convoy that brings important goods—in this case, the management of major companies of the industry and their employee securities—with the protections of battleships, destroyers and cruisers—or in this case, the association with and protection offered by governmental orders, financial corporations and smaller companies (Murakami 122-30). The government found it useful not only because it can protect the major industries but also because the government can easily trace—and if necessary, regulate and control—the flow of investments within the segment. Additionally, the government found it favorable for their state-led economic packages because they can regulate new entries into the financial and banking sectors. In this way, the state constructed a sustainable structure between banks, big companies and smaller companies in major industrial sectors. With these protections, the state launched a number of growth plans that spotlighted key industries and concentrated the national revenue on them through public investments (Murakami 130-31).

Along with these industrial developments, the government was prompted to connect these cities with modern transportation systems. As the local towns and cities have developed their industrial products, the former Transportation Minister Kakuei Tanaka administration (1972-1974) boosted the state-owned (but later privatized) transportation infrastructure project, which had been stopped during the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games and preceded to its completion afterwards (Oguma 240). Specifically, Primer Tanaka prompted the government to finalize the projects of inter-prefectural highways and trains. Even though Tanaka left the administration before his proposed plan was finished, his proposal was taken over by later Prime Ministers, and the state successfully connected the major cities with strong transportation infrastructure towards the end of the 1970s (Shinkawa 96; Takahara *Gendai Nihon* 112).

In short, the LDP quickly organized a basic structure of free-market competition. The Party targeted key industries and injected public investments to its targeted industries, and enabled quick and at the same time stable and safe growths. As a result, the LDP succeeded in establishing fair credibility and popularity from the majority of the nation, creating the myth that the model can bring about fair capital to the end of the hierarchy, from the major to the minor, from the urban to the rural, and from elite companies to middle-sized and small-sized companies.

What famous historian Hobsbawm once called the “mixed economy”—the mixture of state regulation and free market competition emerged in the twentieth century—has some varieties. Yet, the Japanese version of a mixed economy would be peculiar in terms of an ambivalent role of the government. While the government took a strong initiative on determining the main players in free competition by the sequencing of public investments, the government merely played the role of an observer in terms of overseeing the trickle-down to the end of the social hierarchy: The actual distribution to the people, in other words, was determined by individual companies. This ambivalence is what characterizes the LDP’s in the structure of companyism and redistribution model.

***Japanese Company Management Model.*** Unlike the last section where I described the basic capital flow from the state to companies, this section tries to show the dynamics regarding the capital flow from companies to employees. During this process, I claim that the capital flow here is not merely the flow of money and other resources but I attempt to demonstrate that it formed particular public values in companies, more specifically in belonging to companies with formal membership, that is, with regular *seishain* status. I hope to claim toward the end of this part that that this particular relation is enabled by the model.

In a word, Japanese company management enabled what Abegglen called “life-time commitment” (13).<sup>16</sup> What Abegglen captures by this word is not only the long-term contract I review later, but also the closeness of relations between companies and married, male regular workers and their family members. In explaining why such close, harmonious and long-term relations were possible on a mass scale, scholars agree that life-time employment, the seniority system, and the enterprise union played significant roles.

To contemporary audience, especially non-Japanese, the first two of the three—life-time employment and the seniority promotion—may appear to be anachronistic, as if they were some kind of leftovers from the time of Fordist industrialization. While some companies have already terminated these systems and replaced them with more performance-based, short-term alternatives, they still survive in many contemporary Japanese companies. While I explicate how these systems have been negotiated in Chapter 3, this part describes here the process that these customary systems emerged in Japanese working spaces and became the symbol of the Japanese company management.

**Life-time employment.** The idea of life-time employment is widely known to contemporary Japanese public, but its origin is not. Actually, economist Sekiguchi claims that there was no such term as life-time employment in literatures of labor relations before the end of the WWII (2). While it is possible to find similar vocabularies on corporate and self-help booklets of retirement pensions and post-retirement life, they metaphorically referred to personal banking for

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<sup>16</sup> Suda suggests that the Japanese version of Abegglen’s book *Japanese Factory* mistranslates the term life-time commitment into *shūshin koyō*, literally life-time employment. “It is researchers’ general view,” Suda says, “that the term *shūshin koyō* in Japanese was spread to the entire public since then to refer to the customary employment status [of regular working force],” a synonym of life-time employment in English, as a distinctive character of Japanese style of working in a company (42). Following Suda, this study uses the term life-time commitment as an overarching concept of Japanese company management style and life-time employment as tenure employment contract.

post-retirement life; in other words, the term was not used to refer to any kinds of stable employment status, in the same way as in contemporary Japanese (Sekiguchi 2-3).

The contemporary sense of the term life-time employment—tenure-track contract for all regular *seishain* workers until his retirement age (fifty, fifty five, and it is mostly sixty or sixty five now)—emerged soon after the early post-WWII period, adopted in many companies throughout the 1960s, and now it is widely adopted in various kinds of jobs—from factory labor to clerical work, and from state-hired positions to private company positions (Sekiguchi 20; Nomura *Nihonteki* 85). For instance, Suda, management scholar, comments that “it is the consensus of the public that, . . . the life-time employment, . . . has been the matter of the entire companies in Japan, not just the convention of individual companies” (42). Abegglen agrees with Suda by commenting that it was widely adopted in many *seishain* positions; “at whatever level of organization, . . . the worker commits himself on the entrance to the company for the remainder of his working career” (11). Thus, life-time employment is a de-facto employment standard for most of *seishain* workers. An important factor that enabled this generous employment contract in this incredibly wide scale was a series of court judgments in the 1970s, which penalized companies for their sudden discharge of regular workers. These cases pushed the majority of companies to fix the system, as the act of discharge became more and more difficult beyond profit assessments (e.g., Nomura, *Nihonteki* 52-64; Sekiguchi 25).

In sum, life-time employment system became a default employment contract for most of companies over the post-WWII period. In the era of Fordism and rapid industrialization, working full-time became almost equivalent to working with a regular status, and it became a widely-shared national standard (Sekiguchi 26).

**Seniority promotion.** In the upbeat climate of the domestic economy and the constant shortage in labor force, companies tried to hold these laborers not only by setting up long-term contracts but also by demonstrating a path of stable salary increase. Thus set up with life-time employment was a system of seniority promotion (See Table 1). By seniority, they meant regular workers' years of service. By promotion, they meant the promotion of salary, not necessarily the promotion of job titles. Therefore, companies adopting seniority promotions have meticulous tables of salary increase according to years of service and job ranking, which is designated in order that no one in his career course loses income.

Table 1: Wage System in Post-WWII Japan.

Time	Public trend on wage system
1945-1954	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Most companies adopted seniority promotion system.</li> <li>● Wages are determined after the disputes.</li> </ul>
1955-1964	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Merit system was incorporated in a few companies.</li> <li>● Allowances were added in some big companies</li> </ul>
1965-1974	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Seniority promotion system was incorporated into merit system in a few big companies.</li> </ul>
1975-1984	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● More companies prioritized merit system.</li> <li>● Some companies even altered seniority promotion with merit-based salary system.</li> </ul>
1985-1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Seniority promotion system was even banned in some companies.</li> <li>● Allowance expanded in terms of its variety.</li> </ul>
1995-2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Public interest in allowances increased, and more companies introduced them.</li> <li>● More companies introduced merit-based promotion system.</li> </ul>
2005-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Seniority promotion system was re-evaluated in some companies that require long-term service.</li> <li>● Public debates on wage systems.</li> </ul>

Source: Takeuchi, Yutaka. *Nihon No Chingin: Nenkō Joretsu Chingin to Seikashugi Chingin no Yukue* [*Wages in Japan: The Futures of Seniority Promotion and Meritocracy*]. Tokyo: Chikuma, 2008. Print. 29.

A research shows that a fair majority of major joint-stock companies (82 percent) still hold this system as the basic salary assessment in 2005 (Institute of Labor Administration ed. 46-48). Furthermore, the research claims that seniority promotion systems are also major in small and middle sized companies (with three hundred or less employees); forty six percent of them use it to assess salaries to executive officers, and more than sixty percent of them use it to assess other rank-and-file employees (Institute of Labor Administration ed. 52). Therefore, economist Takeuchi concludes that, because “the system of age-based promotion still has the steady support and some relevancy” in many jobs, the system “will certainly play substantial role in future Japanese company management” (28).

At this point, it is possible to confirm the normative element of what Takahara says the “intensive company culture,” or a normative element that enabled a culture of obedience and loyalty (Takahara, *Gendai Nihon* 98-100). That is, the norm of close ties and intimate relations was endorsed by almost unchanged members and, above all, by almost guaranteed wage increase—that is, by the combination of life-time employment and seniority promotion system. Indeed, this was what Abegglen also noted metaphorically that their company group dynamics work “in a way resembling that in which persons are members of families, fraternal organizations, and other intimate and personal groups in the United States” (11). In his later work with Stalk, Abegglen also comments that this is “a total system of employment and corporate governance that combines to produce” good results, and also that this is “unique to Japan, and perhaps could only have taken shape in the context of Japanese society” (182-83). Whereas these critics tend to emphasize cultural character and workers mentality to explain why it is functional in Japan, it was also true that they were endorsed by their capital gains and the growing national economy. In conclusion, this section, in combination with the prior section,

confirms the extremely safe *seishain* regular employment contract and almost promised salary increase. By that, this part confirmed that these two elements significantly contributed to form Japanese companies' obedient and loyal attitudes to companies.

**Enterprise-based unions.** In western countries, unions are typically industry-based, following the tradition of craft unions. In contrast, Japanese unions are typically enterprise-based, being comprised exclusively of workers holding regular working status and are said to represent the benefit of all the employees of the company, from clerical to technical workers and from factory laborers to desk workers. Enterprise unions began in the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, when several gigantic *zaibatsu* conglomerates—groups of family-own companies—imported the idea of labor unions (Nomura *Nihonteki* 361: Shirai, Hanami and Koshiro 100). Fearing that members would leak their clique information to their rivals, however, the companies independently organized unions exclusively within their own organizations in the form of a branch or department of the companies (Shirai, Hanami and Koshiro 101-02).

Investigating unions in post-WWII Japan, historian Nomura claims that companies' financial constraints and their lack of efforts to introduce western-style unions were two major factors as to why the enterprise-based structure was maintained in the post-WWII period (*Nihonteki* 390-92). Even though the Allied occupation force ordered to democratize unions, unions reestablished in this period did not fully achieve the financial and democratic independence from their own companies, and most of them have remained so for the past sixty years (*Nihonteki* 363, 392). Thus, Baba claims that company-based unions spread nationwide by the end of the 1970s and soon became “the norm for middle and small-sized companies” (Baba 62-63).

As they remained enterprise-based and ambivalent in political stances, some unions were ironically called *goyō kumiai*, or company-controlled unions. This pejorative nickname was used when magazines and newspapers reported dysfunctional unions; typically, these unions were ruled by covert members and ruined employees' claims (e.g., Nomura *Nihonteki* 359; Shirai, Hanami and Koshiro 40; Takahara *Gendai Nihon* 140). Actually, the Japanese Labor Standard Act states that executive officers of big and middle-sized companies should terminate their positions before belonging to unions, so that unions are not dominated by their voices.<sup>17</sup> However, many companies have allowed union members to retain their contract with companies, and some even had “covert” members dispatched by the executive board, who inform the union's movement to executives and sometimes even control the union (Nomura, *Nihonteki* 360-62). For these reasons, company-based unions have had negative reputations from Japanese company workers.

Despite that, the unique form of unions also gathered attentions as an efficient way of managing companies, as Japanese companies increased global presence. Most typically, discourses and narratives acclaiming company-based unions emphasized “humane” relations with company executives and contrasted Japanese unions with western industry-based unions, which were frequently described as being “cold-blooded” and making company structures “rigid” and “incompetent” (Baba 62). As a result, even the Japanese government extolled them in 1980:

Company employees organize unions and become an effective part of company management. Well-educated union members can consider not just the effect of wage increase to company management but also the change of competencies as an effect of wage adjustments. . . . This “fellow-driven” company structure, placing

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<sup>17</sup> See the Japanese Labor Standard Act, Article 2-1.

importance on human relations, may look mysterious to foreigners. (Jiyū Minshu Tō, *Ohira* 442)

In this way, company-based unions were recognized as a part of the entire capitalist hegemonic order—and this is why critics include unions into part of the apparatus of companyism.

Not surprisingly, the presence of unions has substantially ebbed since then. For instance, in 1974 when the nation suffered from the high oil price and increasing yen price, the number of strikes reached a peak of 9500, but it decreased to only fifty seven in the entire nation in 2011 (“2011” 5). As of 2011, only 55 percent of domestic companies organize unions, many of them finished with wage and welfare negotiations before May Day in order not to cause much confusion. Above all, the increase of non-regular workers in all major industries and jobs has contributed to the overall decline of labor unions (“2011” 5).

In summary, Japanese enterprise-based unions were launched as a system that efficiently promotes company benefits and at the same time guarantees employees’ bargaining rights. From the beginning, however, this organization was criticized as “inner-company human resource market” for they significantly lacked democratic functions (Shirai, Hanami and Koshiro 101-02). Yet, supported by the rhetoric that praises Japanese companies in global market, the basic structure of unions was conceded within the domestic public.

In this part, we observed three foundational elements of the Japanese company management model; life-time employment, seniority promotion, and company-based unions. By and large, the model aims at efficient human resource management for Fordist industrialization by enclosing young male (i.e., long-run and stable) working forces and restricting their claims against their mistreatment. And with the LDP’s redistribution model, we have found so far the

image of companyism in terms of capital flows between the government, industries, companies and employees.

***Japanese Welfare Society Model.*** The third and last main component of the companyism is on the state social welfare. Even though western welfare statism typically conceives of social welfare as redistribution independent from salaries and wages gained by labor, it is a consensus among Japanese domestic scholars that Japanese welfare is an important element of companyism. According to Takahara, key to understanding this peculiarity is the LDP's small booklet *Nihongata Fukushi Shakai*, Japanese-style Welfare Society, published in 1979.

Yet, it may be helpful, before reading the booklet, to review the post-WWII history of Japanese welfare system. According to Ishida, it was the General Headquarters of the Allies (GHQ) which introduced the idea of social welfare to Japan (3). Understanding that the rise of the fascist regime was due in part to the absence of social insurance and welfare as a cure for domestic poverty, the GHQ attempted to systematize it in Japan (Ishida 4-6). Consequently, each of welfare policies—such as seniority pensions, health care, care for special needs—was examined in the Diet and legislated in the next decade or so.

Because the national health care and pensions systems were implemented in 1961, as early as fourth and twelfth in comparison to all the countries in the world, the government frequently promoted Japan as an advanced country for welfare services. However, Shinkawa contends that “these policies by no means raised the Japanese welfare standard to the level of western industrial nations” (55-56). In the period between 1960 and 1974, using a Keynesian framework, major OECD countries already raised their public social welfare expenditures more than thirty per cent of their GDPs. However, the Japanese government spent less than twenty. Worse, this expenditures' value of elasticity in the same period was only 1.13, scoring the second

worst next to France, while the OECD countries' average was 1.21. Besides failing to spend an appropriate amount of money for welfare, the national system has offered only a smaller variety of coverage, notes Shinkawa (55). For this reason, Shinkawa points out that, in most cases, average citizens need to cover these services with their own pocket money; and furthermore that there were many who were not affordable to do so. Therefore, Shinkawa concludes that the state role in social welfare has always been minimal (56).

By the end of the 1970s, Japan already underwent the end of Bretton Woods system, currency inflation, two big oil crises in the 1970s, and the rise of the average age of the population. In effect, Japanese GDP growth stagnated, the government decreased tax revenue, manufacturing sectors decreased profit rates, and a few Prime Ministers substantially lost their popularities. Therefore, the Japanese future did not appear to be very bright as it once did.

It was against this backdrop that the LDP tried to revise national welfare policies. In order to notify to the public their basic stance, the LDP crafted a small booklet called *Japanese Welfare Society* in 1979. By this work, the LDP confirmed the need to rebuild the national welfare system. Yet, it at the same time emphasized the exceptionality of LDP's distribution model and the Japanese-style of management system, with the achievement of the second-largest economic power in the world. So the booklet notified its intention to organize a welfare system without substantially changing the basic framework of capital distribution. Specifically, it confirmed that the cost of national welfare should be squeezed while assuming that there was no alternative to companyism for Japan, and so they eventually claimed that their own system, which they called the "Japanese welfare" system, should be organized.

Evidence offered for this claim was the failure of European countries' welfare policies. While it does not specifically note why, the booklet points two cases, British and Swedish

national welfare systems. The pamphlet contends that Great Britain, “once the richest country,” focused more on “how to distribute their economic pie” than how to enlarge it (*Kenkyū* 34). The booklet contends that, as a result, these policies “bloated” the governmental welfare burden, “deactivated” the market, and eventually caused what it calls the “British-style economic diabetes,” a critical illness for the national funding ability (*Kenkyū* 34-35).

On the other hand, Swedish welfare system was also denied. The booklet says that the Swedish idea of “social welfare as [a] panacea” has accelerated the people’s tendency to rely on the state instead of mutually helping each other with their family members, relatives and friends (*Kenkyū* 42). As a result, the booklet argues that the Swedish welfare system promoted “extreme individualism”; an individualism so dependent on the state welfare that it is filled with loneliness and “cold-hearted human relations” (*Kenkyū* 43). While Swedish people “may have lovers privately tied with free-sex,” many of them need to spend their senior years “without legal marriage protection” (*Kenkyū* 42). Such a life, according to the booklet, is like “being naked and swimming in the open sea to a destination, with no ship called family” (*Kenkyū* 41-42). Hence, allowing such generous welfare services like the Swedish one is “far from the matter of the government of civilized nations” because they spoil family value and ultimately ruin human souls; Swedish welfare system therefore “represents the low quality of Swedish culture and the low standard of Swedish wisdom,” and this is “a kind of a plain folly” (*Kenkyū* 41).<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, Swedish welfare system was also denied with heteronormative and ethnocentric reasons. By rejecting these two welfare policies as unsuccessful cases, the booklet proposes a unique system of Japanese welfare—sustained by the network of company, family and friends.

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<sup>18</sup> The rhetorical attempt of distinguishing the Japanese system from other welfare systems in industrial nations is observed elsewhere around this time. For instance, see Jiyū Minshu Tō’s *Ohira Sōri* (459-61).

In other words, the LDP, although informal, proposed that the state should not be the main welfare provider of the nation.

Accordingly, sociologist Mari Osawa summarizes the booklet's framework of the welfare reform in the following four items:

- (1) National minimum does do more harm than good: the state “salvation” should be limited to the case of handicapped people;
- (2) Individual risk should be responsible to himself or herself, if not shared by his or her families and relatives;
- (3) Welfare policies with the idea of “the equality of results” corrupt Japanese citizens; and
- (4) A larger field of welfare policies should be entrusted to private companies and the principle of free market competition. (247)

Basically, the booklet reassured the role of the government as a minimal welfare provider, and imposed all the rest to their companies, families, friends and relatives.

As a result, now the state health care and pension—*kokumin* national system born in 1961—captures only small proportions of the citizens, such as small farmers, self-owned business persons, shop owners, practicing doctors, and local civil servants. Those without *seishain* regular status and without jobs can also join it on their own, but their subscription rate has been constantly decreasing during the last two decades' recessionary period.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, company and industrial sectors have provided their own *kōsei* employees' health care and pension program hosted by industry- or company-based mutual benefit societies. *Kōsei* health care and pensions have been strictly limited to those with regular working status and their families, and the welfare expenses are deducted from their salaries. Therefore, a general tendency within these private systems is that the bigger and more affordable the company and

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<sup>19</sup> As I will explain further it in Chapters 3 and 4, many young non-regular workers are not allowed to enroll even the national welfare because it is not affordable to them.

industrial sector, the better the benefits.<sup>20</sup> In general, however, *kōsei* company welfare has much better benefits and services than the national *kokumin* services. Hook and Takeda therefore conclude that the “postwar Japanese governments have been able to maintain their social cost an exceptionally low level, reducing state risk and relying on the individual and the family as a means to provide ‘social security’” (102).

So far, we reviewed how the booklet embodies the government’s present posture on welfare policy. Published in the time of stable industrial growth, yet nonetheless anticipating future economic situations, it explicitly demonstrates the minimalist posture, while it imposed a large portion of normal family’s welfare service to their companies and family and friends. While it was true that the government was within the severe budget crunch after the two oil crises, it is also true that the booklet decided the state attitude toward the national welfare, given that it has been unchanged since then.<sup>21</sup> In short, the main player of the Japanese welfare society model is not the state but the “society,” operationally defined as the network of companies, families and friends. The state has justified its minimalist attitude by relying on the already established ethos of “Japan as number one,” the collective myth about the superiority of Japanese companies and the social structure over western nations.

The three main pillars of companyism—the LDP’s redistribution model, Japanese company management model, and Japanese welfare society model—have been the pillar of

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<sup>20</sup> Serizawa explains that the mid-to the late-1970s was an important moment for the increase of private *kyosai* services. Around this time, big companies independently set up benefit packages that include various “extra benefits” such as child care, senior care, their medical expenses, housing and union pensions for regular *seishain* workers and their family members. (Serizawa 334-35).

<sup>21</sup> Specifically, the first oil crisis in 1973 increased consumer price index by twenty three per cent, the cost of products received a direct influence, and the national economic slow-down led to the 1.2 per cent loss of GDP. The second oil crisis in 1979 was not as damaging as the first one in terms of its effects, but it consolidated the government’s thrifty approach (Takahara, *Gendai Nihon* 136).

capitalist art of governing the citizens' life pivoting around private companies, and the central government has rigorously remained its role as a regulator of the capital distribution and the supporter of private companies. Both in work places and in the general public, companies thus reinforced the norms of companyism to both employees and general citizens. Not surprisingly, this discursive space has produced a national mission that the company management should be stable and growth-based. In the case of Japan whose main industry has been manufacturing, this call has formed the principle of production first. As Bennett and Solomon claim, the principle,

a decision to permit the social system, . . . with minimal help from the state, based on the theory all capital has to be plowed back into production in order to achieve a high level of economic growth, . . . has influenced the general decision to allocate minimal amounts of economic resources to social needs" (442).

In this way, the principle of production first has been a prevalent motto for Japan for a long time, perhaps until now. What did this particular discursive space formed the notion of individual workers' rights and duties? I will explore this issue in the next part.

### **Desire for Stable Life: An Effect of Companyism**

In the last section, I explored politico-economic aspects of companyism. Based on the discussions so far, this shorter section examines an effect of corporate ideology to the notion of citizenship. Conceiving this as an effect of ideological state apparatus, or the production of social relations and the interpellation of individuals into subjects as Japanese citizens, this part delves in how the Japanese society under companyism raised our senses of freedom, duty, rights and benefits of labor in Japanese working culture. In exploring this, I divide this section into three. First, I review a scholarly debate over the ideas of freedom and equality in the rise of state welfare system in western nations because these ideas significantly contributed to the

development of foundational concepts of welfare statism and the philosophy of many contemporary anti-corporatist activists. From these discussions, I extract a concept of equality that welfare statist claimed as a counter-concept of free competition. Second, I seek for an idea equivalent to welfare statist's distributive justice in domestic Japan as I closely read normativity of companyism. Through the discussions, however, I turn to claim that Japanese working culture has not developed the idea of equality and distributive justice as rights and citizenship; instead I argue that there was only a collective desire for economic stability. Third, I offer an analysis of the rhetoric of *Masayoshi Ohira's Proposal* published by the Liberal Democratic Party in 1980. I claim that the *Proposal's* idea of stability and the framing of Japanese society as the super-stable society exemplifies that there is no idea of distributional justice in Japan.

***Freedom versus Equality in Western Nations.*** On *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century*, historian Eric Hobsbawm called the period between 1945 and 1970 the golden age for global growth and world peace. Hobsbawm called so because of the increased level of national security in major industrial nations and because of their high growth rates on an unforeseen scale. As these nations incorporated controlled economy into the principle of free competition, they maintained a solid expansion of industrial scales and exports. It was due to this backdrop that both leftists and rightists—those for equal distribution of the capital and for free competition—shared a common affinity for the free market. Actually, we witnessed the rise of moderate, soft-line political parties in Western Europe and the North America while “extreme” left radicals receded (Hobsbawm 257-60).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Hobsbawm also categorizes Japan as one of the nations enjoying the growth with the mixed economy. This is because the conservative capitalist party, LDP, has been dominant in the post-WWII Japanese legislature, and because the nation succeeded in demonstrating a good economic presence in the global market (258-59, 268-70).

Even though the mixed economy arguably maintained good relations between the state and citizens, it was also true that the state's extended intervention of civil life was criticized for harming the freedom of civic life. For instance, C. Wright Mills reclaimed individual freedom from bureaucracy in mixed-economy welfare states (7-12). Nevertheless, these systems were mostly welcomed as a good mix of benefiting the material wealth and advancing the welfare services. The only exception seems to be Friedrich Hayek and his followers who claimed to expand the realm of laissez-faire. In sum, industrial nations were mostly happy with mixed economy in the golden age (Hobsbawn 258-64).

However, the global oil crises brought to an end stable growth in these countries. Consequently, the state began worrying about increasing spending for social security and tended toward the idea of laissez-faire. In this time, Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom* was influential by its claim that state interventions should be minimal in order to guarantee citizens' free competitions (22). Called libertarians, critics like Friedman maintained that the role of the government should be limited to an observer of the market, or "an umpire" of the game of capitalism, believing that leaving the game to the logic of capitalism can realize the best growth rate and material prosperity of the society (Friedman 25-27). For instance, Friedman applied this principle to the architecture of capitalist societies and the role of the government; so he argued that such policies as tax exemptions and special treatments to socially disadvantaged people should be abandoned not only because they deteriorate efficiency but also because they infringe property rights (34-36).

The main opponent to Friedman-style economic libertarianism was John Rawls' *Theory of Justice*. Critics like Rawls, being skeptical of Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian standard, "greatest happiness for the greatest number," objected it because "the greatest number" can be defined

only too vaguely in now diverse Euro-American nations—for instance, the “greatest number” may be just a group of exploiters or culturally privileged groups.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, while Rawls agreed with Friedman that individual freedom is important, he also underscored the principle of equality. Specifically, Rawls claimed that freedom should be limited as far as one does not significantly infringe on others’ freedom (which is the principle of justice to guarantee one’s leeway of freedom). He also believed that social and economic inequality should be accepted only when the society guarantees freedom to the most disadvantaged people (50-75). In this sense, Rawls’ view of equality is antithetical to libertarians’ idea of freedom.

Rawls did not understand equality as autotelic, or self-evident: rather, he viewed it as a theorem on which post-New Deal societies can properly function (Berlin 340-68). That is, for Rawls, justice was a theorem to achieve a more balanced capital distribution in already industrialized, diverse societies, and a guideline to achieve this goal was Rawls’ idea of distributive justice (Moriyama 84). Not surprisingly, this idea of distributive justice was criticized by libertarians, and there was a sequence of heated debates over the state role on welfare. For instance, libertarian political philosopher Robert Nozick challenged Rawls’ idea of distributive justice, claiming that it infringes property rights of not only normal citizens but also those who succeeded from similar disadvantaged positions, if the state collects tax from them. That is, Nozick understood that guaranteeing the property rights to all citizens is paramount and non-negotiable (262).

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<sup>23</sup> For instance, Isaiah Berlin’s *Four Essays on Liberty* makes a similar argument around the same time that the primary concern for intellectuals in democratic nations of the time was not on Stuart Mill’s theorem “the greatest happiness of the greatest number.” Berlin’s work suggests that Mill’s classical theorem was already in doubt in the late 1960s. As Berlin argues, it was doubtful not only in terms of a verifiable assessment on the population of “the maximum number” but also in terms of the distributional principle in rapidly diversifying populations in western societies (237-38).

Similarly, they disagreed on many points at the level of tax and distribution policies. For the objective of this study, I recapitulate this debate as a result of their different understandings of freedom and equality. With a consensus that the New-Deal-type, large-scale public investments do not work effectively any more in already industrialized nations, libertarians understood that the maximum degree of economic freedom can best realize a fair and affluent society. Accordingly, individuals' free economic activity was paramount for them. On the one hand, welfare statisticians claimed that the idea of equality should be a fundamental theorem of the social system and that economic freedom should be allowed only when the society guarantees minimum civic life to all the citizens. As Rawls claims, they understood that "the right to own certain kinds of property, . . . and freedom of contract as understood by the doctrine of laissez-faire are not basic"; that is, that "all social values—liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the social bases of self-respect—are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any, or all, these values is to everyone's advantage" (54). For libertarians, however, the liberalists' idea of intentional state interventions to equalize capital distribution—the idea of guaranteeing individual economic freedom for disadvantaged citizens—is rather harmful, because distributive justice rather infringes others' property rights. In summary, a central issue of this debate was to what extent of individual economic freedom should be allowed in light of the equality as rights among all citizens, including disadvantaged people and minorities. Even though many western nations do not practically follow the line in their legislatures and administrations anymore, I want to confirm here that these two contrapositions developed conceptual frameworks as well as policy ideas.

***Freedom and Stability in Japan.*** Now that I have reviewed how economic freedom and equality are understood from a western perspective, I explore what would be, if any at all, a counterpart

of economic freedom and equality in post-WWII Japan. To this end, I argue that Japanese post-WWII working culture developed a collective desire for ongoing economic growth and established an illusion of stable life within the logic of free competition as a (pseudo) alternative to the notion of distributive justice, while jettisoning the civic notion of distributive justice. In making this argument, I start with recalling the principle of production first. By the end of the 1970s, Japan was already proud of its industrial and economic development, and their manufacturing sector was considered of paramount importance. Such cultural values dismissed the chance of public deliberation because, as Michio Goto comments,

the opposition of ideologues between the leftist and rightist has become a mere pretext for holding the ideology of companyism. The conflict between the business manager and employee benefits was not a topic of their heated debates anymore, and even the issue of balance between redistribution and development became receded. (192)

Goto calls this tendency “the integration of companyism with the society,” the tendency that the ideology of companyism forecloses the possibility of public deliberation and social mobility (193). In short, Goto claims an effect of companyism in terms of depriving the possibility of public deliberations on rights, duties and benefits of workers.

Given that, I speculate that companyism has also influenced the public norm of labor rights and citizenship. That is, in the society where free market competitions have always been promoted and where their economic prominence against the global market was already their national pride, value of free-market was a deep-seated idea in their economic culture. Actually, as we have seen it so far, the post-WWII Japan assigned the role of caring citizens to the network of personal relations (i.e., to the realm of the private) and not to the state (i.e., to the realm of the

public). All these infer that the Japanese state, with the ideology of companyism, has denied a western liberal sense of equality and distributive justice. Inevitably, companyism also affirmed classism, as a famous Japanese proverb says that “if you don’t work, you don’t eat”; in this sense, the Japanese society “has affirmed a bare logic of free-market competition” (Goto, Michio 124-38). So I claim that, within this framework, the Japanese society dismissed the chance to develop welfare statism and the idea of distributional justice.

Despite this general tendency, I note that there was once a movement to realize distributional justice in the form of welfare policy. Most conspicuously, the idea was outlined in former Primer Kakuei Tanaka’s 1973 bill of *Fukushi Gan’nen* [The First Year of Welfare State]. It included the increase of pension and health care, a more comprehensive state welfare framework modeling northern European countries, and the plan to reduce income tax burden for ordinary income earners (Liberal Democratic Party n.p.). Politically, this was proposed as a response to damages caused by the oil crisis—inflations including the escalation of medical cost and the increase of the unemployed. It is believed that Tanaka’s idea was inspired by the idea of civil minimum for the Japanese public, which was introduced to Japan by Marxist critic Keiichi Matsushita. Matsushita’s idea is to allow provisions that enable minimum civic life to all Japanese citizens, and his work incorporated, as might be reasonably expected, liberalist notions of equality and distributive justice (Matsushita 10-25; Suzuki, Yasushi n.p.). Politically, Tanaka’s proposed idea answered to voters turning away from the LDP by the economic stagnation caused by the oil crisis (Ishikawa 70-86).

However, Tanaka’s ambitious idea was left incomplete. Even though it is said that the oil crisis did not cause so much damage as western industrial nations, the LDP found more imminent the state and company balances; so the government declined Tanaka’s idea and instead

focused recovering state revenues and rebuilding structure that keep good balance against inflation, including corporate tax rate adjustments. Thus, the idea of a civil minimum was disregarded from the “national issues” in post-oil crisis period (Ishikawa 75-78). Soon, Tanaka was blamed for an infamous bribery scandal in 1974, and resigned the office.

Unfortunately for citizens, Tanaka’s original welfare plan did not draw serious attentions by later administrations (e.g., Ishikawa 85-93; Liberal Democratic Party n.p.). That is, his idea was ignored because they remained a strong belief toward Japanese company management and Japanese welfare society models. A typical example was shown in the rhetoric of *Masayoshi Ohira’s Proposal* published by the Liberal Democratic Party in 1980. Whereas some Japanese Prime Ministers have published documents on his administration, policies and the nation of the time, Ohira’s was exceptional in terms of the range of areas, the details, and implications. The *Proposal* was made by the former Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira’s request to his Vice Premier Nagatomi “to analyze the current problems which the developed countries were experiencing within the broad perspective of the history of civilization” (2). Therefore, in nine major areas from military security and diplomacy to national financial policies, urban planning, science and technology and to family life, the *Proposal* analyzed Japan’s status quo and addressed its future directions. Each of nine works was compiled by a working group of Ohira himself, ministers of his administration, national bureaucrats, university professors, and other experts in the area; as a total, the group consisted of “130 distinguished scholars and 80 middle-level government officials from all ministries” (2).

In this grand summary of the Japanese post-WWII era and the plan for the nation’s future, companyism is reiterated across areas, used to glorify the rapid economic growth in the post-WWII period, to legitimize the socioeconomic status quo, and to find the future direction

based on their past and present course of actions. For instance, critic Tachibanaki notes that the overuse of the term companyism clouds the accuracy of analyzing the present Japanese economic landscape, claiming that the report was an “obvious ideologue” of Japanese companyism (78). Since then, no Japanese administration has ever seriously considered any possibilities outside of the basic framework of companyism (Tachibanaki 79-91). Also, historian Takahara comments that there was virtually no public debate over the distributional justice as citizens’ rights versus the libertarian sense of freedom of economic competition and property rights; and accordingly Takahata claims that “the public did not even equip a good understanding on the idea of minimum life standard and economic equality as rights” (“Sengo Nihon” 61). Given that, Tachibanaki concludes that the demise of Tanaka’s 1973 idea and his administration in 1974 remarks a focal point of the national direction to depend welfare services to private sectors (24-26).

Thus, Tachibanaki and Takahara’s studies confirm my speculation that that the Japanese post-WWII society has not engendered the idea of distributive justice; that is, their works claim that companyism has both conceptually denied it and politically foreclosed the political possibility. This, however, does not mean that Japanese working culture has been void of any sense of equality among all citizens. Here, I claim that the Japanese society around that time developed a unique alternative, a unique mode of citizenship. My main concern in this section—and in this chapter—is about how the post-WWII Japanese public has imagined at all the idea of protecting citizens from bare free-market competition. On this point I propose that it was only the idea of economic stability that served as a comparable to the notion of distributional justice. Put differently, it addressed that, if you work hard, you would be able to benefit from the national economy and your companies and enjoy a decent life. Inevitably, this is only a doxastic

belief based on a premise that companyism effectively functions, brings about fair benefit to the nation, and that the benefit fairly trickles down to the family of all the nations. In other words, the idea of stability existing not as rights makes it absorbed by the logic of companyism, or free competition.

***Stable Society Japan.*** In this part, I explain how the idea of stability emerged and settled down in Japan. In doing this I will review a literature published when Japan was already industrialized and the absolute nation recognize that Japan is an economically stable nation. By reading relevant parts of *Masayoshi Ohira's Proposal* published in 1980, I will claim that Ohira's redefinition of the Japanese society as the "super-stable society" not just obscured the void of the idea of distributional justice in Japan but also reconceptualized Japan as a unique society in which western welfare statism model is unbeneficial to the nation.

Earlier, I introduced the *Proposal* as an embodiment of companyism. Here, I revisit the *Proposal* as a critical document for the ideology of companyism ideology for it proposed the idea of stability as a distinctive and applausable achievement of Japanese post-WWII capitalism. First of all, the *Proposal* defined Japan as one of the "highly industrialized and prosperous" countries "as a result of modernization and industrialization"; yet it also maintained that Japan was different from other western nations because of its character as a "super-stable society" (Jiyū Minshu Tō, *Ohira* 440-42). That is, by weaving "different systems of narrative" from economic, cultural and political realms, the *Proposal* tried a "formation of a new discourse" in the "new age of culture" (Harootunian 86-87). Here, Ohira proposed that the "material civilization based on modern rationalism had reached its saturation point [*howaten*], and the time had arrived to transcend the modern [industrialization] to an age that stresses culture" (Jiyū Minshu Tō, *Ohira* 440). He claimed that the West, whose industrialization "disregarded the culture," was not a

good role model of Japan anymore; rather, Japan must “systematically assess anew the special quality of Japan’s culture” in order to confront the end of modernization and “overcome the modern” (Jiyū Minshu Tō, *Ohira* 442). Therefore, any social models that include the “western modernization” should be rejected because following them may cause social, cultural and economic malaises found in Western industrial nations. Accordingly, the *Proposal* tried to “find a ground outside of its recent historical experience of [western] modernization” for Japanese future, by redefining European bourgeoisie and middle-class Americans as “Japanese and human” (Harootunian 80, 87). In short, the term “super-stability” was both the vision of Japan’s economic future as well as a key term of national identification away from the west.

The *Proposal* understood that the stability, both in societal and individual scales, can be attained by—and arguably only by—rigorously following the ideal of companyism. Actually, it claimed that the stabilization of the upper divisions of industries, sustained by the LDP’s distribution model, were crucial to bringing benefit to the bottom of the society (Jiyū Minshu Tō, *Ohira* 121-45). Also emphasized was the purported convoy system, the protection of particular industrial sectors with financial investments, legal protections and trade promotions; by framing it as a distinct unique feature of Japanese companies it claims that Japan should keep its presence in global market (Jiyū Minshu Tō, *Ohira* 89). Likewise, the stability was also a key idea on employer-employee relations. The combination of life-time employment and seniority promotion greatly stabilized not only employees’ future capital life but also their relations with each other (Jiyū Minshu Tō, *Ohira* 190-98). In the era of economic prosperity, therefore, the phrase “the super-stable society” was a powerful phrase, a phrase that does not just capture the economic mood in 1980 but also puts force the Japan’s high performance in the global market and affirms their past efforts (Takahara, *Gendai Nihon* 126).

The most crucial implication of this discussion is that the idea of stability is not individual citizens' rights, or the idea claiming each citizen should have a right to live a minimum standard of living. Rather, it is a collective, social-scale vision within the framework of companyism that, if all citizens work hard, then the benefit will be trickled down to the bottom of the society. Not surprisingly, therefore, the idea of stability was premised upon good economic situations and healthy functions of the redistribution to the absolute majority of the nation. To the Japanese citizens around this time, however, this vision did not sound so unrealistic as it does to contemporary Japanese, because the majority of Japanese had a solid sense of material affluence, and many of them had a very strong pride of their national economy. Like Japanese old catch phrase "all one-hundred million Japanese citizens were middle-class" implies it, they optimistically understood that ever-lasting Japanese economic growth will bring the absolute majority into prosperity, and even naively expected that the free-market growth and Japanese companyism will trickle down the national benefit to the end of the society. In this way, the concept of stability, as a result of ongoing economic growth, became an alternative to the distributive justice and the right of minimum civic life in Japanese society.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has described the systematic elements of companyism, the Japanese post-WWII capitalist hegemonic order, and an effect of companyism to the value of work in Japanese culture. In the first half, we witnessed that the Japanese post-WWII capitalism was characterized by a strong state initiative of commanding public investment projects, wage and welfare service system that induce workers into intense engagement to their jobs, and the "welfare system" organized not by the state but by the network of corporative benefit societies and family and private relations. In the second section, we witnessed that companyism has framed the notions

of freedom, equality, and stability according to the logic of companyism—that is, the logic of free market under a utilitarian framework. It revealed that, while the nation was immersed with the logic of free competition, the citizens were also encouraged to nurture the value of *Gemeinschaft*-like relations with companies, families and friends and ask them for care and security.

Whereas I excavate in the next chapter a normative effect of companyism to contemporary non-regular workers, I instead offer three implications drawn by the discussions so far. First and foremost, the framing of companyism as an ideological apparatus suggests a norm that male workers be *seishain* workers. As Gottfried remarks that “labor standards” have been “based on heteronormative masculine embodiment of work without interruptions for care responsibility,” companyism is a structured system for a male *seishain* worker to be bread-winning husbands and thereby to be “a man” (*Reproductive* 114). By and large, this culture enabled the common understanding of the general domestic public that regular *seishain* workers are the chief wage earner of family as well as main driving force of company management. This norm—which is, in turn wage privilege in employment contract—cast negative implications to the meaning-making of contemporary young workers because they are unable to work with the standard *seishain* status.

Second, it should be noted that the idea of stability has generated a new meaning to part-time works, and also that this remarks an important implication in terms of what it means to do a part-time job in Japan. Indeed, behind the spread of the term “super-stable society” was an emergence of service and technological industries and the need of flexible and cheap labor forces. Consecutively, *Masayoshi Ohira’s Proposal* , as well as labor economist Takanashi in the Council of Economic Advisors under Ohira administration, tried “effective use” of lenient labor

forces by offering an idea a “new way of working.”<sup>24</sup> Takanashi argued that latent working forces, especially housewives, should be effectively used to meet these demands because they “have been liberated from housework because most of them is already automated” (*Pāto* 6). Accordingly, Takanashi claimed that part-time job for them should have a new meaning, a part of “the pursuit for meaning to life and a kind of social participation” (*Pāto* 6). Especially housewives’ part-time jobs, Takanashi emphasized, should not be “simple money-making jobs of lower-class housewives unwillingly conducted” (*Pāto* 5). By such rhetoric, housewives, students and seniors were mobilized into companies as shock absorbers of the Japanese industrial shift and convenient, peripheral working forces in new industries.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the idea of stability as well as its by-product “a new way of working” explains a nuance of Japanese part-time working that those in part-time positions are doing an “extra part” of their life, either seeking the true meaning to their life while working part-time or having other, main objective while earning living expense by part-time jobs. Sociologist Heidi Gottfried called *seishain* positions masculine and other non-regular positions feminized (*Reproductive* 103-116); and so the idea of stability suggests an important point of reference as to how non-regular working positions in Japan were implanted negative and feminized implications.

Third, this chapter suggests implications as to why the Japanese culture has been poor at workers’ rights. The idea of stability, as we have confirmed, was fundamentally different from equality and distributional justice, for the idea of stability is merely a result of the national economic growth, and not rights of citizens. This implies that workers, especially non-regular

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<sup>24</sup> On *Masayoshi Ohira’s Proposal* the idea of new style of working is mentioned (Jiyū Minshu Tō, *Ohira* 502-05).

<sup>25</sup> Actually, Takanashi took an initiative of deregulating the working condition on the national Cabinet. The commission that Takanashi chaired was actually the group that introduced the *Haken* Law. Later in 2007, Takanashi observed that his work in 1985 aimed at answering the need of both companies and housewives and students (10).

workers, have been particularly vulnerable once threatened by the risk of discharge or precarious positions. This is fatal for workers, as we shall see soon in Chapters 3 and 4.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the current slow economy has tended incoming labor forces toward safer working environment. For instance, a 2009 research conducted by *Nihon Seisansei Hombu* [Japan Production Center] showed for the first time in the last nineteen-times that the majority of new college graduates (48.1 percent) expected their companies to adopt life employment and seniority promotion systems (4). Most typically, their preference is demonstrated by the fact that now the largest number of college students want to be employed by the government with full-time status—for instance, city workers, public school teachers, police officers and firefighters—because these jobs have almost zero risk of bankruptcy and they maintained traditional employment rules including life time employment and seniority promotion system (4). As the Center comments, young generations once desired most strongly an achievement-based promotion system rather than an automatic, seniority promotion system (4-5).<sup>26</sup> Yet, as the analysis section of the survey notes, more and more contemporary college graduates would desire a secured position and stable future in this era of economic stagnation (4).<sup>27</sup> This research is a good example that demonstrates the collective desire for stability is still prevalent. Now in the recessionary era, the amount of regular positions has shrunk and fewer regular status workers can keep their stable employment status. In this environment, regular positions with a good stability and the promise of salary increase have become scarcer in Japan and more desired by the youth. In such external conditions, how has the public treatment of

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<sup>26</sup> This is because, as critic Jo comments, companies adopting seniority promotion restricts younger workers' salary (9).

<sup>27</sup> Critic Ryosuke Nishida understands that the spirit of entrepreneurship is rapidly diminishing among Japanese young generations, even though it has been relatively high until the end of the IT bubble in the mid-2000s (200-01).

young generation—and more specifically young non-regular workers—changed? I explore to answer this question in the next chapter.

### **CHAPTER 3 YOUNG NON-REGULAR WORKERS AS AN INFERIOR SPECIES: A DESCRIPTION OF A DEROGATORY SUBJECT**

Don't be a *freeter*, don't be a *NEET*—If you become one of these, you are an ungraceful child, ignoring your obligation to your parents.

A University Officer in a University-sponsored Job-Fair Meeting, to His College Students. 2013. n.p.

In Chapter 2, I investigated historico-structural features of companyism in post-WWII Japan. I claimed that companyism, the hegemonic order of private companies, has exerted its influence not just within companies. More widely, companyism has been influential in Japanese post-WWII domestic culture, extending its impact from the basic framework of state welfare system to their common understanding of standard life courses. Whereas Chapter 2 attended to systematic aspects of companyism, highlighting such elements as laws, rules and customs, the companyism as an apparatus has evolved not just with these elements but also with particular modes of narratives and discourses as its communicative elements. For example, Foucault claims that these two aspects are in close relations; systematic characters enable a certain type of discourses, whereas the discourses produced as such play a “dominant strategic function” to legitimize and validate these systematic elements (“Confession of the Flesh” 195). Namely, liberal economy and its current trend have a substantial effect to public discourses, whereas the discourses shape and reshape the public recognitions on the wellness of the economy.

This chapter attends to a communicative element of Japanese capitalist hegemonic order in the post-bubble period, and investigates how public discourses engendered an economic subject against the slow economic trend. More specifically, the chapter delves into how the rhetorical subject of young non-regular workers have been shaped and reshaped in the public discourses in the era when the nation faced the ineffectiveness of preexisting system of capital

provisions. Ultimately, I am interested in understanding how this oppressive aspect of neoliberal power relations engendered conditions that allowed and promoted to sacrifice a mass of young generations of the nation, and how public discourses have been concerned with reformation of the subject of young non-regular workers.

As we will see later in this chapter, this change occurred not only by rhetorical actions but also by inactions, not only by public and media focuses but also by the intentional defocuses and ignorance. Specifically, I will claim later that young workers were once unobserved subjects, especially soon after the bubble burst in 1991, even though only precarious employment jobs were available for them. Around the turn of the century and later, however, young workers were almost suddenly spotlighted by the general public against the backdrop of sluggish economy, and they have been recognized both as an effective means of economizing company managements and as a factor of the recession rather than victims of it. Accordingly, I claim toward the end of this chapter that the Japanese capitalist hegemony, in the post-bubble period, has drastically reformed the subject of young non-regular workers. This chapter explores how it has been constituted in the Japanese post-bubble society.

In the post-bubble period, Japan has been mired in a long-time, tenacious economic recession. Accordingly, the tone of economic discourses has been by and large as John Crump summarizes in the following passage:

Not only was Japan's economic performance from 1992 far inferior to its past record, but also it was uncharacteristically outclassed by its principal rivals within world capitalism. . . . The dilemma facing Japanese companies in the 1990s was that they were burdened with a level of productive capacity that was vastly in excess of what the markets could profitably absorb. . . . From 1992 successive

governments unleashed one fiscal package after another, running into trillions of yen, in an effort to reinvigorate the economy by means of tax reductions and public spending. While this policy had the effect of driving the level of government debt considerably higher than total GDP, it made little impression on the dead weight of overcapacity and failed in its purpose of ending the recession.

(138)

Like this, economic discourses are characterized by downward and eventually pessimistic tone, and they cried the structural limitations of their national-pride manufacturing industries.

Also, the above passage suggests another unique tendency of Japanese general public that the national economic trend is conceived in a monolithic and simple way. That is, Crump's above passage—that the government tried to reinvigorate *the* economy, that this was by means of *national* tax reductions and public spending, that the national GDP growth rate was used as a primary index to measure the economic wellness—epitomizes a public recognition that economic ups and downs are phenomena that occurs on the national level in a way that concurrently influence most of the citizens in the society, just as stories of “the economic miracle” and rapid industrialization in the 1960s-1970s and “the bubble” economy in the 1980s inform that the absolute majority of the citizens were benefited from these prosperities. In other words, domestic discourses were tightly bounded by their past memory.

In my understanding, this critical lack of imagining economic countermeasures from a broader perspective, specifically by reforming the structure of companyism, is critical for producing young working populations as being precarious as they were now. Actually, many ideas of economic recovery/reform proposed in the 1990s primary targeted peripheral portions of the distributional structures, while core parts—including the capital interest of already hired full-

time regular workers—were consistently retained. As I will unveil later in this chapter, the lack of imagination is critical because it eventually brought about a tragic consequence to young non-regular workers. That is, it allowed the Japanese public to erode the sense of self-reflection and to eventually marginalize and sacrifice a mass of young workers both materially and rhetorically. In this sense, the way that the public developed the discursive formation for this population is important for their life.

The discourses I will delve into in this chapter have been enabled and developed by *fuan*, anxiety or fear, on the future of their domestic economy. On an opinion poll of *Nikkei Newspaper* on “Whether Japan is going to good direction?,” those who answered yes overwhelmed no by fifty per cent versus twenty five in 1988, but the ratio reversed to twenty four per cent versus fifty four in 1995 (qtd. in “Dēta Fairu: Keiki” 207). Furthermore, an annual survey conducted by the Cabinet Office in 2011 suggests that the *fuan* is being accumulated recently. According to the survey, the Japanese who answered yes on fear for “the country’s future” outnumbered those who answered no in 1992, reaching up to sixty per cent in 1998, to seventy per cent in 2008, remaining at the highest level ever since (Naikakufu, n.p.). On the baseline of discourses I will study below has been the public fear or anxiety looming in the public. This anxiety is enrooted in the dilemma between the limitation of the profit under present companyism and impossibility of reforming the very structure of companyism. That is, whereas it was becoming harder to maintain the profitable structure with the preexisting industrial structures and employment standard, it was also said that many portions of companyism were impossible to be reformed because it has already been so deeply saturated into the law, rules, customs and public beliefs. In this sense, *fuan* has been a drive of the national-scale desire for escaping from this dilemma.

Furthermore, we will see later that *fuan*, anxiety, on the national economic future has been gradually spurred to micro-level discourses of economy. That is, uptight and nervous tone has become prevalent not only in the discourses of national economy but also in discourses on the levels of industries, company managements and their breadwinners' income, and so my overall argument in this chapter is that it is this particular tone in economic discourses that formed the direction of major public discourses, and that this simple and short-sighted view on the economy brought about tragic results for the subject of young non-regular workers.

In short, their *fuan* was erupted in the form of economic discourses. When Foucault discussed the advent of eugenics and its effect into our conception of human capitals, he notes that the public fear appears in the domain of discourse, or “at the level of actuality itself, with the real problems that it raises” (*Birth of Biopolitics* 228). This is because, as Foucault says, “[w]here there is desire, the power relation is already present: an illusion, then, to denounce this relation for a repression exerted after the event” (*History of Sexuality Vol. I* 80-81). Like this example, I will claim later that the public anxiety erupted in the economic discourses targeted material and rhetorical conditions of young working forces. Accordingly, my general understanding in this chapter is that their subject has been consolidated in a particular way by discourses driven by the generation of consent via fear or anxiety.

In exploring this, this chapter consistently attends to discourses widely circulated in the realm of the public and the popular. That is, I choose the objects of analysis which reflect “major” public opinions and points of public debates. For this reason, I analyze articles of *Nihon no Ronten*, or *Issues of Japan*, and other sources widely circulated in the public. *Nihon no Ronten*, or *Issues of Japan*, released since 1992, annually published a wide range of opinions on

political, economic, diplomatic, historical and cultural issues in about seven hundred fifty page volume.

A unique stance of *Nihon no Ronten* publisher within domestic publishing companies suggests that it is an appropriate text of analysis. In Japan, there is about a century-long history of monthly opinion magazines functioning as public forums. *Iwanami*, *Asahi*, *Yomiuri*, *Chūō Kōron*<sup>28</sup>, and *Sankei* are all well known as publishing houses of their monographs, and *Bungei Shunjū-sha*,<sup>29</sup> the publisher of *Nihon no Ronten*, is also recognized as one of these by their monthly monograph, *Bungei Shunjū*. Among these publishing houses, *Bungei Shunjū-sha* has been unique in its political stance. Traditionally, *Bungei Shunjū* has been known for literary and cultural criticisms and novels and essays as well as purely political articles. Well known for the founder and sole sponsor of *Akutagawa-shō*, one of the most prestigious novel prizes, *Bungei Shunjū* is still a distinguished magazine for novelists, essayists and literary and cultural critics as it releases prize-winning pieces in March, every year. This tradition suggests that *Bungei Shunjū-sha* has been fairly independent from any of the political spectrum, as I listed above in the order from *Iwanami*, far leftist, to *Sankei*, far rightist, whose publications—monthly monographs, weekly magazines and newspapers altogether—realize their political intentions. Therefore, we can expect that *Nihon no Ronten*, an annual summary of the national major issues published by *Bungei Shunjū-sha*, can list a good balance of critics with a variety of political orientations.

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<sup>28</sup> In 2002, *Chūō Kōron* was drawn into an orbit of *Yomiuri* group.

<sup>29</sup> Literally, *Bungei* means art of creative writing or composition. *Shunjū* is spring and autumn, short for China's Spring and Autumn period when Jin dynasty fell apart to three different regimes (BC770-BC453). *Bungei Shunjū* is named so by the publisher's hope of active exchange or battle of opinions like the Spring and Autumn period, and the company name *Bungei Shunjū-sha* follows the most traditional media outlet.

Because *Nihon no Ronten* juxtaposes multiple numbers of articles with opposite or different viewpoints of the same topic, it highlights critical bifurcations of given topics. That is, the format of *Nihon no Ronten* encourages individual writers to stress their political and public positions. Please recall the main objective of the companion in the first volume of 1992 that “the top figures of and/or the persons directly involved in the issues” are invited to write their articles (n.p.). Limited in space and inserted adjacent to different or opposite opinions on the same topic, individual articles are crafted in ways that appeals general readers effectively for their authors. In our discipline, public debates and discussions have always been a good text of criticism. It is because they, whether written or spoken, claim to guide the public to a certain direction. If it is one-sided, it is a simple public speech; if it is two-sided or more like *Nihon no Ronten*, then their opinions highlight public divides. Speaking personally, *Nihon no Ronten* was one of my favorite sources when I participated in inter-collegiate policy debate circuit a long time ago. For the participants, *Nihon no Ronten* has been a well-known referential source to understand major critics of the problem and their claims. In this sense, I believe that *Nihon no Ronten* is a good source of criticism.

This chapter specifically deals with multiple denominations of young generations, claiming that these denominations were primary forces that reformed their rhetorical subject. So I briefly note here that the act of naming and titling has a strong force in power relations. Firstly, recall my points in Chapter 1 that Raymond Williams suggests that naming a particular subject in the mass is bringing a formula convenient for the hegemonic order, and also that Stuart Hall also suggests that the inferiority is configured in the cultural matrix of meanings. By and large, their theoretical underpinnings are also shared with contemporary rhetoricians, as a part of what Kenneth Burke would say “terministic screen,” the standard of discernment and evaluation by

the act of naming (*Language* 46). Taking a cue from Burke, rhetorical scholar Raymie McKerrow also recognizes that the act of naming is rhetorical in that it both regulates and resists power. “Power is,” McKerrow argues, “a concomitant of naming as well, because it enacts one’s relationship within (as well as potential resistance to) what the names conjure. As name changes, so does the power relation that inheres within the name employed” (621). Following their theoretical insights, I delineate the subject of young non-regular workers in recent Japan in this section.

Accordingly, I divide this chapter according to specific rhetorical phenomena regarding the subject of young non-regular workers, and advance the discussion in the following order. First, I briefly review how young population and young workers were once projected to the public in the era of economic development and industrialization, in order to set up a foundational recognition of Japanese youth and young workers. In order to do so, I pick up two terms, *moratoriumu ningen*, a human under moratorium, in the 1970s and *freeter*, a young part-timer, in the 1980s and later. By analyzing these two denominations and their contexts, I argue that both of these terms suggest important vectors in terms of how the youth were embraced by the society in pre-bubble period. Second and third, I use *Nihon no Ronten* articles and other relevant texts to explore how public discourses shaped and reshaped the subject of young non-regular workers in the recessionary Japan by analyzing. Specifically in the third section, I explore their rhetorical subject unattended and their future economic risk underestimated. In the section, I will clarify that this happened as an effect of economic discourses that deflected our attention from the issue of young non-regular workers. Here, I specifically illuminate the following four discourses and their effects; (1) national economic recovery; (2) *risutora*, or lay-offs of middle-aged regular workers; (3) a 1995 announcement of *Nikkeiren*, the biggest lobbying organization for big

domestic companies; and lastly (4) an official unemployment rate. Toward the end of the section, I explore how each of these was interrelated, and how the interrelation of these discourses engendered discursive powers to the subject of young non-regular workers. Third, I advance the discussion and claim that their rhetorical subject was reformed into an abject subject in general public once they were spotlighted in public discourses by analyzing prevalent discourses in the general public. Specifically, the section discusses the following discourses; (1) the influence of Koizumi administration's "structural reform"; (2) the discourse of *parasaito shinguru*, single workers living in their parents' house; and (3) the discourse of *hikikomori* and *NEET*, young withdrawals.

Again, I divided the first, second and third sections based on their public rhetorical images. Still, I advance my analysis with a basic understanding that each image has taken over some portion of previously existing images and developed chronologically. By analyzing the rhetorical subject of young non-regular workers in this chapter, I attempt to spotlight effects of dominant capitalist power to them.

### **Young People and Young Non-Regular Workers in the Pre-Bubble Era**

In this brief section, I review the way the subject of young people and young workers was framed in the era of economic growth and stability. On this topic, sociologist Satoshi Kotani edited a good collection of analyses on young people. Released in 1993, the book recapitulates prevalent images of young populations from the 1970s to the beginning of the 1990s. To some contemporary readers, the book's images of youth, students and young workers are unexpected with many positive images such as those enjoying material wealth, technological development and the widening possibility of their national economic future. For instance, some say that they were "the engine of cultural creativity" (Uemura 114-16); "tricksters" playing with technological

and cultural artifacts (Uemura 116-18); “connoisseurs” of a variety of events burgeoning in the advent of consumer and entertainment society (Morihiro 156); and “masters” of, but sometimes “the addict to, the technology and media” (Morihiro 156, 162), while the latter was once infamously called *otaku* or a nerd. Summarizing the major public images of young people in this era, sociologist Tomohiko Asano points out that these images were bracketed by “the ideology of egalitarianism” (57). By that, Asano means that the principle of equality in recognizing and representing young adults of the society made a wide array of the domestic youth feel politically and economically free (57). Therefore, Asano sees that the Japanese society once equipped more tolerance and understanding to the youth and embraced them more tenderly.

One denomination that typically shows this ideology is a term *moratoriumu ningen*. *Moratoriumu ningen* was originally invented by scholar of psychology Keigo Okonogi in a monthly opinion magazine to refer to domestic teens and twenties spending longer time before starting their vocational career like moratorium (qtd. in Kotani “Joron” 4-5). Even though he originally meant those studying in higher educational institutions as well as those working part-time rather than full-time, the term *moratoriumu ningen* quickly spread to the entire society as it also widened the scope to refer to the entire young generations. As a result, the term quickly became a buzzword to portray their disengaging, conservative character.

In order to understand the nuance of the term, we must understand the time of Japanese student activism in the late 1960s. In that time, the dilemma between their pacifist constitution and American militarist interventions to Asian countries incited student anti-militarist activism, and its climax was observed in many university and high school campuses when the government renewed the U.S.-Japan Security Pact including the permission of the American army stations in domestic Japan. Whereas the anti-militarism occupied the large portion of the movement, it also

absorbed a variety of other political and economic claims that emerged in the course of industrialization and by the import of “new” human rights from western countries, leading to the momentum of civil activism in the entire nation (Oguma 87-101).

However, the student activism rapidly slowed down since 1970, and is almost dead now. Accordingly, the public recognized that Japan, already industrialized, already rich, and already oblivious of the bitter memory of the WWII, framed *moratoriumu ningen* as a person being dissociated from political issues but still satisfied with a “comfortable ‘here-and-now-ness’” (Kotani “Moratoriumu” 61). In this way, the term *moratoriumu ningen* was framed as a depoliticized subject. Kotani therefore sees Okonogi’s work as “an accurate description of the society” in terms of “the sense of languor in the aftermath of the social uproar” (“Moratoriumu” 61).

Importantly, however, *moratoriumu ningen* was imagined as an adolescent free from the obligation of economic production. That is, *moratoriumu ningen* was “tolerated by the society, or by ‘adults of the society,’” to stay away “from the sites of production” (Kotani, “Moratoriumu” 61). Accordingly, *moratoriumu ningen* was literally allowed to enjoy their period of moratorium, and this special status was “widely and profoundly validated” by the cultural climate of the time (“Joron” 5). On why this was acknowledged by the society, Kotani explains that the advent of *moratoriumu ningen* was with a general public recognition that Japan was within a systematic change (“Moratoriumu” 56). That is, he sees that “in the society where the economic stability is fixed and the tolerance to the weak is grown,” the term *moratoriumu* was recognized as a mass of youngsters needing an additional extra time in order to accommodate themselves to the society (“Joron” 5). In this way, young generations were allowed to withdraw themselves from

both political and economic participation to the society for a longer period of time in a mass scale.

Yet, *moratoriumu ningen* also connotes negative nuances, which make the existence of *moratoriumu ningen* ambivalent. Okonogi describes them as those who “hypertrophied the sense of self-esteem but do not have any will or vigor to achieve anything in the society” (67). However, Okonogi did not accuse the character of *moratoriumu ningen* out of these features. Rather, his work that originally proposed the term was penetrated by a basic concept that setting up a moratorium in his or her adolescent period is a wise, functional choice in now affluent, peaceful, free, democratic and complicated society. For one, this was because *moratoriumu ningen*—or perhaps more generally the youth—was imagined as a symbol of post-WWII industrial and pacifist Japan, and therefore denying their personal characters was by itself the denial of their post-WWII history. Accordingly, to Okonogi and many others in the 1970s, sacrifice youth for saving the society was a taboo, reminding him of obligatory military drafts and a series of tragic consequences under the imperial regime (67-69). So it is conceivable that Okonogi’s concern as well as the basic sense of tolerating *moratoriumu ningen* was largely shared.

Secondly, company culture also acknowledged their attitude and embraced them within it. For instance, critic Kunihiro Yamanote comments that “it is the responsibility of companies to adjust to *moratoriumu ningen*. As the society generated these kinds of people, companies need to train them in accordance with their business objectives and demands to young employees. To put it shortly, we need to grow them into full-fledged, mature ‘adults’” (394). Yamanote even claims that, in the process of educating young workers, the society and adults “should also

learn from them” to explore new possible company management styles and directions of the society (394).

Thirdly, and moreover, Kotani understands that such an idea was endorsed not only in the term *moratoriumu ningen*, but also in other terms referring to young generations and young workers designated in relations to their new life style, behavioral patterns and preferences. Kotani explains that they altogether suggest an idea that these new “characters of young people” should be firstly embraced, and if necessary, trained “into ‘the right’ direction” (“Musubi” 231). For this reason, I follow Asano’s remark that the “ideology of egalitarianism” was prevalent in the public recognition of young generations in the 1970s and the 1980s (57).

To review my points so far, discourses of young generations around this time projected humane and tolerant visions to young people and young workers. They were embraced by the public and enfranchised to enjoy enough time before formally joining in the society, and their public subject was accordingly formulated. Seemingly, this idea survived as late as 1993, at least among intellectuals, for Satoshi Kotani stated that it was the responsibility of the society to provide an alternative “future vision” or a collective goal to the young generations of the society:

In the era of economic miracle, young generations were always sustained by the ‘grammar of motives’ such as their civil activisms and economic productions. But I cannot find any of these grammars either in the contemporary youth culture or more widely in the Japanese public. (“Musubi” 231)

Alluding Kenneth Burke’s work, Kotani claims that it is adults’ or the obligation of the society to rebuild “another ‘grammar of motive’” for them (“Musubi” 232). In this way, young adults were once embraced by the domestic society.

As I will extrapolate it in later sections, however, the public has become crueler, more cold-blooded as they were violently labeled as being lazy, trouble-making, and even tranquilizing of national economic activities. This change is most clearly observed in the change of the sense of a term *freeteer*<sup>30</sup>, or young part-timers. While *moratoriumu ningen* has not been used frequently since the 1980s and is almost dead now, *freeteer* has been very widely used since its inception, and it is now built into a common Japanese vocabulary. Therefore, the remainder of this section explores how the meaning of Japanese young non-regular workers has changed by tracking the change of the status of the term *freeteer*.

The term was invented by a 1983 article on *Furomu A* or *From A*, a magazine of part-time job positions. Originally, the article featured individual *freeteers* with a focus on their voluntary choice of part-time jobs and their new, free life style. Therefore, Driscoll once defined the term as “the youth who choose to make a living from part-time work even after graduating from junior college or university” (170). In its practical usage, the term once had—and still has—an indulgent image, the image of youth dependent to their parents for living expenses but using their wages for personal entertainment and leisure. For instance, a weekly popular magazine notes in 1988 that “they are given a decent amount of living expenses by their parents and earn some extra by enjoying working part-time”; by that, *freeteers* “keep squandering commodities, buying too much clothing, use fancy cars, and enjoy international trips frequently” (“Teishoku Kyohi” 38-39).

However, it is noticeable that positive nuances coexisted in the early image of *freeteer*. As was originally defined in the part-time job information magazine for young people, individual *freeteers* were regarded as those free from company culture that strongly bind the life of those

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<sup>30</sup> A combination of a qualifier *furī*, free, and *arbaiter*, laborer in German language.

formally joined in. So they were described as “those realized ‘the true virtue in a rich, advanced industrial nation,’” and this bohemian life style has even made them the target of envy and desire upon the nascent high consumer culture (“Teishoku Kyohi” 38). These discourses suggest that *freeters* were also recognized as “the vanguard of the Japanese society,” those enjoying a new work-life balance in the super-rich society (“Teishoku Kyohi” 39).

Accordingly, while *freeter* entailed a negative tone such as being squandering money with expensive products and disengaging in the act of productions, these features were conceded as their temporary traits, while their basic employment status and life styles were accepted (“Teishoku Kyohi” 38). It was also recognized that his or her present weaknesses should be corrected by the society and companies, by which his or her life should be correctly guidance. Like this, the early *freeter* image, like *moratoriumu ningen*, existed in the ambivalence between the positive and the negative.

On the other hand, *freeter* in the contemporary sense is much more negatively nuanced. As we will see the details below in this chapter, the term is sometimes used even as a synonym of a drop-out, for their choice of part-time job was recognized as a fatal and irrevocable career failure. While I reserve myself from analyzing specific politics regarding the term *freeter* until the middle of this chapter, I make an overall statement here that the sense of tolerance and embracement in *moratoriumu ningen* and early *freeter* images has been gradually eroded from the subject of young populations and young workers over the last two decades.<sup>31</sup> In short, the term *freeter* epitomizes the change of the rhetorical subject of young non-regular workers because it has significantly changed its nuances in the last two decades, as the positive—that is,

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<sup>31</sup> For instance, Yamada parallels the term *freeter* with *parasaito shinguru*, and discusses these two populations altogether as those lacking the sense of social integrity. See below and Yamada, *Parasaito Shinguru*, 46.

free, liberated from heavy burdens of full-time workers and intense company cultures—side has been worn down from the matrix of the meaning.

In short, this section reviewed theoretical literatures of rhetorical subject, and discussed how young generations and young non-regular workers were conceived in pre-bubble era. Firstly, I outlined theoretical underpinnings of rhetorical subject with ideas of Michel Foucault and scholars of cultural studies. After that, I explored the history of two terms referring to young population, *moratoriumu ningen* in the 1970s and *freeter* since the middle of the 1980s. By these, I claimed that these denominations and neologisms constituted their rhetorical subject in a framework tolerantly embraced by the society. As I will return to the term *freeter* in the next two sections, however, the public status of young population—young workers and young non-regular workers—were not under this framework since then.

### **Young Non-Regular Workers Un(der)represented**

This section analyzes *Nihon no Ronten* articles of the domestic economy in the post-bubble, recessionary Japan. By that, I try to understand discursive unities surrounding the young workers and the politics of appropriation into their public subject. In the end, I claim that discourses reinscribed the non-regular workers' subjectivity in a particular way, that the subject was un(der)represented against economic discourses. By the parenthesis I intend to mean two different effects of the biopolitical power to the subject of young non-regular workers. By unrepresentation, I mean that they, as workers, were unobserved and unattended by the public, especially in terms of their labor rights and security. By underrepresentation, I mean that, even when they were mentioned, their situation has been underrated, that is, it was recognized as a minor, inconsiderable and negligible issue in comparison with other more critical issues of the domestic economy.

In this part I will discuss four major economic discourses the nation experienced, which, I will argue later, had a substantial influence to the subject of young non-regular workers. Specifically, this section discusses: (1) the discourse of the national economic recovery in the 1990s; (2) the discourse of *Risutora*, or restructuring middle-aged regular workers, in the middle to the late 1990s; (3) the largest lobbying group *Nikkeiren*'s 1995 announcement that called for limiting the availability of *seishain* regular workers' good benefit and security; and lastly (4) the discourse of official unemployment rate. As I advance my analysis of these four discourses, my exploration is directed to find their effects to the subject of young non-regular workers. Toward the end of the section, I argue that each of the above discourses interrelated together to un(der)represent the young workers.

***Desire for the National Economic Recovery.*** Because *Nihon no Ronten* started in 1992, soon after the bubble burst, reading the articles of domestic economy is itself an experience of understanding how the Japanese public has struggled with the long-term economic recession. Topics vary from the valorization of the present overall domestic economy, weak and strong industrial sectors now and future, to countermeasures against the recession and to how to treat industries and employees.

Articles of domestic economic situation and countermeasures agree upon a premise that the nation should gather their effort to end the recessionary trend. Accordingly, most of the articles suggest their thoughts on the factors of the current slow economy as well as countermeasures against them. In this part I attempt to reveal how their discourses impact the subject of young workers. In order to do it, I firstly read appropriate articles of *Nihon no Ronten* and understand dominant recognitions of their economic status quo and possible

countermeasures. Secondly, I show how these discourses formed the subject of young working populations.

Discourses of the national economy have consistently emphasized the manufacturing sector as the main, pillar industry of the nation. For instance, Akio Morita, the former President of Sony, proposed a countermeasure against the bubble-burst crisis in his 1992 article. Like many other articles, Morita claims that they should focus on boosting domestic manufacturing industry in the first place, and that this should be done by slashing the benefit per product and increasing the total number of the product (118-19). For Morita, it was imperative that the Japanese economy wipe out negative images of the bubble burst and keep good balance in foreign trades (119). Therefore, Morita, with his persona as a self-made craftsman and one of the leading entrepreneurs in the global company, believed that producing a more amount of good-quality products and distributing them more widely to the world with cheaper prices can best reinvigorate the domestic economy. By that, Morita claims that “another long-term growth” is possible (119).

Along the same line, former Finance Ministry official and economist Toyo'o Gyoten also claimed that exporting manufactured products is critical for Japan's economic future. In order to achieve this, however, Gyoten mentions the need to reform inner-company structures, and claims that that the swollen human resource costs should be effectively curtailed in order to secure the profit level against downturn factors such as high yen price and increasing American pressures. Therefore, Gyoten's claim is the combination of boosting exporting goods and reducing human costs (295-96).

Like Morita and Gyoten, economist Jitsuro Terashima claims that manufacturing industry should be the main engine of the Japanese economy. However, Terashima's use of the

term manufacturing was exceptionally rhetorical. He claimed that, because the manufacturing industry has always been “the keystone of the national economy,” Japan should strengthen the industry and change the entire nation into what he calls “the manufacturing society” (286). “But,” Terashima continues, “I do not use the term manufacturing in a narrow, conventional sense” (286). Instead, “together with agricultural, fishery, and constructional industries,” Terashima claims that Japan should maximize their elaborate craftsmanship, produce more high-skilled products, and then become “the leader of the real economy in the entire world” (286). Therefore, Terashima’s proposal was more radical than the other two by his claim that other industries should learn from manufacturing companies their value-adding profit-making system.

Their strong expectations to manufacturing industries—especially manufacturing of technological, electric and heavy-industrial goods—do not just reflect their material affluence brought by these industries. As a national pride, manufacturing has been promoted as a symbol of the Japanese economy throughout post-WWII era. For instance, Shunya Yoshimi’s investigation on domestic discourses of home appliances and electronics proves that post-WWII Japan promoted a public discourse of “techno-nationalism,” that affirms the national identity and pride with their electronic and manufacturing technology against the United States and other industrial nations (153-73). In this sense, Morita, Gyoten, and Terashima’s emphasis on manufacturing sector typically exemplifies a high symbolic value of manufacturing in Japanese public.

Yet, in contrast to such prevalent discourses, it was also known that manufacturing industry already faced a set of new issues. As Crump says, “the dilemma facing Japanese companies in the 1990 was that they were burdened with a level of productive capacity that was vastly in excess of what the market could profitably absorb” (138). As a result, “Japan’s average

annual rate of growth in GDP during the period of 1992-1999 was a mere 0.9 per cent, which was only one-quarter of the 3.6 per cent average achieved in the USA,” says Crump (138). Therefore, Crump recognized, by the end of the 1990s, that the revival of manufacturing sector was almost impossible, whatever strategies critics propose—whether they sell more with cheaper profit per products, they produce the smaller number of good-quality products, or whether they curtail cost in the process of manufacturing. Crump thinks so because the manufacturing industry already faced both swollen human resource costs for now middle- and old-aged baby-boomer regular workers, and furthermore against rising rivals in Asian countries (136-38). So his conclusion was that the Japanese manufacturing is by and large facing structuring problems that already industrialized western nations; that is, most of these companies should prompt structural shifts of their manufacturing mechanisms, or they cannot survive in the global market. As Crump extrapolates, their national-pride motor vehicle companies most typically serve as “a particular striking example” (138). He explains:

The Nissan Motor Company possessed the capacity to produce 2.3 million motor cars, but in 1998 it sold only 1.53 million. . . . It is cases such as this which lend credibility to estimates that as much as 25 per cent of Japan’s industrial capacity was lying idle in 1995 and that only 35 per cent of Japanese companies were making profits. (138)

In short, the public’s expectation to manufacturing sectors, endorsed by the high symbolic value of manufacturing, was becoming increasingly distanced from economists’ pragmatic forecasts.

At least in the 1990s, most responses from *Nihon no Ronten* , like many other similar media, was to augment a more variety of economic measures and theories are used to calculate their economic status quo. For instance, Shimanaka, a researcher at an economic think tank,

brought about diffusion index and historical diffusion index in order to measure the recent economic trend in 1995. With this, Shimanaka argued that the “Heisei recession [the recession since the bubble burst in 1991]<sup>32</sup> was already over in fall, 1993” and so the domestic economy was going to recover in near future, which, of course, was proven to be false (285-86). Two years later in 1997, a commentary article of *Nihon no Ronten* entitled “Has the economy been recovered? If it does not yet, when?” also suggests that the public has not been able to predict their economic tendency (“Dēta Fairu: Keiki” 203).

Even though the number of individual articles increased around this time, their efforts did not help to envision the domestic economic future, but their predictions rather complicated the whole picture on the economic status quo, while they strengthened urgent and uptight tones. Consecutively, even the state packages and announcements did not gain enough credibility, but rather confused the entire economic situation. As Takahashi says in 1997,

Even though the government announced for several times that ‘the domestic economy is being reinvigorated,’ and even though critics and scholars commented so, many citizens are still anxious about all these. They all know that state countermeasures are limited in their access to the entire monetary circulation, and that individual efforts at industry- and company-levels are longer powerful any more. (203-04)

As a result, a *Nihon no Ronten* article concludes that, “so far, a welter of controversies between pessimists and opportunists has made it very hard to predict which direction we are going” (“Dēta Fairu: Fukyō” 290). In the circumstance where economic predictions are contradictory with each other and countermeasures repeatedly failed, critics seemed lost their capacity of

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<sup>32</sup> Heisei is the current era of Japan, started on January 8th, 1989, after the death of the Emperor Hirohito. Heisei recession is an alias name for post-bubble economic recession.

accurately foreseeing their economic future and properly guiding the public. As a result, the article concludes that “doing economic forecasts is like doing the profane to the God; it is totally beyond human intelligence” (“Dēta Fairu: Fukyō” 290).

In summary, this part has reviewed discourses in *Nihon no Ronten* that discussed the national economic trends and countermeasures. We confirmed that, while many of them relied on manufacturing sectors to play the leading role of the economic revival, the sectors were by and large under the structural mire. Accordingly, the sense of urgency, anxiety and confusion toward their economic future was increased.

It is in this particular context that young populations were mentioned as present and future workers in the articles of *Nihon no Ronten*. In the remainder of this subsection, I explore how the subject of young non-regular working forces was reformed by analyzing *Nihon no Ronten* article. In order to do this, I will analyze discourses of both young non-regular workers and regular workers. Toward the end of this part, I claim that the effect of these economic discourses were strong enough to re-inscribe their subject in the pre-bubble image.

As is typically shown in the articles of Morita, Gyoten and Terashima, economic discourses repositioned young workers, including *seishain* and *freeters*, within the negative pre-bubble view of them as having insufficient prowess and marketability. Articulating this view overlooked the non-regular workers’ potential for personal development and excluded their capacity to contribute to capital production. This rhetoric, in other words, disqualified the non-regular workers and lowered their status relative to that of *seishain* workers.

In *Nihon no Ronten*, such discourses are observed frequently in the mid-1990s and later. For instance, Esaka, in his article of company cost-down, lists possibilities of company cost-cuts. In listing possibilities according to job titles and generations, Esaka claims that young workers

“should not be qualified as company executives” because they are not so loyal to or engaging in their companies unlike older counterparts (576).

More aggressively, Hiroyuki Itami claims that companies should adopt a more stringent measure in recruiting young workers with regular *seishain* status. By answering their general tendencies to cut human costs, Itami argued in 2001 that “such policies [as guaranteeing long-term employment to everyone] practically force a lot of financial burdens to companies,” and that this should be began by recruiting less new high school and college graduates (307). Inevitably, Itami’s main argument is that the key to increasing company profit is to hire more competent and fewer young new *seishain* workers by examining them more strictly, because this enables companies to spend “more energy to grow fewer good regular workers and enclosure them with better payments by allocating energy and money that they presently use for *freeter* part-timers” (307). In this way, Itami claims companies should adopt a more careful filter of new workers (and only new workers).

Furthermore, William W. Grimes, in his 2000 *Nihon no Ronten* article, accelerated Itami’s idea with neoliberal market-fundamentalist rationales. In order to achieve economic recovery, Grimes argues that, while politicians need to “hold tight with business leaders and provide public spending with the market,” companies should spend more on stock investments (55). Grimes also proposed to amend the present “overprotective” treatment of employees, for it is “detrimental” for companies to allocate too much works and expenses to working resources (54). On employees, Grime claims that hiring college graduates was especially wasteful because they are less experienced and so specifically incompetent in speculative businesses. Ultimately speaking, therefore, Grimes offers a shift to post-Fordist company structure, and asserts that this

enables “a stable, long-term growth”—young generations are altogether abandoned in his proposed solution (55).

As is obvious, these three critics shared an idea that young generations’ employment security was not a critical issue, and far less important than the revival of the national economy. Actually, this comparison was mentioned more explicitly by a few other writers of *Nihon no Ronten*. For instance, Uchihashi claims that it is “time to remind ourselves that both the Japanese management and employment systems were not bound by any laws or acts, but they were just customary inner-company rules,” and that “the life-time employment is a system presupposed by the economic development and is therefore unsuitable for present Japan” (588-89). For this reason, Esaka claims that companies should focus on developing present employees’ skills in order to improve company records (575-76). In this way, critics in *Nihon no Ronten*—Esaka, Itami, Grimes and Uchihashi—accorded with filtering young workers from working with regular *seishain* status.

As we have seen it so far, *Nihon no Ronten*’s articles on the national economy set the revival of the domestic economy as the primary mission of the nation. Like the general domestic public, these critics conceived the economic recovery based on the re-boost of manufacturing sector as the sacred, grand mission. While young working populations were sporadically mentioned in these articles, their future treatments were deductively directed into more precarious statuses.

Foucault claims that power produces “absences and gaps; it overlooks elements, introduces discontinuities, separates what is joined, and marks off boundaries. Its effects take the general form of limit and lack” (*History of Sexuality, Vol. I* 83). As Foucault says, a gap or discontinuity exists in terms how young working forces were treated between the above

discourses and images of *moratoriamu ningen* and *freeters*. That is, these economic discourses co-opted negative aspects of previously existed young generations and jettisoned the holistic perspective of embracing the positive character of the youth, and thereby reshaped the subject of young workers. In economic discourses, young working forces were only sporadically mentioned, but it was in between these absences and gaps where power effectuated oppressively to the capital status of young workers. In summary, this part discussed economic discourses and claimed a reformation of the subject of young non-regular workers according to the unique discursive space of recessionary Japan. I claimed that the transformation happened in the economic realm as far as *Nihon no Ronten* is concerned, and that this was easily justified for the sake of discussing the grand scenario of the national economic recoveries.

**Risutora, or Layoffs of Middle-Aged Regular Workers.** From the late-1990s to 2000 or 2001, mass media sensationally reported lay-offs of these workers in several companies, the new word *risutora*, short for English word restructuring, quickly became a buzzword.<sup>33</sup> In this time, citizens got aware that that the national recession was more tenacious than firstly expected, and the public gradually realized that a single economic stimulus package cannot revitalize the entire economy, or that there was no magic wand on this complexly intertwined phenomenon. As Crump elegantly frames, their ever-unrecoverable economy was becoming “a large slice of *déjà vu*,” or an irremovable torment (144). Accordingly, *Nihon no Ronten* featured *risutora*, discharge of older full-time *seishain* workers, as an independent topic of articles. I analyze effects of *risutora* discourses here and claim that these discourses, by translating the issue of domestic economy from abstract, national scale problem to the imminent threat to citizens’

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<sup>33</sup> Critics note that the rise of *risutora* discourses concur with the rise of unemployment rates of old-aged workers. See Table 1; Oguma 280-85; and Yuasa, *Han-Hinkon* 37.

family income, provided another rationale for disregarding the employment security of young non-regular workers because they are assumed to be perennial income earners of the family.

In all of these articles, *risutora* was recognized as an imminent and urgent danger to the nation, perhaps more so than the problem of slow national economy as far as the imminent and urgent tone is concerned. Actually, a summary article of *risutora* in 1997 emphasizes that over the sixty per cent of major domestic companies recognize a more room to curtail human resource costs—and furthermore that the rate increases as high as ninety one per cent in case of large-sized companies (“Dēta Fairu: Kō” 212). The article concludes that “the reality is that your company asks you early retirement, you cannot attain another regular job once you accept the offer, and even though you fortunately get another job, your salary would be much lower” (“Dēta Fairu: Kō” 212). Accordingly, *risutora* articles conveyed a fear-constructing power, as Kamata claimed in his 1996 article that “*risutora* and the hollowing out of the manufacturing industry is the root of *fuan* for contemporary Japan. Thus Japan, once ‘the economic superpower,’ is now ‘*fuan* superpower’” (“Shitsugyō” 300). In this way, the Japanese public was rapidly covered with the fear of their breadwinners’ risk of discharge and the economic collapse of Japanese families.

How was this discourse intersected with the discourse of young workers? I claim that *risutora* discourse allowed the public to ignore the employment status and future risk of young workers more explicitly than the discourse of national economy. Certainly, the discourse of national economy worked to disregard the future employment stability of young working forces by comparing the national economy with young workers’ stability. While the national economy has always been the top priority in this economic nation, the economic trend, however, has also been abstract and unreal for many of domestic citizens. On the other hand, the *risutora* discourse

uniquely offered this danger as a form of an economic crisis of their individual families—of your fathers and husbands’ discharge—and asked the nation to choose the discharge of your father or an unstable employment status of your sons and daughters. That is, by paralleling these on the level of the damage to the same household income, the *risutora* discourse offered a new sense of disqualification of young workers’ employment security.

Actually, Kazuo Koike, professor of business administration at Hosei University, claimed in his 1995 *Nihon no Ronten* article that young workers should be the first target of discharge; against the budget crunch of a company, “the only option,” claims Koike, is “that someone should get the shortest of short straws” (443). Accordingly, he concludes that human resource reforms with the risk of *risutora* should start with discharging young people because they have more “future” in this era (443). Presumably, claims such as Koike’s were convincing to Japanese, as Genda claims that “the job insecurities of middle-aged and older workers remain[ed] a far greater cause for concern in Japan than those of young people” (*A Nagging* 29).

Even though critics like Koike claimed to disregard young workers’ employment because they have more “future,” their future availability of full-time employment status was too optimistically forecasted. As one among most crucial effects of *risutora* discourse, therefore, there existed a gap between the overemphasized risk of present full-time workers’ discharge and the minimized risk of young workers’ future employment security. This gap is clearly described, for instance, on an article of popular weekly magazine *AERA*:

In near future, say in 2020, most young people can get a regular status because there are fewer workers [due to the smaller population of these generations]. However, from now on more and more middle-aged people will lose their jobs because companies avert their expensive labor cost. Once, middle-aged workers

passed a very easy course to get a job, but now they need to go through a thorny path. (“Chūkōnen ga Abureru” 15)

Obviously, such forecasts like the *AERA* article turned out to be blatantly wrong because they failed to take into account a variety of factors that shrunk the available positions of *seishain* full-time workers such as the overall economic trend, wax and wane of the main industries of the nation, and above all state regulations.<sup>34</sup> Yet, a welter of *risutora* discourse has directed the large public attentions away from the issue of young workers’ employment stability.

It should be noted, however, that the unemployment rate of male middle- and old-aged males has never been higher than young counterparts, even in the middle of *risutora* discourse in the late 1990s (see Figure 1). As far as we see the statistic results, substantially higher rate of young workers has been unemployed, and far more young working populations have also been underemployed (see Figure 2). Accordingly, I claim that *risutora* discourse, in combinations with rough forecasts of young generations’ employment status, had an effect of underestimating the risk of young workers’ present employment security and their future survivability.

In summary, the *risutora* discourse, articulated with the discourse of the national economy, provided a greater rationale for the public to disregard the issue of young workers’ employment status. Most critically, *risutora* discourse provided a much more imminent sense of fear and anxiety toward the national economy because *risutora* discourse uniquely raised the fear as a fear of the absolute majority Japanese citizens’ household’s main income. By translating the issue of future domestic economy from the abstract, national-scale problem to their individual

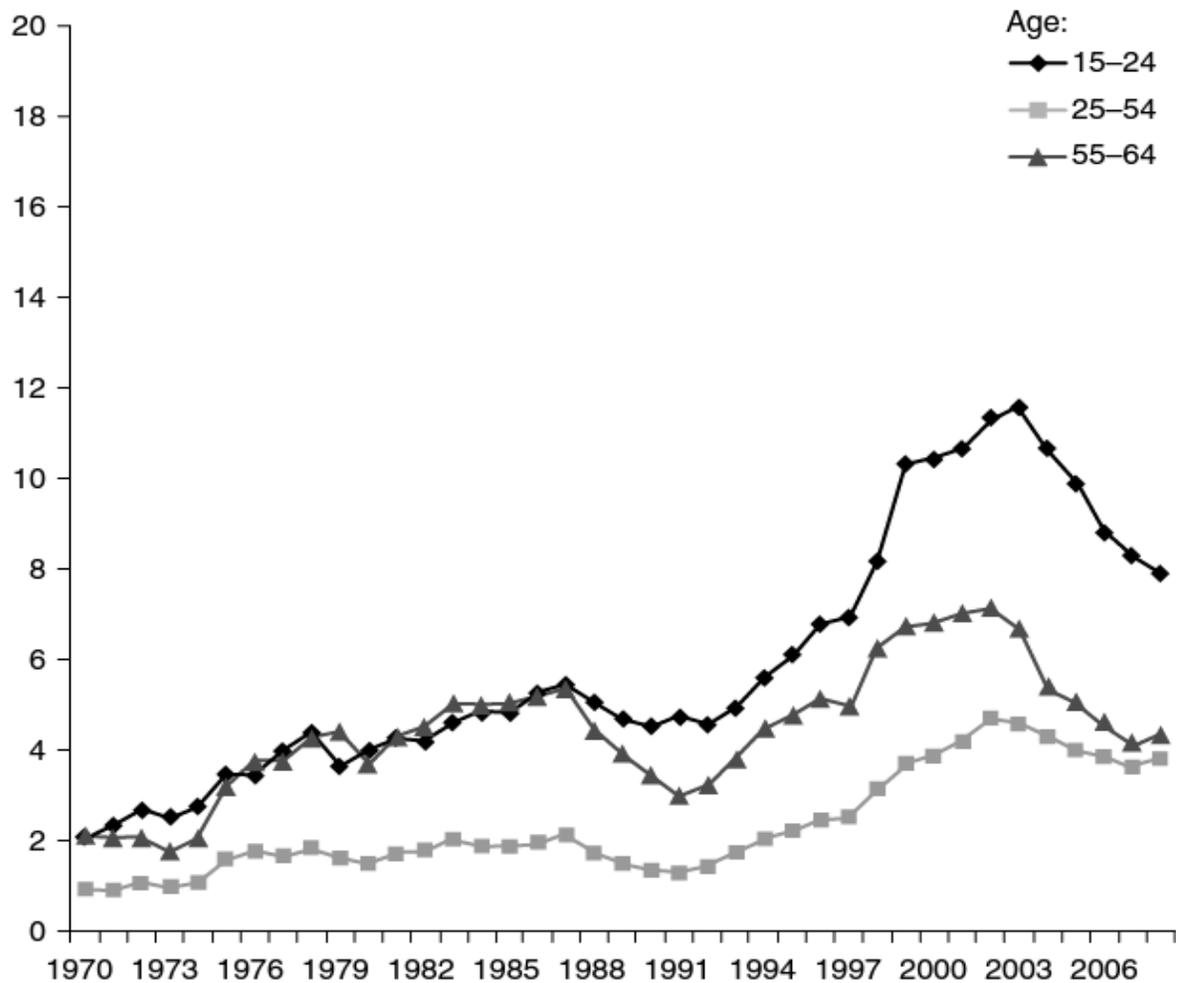
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<sup>34</sup> Also, Itoh claimed in 1996 *Nihon no Ronten* that the tertiary sectors such as service and creative industries will grow big enough to absorb young labor forces (304-05). Likewise, Ikeo expected the tertiary sectors to play the same role in his 2000 *Nihon no Ronten* article (288-89).

citizens' pockets, *risutora* discourse provided another, stronger reason to ignore young workers' employment security.

Fig. 1

Unemployment Rate of Fifteen Years Old or More Male Labor Force by Age, 1984-2004.

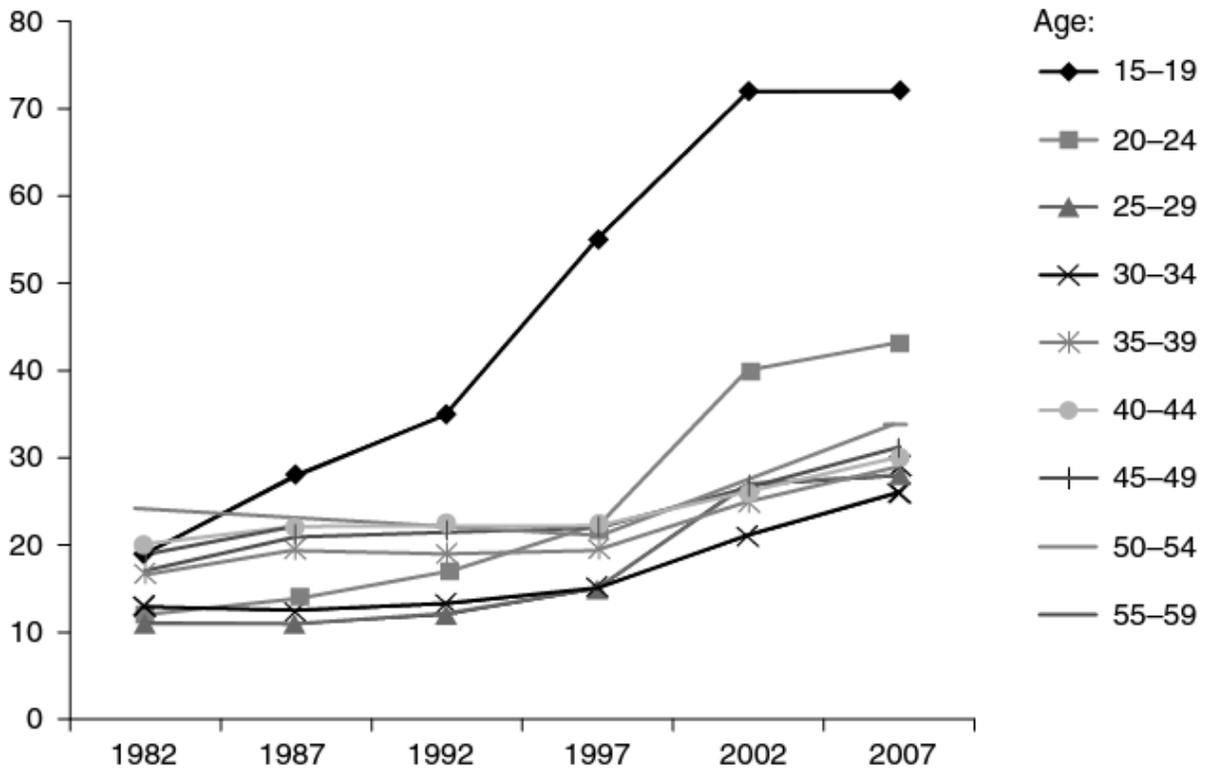


Comparison of Unemployment Rates for Young and Older Men: Japan.

Source: OECD Stat. qtd. in Brinton, Mary C. *Lost in Transition: Youth, Work, and Instability in Postindustrial Japan*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. 2010. Print. 22.

Fig. 2

Change in the Percentage of Japanese Employees Engaged in Non-regular Work by Age, 1982-2007.



Sōmushō, Shūgyō Kōzō Kihon Chōsa. qtd. in Brinton, Mary C. *Lost in Transition: Youth, Work, and Instability in Postindustrial Japan*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. 2010. Print. 28.

Before analyzing another discourse, I should point out a character of the above two discourses in relation to the western rhetoric of neoliberalism. David Harvey commented that, in neoliberal society, the lack of flexibility represented by “rigid rules and bureaucratic structures” is frequently perceived “as much a disadvantage for individual labourers as it was for capital” (*Brief History* 53). Therefore, Harvey says that “virtuous claims for flexible specialization in labor processes and for flexi-time arrangements could become a part of the neoliberal rhetoric

that could be persuasive” (*Brief History* 53). In contrast to Harvey’s description of European rhetoric that celebrates flexibility and specialization, the above discourses exemplify a Japanese traditional working culture that did not treat rigid full-time employment status as a vice and flexible contract-based employment status as a virtue. As we have seen so far, the Japanese working culture in this period has recognized the value of *seishain* full-time workers in general, and the cultural rhetoric rather adopted western rhetoric that applauds flexible working style exclusively to young working forces, whereas the flexivization for older male workers were apparently recognized as a crisis. In many regards, this rhetoric reflects a structural feature of companyism that presupposes the superiority of *seishain* full-time workers. That is, the analyses in Chapter 2 and in this chapter together suggest that the discourses were premised upon the regime of companyism, in which *seishain* full-time working style has been the pillar of legal and capital systems in post-WWII Japan. I claim that this particular mode has promoted exclusively young generations to be allocated to precarious positions.

**Nikkeiren’s *Japanese-style Labor Management and Deregulations*.** So far, this section analyzed two discourses, the discourses of national economic crisis and lay-offs of older regular workers. I claimed that these discourses worked together to disregard young workers’ future employment status and livability. Because it was several among tens and hundreds of economic articles in *Nihon no Ronten* that discussed young labor forces, young workers had presumably an oblique presence in the backyard of “main,” “more serious” economic issues of the nation. Consecutively, the chance that young workers’ problem was considered seriously by the public was dismissed. That is, their problem was unrepresented in the domestic society.

In this part, I discuss a particular announcement from a lobbying group, and I argue that the announcement promoted a deregulation in the national employment restrictions and that the

deregulation caused a massive flow of young generations into newly invented precarious employment status in the next several years. *Nikkeiren*, short for *Nippon Keiei-sha Dantai Renmei*, or Japan Federation of Employers' Association, is the biggest lobbying organization for the Japanese industrial world. Originally founded by executives of Japan's leading companies in the early post-WWII period, *Nikkeiren* soon became the biggest lobbying group that represents the will of Japan's industrial and financial world. Besides lobbying activity to the national and local governments, *Nikkeiren's* tasks include publication of economic analysis, negotiations between major companies of the nation, maintenance of government-company relations, and even the organization of annual May-Day events. To the contemporary public, therefore, *Nikkeiren*, now renamed to *Keidanren*, is thus recognized as the symbol of Japan's industrial world (Crump 82, 140).

Throughout the history, *Nikkeiren* has not been a pro-labor rights organization, but it has consistently represented the voice of company managers and executives. This stance has remained unchanged in the post-bubble period, as it explicitly demonstrated pro-industrial world and anti-labor rights attitudes in the following passage:

The wage level in our country is the highest in the world. A further rise in wage costs, linked to a loss in international competitiveness, can only further accelerate the industrial hollowing out that is under way. What should concern us is the actualization of excess employment in industry and enterprises. Under these circumstances, the maintenance and stabilizing of employment becomes the most important question for our country as a whole. Fundamentally, further wage rises will cause difficulty. (qtd. in Crump 147)

Like this, *Nikkeiren*'s rhetoric explicitly demonstrates the threat of unemployment "as an alibi for freezing wages" (Crump 146-47).

It was under this *Nikkeiren*'s recognition on the economic trend that it published a report "*Japanese-style Management*" for a New Era: *The Direction We should Strive for and the Concrete Measures Entailed*. Released in May, 1995, the report proposed to revise the traditional Japanese company management and life-time promotion models that I discussed in Chapter 2. Specifically, the report claimed to reduce the thick layer of *seishain* full-time workers by offering new "flexible" working styles that "respect the subjectivity of employees" (27).<sup>35</sup>

Historically, non-regular workers were important working forces for Japanese companies. Throughout the post-WWII history, there has been a substantial body of peripheral, non-regular working populations such as housewives, students, and retired seniors. Accordingly, part-time positions were on the one hand recognized as those for peripheral income earners of family. On the other hand, however, non-regular positions have been open to those who need more wages, such as seasonal workers engaging manual and physical labor in their off-seasons and recently legalized "trainees" and "interns" from East Asian and South East Asian countries.

Even though they have their own history of non-regular and precarious working status, this announcement was uniquely meaningful in that it tried to normalize part-time status to a mass of young, incoming working populations. That is, the announcement proposed that long-term security should be limited to a much slimmed down aristocracy of labor, and that there should be increasingly peripheral strata with the decreased levels of job security. Namely,

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<sup>35</sup> It should be obvious that these phrases are *Nikkeiren*'s code word for insecure and precarious jobs. Actually, leftists have claimed that the announcement was the milestone for the landslide movement toward deregulation. For instance, Karin Amamiya explicitly accuses the report as "the business world's first and most effective plan to make a large body of slaves, as large as one-third of the entire domestic labor population" (*Ikisasero!* 8). Other literatures include Amamiya, *Ikisasero!* 20-25; Brinton 29-30; and Yuasa, *Han-Hinkon* 22-23, 55-64.

*Nikkeiren*, targeting the entire domestic working forces, claimed that it should be only the core group of company management who can and should maintain the benefit and job security that present regular *seishain* workers invariably enjoy, such as life-time employment, seniority wage, bonus payment, pension and health insurance for workers and their family members (31-32). According to the report, this group is limited to business administrators, technical managers, and workers with good expertise. On the other end of the scale have a short-term, non-regular contract like present *freeters*, who are not able to join health care and pension service. Like *freeters* part-timers, they simply earn hourly-based or daily-based salary without the benefit of health care, pension, or bargaining rights. In-between these two ends is an intermediate stratum made up of those “equipped with skills which were currently in demand” but still entitled to be “flexible” (32). According to the report, they have fixed-term contracts, would be provided much lower rate of bonus, would not be able to join company health care and pension service or enterprise-based labor unions (32).

*Nikkeiren* offered the three-layered stratification model not as a blueprint of governmental policy but as a guideline for private companies. So, there was no official binding power in the report itself. Also, *Nikkeiren* clarifies that the three-layered stratification does not automatically apply to all kinds of business categories. *Nikkeiren* stressed that each company should work out its own “employment portfolio” corresponding to the precise mix of different types of labor it needs; accordingly, some companies may need to add up another stratum or two; others would need only two among the three (18).

Table 2

Legislation of non-regular working status, 1985-2008

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Year (Month) Details of Legislations

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- 1985 *Haken* Law (*Rōdōsha Haken Hō*), short for Law for Ensuring the Proper Operation of *Haken* Business and Improved Working Conditions for Non-regular Workers (*Rōdōsha Haken Jigyō no Tekisei na Unei no Kakuho oyobi Haken Rōdōsha no Shiigyō Jyōken no Seibi nado ni kansuru Horitsu*): legalisation establishment for a positive list of 13 designated occupations with a limited contract term of 9 months to 1 year.
- 1986 Enforcement of *Haken* Law.
- October: Revision of *Haken* Law: extension of the positive list from 13 to 16 occupations.
- 1990 Revision of *Haken* Law: extension of the contract term for all occupations to 1 year.
- 1996 Revision of *Haken* Law: extension of the positive list from 16 to 26 occupations; enforcement of a special *Haken* Law for workers taking child family care leave.
- 1997 Revision of Employment Security Law (*Shokugyō Antei Hō*): relaxation of private job placement regarding occupation restrictions and conditions for the establishment of private firms.
- 1999 Revision of Labour Standards Law (*Rōdō Kijyun Hō*): legalisation of fixed-term contract work for most specialized occupations with an extended contract term of 3 years.
- Revision of *Haken* Law: replacement of the positive list with a negative or prohibited list; 1 year contract term for newly permitted occupations; extension of the contract term from 1 to 3 years; repeal of special measures for elder workers aged 60 and above and workers taking child and elderly care leave.
- 1999 Revision of Employment Security Law: further relaxation of private job placement by removing all occupational restrictions except for jobs in stevedoring and construction areas.
- 2000 Enforcement of temp-to-perm non-regular *haken* condition (*Shōkai Yotei Haken*).
- 2002 Enforcement of a special law for workers aged 45 and above (valid until 31 March, 2005): extension of the contract term of *haken* from 1 to 3 years.
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Table 2 Cont'd

## Legislation of non-regular working status, 1985-2008

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Year (Month) Details of Legislations

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2003 Revision of Labour Standards Law: relaxation of fixed-term contract work by extending the contract term to 3 years for project-related work and 5 years for specialised work.

Revision of *Haken* Law: abolition of the 3-year term restriction for the designated 26 occupations; extension of the term for other newly permitted occupations from 1 to 3 years; lifting of ban on manufacturing assembly lines with a limited term of 1 year; new obligation to directly employ *haken*; lifting of ban on the interview with client firms for temp-to-perm *haken*; lifting of ban on temp-to-perm *haken* in medical services.

Revision of Employment Security Law: further relaxation of private job placement regarding the establishment of private firms and placement industries.

2006 Revision of *Haken* Law: lifting of ban on medical services in hospitals or clinics; partial permission of patent solicitors and chartered/certified accountants

2007 Revision of *Haken* Law: extension of the term for manufacturing assembly lines to 3 years.

2008 Revision of *Haken* Law: introduction of a ban on dispatching *haken* on a daily basis or for less than 30-day employment with the exception of 18 specialized occupations; restriction of the ratio of workers dispatched to group firms to below 80 percent; obligation to reveal the profit margin and turn registered *haken* into employed *haken*; establishment of admonition rules to advice companies in violation of the law pertaining to *haken*'s direct employment.

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Source: Fu, Huiyan. *An Emerging Non-Regular Labour Force in Japan: The Dignity of Dispatched Workers*. London, UK: Routledge, 2012. Print. 62-63.

Still, the categorization of workers was a useful and powerful rhetorical tool for *Nikkeiren* to convey their intention. That is, the announcement signaled to employers that it “enabled companies to offload at will” anyone outside of the first-tiered workers, “whenever the economy slipped into recession” (Crump 148). Furthermore, given the actual state deregulation

enacted in ten years after the announcement, the announcement had a tremendous influence in framing the future economic policies.

Practically, the deregulation was conducted by widening the application range of so-called *Haken* Law, or the Temporary Worker Dispatching Law (See Table 2). Originally, the law was designated to help those with special occupations, or “positive list of 13 designated occupations” such as film translators, interpreters, and television and radio announcers, to find a job via temp agencies. Because these jobs are in most cases short-term and do not fit to the conventional *seishain* contract, the law was designated to enable them to find jobs easily via the temp agencies. The revisions after 1995, however, were conducted apparently in order to realize the intention of *Nikkeiren*, that is, in order for normal companies to replace regular *seishain* workers with cheaper *haken* workers. Now that all the major industries and job kinds are allowed to use *haken* workers, their life and job risks—such as cheap wages, disease and post-retirement life—have been becoming imminent for a mass of young non-regular workers. For this reason, I claim that the announcement was a touchstone that mobilized the society toward deregulation. Given that, I explore in the rest of this part how the announcement was effectuated to the discursive space of recessionary Japan.

In *Nihon no Ronten*, several articles mentioned the announcement. Yet, it is noticeable that these articles, both supportive and critical, are very scarce soon after 1995. Presumably, this was because the report was firstly recognized as just one among many other similar reports that *Nikkeiren* published periodically. And it was only around the 2000 and later when opponents of *Haken* Law revisions—and only the opponents—mentioned the 1995 announcement in retrospect. They, however, did not set it as a main topic, but it was mentioned as a cause of precarious working conditions of workers. For instance, Etsuya Washio claims that the

announcement's influence is observed especially the 1999 revision of the Law that changed the list of jobs from the "positive" to the "negative" or the prohibited (See Table 2). Before the revision, *haken*, or dispatched working contract, was limited to jobs requiring special skills and with unpredictable working time such as film translators and architectural designers; and so the kinds of jobs allowed to use *haken* contract were *positively*—that is, explicitly—listed.<sup>36</sup> However, the 1999 revision flipped the statement and listed the jobs that should be done exclusively by regular workers. Codifying them *negatively*, that is, listing job kinds which require direct contact with employers and therefore with no *haken* workers, practically opened the door for almost all business categories in almost all industries and enterprises to hire employees with *haken* status. Therefore, Washio claims that the announcement eventually made the Japanese companies "to ignore basic labor and human rights" (328).

Likewise, Noriaki Kojima said in his *Nihon no Ronten* article that the "1999 revision jettisoned" the notion of "employee protection," because *haken* workers are not protected by basic Labour Laws; accordingly, they work outside of the basic guidelines of workers protection such as their maximum working time, minimum payment and welfare (446). Therefore, Shigeru Wakita, scholar of Italian labor law, claims that recent revisions of the Act are unjust because they practically allow many companies to ignore *haken* employees' working conditions (449). As a result, Lawyer and activist Mami Nakano concludes in 2001 that *haken* workers are "consumers of temp agencies' services" and not workers protected by the state legal framework (317). Like this, articles of *Nihon no Ronten* by Washio, Kojima, Wakita and Nakano claimed against the revisions.

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<sup>36</sup> Despite their unstable income, old *haken* workers earned much more than those after the 1999 legislative change thanks to their special skills.

Against these claims, *Nihon no Ronten* juxtaposed opinions supporting the revision. They, however, reiterated an old rhetoric with which housewives and students were promoted work part-time since the 1980s. For instance, Shun Arakawa argued that the *Haken* Law promotes self-disciplined working style (323). Likewise, Nagasaka, by lamping young workers together, argued that “part-timers do have other choices, but they voluntarily choose their part-time style in order to save time for childcare, nursing care, and self-actualization” (311). Like this, both Arakawa and Nagasaka, respectably in 1999 and 2001, repeated old rhetoric to promote deregulations despite disproportionately increasing unemployment and underemployment rates.

Like this, *Nihon no Ronten* developed a debate over deregulations of employment for several years since the late 1990s. Washio, Kojima and Nakano believed that any workers spending their time mainly for vocational activities should be protected by basic Labour Laws, so they believed that *haken* status is systematically organized to be exploitative and therefore unjustifiable. On the other hand, pro-deregulation critics such as Arakawa and Nagasaka used the same appeals, which assumed that the freer they are, the more likely they can attain their desired jobs in future. By that, they tried to nullify the potential impact of increasing unemployment and underemployment rates among these generations.

Above all, this debate suggests that critics missed appropriate timing and points to respond. Even though *Nikkeiren*'s 1995 announcement was decried several years later, even after critical revisions of *Haken* Law, their late responses rather became isolated against the mass media and public leaning toward pro-deregulation—furthermore, these opinions soon lost their rhetorical potency against the entire public applauding neoliberal reform under Koizumi administration since 2001. On the other hand, pro-deregulation critics were also unable to offer

unique reasons to support it against slow economic trends, but they behaved as if advancing neoliberal reform is the only way left and should be able to achieve a stable growth.

In a sense, the result of this debate in *Nihon no Ronten* epitomizes the lack of public deliberation on this issue, even though the mass media and the public altogether tended toward neoliberal deregulations. Actually, lawyer Mami Nakano claims later in her 2001 *Nihon no Ronten* article that there was no contemplation on “the net advantage by alternating *seishain* regular workers with non-regular workers or how the new working style should be negotiated with the basic labor laws of the nation” (316). Accordingly, Nakano concludes that public deliberations of the deregulation were far more scarce than they should; that is, critical “revisions [of the *Haken* Law] have been enacted with almost no discussions in the policy-making board or the national Diet, or any major mass media or public forums” (316). Whereas Nakano’s opinion itself was only the wisdom of hindsight, it summarizes well how the public mobilized itself toward a neoliberal direction.

What mobilized the public atmosphere toward pro-deregulation was what I understood as an increasing power of corporate-centered neoliberal rationality. In this time, mass media environment was prevalent with the same rhetoric that applauds effective use of flexible workers as a new business trend. For instance, a former chief editor of part-time job magazine *Furomu A* Yoichi Kobayashi argued that “the more efficiently companies use part-time and *haken* workers, the more profit they make, . . . Typically, theme parks<sup>37</sup> hire more than several thousand part-timers and still they manage it very well” (69). Kobayashi continues that

Now it is a general tendency that companies using *freeter* workers do a better job than those do not. . . . For instance, software development and user support

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<sup>37</sup> By theme park, Kobayashi means the management style of Tokyo Disney Land and Tokyo Disney Sea.

departments of computer software companies have higher proportions of non-regular workers, and they keep good records and contribute to company balances.

(69)

Kobayashi foresaw that this trend would spur to other major industrial sectors such as automobile and electronics manufacturing, and that the business of *haken*, temporary staffing, would soon become popular. Therefore, Kobayashi concludes that the use of these staff services would be a key to managing companies in near future (68-69). Such company-oriented rhetoric to support deregulations was also frequently observed in *Nihon no Ronten*; For instance, Yashiro claims in 1999 that the series of deregulations generate “various good effects such as productivity improvement, cost-reduction, and above all the new invention of employment opportunity” (369).<sup>38</sup>

Not surprisingly, such company-oriented rhetoric to support deregulations had very good correlations with Arakawa and Nagasaka’s claims that tout flexible and independent working style for young workers, because companies can economize their human resource costs and at the same time allow freedom to them. In this way, these discourses together configured a new relation between companies and young workers connected with non-regular status.

Like this, rhetoric of deregulations and public reactions infer that young workers became an instrument rather than a model, the instrument for enterprises and industries to reach their managerial objectives, rather than the model of workers’ sound way to work and enterprises’

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<sup>38</sup> Opinions such as Yashiro’s asserted that the benefit is trickled down in the forms of new job positions and basic salaries to present non-regular workers. However, all such claims in *Nihon no Ronten* fail to explain how many jobs were created and how many present non-regular workers were rewarded. In retrospect, I understand that their claims were based on too optimistic assumptions in regards to how companies treat them and more largely how the domestic economy changes. So, given the up rise of civil activisms on young non-regular workers life several years later, I understand that opinions such as Yashiro’s are irresponsibly promoted non-regular positions to young workers.

sound way to organize working environments and conditions. Namely, the discursive space has put young workers—and exclusively young workers—into a condition in which their stable work life is not a “chimerical model” any more (Nealon 72). And the capitalist hegemony, under this particular condition, has been allowed to reproduce rhetoric in order to govern them more effectively. For this reason, I will claim that the impact of *Nikkeiren*’s announcement has been enormous in terms of creating a critical chance that young non-regular workers’ public subject was transformed to the one convenient for rising neoliberalism.

In summary, this part discussed *Nikkeiren*’s announcement to promote the deregulation of employment security and status, and its effect in the form of legalizing dispatched working form in Japanese work places. While *Nihon no Ronten* highlighted pros and cons of the announcement, the public and mass media did not respond to these debates promptly and meaningfully. Rather, the deregulation was implemented with a rising corporate-centered rhetoric that features “successful” company management by using non-regular workers “effectively,” and it was said that young generations also accorded with this shift. For this reason, I claim that the *Nikkeiren*’s 1995 announcement had a critical importance because it mobilized the public to normalize the use of young workers with non-regular status, while it deflected the public from seriously considering potential risks and hazards of leaving young workers with these conditions.

***The Official Unemployment Rate.*** In the last, fourth sub-division of this section, I briefly discuss the calculation formula of the national government’s unemployment rate, and point out its effect to the public understanding of young workers’ economic situations. In this section we witness that the rate cunningly lowered the proportion of young workers suffering from unemployment, and I claim that the rate has concealed their increasing risk of unemployment

and underemployment. According to Foucault scholar Hacking, statistical data has a significant meaning in the art of governing, because they impose not just perceptions of the government but also classifications “within which people must think of themselves and of the actions that are open to them” (194).

As I demonstrated on Figure 1 above, the domestic unemployment rates are calculated in the category of age by the national Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, and the rates are announced with other categories of sex and forty seven prefectures of the nation. Like the United States, these figures are widely shared via newspapers and TV programs with their current economic trends. On these figures, however, not a few critics have pointed out arbitrariness of the calculation formula. For instance, journalist Satoshi Kamata claims in his 1997 *Nihon no Ronten* article that the official unemployment ratio has been fundamentally flawed, because the figure has been intentionally designed to calculate the smaller figure. Ironically, Kamata points that the rate is designed to identify those fitting to *all* of the following seven conditions: (1) those without any working position, (2) those who did not do any wage-earning activity in the surveyed monthly period, (3) those who are physically workable, (4) those who expressed their wish to work on public job-placement offices, (5) those who can immediately start working once demanded, and (7) those who waited for the result of job hunting activities. Accordingly, Kamata claims that the rate calculates substantially lower amount of the unemployed than the actual, and so that the ratio is designated to find out “uselessly limited” group of people (“Kanzen Shitsugyō Ritsu’ no” 208-09).<sup>39</sup> Japanese communist newspaper *Akahata* continues more acrimoniously that “those fitting to this category would be those who

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<sup>39</sup> According to Kamata, this trickery calculation is unlikely “in any foreign countries. . . . For instance, US unemployment rate includes those temporarily left the working place for their personal matters” (“Kanzen” 209).

has a zero income but can actively move around to seek for a job in the entire month, but those who cannot still find one” (“Kanzen Shitsugyō Ritsu tte” 3). “In reality,” continues the *Akahata*, “such a person would be, . . . a top-tier businessman” vigorously looking for a better full-time position, or a person who is extremely unlucky in job hunting but who can anyway survive with supports from his or his surroundings (“Kanzen Shitsugyō Ritsu tte” 3). Accordingly, it is clear now, as a 2002 *Nihon no Ronten* article notes, that the rate is first of all designed to “constrict the issue of unemployment from being exposed to the public” (“Dēta Fairu: Kōzō” 202). President of *Nikkeiren* Nemoto also concedes the trick when he commented that three point six per cent of unemployment rate in 1996 would be more like six per cent according to UK criteria, and perhaps even higher in some others; so he admittedly says that “image belies the truth” (Dawkins 6).

From the way that the unemployment is calculated, young generations received most severe, negative influence. Genda claims that, because young people has a highest rate of non-regular working positions and higher risks of sudden, unexpected discharges, they are most unlikely to be reflected to the official unemployment rate and therefore most unlikely to be problematized as a public issue (*Nagging* 27-29). Despite these conditions, Genda continues,

Since the late 1990s youth unemployment rates have risen sharply: between 1999 and 2000 the average annual unemployment rate for males under the age of twenty-five exceeded ten percent; the rate for the month of September, 2001 was the worst on record at 12.4 percent. The Japanese unemployment rate has overtaken that of the United States and is now considerably higher particularly for workers in their twenties. (*A Nagging* 29)

Given that, it is clear that Japanese official employment rates have disguised the domestic public. In fact, it was already expected around this time that young generations' unemployment will soon become the problem of their survivability. However, this issue was kept unattended by the general public until many young people were physically victimized several years later.

On the backdrop of these discourses was an effect of companyism. Because the companyism as an apparatus tries to maintain a posture that domestic labor forces are properly allocated and functioning, high unemployment rates can be a threat for the legitimacy of the order. Accordingly, holding down the rates, I argue, is the domestic capitalist hegemony's control over the reality of young workers and the conditions of enunciations from the public (Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol. I* 18). That is, offering lower unemployment rates contributes not only to make light of unemployment among young workers but also, more widely, to control conditions of discourse. That is, the tricky calculation formula has pretended as if the domestic unemployment situation is not as bad as those in other industrial nations, and blinded the increasing risk of young workers' precarity. Articulated with other discourses I reviewed in this part, the rate produced a reality that the domestic young workers were not so seriously suffered from the problem of unemployment.

In this section, I analyzed four particular economic discourses: (1) the national economic recovery; (2) *risutora*, or restructuring middle-aged regular workers; (3) lobbyist group *Nikkeiren*'s announcement; and (4) the official unemployment rate. These discourses remarked a critical turning point for the subject of young populations because it tended away from independent citizens with legitimate labor rights and citizenship as well as experts of modern technology and culture toward tools for the capitalist hegemony to reduce the swollen human resource costs. Augmenting Butler, Lorey claimed that "precarity denotes the striation

and distribution of precariousness in relations with inequality, the hierarchization of being-with that accompanies the process of othering” (n.p.).<sup>40</sup> In this section we revealed that the othering of young workers began by both hiding their existence from the public upfront and also by undervaluing the problem of their employment and livability. When they are mentioned, they are recognized as being satisfied with “free” and “independent” working style and voluntarily desire such positions by post-industrial, recessionary capitalist hegemony. By that, the symbolic otherization of young workers—ousting them from company culture—accompanied with a rising risk of their livability.

### **Young Non-Regular Workers as Inferior Species**

In the last section I claimed that young populations’ non-working and non-regular employment status were not problematized in society, while the risk of their future survivability was unrepresented in economic discourses. In sharp contrast, this section witnesses that they have been rediscovered and spotlighted with neologisms, and targeted as a cause of economic recession and became a public enemy. As these new images were widely shared by the public, both in the economic and popular realms, the public image of entire young workers and young generations were substantially and explicitly reinscribed into what I—and Stuart Hall—called “inferior species.” By inferior, I mean not only a recognition of being inconsiderable, menial and disposable *as working forces*. But I also mean, borrowing from Stuart Hall, that they are secondary-class and lower-in-status *as individual citizens*, and that this is *explicitly and openly* addressed by multiple discourses, as Hall explains with a subject of “black female” persons (“New Ethnicities” 446). In this sense, this section witnesses that the subject of young non-regular workers are reformed as these neologisms were shared widely within the entire society.

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<sup>40</sup> See introduction.

In order to explore how the reformation of the subject was possible, I advance my discussions in the following three subdivisions. First, I briefly discuss an economic reform conducted in the administration of former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi (2001-2006) and its neoliberal effects. In this part, I claim that Koizumi's reform boosted the neo-liberalization of the public and conditioned the neologisms to rise. Second and third, I analyze neologism referring to particular groups of young generation emerged around the time of Koizumi administration and later. Second, I look at the discourse of *parasaito shinguru*, parasite singles, or single workers "parasiting" their parents. By analyzing the discourse, I argue that a wide array of social problems was articulated with their public subject, and that the subject was reformed by the effect of the articulations. Third, I discuss the discourses of *hikikomori*, retreats, and *NEET*, or tribes *Not in Employment, Education or Training*, both emerged since the middle of the first decade in the 2000s. In the end, I argue that *hikikomori* and *NEET* implanted uniquely a fiendish sense to the subject, the sense that they were not just economically but also culturally and socially abject. These three names, *parasaito shinguru*, *hikikomori*, and *NEET*, are the major denominations to designate young generations around the late 1990s through the middle of the 2000s. Together with the last section, the analysis of these three denominations will suggest that the subject of young non-regular workers received a severe symbolic damage and changed the public image dreadfully in the domestic economic culture.

***Koizumi's Structural Reform.*** Before discussing these denominations, I briefly review the political framework of the administration of Junichiro Koizumi (2001-2006) in this part. Koizumi, former Minister of Posts and Telecommunications, started his Primer career with a record high approval rating of 85.5 percent ("Tuesday Cabinet's" 1). This incredibly high

approval rate was largely due to his appeal of “five principles,” as well as the “seven reform programs” as the specification of the principles. He proposed the blueprint of them as early as the election for party presidency, which was practically the inner-party election of the Prime Minister of the government.

Formally announced in the inaugural address, the five principles are key to his administration. In his 2002 article of *Nihon no Ronten*, Heizo Takenaka, Minister in Charge of Economic and Fiscal Policy, explains that the principles enunciates the following five keystones that the reform aims to realize: (1) individual efforts are rewarded; (2) losers have another chance; (3) private sector first, government sector second, local development first, central, urban area development second; (4) coexistence of material wealth and mental generosity, and; (5) the society that take over good spirits to our children (“Ganbatta” 188-89).<sup>41</sup> Based on these, the administration advanced political decisions including the structural reform.

Koizumi’s reform was conducted under “the seven reform programs,” which they said the specification of the five principles. Following the third of the five principles that privatization is paramount, the reform launched decommissions of the state properties including the postal services<sup>42</sup> and highway, the cutback of subsidies to local (prefectural and municipal) governments, and the review of public investment budgets such as road constructions.<sup>43</sup> Because

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<sup>41</sup> Takenaka, a half of the reform duo, already proposed a quite similar deregulation proposal as the reform program as early as 1997 in his *Nihon no Ronten* article. Then, Takenaka argued that, if Japan did not carry out deregulations, “the domestic high price and resource drains to overseas will be accelerated, and the value of yen will plummet. Then, Japan will groan under employment anxiety and super inflation” (“Kisei” 215). For this reason, I understand that the reform was an actualization of Takenaka’s libertarian economic theory.

<sup>42</sup> In the reform, the privatization of the Japan Postal Mail, Savings and Insurance was one of his key proposals. The Savings branch was said to have the largest amount of private saving in the entire world, and so the privatization was said to realize a more flexible management of the fund and to benefit the society.

<sup>43</sup> See Cabinet Office.

these were all said to be the fundamental revision of the old LDP capital distribution, which was by that time recognized as wasteful heritages from the pre-bubble, high-growth and industrialization era, Koizumi gained an extremely high popularity rate. With the reform in one of key promises of his administration, Koizumi succeeded in gaining a high approval rates.

As he successfully promoted his reform, the Japanese word *kōzō kaikaku*, structural reform, was repeated numerously in the media. As Sawa describes in his *Nihon no Ronten* article,

The term *kōzō kaikaku* showed up every single day like a signature catch-phrase on a variety of media from newspapers, business magazines, to TV show commentaries. *Kōzō kaikaku* was presupposed to be a desirable change for everyone in Japan, and it has been promoted like a rock-ribbed law. If there should be any adversary claim, he or she would be labeled as conservative, old-guard cronies. (198)

Likewise, Derek Hall also points out that the structural reform was presented as “the nationalist” project in which “all Japanese” should take part, despite its roots in neoliberal economic theories (87-88). Like this, the term almost gained the status of a “god term” or an “ideograph.” According to Richard Weaver, a “god term” is a word that has “inherent potency” in its meaning (Young, Fred, 147). An “ideograph,” according to Michael Calvin McGee, is a manifestation of certain ideology in a specific term “representing commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal” (15). Both scholars list terms such as democracy, freedom, and rights as examples of god terms and ideographs in an American context. I used these terms here to mean a public manifestation of the supporting market-fundamentalist ideology within the term “structural reform.”

On the contrary to the general mass media reactions, *Nihon no Ronten* lists an equal number of articles on both pros and cons of the reform. Accordingly, opponents of the reform are from unpopular political parties and leftists. For instance, economic theorist Keishi Saeki argued in 2002 that the administration had a critical default in its recognition of the world economic trend, risking fatal loss of the domestic capital loss by foreign private companies. While leading industrial nations in the 1990s already moved toward the swing-back from the globalization in order to redefine and protect their national interests, Saeki claims that the reform inconsiderably unleashes the national interest to the global private market. Therefore, Saeki believed that the structural reform should be “overhauled” before it was launched, and each specific item should be more critically reconsidered (“Dēta Fairu: Kōzō” 203). Economic analyst Uchihashi criticized the reform as the reform with no major alternative industrial sector or grand scenarios to realize another sustainable growth. Uchihashi claims that the reform blindly believes neoliberal tenets, most importantly further flexivization of labor forces. Uchihashi therefore cautions that Koizumi’s privatization along with *Haken* Law revisions will cause the loss of many workers’ securities (“Koizumi” 195). Also, Takamitsu Sawa, philosopher of economic theories, warned in 2002 that the reform critical lacks “a perspective of keeping a good civil society” (201). Sawa argues that any “sane democratic society must stand upon a good independence from the state power and maintain fair relations between the government, market, and civil society” (201). But Koizumi’s unforeseen popularity has allowed the administration to accelerate market-fundamentalist revisions, which will endanger not only their civil society but also the government’s independence from the market (Sawa 200-01).

On the other hand, supporters such as Takenaka claimed that the reform can revitalize the national market, company management and the national economy. Whereas these articles

promoted the reform, they just simply combined corporate-central rhetoric reviewed in previous sections with their expected immediate benefit gained by the privatization; in other words, they did not rigorously assess potential risks and liabilities that the privatization may yield later.

Given that, I claim that the public saw the Koizumi reform as a resort and mental oasis for relieving its anxiety toward their economic future. As Hook and Takeda comment, the public tone on the governmental finance around this time was very uptight:

Should government funds prop up these failing companies, should the market dictate their collapse, and what should happen to ordinary citizens in this situation? Under the pressure of globalization, it was precisely at the time such questions were being asked on the popular level that neoliberal reforms aimed at coping with the economic setback were being implemented on the national level. This was observed, for example, in the case of the reorganization of the pension system and the implementation of pay-offs after the bankruptcy of many banks in 2005. (109)

That is, Koizumi reform aptly answered this rhetorical situation and absorbed the public anxiety swollen by a welter of such pessimistic economic news. As a result, his Primer post has been consistently stable by good public supporting rates until he quit the position in 2006.

In my idea, the prevalent public discourses of Koizumi's neoliberal reform represent the triumph of what Foucault called "internally sustained" game of "the economy of power" over the idea of welfare statism (*Birth of Biopolitics* 65). According to Foucault, neoliberal art of governing determines "the precise extent to which and up to what point individual interest, that is to say, individual interests insofar as they are different and possibly opposed to each other, constitute a danger for the interest of all" (*Birth of Biopolitics* 65). Here, Foucault claims that

the pursuit of individual interest can be recognized as a problem that threatens the security and interest of all the members of the society in neoliberal society. Therefore, Foucault concludes that “the freedom of economic processes must not be a danger, either for enterprises or for workers” (*Birth of Biopolitics* 65).

As Foucault outlined the mechanism of internally sustained neoliberal art of governing, Japan’s hegemonic order of capitalism generated a public consensus that giving *seishain* regular status to male workers is subject to the danger for the interest of the entire nation. When the public vigorously supported Koizumi reform’s idea of privatization, the critical portions of deregulations of employment status was already enacted. For this reason, I understand that the public applause of Koizumi’s privatization infers that the public conceded, if not endorsed, that a huge scale of precarious workers will be generated by the replacement with once “civil servant” full-time positions like employees in already privatized companies. In other words, the discourse that supported Koizumi administration represents neoliberal Japanese public that promotes to shoulder financial risks of young precarious workers on their own.

In summary, discourses of and debates over Koizumi reform signal that the Japanese public accorded neoliberal, corporate-centered reasons in treating the Japanese citizens. While the discourses sacrificed the tolerant and embracing spirit of welfare statism, opponents of the reform dismissed to claim against neoliberal reasons on it. For this study, this move is critical because this conditioned specific denominations, I will discuss in the reminder of this section to emerge. Specifically, what are these dominations and how did they transform the subject of non-regular workers? The following two sections will read them and analyze it.

**Parasaito Shinguru and the Social Problems.** In this and the next subdivisions, I will analyze discourses over the neologisms and their effects to the subject of young non-regular workers. In

the end, I will argue that the subject has been reframed in a derogatory way in an open public. Strictly speaking, harsh criticisms against young non-regular workers are not new since the emergence of these neologisms. As early as 1996, Naoki Yashiro, for instance, deployed a preachy, acerbic rhetoric Against *freeteer* part-timers on a weekly popular magazine *AERA*. On the article, Yashiro frames *freeteers* as those without “appropriate sense of responsibility and urgency in their job” and claims that “such a spirit of decadence is now prevalent in this generation” (8). He continues to claim that the lack of their spirit, attitude, and their *sunekajiri*—or beggar or sponger of their parents—mindset have altogether contributed to the increasing unemployment rates (8-9). Therefore, “if we keep the present situation, Asian competitors may beat Japan; I want to tell them that they should stop messing around—they should be more stable” concludes Yashiro (9).

On popular magazines, television programs and newspaper articles, rhetoric exemplified by Yashiro’s passage above—the rhetoric that mixed fear for Japanese economic future with lazy and incompetent young workers—was rare in the late 1990s. Even though the rhetoric has gradually increased since then, most of these articles did not attempt to generalize these characters to the mass of non-regular workers, let alone to the entire young people. Furthermore, they did not assess whether their status—of smaller amount of salary and no welfare—are beneficial or detrimental to company managements, or accelerate or decelerate present and future economic trends. In contrast, this and next sections witness a national-scale chorus of media bashing against young populations and young non-regular workers, with the help of neologisms invented during the period of Koizumi’s neoliberal reform (2001-2006) and later.

One of such examples, *parasaito shinguru*, was invented by Masahiro Yamada, university professor of sociology. Originally, Yamada outlined *parasaito shinguru*, or parasite

singles, as “rich female workers in their twentieth” in 1997 (“Zōshoku” 9). In his paperback *Parasaito Shinguru no Jidai, The Time of Parasite Singles* published two years later, however, Yamada widened the definition to refer to the population more loosely as those living “in their parents’ home without getting married”; and he assumed that these people enjoy “a good living standard” in the mood of “the wanton 1980s consumer culture” (*Parasaito Shinguru* 158). From the beginning the definition of *parasaito shinguru* was oriented by stereotypical images of rich youth; that is, Yamada did not offer how many *parasaito shinguru* exists in Japan or how much capital allowance makes him or her a *parasaito shinguru*. Both on the original newspaper article and the book, Yamada simply referred the increasing part-time working populations among young generations, and speculatively asserts that the absolute majority of them are what he was talking about (“Zōshoku” 9; *Parasaito Shinguru* 24-26). Like this, the definition was apparently operationalized to emphasize an image being irresponsible, with no spirit of engagement, and above all the mindset of “beggar or sponger of their parents” (Yashiro 8).

*Parasaito shinguru* was the first major name given to young working population since *freeter*. Unlike *freeter*, however, *parasaito shinguru* is primarily outlined by their particular private life. That is, *parasaito shinguru* does not simply connote more time available like *freeter* part-timers, but it more specifically signals their unreasonably rich and extravagant private life.

Yamada describes the population as follows:

If you live alone or are married, you lose time and money for the care of yourself, your spouse and children. But if you stay with your parents with no spouse or children, then you can allocate the cost for basic human needs to your hobby and leisure. Now, there is a wide variety of these hobbies, leisure, and brand goods

more than ever, such as skydiving, expensive foreign cars, organizing music bands, learning ballet and Japanese tea culture, etc. (*Parasaito Shinguru* 48)

Yamada's description of *parasaito shinguru* was not limited to their "parasiting" life with their parents, but it equally signals a particular mode of using their income for luxurious goods and personal hobbies and leisure. Here, Yamada's hyperbolism is intense; for instance, Yamada notes that they "have most extra bucks" in Japan, and they are "even richest in Japan, or even in the entire world," "liv[ing] above themselves any way you look at it" (*Parasaito Shinguru* 48; "Jiritsu" 684-85). Quickly after the publication of his idea, the term as well as Yamada himself became popular in the general public, as Yamada, in his 2001 *Nihon no Ronten* article, comments that the high population of the term was "because the imported term parasite was eye-catching. The term was picked up in various different contexts, and I received many reactions from a lot of people" ("Jitsu" 684).

Not surprisingly, *parasaito shingurus* was imagined more of non-regular—*haken* and *freeteer*—workers rather than regular *seishain* workers. Actually, the examples of *parasaito shinguru* demonstrated in the book are prevalently non-regular, and they are evenly described as being irresponsible, ignoring their "duties" of working full-time. On the part he discussed his college students, for instance, he comments that

Recently, there are many students who do not work with regular, full-time status upon graduation. Most of them stay with their parents in the first place or go back to their parents' home. Then, they keep hunting their favorite dream jobs, while being *freeters* or doing some studies for special job qualifications. While doing such thing they, as *parasaito shinguru*, also work part-time to earn their pocket money and enjoy their leisure. (*Parasaito Shinguru* 46)

Yamada continues to describe their poor attitude toward work:

*Parasaito shinguru* can easily quit their jobs, and they daydreamingly search for their “dream job.” Until they can find one of these, they are afford to, and actually do, survive with their temporary nests with a *freeter* status. In such attitudes one may find why youth’s high employment rates have not been so much problematized in domestic public (*Parasaito Shinguru* 47).

Like this, Yamada framed *parasaito shinguru* by co-opting and augmenting only the negative image of *freeter* populations.

Yet, *parasaito shinguru* newly offered the image of young workers as “parasites.” One among reasons that this term was appealing to the public was that the term answered to a neoliberal frustration that Jock Young outlined. According to Young, neoliberalism generates a sense of inequality and frustration not only upwards but also horizontally and downwards, or a “dismay at the relative well-being of those who although below one on the social hierarchy are unfairly advantaged: they make too easy a living even if it is not as good as one’s own” (9). As Young says, Yamada’s neologism *parasaito shinguru* answered to Japanese citizens’ dismay to vent their frustration.

Given that, the public acceptance of Yamada’s neologism *parasaito shinguru* and the enormous boom of this term in domestic public did not only revise the fashionable image of young generations from the positive to the negative. But more importantly to this study, this neologism also implies a strong sense of moral obligation prescribed to the subject of young workers. That is, discourses supporting *parasaito shinguru* imply that, once they graduate from school, they should attain a regular position, go out of their parents’, get married, and then have children by a certain age, and by that they should become a part of the cycle of economic and

cultural reproduction instead of wasting time and money by leisure, hobbies and brand goods. Whereas *freeters* have a sense of day-dreaming and begging to their parents, the intrinsic part of the term *freeter* is young part-timers in general, reasonably including those using their incomes for their living, educational tuitions or other critical portions of their life.

However, the image of *parasaito shinguru* offered revised the social recognition of young workers in terms of not just their pastime but also their entire public and private life. This was possible by dichotomizing the public subject of young workers into the people enjoying their luxurious and wasteful private life with non-regular employment status on the one hand, and “normal” regular-working young adults being at pains to make bare living against economic recession on the other. By that, young non-regular workers, exemplified by the image of *parasaito shinguru*, became a morally burdened subject because the rhetoric of *parasaito shinguru* asserts that, even if one is able-bodied, even if one gets higher educational degrees, and even if one attains regular working status, being a *parasaito shinguru* is socially abject. By that, *parasaito shinguru* uniquely renewed the subject of young non-regular workers as the citizens failed to fulfill economic reproduction, which is now a moral obligation.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, Yamada’s rhetoric attributed into their lazy and extravagant life the cause of social, cultural and economic problems such as slow economy, low birthrate, late marriage and aging society. In other words, he asserted a speculative link of his invented populations with these social problems, presumably in order to appeal the impact of his work (*Parasaito Shinguru* 56-57). Therefore, I claim that Yamada’s rhetoric effectively renewed the subject of young non-regular workers and made them public enemies.

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<sup>44</sup> On the transformation of citizens by neoliberalism, please see Brown, *Undoing the Demos* 131-34.

Not surprisingly, many leftist scholars and critics regarded Yamada's populist description as being too demeaning. For instance, cultural anthropologist Anne Allison described Yamada as being "unabashedly critical" to his invented population (99). However, it was regrettably a while after Yamada and his invented population *parasaito shinguru* became a big public buzzword when criticisms were also circulated in major mass media. More specifically, it was several years after *parasaito shinguru* joined Japanese common vocabulary and Yamada already became a child of fortune when they mentioned Yamada's works in articles and books that problematized their precarious employment and risky life. For instance, sociologist Michiko Miyamoto says in 2004 *Nihon no Ronten* that, "while the term *parasaito shinguru* widely spread to the society, we [scholars] have failed to share an idea that their cultural capitals were gradually infringed" (360-61). For Miyamoto, therefore, it is imperative to fix the distributional imbalance by nullifying the *Haken* Law and opening more decent job opportunities for younger generations (361). At the same time, however, Miyamoto regrets that she missed to respond this and other critical factors that have fallen them material and symbolic desolation (360). Like Miyamoto, *Nihon no Ronten* did not publish opposing viewpoints against Yamada and others' discourses on *parasaito shinguru*.

Given all these, the public use and abuse of the term *parasaito shinguru* substantially revised cultural politics of young workers in the way that they were made into inferior species and public enemy. By co-opting only negative parts of preexisting images of young generations and young workers, specifically the images of of the 1970s *moratoriumu ningen* and 1980s *freeteer*, *parasaito shinguru* offered a new image of young non-regular workers. Yamada's description goaded a moral judgment that they are not just remiss and lazy but also irresponsible,

unethical and inferior, dooming the future of the Japanese economy and society. In this way, the subject of young non-regular workers was reformed into an inferior species.

**Hikikomori, NEET, and the “Bailout” Policy.** Since the turn of the millennium, Japanese society has constantly increased unemployment and underemployment rates, and the increase has been most conspicuously shown in young generations (see Figure 1 and Figure 2 above). This means that a lot of young people have remained either *freeters* and *haken* workers or unemployed, and the generational gap of income became even highest in all OECD countries around this time (Brinton 20). Particularly, Harvard sociologist Mary Brinton warns a widening gap of male-working populations, as she notes that “the current probability that a young man is in irregular work is nearly equivalent to the probability that a married woman in 1980 would have worked part-time” (28). Their situation, Brinton says, is now worsening “in a way unheard of in prior generations,” even though the situation of women did not tell any optimistic story either (18).

This part advances the line of analysis I have explored in the last section about *parasaito shinguru* by exploring another set of discourses of non-working young populations, *hikikomori* and of NEET. Both of them are young people staying with their parents’, having substantial obstacles for “normal” functioning in companies and daily life. One may wonder why these denominations are discussed this study, but I claim that the names we analyze here will demonstrate another important aspect in the following two senses. Firstly, these denominations became so popular in the entire nation, perhaps even more so than *parasaito shinguru*, that their particular modes of behavior and mentality were regarded as a symbol of the entire contemporary young generation. That is, even though *hikikomori* and NEET originally emerged against their unique backdrops, their semiotic proximity has invited a situation that, on general

topics of the youth culture and youth employment, these new denominations have been frequently used as set of cliché to describe their general mindset and working attitudes. As a result, an enormous amount of narratives and discourses identified these traits with the general tendency of young generations including young working populations. To recall Stuart Hall, the image of young non-regular workers is “crossed and recrossed” across categories (“New Ethnicities” 446). More specifically, sociologist Kumazawa explains that working population and non-working population are “on the different side of the same coin” in their status, being situated “adjacent” with each other in the symbolic realm (19). Following Hall and Kumazawa, I understand that these images “crossed and recrossed” across the boundary of working status and were configured with the rhetorical subject of young non-regular workers.

Secondly, analyzing these denominations, especially the discourse over NEET, enables me to explore the relations between the subject, the hegemonic order of companyism, and the state’s neoliberal art of governing. So far, all the denominations of young workers and young populations we analyzed were invented by university scholars, business persons and economists. In this sense, it was non-state agents which played key roles of inventors and circulators on these discourses. On the other hand, the discourse over NEET was explicitly initiated by the national government and its outsourcing research institutes; they imported the term from the United Kingdom, operationalized its definition and scope, and as I will later, they made NEET one among major rationales for establishing their state-led educational and vocational programs. For this reason, the NEET discourse uniquely remarks the fact that the state embodied “depoliticized economy and economized polity,” which set market competition and growth “the national ends, and the citizenship entails a reconciliation to that ends” (Brown *Undoing the Demos* 212). Because of these two reasons, the investigation of these discourses is critical to this study.

So it is now in order to analyze the two discourses. The term *hikikomori*, literally a pulling inward, has existed since the 1960s to mean act of withdrawing or those in a retreat in general, such as extreme isolation and confinement or recluse. Since the early 2000s, however, the term has been used in a limited sense that specifically refers to “one million hidden youths . . . who have shut themselves away in their parents’ homes, refusing to leave for months or even years on end” and was offered by mass media as a social problem (Borovoy 553). In short, *hikikomori* was redefined around this time as young people having extreme social anxiety and therefore being unable to even go out of home.

For those believing that the cultural and economic system is fundamentally ailing, the tribe of *hikikomori* was a reflection of the social illness. For instance, Amy Borovoy commented that *hikikomori* people are in a sense “healthy outsiders of the society that makes unhealthy social demands: rebels, who resist social conformity by withdrawing” (553). However, the domestic mass media prevalently recognized *hikikomori* as socially inadapted population. In order to understand the cultural politics more precisely, one needs to understand the way that the Japanese society recognizes mental disorder and illnesses. Borovoy explains that Japanese public is particularly sensitive to the vocabularies of psychopathology; “psychiatrists may refrain from using the term ‘depression’ or ‘depressive illness,’ relying instead on such ambiguous labels as ‘depressive state’ and ‘neurosis’” (556). That is, the use of these milder expressions reflects Japanese culture’s general tendency to detest mental problems, regarding them as a personal issue and not public or political problem, as a critical failure for his or her life, and also as the problem not supposed to be unduly disclosed (Borovoy 555-56). As Borovoy continues, “the general cultural value attached to being active and participative informs a more diffuse

assumption that mental degeneration, whether in the form of mental illness, senility or even suicide, is voluntary” (556). In this sense, *hikikomori* contained a strong pejorative sense.

Furthermore, public discourses frequently used *hikikomori* not just as mentally diagnosed and withdrawing people. But *hikikomori* was configured with lazy, slacker images of young workers and reconceived as a general tendency of Japanese young populations. More specifically, the mental problem of *hikikomori* victims are recognized as an accelerated version of disengaging, apathetic mental tendencies of the entire young working populations, and all young generations were recognized as would-be-*hikikomori*. For instance, the following passage of Masahiro Yamada, the proposer of *parasaito shinguru*, conveys that that these tribes are all potentially in the same vein;

*freeters* are much useful and have better potentials [than them] because they have part-time jobs and personal dreams. Increasing *hikikomori* population among young generations means the increase of those who are desperate to their lives, and this could be a destabilizing element of the social security. (“Hatarakanai” 9)

Furthermore, a comment from Ohashi, a president of matching service company, also demonstrates a similar tone as Yamada’s on a newspaper article of recent low birth rates in Japan (1.29 in 2003). Answering to a reporters’ question as to whether “Japanese men want to get married,” Ohashi says that

Japanese males rather feel marriage as obstacles. If they are ‘*parasaito shinguru*,’ parents already do houseworks. If they are *freeters*, they are out of pressures in the workplace [which single male *seishain* workers would feel]. If they are *hikikomori* or *NEET*, marriage is not their options, first of all. If they want kids, they would desire to be married—but I speculate that most of them would not. (“Mikon” 17)

The above passages clearly associate *hikikomori* people with young non-regular workers along a continuum. In other words, these narratives pathologized not only *hikikomori* victims, but they also articulated *hikikomori* with other young adults for this mental weakness.

In the same time of the advent of *hikikomori*, there emerged another strong image of young generation, the image of NEET. NEET, short for “not in employment, education or training,” was originally invented by the Blair administration’s British Social Exclusion Unit in 1999 to mean “16-18 years old, . . . not in education, work, or training” in the context of career education of the urban youth (2). The Unit reported that nine per cent of British youths are NEETs, and it warns that they are prone to be excluded from the social production (8).

In the early 2000s, the term was imported jointly by three governmental institutions, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and their outsourcing research institute, the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (JIL). As soon as it was imported to Japan, the term was apparently tailored to their domestic context. The Japanese sense of the term *NEET* (hereafter I italicize *NEET* when I mean the Japanese version) firstly showed up in the White Paper of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, which defined the terms as “those age fifteen to thirty-four, who are not either enrolled in school or *in the pool of labor forces*” (qtd. in Genda “Bakuhatsu-teki” 306, italics original). As is obvious, the Japanese *NEET* was not defined in the context of economic and social exclusion and for the purpose of saving them; rather, it was outlined following the preexisting labor relations that outlined 15-34 years old workers as being “young” (Honda, Naito and Goto 51-52).

Although the Japanese government delineated *NEET* as above, the calculation of total number of domestic *NEET* population was not exactly offered in public discourses and narratives. Estimated by the preexisting census, they were originally said to be up to 520 thousand in

domestic Japan (“Jittai 36”). However, popular magazines and newspaper articles introduced this neologism on articles that sensationally raise fear toward the domestic economic and social future; accordingly, *NEET* populations were mixed with other non-working populations and non-regular workers, and the number of *NEET* was magically swollen. For instance, a weekly magazine reported that it was 847 thousand (“Jittai” 36); another combined *NEET* with *freeter* part-timers as “the troublesome people” on young generations and estimated that they were as large as 3 million out of the 120 million entire domestic population (Okuda and Takahata 10).<sup>45</sup>

Because a *NEET* was defined as a person with no present academic or vocational status or any job huntings, he or she was practically recognized as those spending their life in the same way as a *hikikomori*. Yet, on their attitude toward works and jobs, a *NEET* was uniquely given an ambivalent position. On the one hand, they were said to be already “hopeless and desperate” because he or she “is dropped thousands of times in job selections and interviews” or even during his or her educational career, according to JIL researcher Genda; that’s why, as Genda continues, “he or she does not do any job hunting activities at all” now (“Bakuhatsu-teki” 306-07).<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, however, *NEET* was defined as potential working force. For instance, Reiko Kosugi, a JIL researcher and a leading author of Japanese *NEET* issue, comments that “we noticed that it is impossible to reach a certain group with present unemployment policies; many high school dropouts, for instance, do not know anything about their neighbor job-placement offices or any information about job openings” in a weekly magazine article in 2005 (“Jittai” 36). This politically devised ambivalence legitimized the need of the state countermeasures against

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<sup>45</sup> Articles that emphasize the number includes have been many. For instance, “Dēta Fairu: NEET,” Genda, “Bakuhatsu-teki,” “Hatarakanai,” and Ikegami.

<sup>46</sup> Reiko Kosugi, a researcher at JIL, categorizes *hikikomori* victims as one among the four types of *NEET* population (“Hatarakanai” 9).

*hikikomori* and *NEET* people because they were said to allocate labor forces to appropriate positions effectively.

Additionally, the ambiguity is critically important for this study because it also created a chance of criticisms against *NEET* and other related groups of people. That is, critics recognized a *NEET* as those wanting to work despite their incompetency and inactive attitude. Accordingly, it was this ambivalence that led to public criticisms in an incomparable scale and intensity with any other prior case. Among the most acid-tongue critics on this problem was Reiko Okutani, a president of a private staffing agency with *haken* status. In 2006 *Nihon no Ronten*, Okutani accused *NEET*s of their “too unrealistic” future career vision, because “*NEET* people had a false sense of confidence based on small amount of information such as successful persons’ books” (361-62). So, “when their own course of action did not go exactly like the book,” Okutani continues, “they irresponsibly accuse either the society or employers without looking back at their own past lazy behaviors” (361-62). Okutani understood that such people seek for their own unique, abstract and selfish dreams like becoming “creative designers” or “entertainers,” which Okutani annoyingly describes as being “utopian and escaping from the reality” (361). According to Okutani, this mentality, as well as their past lazy behaviors, is exactly the root cause of the *NEET* problem. While such similar accusations were observed in the discourses of *freeter* part-timers in the 1990s, the *NEET* bashing was incomparably more furious in the tone of bashing. As the sub-title of her article, “Are You Dare to Request Public Assistance in your ‘Retirement’ Years?” succinctly suggests, Okutani’s neoliberal claim asserts that *NEET*s do not deserve any rewards or assistance from the state budget.

Okutani’s 2006 comment was predicated upon many prior *NEET* reports on media—on their life, their ideas and critics’ comments on them. The most remarkable among them was the

national broadcasting company Fuji Network's morning program *Tokudane*'s special section in June, 2004, which featured a twenty-four year old male young adult, who was called a *NEET* by the program. To the question of the interviewer, "How do you make ends meet?," he answered: "I rely on my family. I hang out. Workers are losers, I think. So I think I am winning" ("Freeter?" n.p.). Among other direct interviews of *NEET* people on TV, this particular footage exceptionally gathered public attentions due to this footage. Characteristic in the TV interview include his able-bodied posture, his smirking face and several missing teeth, oral fluency, and above all, his utterance that "[regular] workers are losers, I think. I think I am winning" ("Freeter?" n.p.). The interview was followed by a scene of the news studio, announcer and critics' acid-tongued comments. The footage instantly spread to other media including other TV programs in Fuji Network, magazines and newspapers, youtube and internet bulletin boards. As this particular footage was ceaselessly repeated in the public, the prevalent reactions were the ones that express annoyance and anger against the young adult.

Perhaps incited by the furious tones in the TV show *Tokudane!* and critic Okutani, Okuda and Takahata report situations of several families with *NEET* sons and daughters. Not surprisingly, the *NEET* people contoured on Okuda and Takahata's article either possess arrogant characters, troubling other family members, or demonstrate extreme passivities and inactiveness (10). Like this, *NEET* was produced in the realm of the popular-cultural as as daydreaming, mentally corrupted bums, as these narratives produced other similar versions and fueled public bashings.

Supported by the general public, therefore, the government launched a set of countermeasures against unemployed and underemployed young workers. Not surprisingly, the policies were presupposed by an idea that disciplining their mentalities and training their bodies

should come first. In April, 2003, four branches of the national government<sup>47</sup> formed a joint program “The Conference for Youth Independence and Challenge.” In June of the same year, the Conference agreed to launch a comprehensive measure for the youth independence under the name of the Plan of Challenge to Youth Independence (Wakamono Jiritsu Chosen Senryaku Kaigi 2). While the Plan has each specific target per educational level from elementary school students to college students, the Plan also set up a special program for non-regular workers and non-working populations—that is, *freeters*, *haken* workers and *hikikomori* and *NEET* people—with about 800 million yen (approximately 8 million US dollar) budget.

Problems of the countermeasures for non-regular—that is, *freeteer* and *haken*—workers and non-working people—*hikikomori* people and *NEETs*—are observed in a series of criticisms against it. Below, I briefly list criticisms on three specific points of the program. Firstly, on mass media’s rough calculation of non-working population, critics argue that those who are categorized into *NEET* have not significantly changed (e.g., Honda, Naito and Goto 26-30).<sup>48</sup> Regarding this, they point out two-folded structure. On the one hand, Honda and others point out those who should not be included into this category—for instance, students studying abroad and upper-class young ladies helping housework and hunting good husbands—were counted because the state used a preexisting census that included “jobless” or “unknown” or “others” altogether (Honda, Naito and Goto 27). Also, they point out rough, duplicative additions of the same population in mass media narratives on the other hand. Their claim is that, when they reproduced narratives of *hikikomori*, *NEET* and other populations as “problematic” for our nation,

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<sup>47</sup> They are (1) The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, (2) the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, (3) the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, and finally (4) the Cabinet Office.

<sup>48</sup> Specifically, they suggest that the number changed from 670 thousand to 850 thousand from 1992 to 2002, based on the White Paper from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. Please see Honda, Naito and Goto, 29.

they randomly calculated a large number of the population in order to emphasize the problem (Honda, Naito and Goto 27; Yuasa, *Han-Hinkon* 29). Therefore, they understand that the state and mass media together ignored basic math and scapegoated these populations so as to assure the legitimacy of state countermeasures.

Secondly, critics argue that, rather than focusing *hikikomori* and *NEET* people whose total number have been unchanged, the government should tackle with the problem of recently increasing non-regular workers and their working environment, including revisions of the national employment framework and inspections (e.g., Honda, Naito and Goto 27; Yuasa, *Han-Hinkon* 35-42). Recent census demonstrates that, whereas non-working population has not changed significantly, sharply increasing in the same period is non-regular working populations.<sup>49</sup> Given that, Honda and others, for instance, claim that dealing with present non-regular workers legislatively and judicially is not just more fundamental because non-regular workers are potential non-working populations; but, this is more urgent because non-working populations have guardians at least for a while (27-28). In summary, they claim that firstly reconsidered is the framework of laws, rules and conventions that justified the distributional imbalance and their precarious working conditions including nullification of major *Haken* Law revisions.

Thirdly, critics point out that the governmental countermeasures were poorly prepared and actually useless. As main projects of the Plan of Challenge to Youth Independence for already-graduated but part-time or unemployed, the government launched two main projects; job café, job placement office specifically for non-regular workers, *hikikomori* and *NEET* people,

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<sup>49</sup> The White Paper from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry suggests that the number of non-regular workers changed from 1650 thousand to 3420 thousand from 1992 to 2002 (Honda, Naito and Goto 29). Also see Figure 2.

and *Wakamono Jiritsu Juku*, Preparatory School for Youth Independence, vocational and educational training schools. However, both were exposed to harsh criticisms soon. Firstly, job cafés were set in all forty seven prefectures in Japan. But soon after the establishment, news media reported several incidents including unreasonably high salaries paid to the officers. They reported this was due to the central government's allocation of excessively large amount of budget for the project (in case of Osaka prefecture, 125 million yen was allocated in 2007) but without specific instructions ("Osaka Pref." 4).

Another institution, Preparatory School for Youth Independence, started to recruit jobless and non-regular working people under forty in 2005. The program was a three-month program of staying together in a camp, teaching self-discipline, communication skills and specific vocational skills. Apparently, the program was designed with the focus on improving youth's mentality and job competencies, as it realize an anonymous politician's comment in 2006 *Nihon no Ronten* article on the School that "they need to train basic mindset and attitude in work" ("Dēta Fairu: NEET" 369). It was not just a coincidence that the spirit embodied in the program was the same kind as basher Okutani's blaming comment above, that is, her didactic comment that "the life is not so easy as they think it is." Actually, a *Nihon no Ronten* article noted that the School's programs were planned based on politicians and bureaucrats who aim to make it similar to American job corps and, more abominably, to the military schools in the Imperial Japan ("Dēta Fairu: NEET" 369).

Not surprisingly, the School was exposed to harsh criticisms. Besides criticisms on its moral principles above, mass media pointed out their managerial mischief and ethics; that even though twelve hundred students were recruited, four hundred sixty six applied and enrolled in the first year; that only forty eight per cent graduates from the School attained either regular or non-

regular jobs (e.g., Kyogoku 98-100). Furthermore, Miki Kobayashi, a journalist of labor and economic policies, comments that “Koizumi administration set up for the School 172 billion yen in 2007, 189 billion yen in 2008. But most of this budget was spent for related private companies and temp agencies under the names of “outsourcing costs,” “gratitude,” and so forth (202). Therefore, Kobayashi concludes that “they spent more than three billion yen for the School in three years, but only twenty nine graduates still hold the regular status” (204). And perhaps most acrimoniously, a critic speculates that the budget was spent more for advertisement, construction, and other outsourcing agencies rather than for educational and training purposes (Kyogoku 99-100). Not surprisingly, both the placement office and the School project aborted several years later, but the volume of news reports on the closing was far smaller than the reports of opening in 2004 and 2005.

Given that, I claim a significance of the discourses over *NEET* (and *hikikomori*) on their relations with the subject of young non-regular workers. Taking over the image of *hikikomori*, mentally vulnerable reclusive, the national state hegemony invented a Japanese version of *NEET* and spread it in neoliberal public with mass media, which also wanted to increase their sales—in this case, writing articles that raise fear toward the national economy and bashing against youth. Not surprisingly, this led to a very wide circulation of the terms and to the mobilization of the subject of young non-regular workers. As prevalent discourses indicate, *freeter* part-timers are regarded as potential *NEETs*, and many *NEETs* are said to be drop-outs of *freeter* and *haken* workers. Not only Yamada’s comment above that parallels *freeters* and non-working populations according to the hierarchy of their “usefulness” to the society, many other discourses and narratives such as Okutani and Okuda and Takahara also categorized them solely with negative characters. For instance, a TV show *Tokudane* also commented that contemporary

young generations are dominated by “some kind of this *NEET* mindset”—which is characterized with arrogant, “so-what” attitude even though they withdraw and do no work of production (“Freeter” n.p.). As these individual media comments and reports prevailed, mass media also tried to make both their incompetency and precarious employment status an accomplished consensus in domestic working culture. For instance, *Nihon no Ronten* reported in 2011 that “more than 50 per cent of companies answered that they [young *haken* workers] lack the ability of problem-solving and active engagement in working places. If they remain so, they will soon be discharged and become *freeters* or *NEETs*” (“Dēta Fairu: ‘Yutori’” 388-89).

Actually, the symbolic proximity of *hikikomori/NEET* with non-regular workers was anticipated arguably from the onset when the government imported the term and launched the Plan of Challenge to Youth Independence. As these program emphasized the widening *kakusa*, or gap between the rich and the poor, they crafted a table of life-time earnings according to employment status, that is, life-time incomes of regular workers, *freeters*, and *NEETs*, respectably three hundred forty million yen, 68.4 million yen, and zero, juxtaposed with each other (Rōdō 254). The national government distributed the table to all public and private high schools and colleges as a part of their newly started “career education” program (Komikawa 45-50). Apparently, the purpose of the table has never been to teach the economic status quo and distributional imbalance from sociological or social-scientific perspective. Instead, the figures were prevalently used in order to promote students toward bare competition of capitalism, the competition to attain increasingly scarce *seishain* regular positions in future (Honda, Naito and Goto 79). In short, the Plan on the one hand failed to save young non-regular workers and non-working people; on the other hand, however, it demonstrated that they should survive in the crude game of capitalism.

Given all this, my main claim in this part is that the enormous chorus of state and mass media over *hikikomori*, *NEET* and other non-regular workers has conjunctured these populations altogether and in turn lowered the public image of young non-regular workers. In this time, non-regular workers were exposed to neoliberal rationality that juxtaposes them with socially inadoptable and problematic groups of people such as *NEETs/hikikomori* people. In the society of bare capitalist competition and personal responsibility, non-regular workers newly occupied a symbolically contiguous position with these zero income earners and recognized by the public as an inferior subject, would-be *hikikomori* psychopaths and would-be *NEET* bums. In this way, young non-regular workers were given a name of what Wendy Brown says a “mismanaged life,” one of neoliberal appellations “for failure to navigate impediments to prosperity” (“Neoliberalism” 42-44). As Brown claims, the prevailing neoliberal power that depoliticizes the subject and reduces his or her political citizenship has reformed a life of economically failed subject into the “mismanaged life,” the life whose civic dignities are ignored and whose entire personalities are evaluated by economic usefulness and managerial competency. As far as it is concerned with the public discourse and narratives over young people and workers, Japanese public also replaced the notion of political rationality with neoliberal, market-fundamentalist version. As the prevalent domestic has gradually tended toward neoliberal rationality, young non-regular workers thus became an inferior species.

In this part, I analyzed former Prime Minister Koizumi’s neoliberal framework in his reform package, and three particular discourses and narratives that occurred since that time; *parasaito shinguru* workers living with their parents, *hikikomori* mentally damaged withdrawn, and *NEET*. By the analysis, we have witnessed that these three discourses intersected on the public subject of young non-regular workers, and as an effect reformed the subject. Specifically

speaking, Koizumi's neoliberal reform penetrated neoliberal rationalities in the Japanese society and eroded the sense of public tolerance within the domestic culture. In this increasingly neoliberal domestic public, public discourses and narratives over *hikikomori* and *NEET* qualified young people, especially non-regular workers in this generation, as what Brown says "mismanaged life" ("Neoliberalism" 42). The discourse over *parasaito shinguru*'s indulgent image inserted a sense that young people, even after they started working, are still intoxicated by the consumerism, incompetent in working culture, therefore inadequate for and undeserving of *seishain* full-time positions. In short, these three denominations legitimated unfair employment conditions and capital distributions within the domestic society, while allowing the state to promote their state framework and to exploit their life.

What is perhaps unique in this finding is that the capital exploitation is inexorably intertwined with the problem of rhetoric. As I demonstrated above in the state project—that is, The Conference for Youth Independence and Challenge—the neoliberal political rationality did not simply disqualify their symbolic status, but it in turn formed a discursive formation in which the state, along with their subcontracted private companies and research institutions, targeted already disadvantaged—both economically and symbolically—youth as a new business chance. In this sense, the analysis in this section can assure the intimate relations between neoliberal political rationality the formulation and development of neoliberal art of governing; "governance is not only by nature neoliberal, but neoliberalism has both mobilized and increasingly saturated its formulations and development" (*Undoing the Demos* 122). Like this, post-bubble non-regular workers have been abandoned by political rationalities, and at the same time exploited by neoliberal market-fundamentalism.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we analyzed how the rhetorical subject of non-regular workers changed in Japan's post-bubble burst recessionary period. Even though the Japanese employment standards practically embodies *Nikkeiren's* 1995 proposal to stratify the employee statuses by increasing "flexible," peripheral working forces, the burden of insecurity was disproportionately imposed to young generations. As a result, a mass of insecure population was quickly generated in young generations, whereas a larger body of older workers and carefully selected young regular workers, especially those in big companies, can still enjoy secure employment status and stable salary increase.

Here, companyism, or Japanese post-WWII capitalist hegemonic order, worked as a critical portion to operationalize not just capital circulations but also rhetorical manifestations that determine winners and losers according to their standard. Taking over its conventional understanding to grow and protect regular *seishain* workers, the apparatus of companyism in the slow economy has consistently tied together with smaller amount of regular workers, whereas it recognized non-regular workers, increasing especially among young generations, as outside assistants to the system. As Gordon claims, however, the "economy, . . . could be seen to provide neither for the political security of the state, nor for the material security of the population" (27). In the recessionary economy, therefore, young generations became both the target of exploitation and the symbolic scapegoating in order to legitimate the system of companyism. In this sense, almost the sudden appearance of young non-regular workers and non-working young adults toward the end of the 1990s and later reflects the need of the capitalist hegemony to maintain its own legitimacy by showing failed examples to the entire domestic public. Therefore, my understanding is that Japanese companyism as a hegemonic apparatus has so far remained its basic conceptual legitimacy as well as its regime of value, as it still

exceptionally protects *regular* seishain workers in sacrifice of non-regular workers' symbolic and capital status.

The rhetorical analysis revealed that public discourses and narratives conveniently resituated young non-regular working forces in the domestic public, sometimes by concealing their existence and in other times by excessively spotlighting a part of their characters. By that, young non-regular workers in the last two decades realize those who failed in struggles and politics over the public subject, the “struggles against subjugation, against forms of subjectivity and submission” (Foucault, “Subject and Power” 781). Augmenting Foucault, Judith Butler describes that this “‘might, . . . be understood as a submission to the necessity to prove innocence in the face of accusation, a submission to the demand for proof’ (*Psychic Life of Power* 118). As Butler articulates the act of submission with a particular “subject” who tries to prove the innocence within the very structure, young non-regular workers became not only economically incapable but also morally corrupted beings. Inevitably, young non-regular workers have been predominantly exploited in the process of submission/subjectification. In my idea, this is an example that Japanese neoliberal power works oppressively to their subjects.

The chapter also confirmed that the fair and objective viewpoints that *Nihon no Ronten* articles claim was not rigorously so. Rather, Foucaultian reading of *Nihon no Ronten* revealed that these notions are powerless against neoliberal discursive formations that control the very notion of rationality and legitimacy. While evaluating *Nihon no Ronten* is not the objective of this chapter, the chapter at least confirms that the standard of rationality and legitimacy itself is under the control of contemporary neoliberal forces. Yet, a question remains. How, if possible, can they resist against it? I am exploring to answer this question by investigating rhetorics of two civil activists in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4 CHALLENGES AGAINST THE OPPRESSIVE POWER: RHETORICS OF TWO ACTIVISTS

It has been more than a decade since our generation was dumped to the society as low-wage workers. So far, however, the society has never paid anything back to us. Furthermore, it have blamed on us of culprits of economic recession, a factor for social enervation, etc, etc. . . . The society will keep the present unequal distribution as far as the nation is not exposed to substantial external threats. So I want something, something that brings up a radical fluidity in the society, something that blows away this sense of closure in our mind. A full-scale warfare [like the one in the Asia-Pacific War], I think, would be one among these.

Tomohiro Akagi “Maruyama Masao o Hippatakitai: 31 sai Furitā, Kibō wa Sensō [I Wanna Slap Maruyama Masao on his Face: I, 31, Freeter, Hope that War Will Happen].” *Ronza*, Jan. 2007. 58. Print.

In Chapter 3, we witnessed the increasing severity of discourse used against young non-regular workers in rhetoric and narratives about the economy, labor relations, and youth. By analyzing the effects of these discourses into the subject formation, the last chapter claimed that the subject of young non-regular workers has been transformed into inferior species based on the discourses underestimating the problem of their insecure working conditions and by undervaluing their existence in company and in society. I ended Chapter 3 with a question: can these discourses be resisted, and if so, how?

This chapter seeks to answer this question by analyzing certain rhetorics of resistance, deploying Foucault’s idea of power as a basic methodological concept. Activist rhetoric attempts to resist the dominant nature of neoliberal discourse and assert workers’ legitimacy in a neoliberal society. Specifically, the difficulty of contemporary anti-corporate activism rests on

the fact that neoliberalism invades not only the state “wisdom,” or “the knowledge of things,” but it also shapes citizens’ perspectives as well (Foucault, “Governmentality” 207). In other words, neoliberal rationality, “compatible with corrupt state forms as agents within civil society,” is becoming increasingly pervasive in liberal democratic nations (Brown, “Neoliberalism” 38). That is, contemporary anti-corporate activisms need to resist not only against these state policies but also against the formation of a “citizen-subject of a neoliberal order” (Brown “Neoliberalism” 42).

Specifically to the object in this chapter, the struggle is a part of a rather classical theme between the economic or neoliberal and the political in terms of the formation and reformation of the public subject of the young non-regular workers. For instance, Wendy Brown argues that democratic subject, equipped with power to govern themselves in the polity, is “self-sovereign through collective sovereignty”, and thus once highlighted, “for example, the intensely political quality of life in Locke’s state of nature before property is introduced” (*Undoing the Demos* 94, 95). This is because before “the social contract, we have in our own hands, . . . the power of executing and enforcing natural law in the name of the communal justice and preservation” (*Undoing the Demos* 94). However, throughout the twentieth century, the nuance of the political has thinned and become overwhelmed by the economic; as a result, we currently experience the economic overpowering the political more intensely than ever in our history (*Undoing the Demos* 92-94). In short, it is the struggle over regaining the political and democratic citizenship and reigning their own public status against ever dominant forces of market-fundamentalism.

Accordingly, I learn from Lee Artz’ application of Foucault’s idea of truth/knowledge/power to social movement how to read the rhetoric of social movement. Artz points out that we all know “the truth that power already knows”: the variety of exploitations that

include imbalanced capital distributions and services (53). Thus, a rhetorical analysis of a social movement should focus on how the rhetoric and performance of these movements access and challenge the regime of truth (53). That is, Artz suggests that “rather than communicating with those in power who benefit from the already known truth of inequality,” we should promote “conversations for change among those who would benefit from creating new truths, new powers” (53). In short, by changing the focus from “speaking truth to the power” to “speaking power to the truth,” it is possible to situate civil movement rhetoric within the entire discursive space. Applying Artz’s idea, I contend that the study of social movements within a neoliberal order should examine how collective action affects the matrix of meaning or ideology that justifies the unequal distribution of resources and status for workers, particularly young non-regular workers. In the following analysis, I will attend to how the rhetoric of social activists can foster the possibility of rupturing dominant truth and matrixes of meaning in the discursive space of Japanese economic culture.

In exploring this process, I examine the rhetoric of two of the most outspoken activists on domestic young workers’ precarious working conditions. The first section discusses the rhetoric of Makoto Yuasa (1969-) and the second section considers the discourse of activist Karin Amamiya (1975-). Yuasa and Amamiya published several books, popular magazine articles, and book chapters. Yuasa also created a non-profit organization to help young non-regular workers. Both activists have periodically joined street marches and guided these collective actions.

While each section examines each activists' of representative books to understand their foundational ideas and subsequent arguments, the eventual objective of this chapter is to understand the possibilities and limits of their rhetoric against the dominant view of non-regular works as articulated by the neoliberal hegemonic order of Japan. Each section starts with a discussion of each activist's personalities and books as an important point of reference to their philosophies. In the reminder of each section, I analyze their rhetoric and public performances against the dominant ideological conception of non-regular workers so as to understand the value of their rhetoric as a collective discursive practice that resists the dominant matrix of meaning. In the first section, I pay critical attention to Yuasa's rhetorical ethos because it is a critical concept in order to maintain both his activist persona and the legitimacy of his logical and objective style of advocacy. In the second section, I consider the possibilities and difficulties of Amamiya's rhetoric that attends to pathos. I finish the chapter with some concluding remarks on the activism, resistance, and logic of neoliberal governance in contemporary Japan.

### **Makoto Yuasa as a Traditional-style Activist**

Makoto Yuasa is a graduate from the law department of Tokyo University, the top-ranked department in the most prestigious university in Japan, as determined by its recent tradition of producing legislative officers, national bureaucrats, and politicians. When Yuasa noticed the problem of non-regular workers in Japan during his post-graduate work, he quit the program and has been managing a non-profit organization supporting those suffering from discharge and cheap wages.

In this study, I take Yuasa's philosophy as advocated primarily from this book, *Han-Hinkon* or *Anti-Poverty*. In addition, I try to capture his political and public performance based on rhetoric he uses a few years after the book publication. In this section of the chapter, I begin

by firstly introducing Yuasa and the book. Secondly, I discuss Yuasa's activist persona constructed in the book. Thirdly, I broaden the scope of criticism to his performance and claim that his rhetorical persona—his object of advocacy and his functioning within the national Cabinet—found in the public together generated consequences unintended by Yuasa. As the title of the book implies, Yuasa intended to advance an anti-neoliberal and anti-market-fundamentalist sentiment and platform aligned with socialist and welfare-statist politics. However, as I will argue later, his rhetoric eventually failed to change the ideological articulation of non-regular young workers' subjectivity in the public and lost its critical potential to challenge neoliberal discourse. The chapter explores how his advocacy and arguments were recognized and treated by the Japanese public.

***Yuasa's "Anti-Poverty" Advocacy.*** In order to understand his basic styles of civil advocacy this study consults his well-known book, *Han-Hinkon* published in 2008. Yuasa explicitly notes that *Han-Hinkon* was written in order to save precarious workers and discharged workers from their deprived conditions. In postscript, he notes that the book is “to claim against present unequal employment and labor status” and against “the culture that conceded this inequality and poverty” because he found that the workers' situation was “more and more devastated” (223). In order to explain his idea, he divides the book largely into two parts in a traditional problem-solution format: the first half discusses the problem of poverty among non-regular workers and unemployed workers and the second half proposes a solution to the situation.

The first half starts by describing a few episodes of young non-regular workers (*freeter* part-timers and *haken* contract workers) he became acquainted with since he started his non-profit organization. Along with the description of their lives, the first half of the book examines the workers' extremely low living standard and unstable employment. Then, with a variety of

statistic data, Yuasa demonstrates that many of the workers are more or less in the same situations and that their future is unpredictable and precarious (9-25).

In his discussion of the living conditions of these workers, Yuasa particularly problematizes *hinkon bijinesu*, or business preying on the poor, because it exploits *haken* workers and perpetuates the problem. Yuasa claims that *hinkon bijinesu* is a part of the state-corporate conglomerate that perpetuates the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism. Because *haken* contracts are new for the majority of private companies, the revised law contains loopholes through which temporary employment agencies can maximize their benefits. A typical example of this exploitation, according to Yuasa, is observed in unreasonably expensive accident insurance, apartment rent, building maintenance, insurance, and utility costs, all of which are preconditioned upon employment contract and deducted from their salaries (68). In fact, what Yuasa calls *hinkon bijinesu* is a group of these rogue temporary employment agencies and other companies that offer business services. Due to an unreasonably high proportion of deductions, the business has transformed many part-time jobs into sweatshop jobs, jobs with long hours (e.g., fourteen or fifteen hours a day) and low pay that barely cover basic needs (67-75). Accordingly, these workers, sometimes called working poor, quit their jobs due to hard working conditions and some simply leave with massive debt owed to the temporary employment agencies (67-80).

Beyond *hinkon bijinesu*, Yuasa also identifies another symptom of the market-fundamentalist orientation of society: the rhetoric of *jiko-sekinin*, or self-responsibility. This is because the rhetoric of *jiko-sekinin* overshadows the significant role that *hinkon bijinesu* has in creating this perilous position for workers on this problem by blaming the workers themselves. Yuasa's argument reinforces Hook and Takeda's point that the long-term economic recession and Koizumi's neoliberal reforms promoted discourses that demand that citizens and workers

“shoulder the responsibility to deal with his or her economic and social risks,” while reshaping citizens into a “productive self,” the individual who operates by economic calculations (109). Therefore, Yuasa’s claim is that, while neoliberal biopolitical discourse regulates citizens in ways to become economically productive subjects, those who failed to be responsible for their plight are rhetorically framed as the abject subject in society.

According to Yuasa, it was a group of would-be “experts” that promoted the rhetoric. Specifically, Yuasa targets Reiko Okutani, the president of a personnel placement agency with *haken* status and a harsh critic of the *NEETs* I discussed in Chapter 3. Yuasa lays blame with Okutani due to this comment she made in a popular weekly magazine: “no employer would order them to keep working until employees die. Essentially, it is the matter of their self-control and self-management” (qtd. in Yuasa, *Han-Hinkon* 69). Okutani continues to claim that a lot of young non-regular workers lack proper control:

More and more young people [non-regular workers] are becoming psychologically weak; and they have problems on understanding their health and job capacity. They should know how to control themselves. They can say “I am tired” when they feel so, or they can demand days-off to their employers when they want. They have a strange sort of self-suppression or some kind . . . . (qtd. in Yuasa, *Han-Hinkon* 70)

By articulating workers’ young image with their inability of managing even their health, Okutani attributes their problems to workers themselves.

However, Yuasa criticizes Okutani’s rhetoric of self-responsibility for failing to recognize the many causes of workers’ hazardous living and working conditions:

Even though it is practically very difficult for precarious workers to take days-off, Okutani assumes they can easily do so. Okutani blatantly thrust the cause of overwork death and mental stress to only their self-management, avoiding the co-committing responsibilities of employers, temp agencies and the current state regulations. (*Han-Hinkon* 73)

Yuasa argues that many companies hire non-regular workers and treat them as disposable resources. Put differently, Yuasa claims that companies force employees to work in extreme working conditions until they are mentally and physically fatigued and, once in that state, the workers are easy to discharge.

The second half of the book, “*Han-Hinkon no Genbakara* [From the Space of Anti-Poverty],” describes the expansion of activists’ networks and the rise of their challenges. In the beginning of this part of the book, Yuasa clarifies his goal of recovering *shakai-ryōiki*, the social sphere. Alluding to a Habermasian sense of communicative rationality in the public sphere, Yuasa claims that it is on this very sphere where the recovery of workers’ survivability can be imagined and realized. From this theory, *Han-Hinkon* proposes a key idea summarized by a single word for returning non-regular workers to a less dangerous life: *tame*. *Tame* is a common Japanese term referring to a water storage reservoir, preservation, or stock. However, Yuasa operationalizes this term to mean a series of capital and social safety nets for citizens comprised of: (1) communicative and material network of mutual support; (2) strong national and local welfare system; and (3) reasonable job opportunities (213).<sup>50</sup> Yuasa’s claim is that society structurally deprives *tame* from many non-regular workers. He argues so by deploying world-

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<sup>50</sup> Unlike the common usage of the term “social safety net,” Yuasa’s definition of *sēfutī netto*, safety net, is more specific to the chance of job placement in case of discharge. So, when a good variation of job opportunities is equally open to the society, one is in the well-established *sēfutī netto* (*Han-Hinkon* 211).

famous economist Amartya Sen's "capability to function" approach to poverty reduction. As quoted by Yuasa, Sen outlines the advantages of this method:

(1) Poverty can be sensibly identified in terms of capability deprivation, the approach concentrates on deprivations that are intrinsically important (unlike low income, which is instrumentally significant). (2) There are influences on capability deprivation—and thus on real poverty—other than lowness of income (income is not the only instrument in generating capabilities). (3) The instrumental relation between low income and low capability is variable between different families and different individuals (the impact of income on capabilities is contingent and conditional). . . . In a generally opulent country, more income is needed to buy enough commodities to achieve the *same social functioning*. . . . Indeed, the paradoxical phenomenon of hunger in rich countries—even in the United States—has something to do with the competing demands . . . . (87-89, italics original; *Han-Hinkon* 90)

Yuasa, using Sen's idea, suggests that Japanese non-regular workers living in one of world's most expensive countries but working for low wages and easily disposable are significantly incapable. Accordingly, Yuasa claims that more *tame* should be provided to young non-regular workers. In short, it is Yuasa's argument that one's poverty should not be instrumentally measured by amount of income. Instead, Yuasa, along with Sen, claims that non-regular workers should be rescued by society because they are precarious according to a more accurate standard of measurement.

In order to save them, *Han-Hinkon* claims that all recent revisions of *Haken* Law should be first and foremost nullified (225). Also, Yuasa claims that the Japanese public should

recognize the rhetoric of *jiko-sekinin* can damage the lives of citizens (225). With these suggestions and the creation of several other follow-up life supports, Yuasa claims that present precarious workers can be financially capable and symbolically embraced. In summary, *Han-Hinkon* does not simply call for more money and financial support for non-regular workers. Instead, on a broader level, the book also tries to establish a thesis against economic, political, and rhetorical ensemble that engenders poverty and harms, even killing, poor young workers. In order to claim this, *Han-Hinkon* firstly points to deprived social *tame* among non-regular workers and the rhetoric of *jiko-sekinin* that victimizes them. Based on this analysis, Yuasa secondly proposes his ideas for change, arguing that these workers should be saved from the economic, political and social deprivation they face.

***Vulnerable Image of Young Non-Regular Workers.*** First and foremost, my main concern with *Han-Hinkon* is Yuasa's consistent description of non-regular workers as highly vulnerable. In his descriptions of workers' helplessness, Yuasa offers stories such as: a thief of an offertory box put in a Shinto shrine<sup>51</sup> (39-40); a person who killed his/her mother in anguish over lacking money for her living cost (42-45); and workers who starved to death (46-47). When Yuasa offers a solution to the problem, he demands that state welfare services play the leading role. Specifically, Yuasa claims that:

In order to increase their *tame*, we need to improve public assistance, assistance of debt-adjustments, and other services in order to make them financially independent. Also, we need mental supports to be free from self-negations and

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<sup>51</sup> A Shinto shrine is a shrine of Japanese indigenous religion, Shinto. Usually on the façade of the main building resides a wooden box, in which visitors dedicate money to the God. Usually, the box is left open to all visitors.

‘the exclusion from themselves.’ These two should be conducted inseparably with each other. (141)

Accordingly, Yuasa frames the “empowerment of non-regular workers” through the allocation of state funds to these people (140).

Of course, it is reasonably assumed that Yuasa characterized workers in this way so as to emphasize their difficult economic situations and to justify his contention that the state needs to offer financial support to young non-regular workers. However, I argue that consistently framing young workers in such a way is rather detrimental to Yuasa’s activist objective. Namely, Yuasa’s call for assisting non-regular workers rhetorically disempowers these workers because his representation of the workers is coded by the governing neoliberal logic as valueless and unworthy of support. This is because non-regular workers in Yuasa’s works significantly deviate from a neoliberal norm that judges individuals’ value as “rational, calculating creatures whose moral autonomy is measured by their capacity for ‘self-care’—the ability to provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions” (Brown, “Neoliberalism” 42). Wendy Brown further argues that neoliberal systems do not work to embrace and care those who fail to meet these norms:

[neoliberalism] carries responsibility for the self to new heights: the rationally calculating individual bears full responsibility for the consequences of his or her action no matter how severe the constraints on this action—for example, lack of skills, education, and child care in a period of high unemployment and limited welfare benefits. (“Neoliberalism” 42)

Brown’s characterization of this neoliberal logic applies well to the current Japanese order, as Hook and Takeda note that contemporary Japanese society demands that citizens be

economically self-sufficient, “shoulder[ing] the responsibility to deal with his or her own economic and social risks without depending on state provisions, as under a welfare state” (109). Brown and Hook and Takeda help us understand that Yuasa’s articulation of non-regular workers is rather harmful because prevalent neoliberal discourses regard these workers as being unworthy of state support, even though the youth committed illegal acts only because they were forced into a desperate place due to the lack of state safety net. Within this context, state welfare services are not the right for all citizens of the nation, but instead are a sort of bonus given only to citizens who are qualified as “productive” or “valuable” by the governing capitalistic logic. Specifically, Yuasa’s framing of non-regular workers risks casting these workers as submissive subjects within a capitalistic order. As a result, Yuasa’s rhetoric conforms to the preexisting stereotypes and discourses that have undervalued young non-regular workers during the economic recession.

***Tensions between Yuasa, Vulnerable Non-Regular Workers, and the Neoliberal Public.*** While Yuasa’s articulation of non-regular workers as a vulnerable subject confirmed a capitalist negative valuation of non-regular workers. As a result, Yuasa’s rhetoric conformed to rather than challenged the dominant neoliberal rationality. Moving beyond Yuasa’s framing of workers, this section of analysis widens the scope of critique from his book *Han-Hinkon* to his performance as a civil activist. In doing this, I take a cue from rhetorical scholar Edwin Black in terms of his discussion the different personas found within rhetoric. In particular, Black notes that there is a “distinction between the [speaker] and the image” of the speaker (111). More specifically, Black argues that, “we have learned to keep continuously before us the possibility, and in some cases the probability, that the author implied by the discourse is an artificial creation: a persona, but not necessarily a person” (111). Beyond positing a constructed persona

for the speaker, rhetoric also contains an implied second persona of an ideal auditor. Rather than evaluating discourse only on its immediate spatial or temporal effects, Black suggests that the rhetorical critic should evaluate the ideology or worldview embedded in a discourse. It is this ideology that both constitutes and connects the speaker's persona and the implied ideal audience for the speaker's ideology (Black 112). Using Black's theoretical framework, I analyze how Yuasa's performance in his new position as Cabinet Consultant for the national government advanced or inhibited his activist aims.

Black provides a clearer vocabulary on how Yuasa's characterization of non-regular workers are shaped by a neoliberal ideology that is constructed through his persona as a public official that is aimed for a second persona, the parts of the neoliberal public who endorse Japan's recent neoliberal reforms. This theoretical lens also aids in understanding effects of Yuasa's political claims to the domestic discursive formations over the status of young non-regular workers a few years after the publication of *Han-Hinkon*. In advancing this argument, I lay out my analysis in three parts: first, how Yuasa's role as the as a national cabinet consultant exposes a neoliberal logic in his rhetoric; second, how non-regular workers' are constituted as Yuasa must speak through his public office persona; and third, the recent neoliberal order as constitutive of his persona and the ideal audience.

It is plausible that Yuasa already understood these risks involved in framing non-regular workers as vulnerable and in need of government aid. I assume so because he attempts to avoid the symbolic isolation from ordinary Japanese citizens by addressing that "we," including Yuasa, poor non-regular workers and all Japanese citizens, "are all weak as individuals, and are impossible to do anything unless we network with each other" ("Ware wa" 74). In this call, Yuasa attempts to redefine every citizen as being vulnerable and therefore advocates for reform

of the present social system so that all people can mutually help each other. However, I have to make a rather pessimistic judgment on Yuasa's political performance overall due to its relationship to his performance based on the philosophy he outlined in *Han Hinkon*, public reactions to his rhetoric, and the political consequences of his call. My judgment is based on three problems I observe in Yuasa's discourse.

First, Yuasa's persona as a public official is articulated when Yuasa accepted his post as a consultant at the Cabinet Office under the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). Until the DPJ won a land-slide victory over the LDP in the Diet election in the summer of 2009, it was known as a pro-labor socialistic party, as it made electoral promises to improve the employment stability of all workers, both regular and non-regular. When the DPJ won the election and formed a coalition government in 2009 with Social Democratic Party and the People's New Party, the government initially proposed to dismantle the neoliberal pro-market reforms passed by the LDP.<sup>52</sup> Yet, due to decreased popularity and the loss of a majority in the House of Councilors in July 2010 soon prompted the DPJ to modify its stance and basic philosophy, taking a more conciliatory and modest approach reforming LDP policies (Song 1013-14).

It was soon after the DPJ's 2009 victory when Yuasa was appointed to the consultant position. On October 26, 2009, former Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama appointed Yuasa as the consultant on national labor regulations until March, 2010 (Yuasa, *Hirō* 158).<sup>53</sup> In May 2010, Yuasa was reinstated to the same position until 2011 until his request for resignation was accepted with an achievement to finalize the DPJ's proposal to support the independence of non-regular workers by reforming the LDP's *Wakamono Jiritsu Juku*, or the Preparatory School

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<sup>52</sup> Later, he regrets his acceptance of consultant. On his confession of the consultant career and his revised vision of the democracy, please see Yuasa's *Hirō*, 50-64.

<sup>53</sup> Yuasa demanded to resign his post in February, 6th, but it was not accepted until the next month.

(Yuasa, *Hirō* 165-72). It was within this discrepant situation that Yuasa tried to maintain his activist role while acting with governmental consultant persona.

As Yuasa himself notes elsewhere, a cabinet consultant is a position meant to help the administration craft specific policy proposals before submitting them to the Diet (*Hirō* 160). Thus, a consultant does not adhere necessarily to the party line, nor is this position subservient to any party or politicians; rather, the consultant maintains collegial relations with the administration (Yuasa, *Hirō* 160). However, according to Yuasa, there were many criticisms leveled against him. For instance, he notes that that the mass media tend framed Yuasa's role either as an "activist out of power or the mouthpiece of the administration," which the latter criticisms conflated his work with the DPJ's agenda and ideology, which was quickly losing public popularity (*Hirō* 161, 164). Therefore, I argue that his new position as a Cabinet Consultant veiled him with a persona that made him less personal and empathetic than an activist and distant from the activists and non-regular communities and more abstract and universal in his appeal. Furthermore, the persona of government consultant made it difficult for Yuasa to distinguish his activist's agenda and ideology from the DPJ's ideology and platform.

Second, Yuasa's public performance as a government consulted rearticulated non-regular workers as an inferior species in the Japanese public. This problem can be most clearly witnessed in overwhelmingly negative mass media reactions on an event organized by Yuasa's NGO, *toshikoshi mura*, the demonstration camp for job-hunters in the park right next to the national governmental bureaus in the Tokyo metropolitan area on New Year's Eve. For Yuasa, opening *toshikoshi mura* was at heart of his activism. As he notes, "For us, the main purpose of supplying food for discharged workers and homeless people is not just 'supplying foods.' . . . By food, we have an opportunity to discuss their life," their difficulty and their life on the same

table; in other words, Yuasa tried to make it an opportunity to share workers' "personal needs, needs of the group, and the needs of the society" (*Hirō* 136-38). For Yuasa and his NGO, the event was an attempt to provide non-regular workers with communicative *tame*, or the safety-net of communications, among precarious workers and volunteer helpers. Furthermore, the *toshikoshi mura* event was intended as a tool of activism because it informs to the wider public about the existence of precarious workers and discharged people in Japan. In short, Yuasa intended to frame this camp both as a means of helping non-regular workers' lives and as a performance of civil activism.

However, the majority of media outlets portrayed the camp in a way completely unintended by Yuasa. For instance, an editorial article of *Sankei Newspaper* reported that:

Unfortunately it was less than ten per cent of all eight hundred thirty three participants who visited job opening booths in *toshikoshi mura*. Furthermore, some of them even demanded free hotel rooms. An old Chinese saying, "well fed, well bred," is true; our soul is corrupted without job or money. . . . Ethically, to help troubled people is okay, but his administrative job is to decrease the number of such people and to help politicians to raise public prospect and hope. Throwing money around them just makes them idlers. ("Sankeishō" 1)

Drawing from the same pattern of images I discussed in chapter 3, this editorial frames the group of non-regular workers as a mass of idle and lazy beggars unwilling to do anything productive. Additionally, Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara used similar rhetoric to constitute these workers at a regular press meeting by commenting that those gathering at *toshikoshi mura* "were indulged and spoiled" (qtd. in Yuasa, "Mizuni" 1). Beyond these limited examples, Yuasa noted on an

internet radio program that the quantity of criticisms of the event were so negative and overwhelming that it was beyond what he could handle (Amamiya and Yuasa n.p.).

What is interesting here to note is that in attempting to perform as a social activist while in a governmental official persona, Yuasa's actions received considerable backlash. Sociologist Imogen Tyler's study of British politics of abject citizenship provides a clue to understand why these actions were so harshly criticized. As Tyler suggests,

Disgust is not just enacted by subject and groups in process of othering, distinction making, distancing and boundary formation, but is also experienced and lived by those constituted as disgusting in their experiences of displacement and abandon. (26)

Tyler claims that public disgust targeted just against present stigmatized populations, but instead is spread and orchestrated to label entire segments of society who are not present at the event. As Tyler explains it, the criticism was directed not just against workers and discharged people gathered in *toshikoshi mura* event, but the negative reaction virally spread in ways to disqualify the value of the event and defame Yuasa's official persona and the DPJ, thus curtailing "the representational agency of those individuals and groups interpellated by these figures" (Tyler 26). Therefore, a series of Yuasa's political performances within his public official persona risked foreclosing the momentum of his activism.

Third, the public reactions to the *toshikoshi mura* event suggest that the Japanese public is becoming increasingly neoliberal in orientation, so much so that Yuasa's dualistic role as activist and public official will be coded by neoliberal companyism as both too radical for the general public yet too conservative for his fellow activists. Previous chapters have already confirmed the market-fundamentalist character of the hegemonic order of companyism. Yet, the

public reaction to Yuasa's *toshikoshi mura* event suggests that the neoliberal opposition directed towards precarious workers is more intense than ever before, while Yuasa's attempts to offer socioeconomic reforms were framed as being wasteful and useless and complicit in the socialist-communist party ideology. That is to say, public reactions to the event, as Yuasa himself notes in a newspaper article, was "beating a fallen dog to death" ("Mizuni" 1). As he clarifies his use of this old Chinese proverb later in the article, he argues that the mass media attacked the event as "an unfair benefit for squeaky wheels" and "200 homeless people illegitimately occupied the public park" ("Mizuni" 1).

This sequence of dominant mass media attacks against Yuasa and *toshikoshi mura* event suggests a certain mode of public expectation for the government. Within this ideology, as Zygmund Bauman contends,

The only two useful things one would expect, and wish, "public power" to deliver are to observe "human rights," that is to let everyone go her or his own way, and to enable everyone to do it in peace—by guarding the safety of her or his body and possessions, locking actual or would-be criminals in prisons and keeping streets free from, . . . all . . . sorts of obnoxious and malevolent strangers. (*Liquid Modernity* 36)

As Bauman claims, the Japanese public expected the state work against Yuasa's efforts, thus turning his public official persona against his activist efforts. For the Japanese public, gatherings such as *toshikoshi mura* are not just worthless, but if they should invade any "public interests" including the occupation of public spaces with unwanted segments of the population, then such events should be prohibited. Unfortunately for Yuasa, in attempting to frame non-regular

workers as a vulnerable population, he speaks to an ideological audience—the Japanese public—who codes such representations as justifying rather than criticizing Japanese neoliberal logic.

To summarize, Yuasa's rhetorical persona as public official created an empathetic distancing between his official position and the precarious non-regular workers he sought to assist. As a result, his advocacy often became conflated with the DPJ and general public dissatisfaction with the party. Furthermore, Yuasa's public performance justified a rather intense opposition to precarious non-regular workers by framing them as weak and in need of government protection. Within this neoliberal logic that Yuasa's discourse played into, the expects the government to do little more than maintain the majority's minimum security and casts non-regular workers as "failed citizens" underserving of public assistance and access to public spaces. As a result, Yuasa's attempt to operate as a public official while remaining faithful to his activist's agenda doomed his efforts.

Moreover, due to the combination of his public official persona and his activist agenda, Yuasa was represented by the media as the embodiment of the DPJ, which cast him as the representative for "big government" and liberal policies that were viewed as a waste of public resources. As a result, the dominant media and public perceptual frame through which to understand non-regular working forces was articulated in a very negative way and Yuasa and his NGO group was punished within the logic of neoliberal governmentality. Actually, the immediate return to power by the pro-market LDP government in 2012 perhaps suggests that Yuasa, as well as a mass of anonymous non-regular workers supported by him, was used as proof of the DPJ's inability to maintain public support and the illegitimacy of liberal social net reforms (Fu 114).

Yuasa did attempt to preemptively respond to many of these criticisms in a local newspaper in early January by arguing that a far more public budget has been spent on employment security of regular workers in comparison to non-regular workers. For example, Yuasa claimed that \$650 billion yen were spent in 2009 for an “employment adjustment subsidy,” financial assistance given to employers to keep regular *seishain* workers, while public spending for non-regular workers has been consistently small, less than one percent of the budget for regular workers (“Mizuni” 1). Therefore, Yuasa attempted to demonstrate that the *toshikoshi mura* was legitimate in comparison to the policies used to prop up regular employees.

Despite the soundness of his reasoning, however, Yuasa’s discourse was framed as demonstrating the laziness of non-regular workers and his agenda was an unjust use of public property and resources. These criticisms articulated together Yuasa and the DPJ, as his public persona could not be separated from the DPJ. As a result, Yuasa’s attempt did not resist or challenge the dominant governing logic operating in Japan and would not be considered a successful instance of activism.

Yet, even with all of the criticism directed at him, Yuasa and his book *Han-Hinkon* have been highly acclaimed by intellectuals and he regularly appears on television shows and magazines which favor his activist ideology. However, the majority of citizen, internet, and media reactions reject Yuasa’s political claim for the need to reform the national welfare system and employment conditions. Yuasa was—and still is—the first activist to highlight the effect of non-regular employment policies and, as a result, he is a famous activist, a manager of a non-regular worker NGO, and one of the most popular critics of this problem due to his former Cabinet Consultant title. Therefore, I claim that, while Yuasa’s philosophy and agenda as outlined in *Han-Hinkon* were, and still are welcomed, his work has lost its critical potentiality of

transforming the present institutional framework and the material-rhetorical conditions of non-regular workers.

### **Karin Amamiya as an Auto-ethnographical Writer/Poet/Activist**

Amamiya, in addition to be a poet and noted writer, is among “most well-known” figures on the issue of precarious workers (Toivonen 152). In contrast to Yuasa, however, Amamiya’s rhetorical strategy is rather non-traditional. Besides dressing in Tokyoite postmodern youth style, Amamiya is also unique in her use of the first- and second-person perspective and provocative tone in her autobiographical narrative.

Equally unique is Amamiya’s fundamental shift in political affiliation. When she started her career as a poet and writer, she called herself *gosurori-wuyoku* [gothic-lolita-fashioned nationalist/rightist], a phrase invented by herself by combining a fashion term and a political term. Later, she notes that, when she was a rightist, doing punk-lolita make-ups and weaving imperial national flag while living with creative writers, she was unable to identify herself with the companies she worked for as a part-time *freeter*. She further explains that the state was a sole object of her identification because “Japan,” the nation state, provided her with a vocabulary to explain her ethnic, national, and political origins (*Ikisasero!* 45; “Binbō” 38). However, she changed her public affiliation and title to *minisuka-sayoku* [socialist/leftist wearing mini skirt] about a decade ago. Amamiya confesses that she now regrets her past affiliation and attachment to the state because, although becoming a rightist once gave her an outlet for her daily frustration, being a nationalist deflected her attention away from distributional imbalances and national labour law injustices (“Binbō” 38; *Ikisasero!* 16-38).<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Despite her female gender and feminine “lolita” fashion, it is still difficult to associate her activism with the issue of gender discrimination in Japanese labor relations—for instance, heteronormative structure of the domestic employment system or the severer situations of female

Why did Amamiya commit herself to nationalism? Philosopher Osawa and sociologist Kitada explain that, for contemporary precarious workers such as Amamiya, the Japanese nation state is an easy and convenient psychological oasis (332-33). Likewise, labor sociologist Kinoshita also notes that,

Even lower-class people may be conservative, and can easily drive themselves into rightists. They understand that “relying on the public budget” is a shame, while affirming current neoliberal deregulations and confirming the rhetoric of self-responsibility. (82)

While members of Amamiya’s generation were adolescent in the late 1980s to the early 1990s when regular *seishain* job opportunities were not as scarce as they are now, this generation faced, on the contrary, rougher times once they started working after graduation. Therefore, in a sense, Amamiya’s emotionally intense rhetoric is a reflection of her feelings of exclusion and isolation as a non-regular worker.

Amamiya and Yuasa have a good working relationship overall. In a series of interviews, Amamiya explains that she has met several poor people whose lives were saved by Yuasa’s activism. She notes that she “really appreciated” the chances of “meeting good spirits like Mr. Yuasa,” and that “hearing from precarious workers about the experiences to be saved by such persons as Mr. Yuasa always invigorates me” (*Ikisasero!* 157-58). Yuasa also commended Amamiya by commenting that in her book *Ikisasero!*, “the most sensational part” of the book “was an episode of a mother of a twenty-three-year-old son who got overwork mental illness and

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young non-regular workers than male. Amamiya does not have specific works that have addressed this issue, and as we will see, her provocative rhetoric rather mixes both masculine and feminine norms in Japanese culture; caring, emotional style to precarious workers (i.e., “the feminine”) and war metaphors and provocative calls (i.e., “the masculine). For this reason, I conceive her biological sexual category and her excessive feminine “lolita” fashion as a part of her performative demonstrations.

committed suicide” (qtd. in Amamiya, *Ōru NEET* 67). In particular, Yuasa applauds Amamiya’s thick description of an interview with a *haken* worker’s mother who is suing the company for violating an employment contract and for ignoring the mental disease that eventually led her son to kill himself. Yuasa says that he was “impressed by” Amamiya’s vivid depictions of these workers, and by her “claim . . . that even their life is endangered” (*Ōru NEET* 68). Furthermore, Amamiya and Yuasa have had some direct conversations with one another and those dialogues are published in hard copy and broadcast over internet radio (Amamiya and Yuasa, “Ikinobiru”; Amamiya, *Wākingu Puā*). As far as my research suggests, these two activists have maintained friendly relations and consider themselves to be comrades.

Overall, both Amamiya and Yuasa through their major publications have attempted to improve the material and symbolic conditions of non-regular workers. However, these activists’ rhetorical styles are very different. Given this difference, the main task in this section of analysis is to examine the unique elements of Amamiya’s rhetorical strategy and to explore how her discourse can, if possible, challenge the material and symbolic dominance of the current Japanese order. In order to do this, this section first describes her representative book, *Ikisasero!* Second, I outline her rhetorical strategy of transforming the public subject of young precarious workers. Third, I evaluate her rhetorical strategy and claim that her rhetoric highlights a unique difficulty in sustaining revolutionary rhetoric in a media environment that trivializes this kind of discourse.

***Amamiya’s Shout, “Don’t Kill Us!”*** Amamiya’s book *Ikisasero!*, or “Don’t Kill Us!” explicitly and provocatively states the objective outright in its preface. Amamiya states that, as she met thousands of *dōshi*, brothers and sisters, and heard their miserable situations, she became determined to rise up in the name of these young non-regular workers. As she clarifies, “I made

my mind. I am going to interview and write young people suffering from unequal employment status by recent legal amendments. And I will remain politically active until the very day this society changes itself to save them” (*Ikisaseo!* 312). Like this, Amamiya writes in a style similar to a political manifesto, almost in the similar tone to *freeter* part-time worker Tomohiro Akagi’s passage I quoted at the beginning of the chapter in terms of its aggressiveness. However, her tone might be somewhat more confrontational as she frequently repeats militant phrases. For instance, Amamiya contends that, “we will start fighting back. We will fight back against all who have made youngsters a mass of disposable, low-wage workers, who gains more benefits than they should by our cheap labor, and all who have criticized young workers for bad reputations” (7).

After making these rather aggressive claims in the name of young non-regular workers, Amamiya provides further rationale for writing the book:

Now *freeter* part-timer amounts to two million. Non-regular workers including *freeters*, female part-timers, *haken* workers and others amount to sixteen million in all. They occupy one-third of all Japanese labor force. [The reason young working force remains non-regular is] not because of their “dullness,” “slovenliness,” or “incompetency,” which I heard as typical evaluations about them so many times. [It is] because private companies, with a pretense of surviving international competition, have not provided fair wage and care for young generation, even if their future is sacrificed, even if they cannot buy breads for the day, and even if they get mental disorders by extreme working conditions (7-8).

Therefore, within the first few pages of the book, Amamiya outlines the main objective of the book and advances her claims with antagonistic and emotional appeals.

After she establishes her central argument, the book provides thick descriptions of individual precarious workers and Amamiya's opinions about them as supporting materials for her central claim. In this process, *Ikisasero!*, much like Yuasa's *Han-Hinkon*, isolates the main cause that has restricted young workers from raising their voices: the discourse of *jiko-sekinin* or self-responsibility. Whereas she mentions this in several different parts of the book, Amamiya begins with each interviewee's experience of oppression and generalizes it to the public, demonstrate how the plight of these workers is a common issue related to everyone in Japan. Specifically, in her own experience as a *freeter* part-timer at the age of 19 through 24 while working as a creative writer and rightist, Amamiya states that she was unaware of any means to vent her anger against the rhetoric of self-responsibility. As a result, she blamed herself for her own perceived failure and committed some self-injurious and self-mutilating behaviors (*Ikisasero!* 37-39). However, becoming a leftist provided Amamiya with a way to express her personal frustration and political claims together. Actually, she suggests that the rhetoric of self-responsibility does not improve or motivate non-regular workers and merely creates anxiety and even psychological harm:

When coming home from work, we are exhausted. To us, they [mass media] relentlessly give reproaches such as “you don't have enough motivation to work full-time!” or “independent yourself, beggars!” As meddlesome sermons such as “improve your character” are becoming prevalent in this time, our present livability is severely limited. (20)

Thus, Amamiya is firm in her stance against the rhetoric of self-responsibility as she claims that “we will fight back against all discourses which have drove [young non-regular workers] to extreme situations under the name of ‘*jiko-sekinin* [self-responsibility]’” (7).

One significant difference from Yuasa’s work is that Amamiya’s arguments are grounded in the narratives of individual precarious workers and her strong emotional appeals. Her rhetoric is supported with her own personal experiences and stories from many other young non-regular workers she has interviewed. Put differently, personal experience is the point of reference at which she grounds not only her personal outrage but also her advocacy. Amamiya reinforces this rhetorical tactic by phrasing her stories as an exchange between “you” and “I” with amicable rhetoric describing the reader and author experience’s as “ours.” In comparison, Amamiya uses more distant third-person pronouns to describe adversaries or people responsible for the poor living conditions of young non-regular workers.

With this style, Amamiya figuratively calls for readers to rise and act up: “they say why Japanese youngsters don’t cause riot. Actually, riots has been happening already, like a bullet is accidentally discharged [from the muzzle of a gun]” (*Ikisaseo!* 10). She uses the term “riots” in this instance metaphorically rather than calling on violence and destruction. Instead, she lists many examples social activism—riots in her vocabulary—including “Return my bike [illegally] parked on the street [and towed away]!”; “Free food for poor people!”; and “Free my apartment rent!” These were comical and satirical campaigns initiated by such groups as *Binbōnin Daihanran Shūdan* [The Group of Rebellious Poores] and *Kōenji NEET Shūdan* [The Group of NEETs in Kōenji District, Tokyo]. Furthermore, Amamiya lists several other marches that were not seemingly connected to the economic life of young non-regular workers such as the

campaigns to “Demolish Christmas fuss!”<sup>55</sup> and “Break down St. Valentine’s Day romance!”<sup>56</sup> (*Ikisasero!* 174-220). Together, her use of intimate language with her readers and the description of these non-traditional activist campaigns serve as her alternative vision of Japanese cultural, economic, and political horizon, the direction to which these “rebellions” should head towards in future.

Like Yuasa, Amamiya also seeks social change. Whereas the need for change is less explicitly demonstrated in comparison to Yuasa’s problem-solution style of organization, Amamiya’s rhetoric is unique because it strongly affirms the agency and image of precarious workers through a series of energetic and dynamic portrayals of discharged workers, poor students, and precarious workers. In other words, by encouraging the young to engage in satirical or symbolic riots and movements, Amamiya seeks to affirm the lives of precarious workers. As she acknowledges, Amamiya views the impact—political or otherwise—of such activism is that it “is the way, despite their deprived economic situation, to assure their own space of habitat and survival (*Ikisasero!* 252). In claiming that these alternative movements “are in a more sensational phase than ever before,” she offers them forth as “a breakthrough for young people who did not have any ladder to climb up in the social hierarchy” to affirm their own life and thereby “to transform the society” (“Binbō” 40, 42; *Ikisasero!* 250). In short, Amamiya suggests that there should be a politicization and spotlighting on the young non-regular workers subject as affirming and possessing agency and make this subjectivity the cornerstone of future social activism.

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<sup>55</sup> In Japan, December 24th is for young heterosexual couples. It is a special day they go out and get intimate with each other.

<sup>56</sup> In Japan, February 14th is for young girls and boys. It is a special day when girls are encouraged to express their romantic feelings for boys through chocolate gifts. In Japan, both Christmas Eve and St. Valentine’s Day are supposed to encourage adolescents’ heterosexual romantic love.

In summary, Amamiya's rhetoric offers a political strategy that is very different from Yuasa's. On the one hand, Yuasa's *Han-Hinkon* prompts the state to set up a safety net for precarious workers. In doing so, his rhetoric constitutes the youth and non-regular workers as being overly vulnerable and thus, unintentionally, unworthy of state assistance (224). On the other hand, Amamiya's *Ikisasero!* frames the youth as a collective agent that is always angry, frustrated, and rebellious, provoking "fights," "revolution" "struggles," and "wars." Accordingly, *Ikisasero!* rejects the neoliberal rhetorical constitution of young non-regular workers as valueless. While Amamiya also depicts the vulnerable side of such workers, she describes it as a seed for agency and social protest. Furthermore, her use of discourse that frames the youth and non-regular workers as ecstatic, delighted, and powerful serves as a counter-hegemonic strategy that offers a radically different image of young non-regular workers and a foundation to improve their material and rhetorical situations (*Ikisasero!* 85).

***Politics of Recognition and De-Classification.*** Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth's work on a politics of recognition help explain the possible impacts of Amamiya's rhetorical strategy. For Fraser and Honneth, public recognition and the means of achieving public recognition are important for creating new conditions of possibility for the political struggles. In making non-regular workers and the young identifiable political agents, Amamiya is attempting to chain arguments about recognition and redistribution with "families of claims raised by political actors and social movement in the public sphere" (9). For instance, Amamiya notes how seemingly small claims made by workers and youth can lead to rather meaningful effects, as she explains in saying, "even though you may have achieved just a little, you can feel and gain a progress toward the social change" by public demonstration marches and exposing themselves to the public (*Ikisasero!* 314). Consequently, Amamiya understands, like Fraser, that recognition is

critical for achieving economic and political redistribution, and that “neither alone is sufficient” (Fraser and Honneth 9). Put differently, even though she does not explain it in academic vocabulary, Amamiya seems to aim at making domestic young non-regular workers a recognizable subject—or publically acknowledged legitimate citizens—and once that is achieved, seeks the possibility of rupturing the dominant discourses used to block economic and political gains for this population.

It is in this politics of recognition—that is, the struggles over the rhetorical constitution of young non-regular workers—that marks Amamiya’s discursive strategy as distinctive. One way in which to understand the implications of Amamiya’s constitutive rhetoric is how it may act as a radical act that universalizes the non-regular worker subject. French philosopher Jacques Rancière augmented Foucault’s idea that “people do revolt. . . . And that is how subjectivity (not that of great men, but that of anyone) is brought into history, breathing life into it” (“Useless” 452). Specifically, Rancière claims that when a member of the underclass declares that he or she is “proletariat,” that utterance can be radical because the “[t]he proletariat is no longer a part of society but is, rather, the symbolic inscription of ‘the part of those who have no part,’ a supplement which separates the political community from any count of the parts of a society” (qtd. in Blechman, Chari, and Hasan 287). Using the example of Auguste Blanqui, who once proclaimed that his “profession” is a “proletariat” while in court charged with rebellion, Rancière argues that Blanqui’s statement was radical because it acted to dis-identify, or to open a political subjectivity in ways that make it both intelligible in terms of public recognition but simultaneous resistant to the logic of dominant class discourse, marking the subject as “an outsider, or, more, an *in-between*” (“Politics” 61). This in-between-ness is important because, as Rancière continues,

any [political] subjectification is a disidentification, removal from the naturalness of a place, the opening up of a subject space where anyone can be counted since it is the space where those of no account are counted, where a connection is made between having a part and having no part. (*Disagreement* 36)

In other words, when articulating together a known and recognized political category or a set of values with a previously unrecognized or unvalued population, a discourse of recognition has radical potential. As Rancière suggests in the case of the proletariat, such an act created “a working class which was more mobile, less attached to its tools and less sunk in its own poverty and drunkenness than the various traditions usually represent it,” and thus disturbed the preexisting class categorizations (*Philosopher* 22). What makes the emphasis on class in this instance radical is not that it accurately labels a particular person or group of people, but that it operates as “a space of subjectification of the uncounted that is open to anyone” (qtd. in Blechman, Chari, and Hasan 290). Thus, it becomes a universal category by opening up possibilities of new values and trying to articulate them with their political subject position.

Rancière’s work helps us to understand how Amamiya’s rhetoric can be considered radical within Japanese public discourse. Rather than frame a “proletariat”, Amamiya’s use of “precarious workers” as a political category for joyful and playful insurrection groups could have a discursive impact on Japanese society. As Amamiya suggests, “to have poor comrades and to rampage around the society you don’t like to be in with these people” is “all the more fun” (“Binbō” 40). By “fun,” Amamiya claims that an energetic image of young non-regular workers articulates and presents a different rhetorical subject position for young non-regular workers to the dominant culture; yet, despite being dissimilar, it really is not new as it is symbolically connected to a familiar class of “young non-regular workers.” Accordingly, I argue that

Amamiya's rhetoric is an attempt to form a "culture," or some collective ethos capable of finding a voice" by creating an "open space for subjectification" that includes many different "uncounted" parts of society that challenges the logic of dominant order that devalues and harms non-regular workers and the youth (Rancière, *Disagreement* 36; Rancière qtd. in Blechman, Chari, and Hasan 290).

For example, in *Ikisasero!*, precarious people are individually introduced in an independent chapter followed by Amamiya's comments about the person's situation. One example is Mr. Matsumoto, a demonstration leader and a worker at a recycle shop. After the interview, Amamiya comments that Matsumoto offers a great example of a good life that exists outside the norm of the governing neoliberal logic:

As I interviewed Mr. Matsumoto, I was envisioned into another wonderful life style. . . . We are under the pressure to live a normal life, but he made me realize that it is all an illusion. You don't have to buy your own house, you don't have to have your own car. Actually, you need nothing with you. (*Ikisasero!* 259)

In addition to Matsumoto's story, Amamiya offers several similar examples—non-regular workers and other poor people—and she follows it with encouraging and positive comments to demonstrate the value of each particular life and lifestyle. Together, these descriptions serve as an attempt of dis-identifying and rearticulate the non-regular worker subject position and revalue it in a positive fashion, which is very different from the neoliberal valuation of this subject position. Each of these descriptions works as a counter-image to the governing norm of the "productive self."<sup>57</sup> With these accounts, Amamiya suggests that non-regular workers is an open rhetorical space that can gather together so many uncounted and unvalued people in Japan and

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<sup>57</sup> Please refer to a few specific negative imageries of non-regular workers and non-workers in Chapter 3.

legitimize them as deserving to be appreciated and valued in society. Put differently, Amamiya's strategy is to normalize the young non-regular work subject position through abnormalization and dis-identification.

Judith Butler remarks that "although the political discourses that mobilize identity categories tend to cultivate identifications in the service of a political goal, it may be that *disidentification* is equally critical to the rearticulation of democratic contestation" (*Bodies* 4, italics original). As Butler suggests, Amamiya's approach may be able to contest the present rhetorical subject that I described in Chapter 3. Amamiya's rhetoric frames precarious workers' in ways to alter the rhetorical subject against the state and capitalist logic; that is, this was the use of social stigmas not as "permanent contestation of social norms condemned to the pathos of perpetual failure" but rather as "a critical resource in the struggle to rearticulate the terms of symbolic legitimacy and intelligibility" (Butler, *Bodies* 3). In other words, Amamiya's rhetoric may affirm the subject with mainstream society, as Honneth claims can happen "as a result of processes of recognition through which subjects are normatively incorporated into society by learning to see themselves as recognized with respect to certain characteristics" (Fraser and Honneth 249). For this reason, when comparing the two activists' rhetorical strategies, I assess Amamiya's rhetorical strategy more positively than Yuasa's.

***Limits of Revolutionary Rhetoric against the Neoliberal Order.*** While her rhetorical strategy offers a number of advantages over Yuasa's, I now consider how Amamiya's rhetoric might challenge the dominant hegemonic order. In the case of Amamiya, I will focus on the tensions created between her radical proclamations and neoliberal matrix of meaning that operates against her rhetoric. Ultimately, I argue that, even though her rhetoric offers some possibilities for

subject position transformation, it also highlights the difficult discursive challenges created by the logic of neoliberal capitalism.

Whereas I described in last section Amamiya's unique rhetorical strategy toward recognition, we must be aware that Fraser, Honneth, or Rancière do not contend that recognition necessarily ensures progressive cultural or political change. For instance, Honneth, who argues that recognition is "the fundamental, overarching moral category," also contends that, in order for the recognized subjects' lives to improve, their existence should be culturally appreciated and their rights should be socially acknowledged (Fraser and Honneth 3). Therefore, Honneth's idea suggests that recognizing non-regular workers is in itself just a preliminary step toward social change and that the change does not happen unless a differentiation claim become sufficiently welcomed by the Japanese culture. Furthermore, unless love—the sense of affect recognizing these workers with the "value of their own bodily needs"—is publicly accepted as well (Fraser and Honneth 139). More critically than Honneth, Fraser claims that "by itself, [recognition] is not sufficient to capture the normative deficits of contemporary society, the societal process that generate them, and the political challenges facing those seeking emancipatory change" (Fraser and Honneth 233). In advancing these claims, both Honneth and Fraser point to social and cultural barriers between recognition and redistribution.

Given this concern, we must assess the larger discursive effects Amamiya's rhetoric more critically. Specifically, a question must be posed: even though her rhetoric may be able to articulate a new and potentially radical political subject for young non-regular workers, can this publicizing of their problems become recognized appropriately in a neoliberal order? As I mentioned early in this chapter, to make a problem "public" means make it a concern for the entire nation and therefore necessary to be resolved. As Foucault scholar Colin Gordon says,

recognition should occur as a part of a broader political strategy designed to form “something more than economic man; a social citizen” (38).

In order to explore this, I examine the character of neoliberalism as it operates as public reasoning. On this point, Bauman makes an important comment that, in recent capitalist societies,

The “public” is colonized by the “private”: “public interest” is reduced to curiosity about the private lives of public figures, and the art of public life is narrowed to the public display of private affairs and public confessions of private sentiments (the more intimate the better). “Public issues” which resist such reduction become all but incomprehensible. (*Liquid Modernity* 37)

Here, Bauman claims the diminution in the value of public interest and the replacement of that value with the private. If everything should be private, then there would be no ground on which activists can claim their “public” rights in light of “the common good” of the nation. Indeed, global anti-corporate movements that claim that “we are the 99 percent” nicely answer this problem because the catch-phrase is designated to critique the distributional imbalance and at the same time raises a consciousness that the minimal life standard should be guaranteed to all populations working full-time. Furthermore, recall my arguments in Chapter 1 that the Japanese public traditionally has little notion of what constitutes a public good, and that Japanese citizens are unwilling to help the most disadvantaged people via state welfare. This problem is further compounded by the fact that the Japanese mass media actively attacks attempts like Yuasa’s call to recover the public—*shakai-ryōiki* or the social sphere. All of these problems highlight the peril of advancing arguments in the name of the public good, as it has long been a critical and nagging concern for activists like Yuasa and Amamiya.

Seemingly, it was with this understanding of the barriers posed by neoliberal logic that current social activists fighting against capital inequality, including Pau and Yuasa, believe that their activism should have a certain amount of chronological succession and persistence in critiquing public consciousness rather than focus on one-time changes to specific legal and distributional systems. Indeed, Yuasa explicitly claims that political advocacy should be “in nature everlasting; enormous amount of irrationally victimized workers and the fired people formulates and reformulates our idea of how the movement should be organized to realize policy change” (“Haken Giri” 357). Likewise, Butler also notes that the capacity of counter-hegemonic discourse still “depends upon the permanence and fixity of the symbolic domain itself, the domain of signifiability or intelligibility” (*Bodies* 96). Put differently, Butler claims that these counter-discourses must also entail constant repetition against social norms in order to effectuate social change:

performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed *by* a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. This iterability implies that “performance” is not a singular “act” or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo . . . (*Bodies* 60, italics original)

Here, Butler suggests that only persistent, repetitive, and ritualized performance can traverse the present matrix of meaning. The takeaway here is that activism against capital inequality should be consistently and repetitively appealing to the politics of signification in order to effectuate social change. In other words, as Foucault says it, freedom is a constant battle or perpetual

practice against the dominant order because power is an ongoing interplay between subjects (“Subject and Power” 793-94).

Given these concerns, I find that Amamiya’s rhetoric has little possibility of realizing the social transformation that she intended because her culturally bizarre rhetorical style is hardly sustainable and likely loses its radical potential rather quickly. Even though I applaud her novel approach to challenging the dominant hegemonic order, Amamiya provides no explanation or rationale on how her radical affirmation of non-regular worker subject positions can access or challenge the dominant matrix of meaning. Furthermore, Amamiya’s provocative rhetorical style may be quickly trivialized because, as Bauman claims, the

Idea of “upheaval” is itself trivialized. Nowadays in the flood of the term, . . . upheavals of such a sort are anomalies in our times. Or, rather, . . . turned into a daily diet, they are not exciting or frightening for more than a few days—until the advent of the next ‘historic’ or ‘revolutionary’ event is announced, with the bated breath, by TV anchor-people and splashed all over the front pages of the tabloids, only to be wiped away shortly afterwards from the drifting attention of the public by another batch of ‘sensational’ and ‘unprecedented’ events. The idea of ‘upheaval’ has become *trivialized* nowadays. (*The Art of Life* 63-64, italics original)

Bauman suggests that dramatic and whimsical public performatives like the ones Amamiya celebrates can quickly be trivialized in the contemporary media environment. This tendency seems likely true from my assessment of the Japanese media. It is precisely at this point at which I find a limit to Amamiya’s rhetorical effectivity. In order to subvert the present negative discourse about young non-regular workers, activists need to make constant discursive

challenges and make them collective and ongoing. However, Amamiya's rhetoric needs to constantly change and adapt to remain resistant in a discursive backdrop that will easily and quickly appropriate or delegitimize her rhetorical style.

Furthermore, the discussion of Rancière's political theory also suggests that Amamiya's efforts to dis-identify or re-articulate young non-regular workers may not be successful. For instance, Jun Hirose, scholar of modern French philosophy, claims that Rancière's radical declassification theory may not effectively challenge the Japanese neoliberal order because "the neoliberal tenet of 'empowering oneself (in capitalist sense)' perfectly fits to and absorbs the political hope that Rancière has" (206). That is to say, Japanese neoliberal bio-politics transmutes political empowerment—in Rancière's vocabulary, attempts of politicizing a subject—into the discourse of a productive self in capitalist society according to a and market-fundamentalist and meritocratic standard (Hirose 206). Hirose claims that this occurs because neoliberal discourse subsumes cultural capital—and even our intellectual activities—into the sphere of the economic. According to Hirose, Rancière has been silent on how his theory of subject can access this appropriating aspect of neoliberalism. If this critique is correct, then Amamiya's revolutionary rhetoric may not operate in a radical or resistant fashion within the current neoliberal order.

If ongoing repetition is critical, as Butler says, then it is worth noting Amamiya's efforts of activism after the publication of the book. On this point, my overall assessment is rather pessimistic because it is rather difficult to find a trace of either her activism consistently maintained by herself or relayed to other important activists. As of now, I can at least say that she works primarily on Japan's nuclear energy policy and she actively assists evacuated tsunami victims since March 2011. In doing so, she seems to have abandoned the issue of young workers'

employment conditions. Why her attention and campaign was not maintained might be explained by an interview with Amamiya by critic Goto. The article is one of Goto's interview series in a weekly popular magazine. Whereas the contents of the interview was just like many others, discussing interviewee's personality, philosophy, and profession, at the bottom of this article about Amamiya, Goto left a longer post-interview commentary. In the commentary, Goto wrote, perhaps regretfully, that "I was not able to ask specifically how to keep on the movement and how to build up a system that allows young non-regular workers to survive" (43). He did not explain why this was the case. Was it because there was no time? Did Amamiya deflect or deny Goto's question? Or was it something else? In Goto's speculative comment, I find an indication that Amamiya was unsure on what a clear path toward a better discursive and material future for young non-regular workers might look like. Actually, I was also unable to find, from all of her available works, any idea on this particular point.

Overall, I conducted a rhetorical analysis of Karin Amamiya's book *Ikisaseero!* and her activist performance. While the book broadened the spectrum of young non-regular workers by attaching a unique cultural value to them, Amamiya's work does not contain within itself the full potential to challenge the dominant economic and social order. In this sense, I argue that Amamiya's work exemplifies the difficulty of waging successful anti-corporatist campaigns within contemporary neoliberal society. In 2003, Wendy Brown claimed that the only way to challenge neoliberal rationality that shapes the "organization of space" is by formulating a "counterrationality—a different figuration of human beings, citizenship, economic life, and the political" ("Neoliberalism" 59). Yet, the analysis suggests that the formulation of counter-rationality is by itself a very difficult task in a neoliberal and media-oriented society like Japan. When politics is dominated by neoliberal rationality, politics is no longer about debates and

deliberations over improve the life of the public but rather how to improve and protect “global competitiveness” and the “managerial effectiveness” required by capitalist economies. In Japan, this idea has been consistently reinforced by an ideology that instills companyism as the dominant frame and value for politics. Whereas Amamiya’s radical transformation of the young non-regular worker subject may be able to offer an alternative vision for subjectification, I, perhaps like Amamiya herself, am still unsure if this counter-subject can negotiate with and resist the dominant norm offered by *homo oeconomicus*. Furthermore, my analysis witnessed a contemporary media and political environment that reacted to resistant discourse with heavy rhetorical assaults that trivialized the matter. I can at least say that her shift away from the problem of precarious workers implies that it is very hard to sustain a movement with her kind of rhetorical strategy.

For this reason, I conclude that Amamiya’s rhetorical strategy is significantly limited in terms of its potential to create social change. Yet, I would like to end this section by noting that despite problems noted with Amamiya’s approach and her move away from the issue that it is perhaps more important that her followers build on her efforts and, if they can, perhaps together with Amamiya’s rhetoric, form a counter-hegemonic discourse that constant reaffirms and rearticulates the value of young non-regular workers and their value to society. My central concern here is not so much with the political aim of this movement, but with the short-term tactics and quirky rhetorical style.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter conducted a rhetorical analysis on works of two civil activists, Makoto Yuasa and Karin Amamiya. Both Yuasa and Amamiya’s works claimed that the precarious living and working conditions of young non-regular workers should be improved. However, the

analysis of their works confirmed that both Yuasa and Amamiya's rhetorical strategies suffer from unique limitations that limit their potential to cause economic and cultural changes.

Yuasa's objective and logical rhetoric did not elicit empathy for non-regular workers from the general public. Moreover, his new governmental post changed his rhetorical ethos and mobilized the public against his activist agenda. That is, the public reaction to Yuasa's political performances embodied what Couldry claimed was a neoliberal reaction informed by a sense that "neoliberalism 'solves' the problem of democratic scale by rationalizing democracy's failures" (149). Put differently, neoliberal discourse translates Yuasa's advocacy into a socialist (and even communist) claim that appears to be anti-capitalist, pretending as if the public has "solved" the troublesome populations in society. Thus, when Yuasa calls for the creation of a state safety net, it was overwhelmingly rejected because the art of neoliberal capitalism functions "according to an intensification of Foucault's notion of productive power, which teaches us that power doesn't hold good until and unless the subject can take some pleasure or knowledge from its bargain with a dominant mode of power" (Nealon 70). In this sense, the analysis suggests that the neoliberal dominant order is all the more intensified in contemporary Japan and can turn rather rational arguments about protecting precarious workers into irrational arguments within a capitalist logic.

In comparison, the investigation of Amamiya's advocacy suggests that her newly offered vision of young non-regular workers could possibly foster a different signification and valuation of young non-regular workers. By offering a set of values beyond those offered by the theory of *homo oeconomicus*, Amamiya argues that it is possible to find meanings and live happily outside capitalist order in contemporary Japan. Yet, this chapter also suggests that, in order for this re-articulation of the non-regular workers' subject position to be resistant, the

rhetoric has to be a ritual reiterated in a constant fight to remain radical and resistant to the dominant order (Butler, *Bodies* 60). For rhetorical performances like Amamiya's, it is difficult for her kind of creative performances and activism to be taken seriously and to register in the public consciousness when the media's hyperbolic rhetoric quickly trivializes her political message. For this reason, the chapter concludes that Amamiya's rhetorical strategy is unable to cause her intended social change.

Consequently, this chapter offers implications for collective action to resist companyism, the hegemonic order of post-WWII Japanese capitalism. As Imogen Tyler claims, neoliberal economic policies are in nature dependent on "the porosity of borders to flows of capital, including the availability of precarious . . . workers" (93). Thus, Tyler argues through examples of the United Kingdom that neoliberal governmental order assumes a dual standard that, on the one hand, demands "curbing immigration" but, on the other hand, holds a sustained demand for cheap and often non-regular working forces (93). Similar to Tyler's description of the United Kingdom, Japanese capitalist hegemony also has remained the basic distributional structure of companyism and its benefits are exclusively given to *seishain* workers. Sociologist Kinoshita, for instance, claims that current Japanese society has still excluded a "mass of youngsters from the preexisting distribution system, the business community and companies together," while older-generations' basic incomes were not so much affected and their benefits are "firmly preserved" (19). Kinoshita speculates that this is due to the Japanese financial system's lack of attitude and imagination "to create an alternative to the old, dual employment system" between *seishain* regular workers and non-regular workers (20). In is this attitudinal presumption to maintain status quo protected benefits where I find the tenacity of companyism.

Despite my negative assessment of Yuasa's and Amamiya's works, I conclude this chapter by noting firstly that their collective efforts are meaningful for the lives of precarious workers—and ultimately for Japan's democratic future. For instance, Kinoshita acknowledges their efforts, particularly Makoto Yuasa's *toshikoshi mura* event, as an important chance to reveal to the entire nation the egregious situations of *haken* and *freeter* part-time workers and the critical failure of the national government's policies on issues such as housing and social welfare (75). Accordingly, Fu comments that,

The social divide caused by employment status differentials has surfaced as a contentious issue. Newspapers, TV channels and popular literature have become fixated on *kakusa* or the widening gap between regular and non-regular workers, haves and have-nots or “winners” (*kachigumi*) and “losers” (*makegumi*). . . . Closely related to this *kakusa* boom is another hotly discussed phenomenon of “working poor” (*wāking pua* or *hataraku hinkonsō*). The neologism refers to a stratum of disadvantaged workers who live below the level of subsistence of livelihood protection (*seikatsu hogo*) no matter how hard they work. (80-81)

Like Kinoshita, Fu also describes the populations of young non-regular workers and other poor people as outcasts of the state distribution framework and calls for change (81). As a result, a recent public opinion poll indicated that 35 percent of the interviewee answered “welfare state” to the question, “What kind of the nation do you want Japan to become?” (“Okisarareta” 6).<sup>58</sup> This demonstrates that the general public is gradually recognizing these populations and the increasing risk of precarious employment statuses that can lead to death.

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<sup>58</sup> The rest of the answers are as follows; 32 percent said “pacifist nation,” 12 percent said “environmentally friendly nation,” 10 percent answered “economic superpower” and a smaller number of people listed a few other options. See “Okisarareta,” 6.

Therefore, if other activists used a different and constantly evolving rhetorical strategy to overcome the barriers that Yuasa and Amamiya faced, then they could possibly contest and re-articulate the precarious workers' subject position in different and new ways, re-inscribing it with a new image and value that is more effective in resisting the dominant matrix of meaning (Foucault, "Useless" 451). In hopes that this sort of collective action might be initiated in the future, I finish this chapter by noting three types of challenge that future anti-corporatism rhetorical strategy should face in regards to contemporary neoliberal politics. First and foremost, it must deal with the extension of a different understanding of "democracy," meaning the neoliberal creation of the idea of public "consent," which implicitly devalues activists' attempts to politicize their activist efforts (Couldry 149). The massive amount of criticisms leveled against Yuasa's Cabinet consultant position and against his *toshikoshi mura* event suggests that the mass media explicitly abhor giving "unfair" benefits to those whom the media consider "undeserving" of public benefits. Thus, many activist efforts are still likely to be actively resisted under the name of public security or invasion of the public interest as long as the ideograph <public consent> is ideologically used in such a way. Even though precarious working populations are now more widely recognized than in 2009 when Yuasa began his *toshikoshi mura* event, neoliberal rationality remains rather entrenched in contemporary Japan. Therefore, activists should find ways to avoid being cast as an enemy within neoliberal discourse while simultaneously legitimizing their activism.

Secondly, claiming and assuring political ground will be a critical task for future activism. I confirmed in this chapter that Amamiya's attempt at "empowerment" was translated by a neoliberal discourse and logic, so in this sense, it is plausible that there have been a number of un-politicized voices uttered in recent Japan. It is therefore important to keep attempts at

gathering and politicizing these voices, perhaps like Amamiya's *Ikisaseo!* but not necessarily in the same style and form. This is a part of the larger problem of developing criticisms against capitalism and recognizing the economy, in Deidre McCloskey's words, as important "grounds" for political arguments without constituting capitalism and market rationality as the ultimate reality or as the sole decision rule in all public discussions (482). Thus, constant efforts to keep the young non-regular worker as an open and radical subject position is important in including more voices of activism as counter-statements against capital rationality and to articulate together a number of political claims advanced against the dominant socio-economic order.

Lastly, there is a need to reframe the domestic employment issue, which is now polarized between the regular *seishain* and the non-regular workers. Even though dominant neoliberal discourse has been tenacious as we have observed throughout this chapter, it is not invincible. As Foucault argued, freedom is practice attained by constant and elaborate strategy against dominant power ("Subject and Power" 793-94). In reframing the issue, it is imperative to address the problem as a problem that confronts all members of society that warrants a constant fight for the value of all people's lives.

We are still waiting for another wave of activism that integrates past social movements' lessons, including those offered by Yuasa and Amamiya's campaigns. We are waiting to see these future efforts can produce discursive-material change. My analysis and arguments in this chapter are dedicated to that objective.

## CHAPTER 5 YOUNG NON-REGULAR WORKERS ABANDONED IN RECESSIONARY JAPAN, AND THEIR FUTURE: A CONCLUSION

What is a nation willing to sacrifice? In Japan's case, the answer is: everything.

Alex Kerr. *Dogs and Demons: Tales from the Dark Side of Japan*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2001. 281. Print.

In this project, I studied the subject of young non-regular workers in the history of Japan's post-bubble recessionary era. In this period, their domestic employment system gradually shifted to a dual structure that on one hand displaced many of them to precarious non-regular working positions and on the other hand maintained a thick layer of conventional full-time *seishain* workers for older generations and a smaller number of competent young workers. As a result, Japan has developed an enormous financial gap between those who are allowed to join in the *seishain* culture and those who are not allowed to do so. Along with this employment shift was the emergence of discourses that reconfigured the rhetorical subject of non-regular workers as the cause of the slow economic trend, a development that both encouraged non-regular workers into precarious positions and legitimated the wage imbalance between these working statuses. Also, I studied political struggles over non-regular workers' "inferior" status by investigating the rhetoric of civil activists. In this discourse, activists experienced great difficulty in adding legitimacy to non-regular workers in the eyes of a domestic public so heavily shaped by neoliberalism rhetoric.

In this chapter, I situate discussions in previous chapters within a larger political and scholarly context and note suggestions that this study could add to discussions in other appropriate fields. First, I rework critical ideas on neoliberal governmentality regulating the material and symbolic status of young workers. Through this work, I suggest implications of this study to the neoliberal governmentality. Second, I situate this study in the field of democratic

cultures and discourse. Using my findings from Chapters 3 and 4, I suggest that academic research incorporate aesthetic notions in the explorations of democratic practice. Third, I suggest future possibilities of extending this research.

### **Neoliberal Governmentality**

Influenced by Foucault, many scholars have explored realignment of citizenship, sovereignty, and subjectivity that have taken place in the transition to neoliberal capitalism. For example, critical theory has described forms of subjectivity and citizenship that have arisen in the neoliberal order with terms like, “performative,” “flexible,” “entrepreneurial,” “mobile” and “plastic” (e.g., Butler, *Excitable* 2-9; Brown “Neoliberalism” 42, 44; Sheller and Urry, 108; and Zizek, 6-7). In different ways, these conceptual vocabularies captured how our social life, from our consciousness to body politics, has been regulated by neoliberal governmentality, biopolitical technologies of surveillance, or by self-surveillance. Consequently, as Rosalind Gill claims, we have invented “a whole array of sophisticated languages and conceptual tools available to us for minutely dissecting and examining cultural representations or discourses” (433).

Yet, as Gill continues to argue, the relationship between social or cultural norms and subject formation are “relatively underexplored”; in other words, there is still an incomplete understanding of how “the social or cultural ‘gets inside’ and transforms and reshapes our relationships to ourselves and others” (433). With a genealogical framework, this study serves to add to our understanding by examining the relationship of public discourses to the subject formation of Japanese young workers. That is, the three parts of this study uncovered the process in which young non-regular workers as a collective public rhetorical subject has been

formed according to the change of the dominant Japanese capitalist order and how it could be challenged.

Accordingly, this case study captures a mode of neoliberal governmentality when it creates a subject as cheap laborers and as the scapegoats of society. In the case of Japan, a two-decade long economic recession was the process in which the *seishain* model's "rigidities" or companyism's hegemonic tenaciousness "hindered its adaptability in the globalization era"; therefore, the non-regular employment status for Japanese young workers exemplifies "an extreme case" in terms of the wage gap compared to older generations (Standing 17, 30). In this sense, the subject of young non-regular workers is the subject burgeoned by the domestic neoliberal capitalist order.

This study, as a rhetorical investigation, notes the existence of a great deal of public discourse that regulated the material-rhetorical conditions of certain economic populations, constituted the rhetorical subjects, and legitimized the entire dominant socio-economic order. Put differently, this study unveiled that economic topics such as the national economic slump, possible counter-measures against it, and the lay-off of middle- and older-aged regular workers were assumed to be the interest of the entire nation, and, as a result, the recovery of the national economy was recognized as the top priority throughout the last two decades of recession. Just as Foucault said that desire of a population is "one of the important theoretical elements of the whole system" of domination, this study suggests that the public discourse shaped and controlled the reality of the economic presence and future including the national, public anxiety (*Security* 73). It was within this context that the subject of young non-regular workers was configured, through negative stereotypes of young non-regular workers, as the source of national economic decline.

Furthermore, this study claimed that young workers' employabilities are controlled not only by the politics of images, but more largely by the technology of domination including "forecasts, statistical estimates, and overall measures," which Foucault claimed as indispensable elements for biopolitical management of certain populations (*Society* 246). In the case of Japanese non-regular workers, statistical estimates conveniently provided scientific rationales for the neoliberal employment policies and reinforced the negative stereotypes of these workers. The result was an overall regulatory framework that monitored and regulated non-regular workers. Thus, this study claimed that the discourse of the national economy, as a technology of crisis management, worked to procure public consent for neoliberalization of state regulations and the public atmosphere. Along with this change, I claimed that the young non-regular worker subject, enmeshed within the interpellative fabric by a series of denominations, has become seen not only as the cause and solution of the long-term economic recession but also cast as a target for pent-up public resentment. As a result, public discourse framed these workers as an "inferior species" and therefore transformed them into a symbolic scapegoat for national economic problems and justified the current Japanese neoliberal order (Hall, "New Ethnicities" 446).

As I argued in previous chapters, Foucault's theoretical framework recognizes the population as a "political problem" requiring "regularization," and capitalism exerts a force whereby "human beings are made into subjects" (*Society* 245, 247; "Subjects" 208). Indeed, as Foucault contends, this type of negative subjectification existed even in the history of welfare statism. For example, the "father" of the British welfare system, William Beveridge, suggested that, as dependents of the welfare state, the "unemployable" should lose all their rights. In "The Problem of the Unemployed," Beveridge stated in 1907 that:

Those men who through general defects are unable to fill such a whole place in industry, are to be recognized as “unemployable.” They must become the acknowledged dependents of the State, . . . but with complete and permanent loss of all citizen-rights—including not only the franchise but civil freedom and fatherhood. (qtd. in Brignell n.p.)

Likewise, Chapter 2 of this study suggests that a Japanese welfare recipient was also a productive concept because the system, established in the course of the post-WWII industrialization, licensed the mass of *seishain* full-time workers and their families as “legitimate” recipients of the service.

Foucault and many of his followers understand that the state does not play the chief role in subjectifying workers within recent neoliberal governmentality; in other words, the state is “neither society’s monopolist of political power or the epicenter of the ordering of social relations, but it is thought of as being embedded and leveled into society and its practices” (Lessenich 305). Along this line, Toby Miller also claims that the study of neoliberal governmentality should look at the intersections between the state and the social where governmentality operates:

by institutions that are more than relatively autonomous from either the focus of the state or secondary accumulation—universities, foundations, churches of different kinds, etcetera. And so it is the social infesting the state, the state infesting the social, and forms of both corporate and not-for-profit activity increasingly seeing themselves not just as agents of their own constitution, not just out to make money or rule, for example, but agents of corporate citizenship that are responsible beyond the self. (Packer 32)

In regarding the discourses of popular media outlets and civil activism as ones situated in the intersection between the state and the social, this study explored features, forces, and effects of contemporary neoliberal governmentality in order to pose different kinds of questions “outside the arc provided by commonly accepted narratives” (Dean 9).

I see the primary benefit of this study in revealing the cruel nature of recent neoliberal governmentality in the politics of subjectification. Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrated that the failure of keeping *seishain* status in one’s post-graduation working career does not just mean that he or she has already lost the ability to work with *seishain* later in his or her working career. Rather, this study revealed that they face a brutal version of what Wacquant called in 2010 a “new government of poverty” (204). With this term, Wacquant claimed that the moral deservedness of those who can escape from economic insecurity is resentfully targeted at the economic disadvantaged. This hostility also pits the disadvantaged against each other to claim limited economic and social resources. This is because, as the economically disadvantaged are figured as “defamed categories that sap the social order,” justifying hostility towards and between state welfare recipients (204). Wacquant’s explanation appears consistent with Jock Young’s observation that relative deprivation not only gazes up the economic and social hierarchy, but also looks down in “dismay at the relative well-being of those who although below one on the social hierarchy are unfairly advantaged” (9). However, Wacquant is much more detailed in terms of the discursive function of the poor in society, as he explains that,

the new government of poverty [was] invented, . . . to enforce the normalization of social insecurity [and] thus gives a whole new meaning to the notion of “poor relief”: punitive containment offers relief not *to* the poor but *from* the poor by forcibly “disappearing” the most disruptive of them, from the shrinking welfare

rolls on the one hand and into the swelling dungeons of the carceral castle on the other. (204, italics original)

This study demonstrated that the Japanese neoliberal order does not materially exploit the youth; but rather, I also found in the analysis of Yuasa's discourse in Chapter 4, that workers' political advocacy was manipulatively restricted or disqualified by a series of mass media criticisms in order to benefit the financial sector and the LDP and its pro-market and regulatory agenda.

For this reason, I contend that Japanese neoliberalism, as revealed in the analysis of Yuasa's rhetoric, is perhaps more cruel than Wacquant's idea of "new government of poverty," which is exemplified by a high degree of capitalist exploitation of the poor and the circulation of disciplinary power through incarceration in "the swelling dungeons of the carceral castle" (204). Put differently, the neoliberal discursive apparatus has reformed young non-regular workers into an inferior species in the society. In this environment, this inferiority likely undermines workers economic stability, which forces them into the underclass of society, or "the swelling dungeons of the carceral castle" according to Wacquant (204). Furthermore, this status of inferiority also disqualifies certain forms of political participation such as demonstration marches or activist camps. In Chapter 1, I reviewed a quantitative study that illustrated the callousness directed towards the extreme poor by Japanese citizens (Kohut, Wike and Horowitz n.p.). Through a rhetorical investigation, this study has described how such a cruel climate was discursively configured by the capitalist regime. Therefore, this study claims that Japan's neoliberal governmentality formed the subject of young non-regular workers as a mediating vehicle through which socially corrosive labor market deregulations and human resource cost cuts were legitimated and resistance to the neoliberal capitalist regime is delegitimized. Illustrating how this type of climate is discursively constructed through the articulation of a scapegoat like the

young non-regular workers is one of the contributions of the project to scholarship about neoliberal governmentality.

It is against this type of scapegoat subjectivity that a resistance to neoliberalism must begin. As we saw in Chapter 4, a politics of representation that affirmed the vulnerability of young non-regular workers was the foundation of Amamiya's rhetorical struggle. Building on a line of reasoning similar to Amamiya, Imogen Tyler argues that, "if we want to fight neoliberalism, to *defend society*, it is essential that we prise open and fracture the concept of the underclass" to understand how neoliberalism threatens several categories or classes of people beyond just what we traditionally understand as the "poor" (17, italics original). In other words, Tyler claims that in order to resist neoliberalism, we must contest its classification schemes. According to Tyler, the problem with contemporary class politics is that, "the history of European thought is premised on the foreclosure of the poor through practices of naming (class-making)" (173). Therefore, borrowing Rancière's theoretical notion that "the working class should be understood primarily as a set of names, rather than as an identity or experience," Tyler argues that the poor should be conceived of not as existing and stable class category but as an intersectional "'placeholder' for those who are spoken for, described and named by thinkers and experts" (174). As I claim in Chapter 4, Amamiya attempts to reconstitute Japanese young non-workers' public identity by providing personal accounts of the vulnerability of their precarious status in Japanese society. This effort to shift the public's understanding of their position within Japan's culture and economy is important to recovering their material-rhetorical status.

However, my rhetorical analysis in Chapter 4 highlights that such rhetorical attempt of radical re-articulation will face obstacles posed by the logic of neoliberal governmentality. In other words, as Butler contends, even though the possibility of social transformation "depends

upon the permanence and fixity of the symbolic domain itself,” Amamiya’s radical discourse must overcome the cultural logic of late-modern capitalist society that views the risk of class revolution or upheaval as trivial (Butler, *Bodies* 96; Bauman, *The Art of Life* 63). In this sense, the flaws in Amamiya’s rhetoric strategies as well as her shift away from advocating for the young non-regular workers’ precarious status exemplifies how democratic attempts of reconstituting the subjectivity of a disenfranchised population is restricted by the force of neoliberal discourse.

In short, this study illuminates particular forces and effects of neoliberal governmentality in terms of configuring and regulating working subjects’ lives and political agency. Colin Gordon contends that recent neoliberalism, “understood...as a novel set of notions about the art of government, is a considerably more original and challenging phenomenon than the left’s critical culture has had the courage to acknowledge” (6). By providing a test case from Japan, this study advances our understanding of neoliberal governmentality operates as a truth-effect that regulates and disqualifies the cultural and economic worth certain subject positions and political platforms. As Foucault suggests, the discursive array of neoliberalism plays out here both “as a technological type of rationality and as strategic games of liberties”; this study tracks how rhetoric plays a significant role in legitimizing the rationality and playing the strategic games of liberties by reshaping and transforming cultural and economic relationships to ourselves and others (“What is Enlightenment?” 50).

### **Democratic Practice and the Role of Rhetoric**

Beyond providing a new understanding of the discursive dimensions of neoliberalism, this study also offers benefits to the study of rhetoric. Specifically, I claim that my study

contributes to recent scholarly works on the rhetorical manifestation of democracy, which rethinks “democracy and the role of ‘representation’ via new modalities of dissent within democracies” (Cox and Foust 617-18). According to Cox and Foust, this line of thought emerged recently in the rhetorical studies of social movement and democracy by taking a cue from Hardt and Negri’s works, which offered a set of “provocative critiques in the altered logics of global society” (618). Consequently, Ronald Greene, among others, has opened “new inquiry into the modalities of” democratic practice, subject formations and reformations, and global neoliberal orders (618).<sup>59</sup>

So far, this scholarship has advanced theoretical investigations that largely examine the state of democratic processes or differences between public, technical and private spheres and how these processes or spheres might serve as a practice for expression in the society rather than communication operating within a highly regulated and constrained space or sphere. For instance, Best claims that this framework offers,

a map for scrutinizing new routes of power that traverse the daily, individualized, and highly mediated modes of contemporary democratic citizenship, a map for subjecting these pathways of power to more specific and potentially constructive critique and construction. (232)

Accordingly, Best claims that only with this framework “can we engage with the specific complexities, drawbacks, and attributes of the claims and practices of different types of articulated democratic action” (232).

Within this framework, understanding rhetoric as being “integral to the articulation of regimes of value,” this study points to the discursive challenge of manifesting and legitimizing

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<sup>59</sup> See Greene “Rhetoric and Capitalism” 198-201.

democratic expression in contemporary capitalist societies (Greene, “Rhetorical Materialism” 49). That is, this case study offers a specific relationship between the effects of state and financial circle’s dominant discourse, the politics of subjectivity in the realm of popular and public discourse, and the difficulty of conducting democratic practices against neoliberal economic and social formations.

More specifically, this case study suggests that Japanese peripheral workers tend to be disarticulated from democratic participation upfront. Furthermore, this study tracks how technologies of rhetoric can depoliticize certain specific groups. In terms of the former, my study suggests that the governing apparatus rhetorically operates in the cultural and economic realms to deflect citizens’ attention from the potential risk of non-regular laborers and the youth and to legitimize their “inferior” status and sacrifice in order to protect the nation’s economy.

In this vein of scholarship, a governmental apparatus is conceived of “as a material space by which to investigate the effectivity of rhetorical practices by analyzing how they answer questions concerning such classic policy dynamics as the nature of the problem, the causes of the problem, what solutions are advocated, and which solutions are discounted” (Greene “Rhetorical Materialism” 54). My analysis in Chapters 2, 3, and the examination Yuasa’s discourses in Chapter 4 suggest that Japanese companyism, as an apparatus of the dominant power structure, has been consistently manipulating forces that conveniently transform the young non-regular worker subject to best serve company’s goals and thereby disarming young non-regular workers’ democratic expression. In this sense, this study suggests a specific role for rhetoric as an effect of the capitalist regime.

In terms of the latter—discursive technologies that immobilize advocacy—the analysis of Amamiya’s rhetoric offers a critical implication for the constitution of political subjects. As

we saw in Chapter 4, the analysis of Amamiya's discourse showcases how performative—provocative, satiric and even ecstatic—rhetoric contributes to rearticulate subject. For example, Amamiya's rhetorical efforts actively affirm young non-regular workers' impoverished conditions while, at the same time, provocatively operating in the political realm to challenge this subjectification. As Greene suggests, understanding rhetorical agency as “life-affirming labor” that operates as a “value-creating practice” that resists capitalism's capture by “suggest[ing] an alternative politics: a common creativity and invention, a productive excess and joy” (“Rhetoric and Capitalism” 203-04). In a way, the constant neoliberal anxiety about the value and production of young non-regular workers demonstrates some of the resistant potential of these subjects; they likely create value outside of traditional capitalist modes of production.

While the analysis of Amamiya's rhetoric does not specifically examine how the aesthetic and the logic of neoliberal governmentality interact in a resistant way, this study at least explores, in a concrete and specific fashion, how aesthetic labor discourse operates through multiple discursive genres and particular populations. By that, this study suggests that it is difficult that Amamiya's rhetoric, at least by herself, can mobilize the public within the contemporary configuration of neoliberalism within Japan.

However, as I conclude this project, I do not want to claim that resistant discourse such as Amamiya's cannot in some ways alter their material and rhetorical status. As a genealogical investigation, this study follows critical scholars' understandings of the impact of public advocacies as a politics of articulation. For instance, Foucault recognized the impact of advocacies as an inscription of their public utterances in history when he said that “People do revolt; that is a fact. And that is how subjectivity (not that of great men, but that of anyone) is brought into history, breathing life into it” (“Useless” 452). Likewise, Bauman also suggests

more specifically that, even though a communitarian type of genuine “revolution” may be impossible, such public efforts will influence the micro-politics of power relations:

If a genuine upheaval does happen, . . . the life experiences that will sediment after the transformation are certain to be sharply different from those remembered from before; what for people on one side of the transformation was at best an exception, a breach in routine, will appear as a normal state of affairs for those on the other side. (*The Art of Life* 64)

In this sense, Amamiya’s rhetorical efforts should not be underestimated and we have to critically examine whether such rhetorical attempts as hers may rupture the matrix of the dominant structure in the future.

In summary, this study offers two primary contributions to rhetoric and communication studies. By offering rhetorics of democratization that sustain and resist neoliberalism, this project promotes our knowledge on how rhetorical attempts with aesthetic notion can or cannot function as a mediating force between dominant and resistant orders in the democratic struggles. To further explore these contributions, I now suggest some possibilities for future scholarship along this track.

### **Possibilities of Future Research**

While this study suggests ideas to advance our understanding of neoliberal governmentality and the scholarship of rhetoric of democratic practice, I also understand that this vein of critical inquiries is more meaningful if it was conducted in collaboration with other related efforts. This is especially true for those interested in the past and future of neoliberal policies and rationality, employment policies toward minority workers, and Japanese companyism regulating the life of Japanese citizens. In this section, I want to suggest these

possibilities by listing possible future research trajectories that meaningfully advance lines of research tentatively explored in my project. In doing this, I will suggest two lines of inquiry; first, possibilities to describe and analyze capitalist hegemonic order; and second, possibilities to find other resistant rhetorical performances. While I divide these parts, the two suggestions intersect with each other at the point of our ultimate goal of understanding the rhetoric that enables or restricts democratic practices in contemporary capitalist societies.

My first suggestion is for enhancing our knowledge on the functions and effects of neoliberalism and capitalist hegemonic order. In order to do so, it is meaningful to explore other working populations that operate within and against neoliberal hegemony. Because the primary objective of this study is to understand how a contrast of forces formulates the subject as a reaction to national economic trends, I picked the subject re-articulation of young non-regular workers in post-bubble, recessionary Japan. However, in order to understand it more comprehensively, it is highly useful if we know how the dominant order can exert its forces to other peripheral workers. Accordingly, the study lists the possibility of studying two other related populations in Japanese working culture; female workers and foreign workers.

The first example is the female working force. Even though Japanese domestic job markets are categorized only by school or academic degrees and so appear to maintain gender equality, critics have pointed out sexist conventions in many phases of human resource management (e.g., Hamaguchi; Iguchi; Kamo and Akaishi 149-56). So as Gottfried suggests, female *seishain* workers are more likely to work in less stable “small firms (37.0 percent) or in family enterprises (19.3 percent), and/or as non-standard workers, places and statuses which do not accord lifetime employment” (*Reproductive* 28). Therefore, Gottfried claims that “employment opportunity structures for women were constructed in relationship to mandatory

motherhood” (*Reproductive* 37). That is, as an opening quotation of Chapter 3 suggests, “heteronormative ideology of *ryosai kenbo*,” or woman as good wife and wise mother, has promoted female workers to quit their job once married and above all to raise good children who can work with *seishain* status (*Reproductive* 37).

Perhaps most importantly to this study, this appears in a large number of low-wage and precarious female workers. Even though the gender gap is not so severe in younger generations (15-24 years old), as 47.2 percent in male and 53.6 percent in female have non-regular status in 2013, and this domination might be less visible than the discrimination against male precariats, it seems rather likely that post-WWII Japanese work places have oppressed female workers more than their male counterparts. For instance, Standing claims that,

Gender inequality is a cultural legacy that has fed into a gendered precariat, in which women are concentrated in temporary, low productivity jobs, resulting in one of the highest male-female wage differentials in the industrialised world. In 2010, 44 per cent of women workers in Japan were receiving less than the minimum wage. (61)

In this sense, investigating female workers would give insights into how Japanese working culture has been structured in ways to position women as peripheral workers. Furthermore, a study that examines gender as a significant factor might also reveal how Japanese working culture has been historically legitimized through structural patterns based on gender roles in companies and families.

As is the case of the investigation of female workers, studying foreign workers may be able to illuminate another important aspect of Japanese capitalist hegemony. Even though a basic theorem of the national government is that workers with foreign nationalities can engage in

only technical skilled jobs, the neoliberal government has made some loopholes that allow a few special kinds of foreigners to engage in non-skilled and simple labors. One such exception is for foreign workers with Japanese ethnic origins. Migrated from East Asia, South East Asia, Peru and Brazil, these laborers now total 621,756 in 2008, which comprised 62.8% of total foreign workers (Iguchi 1040). Furthermore, the 2008 global financial “Lehman” shock most directly influenced these workers, as a labor economist claims that “between 30% and 70% of foreign workers are estimated to have lost jobs by the end of April 2009” (Iguchi 1032).

Furthermore, technical internship trainees from Asian countries have more severe working condition than other foreign workers. Originally launched in 1981, the traineeship program has accepted applicants from foreign countries in order provide opportunities to learn “top-notch” technologies and job practices in Japan. However, a series of revisions in the 1990s and 2000s permitted business owners to make direct contact with foreigners and allowed them to engage in work under the framework of traineeship program, which exists under the education and training framework and outside of the Japanese Labor Laws. Since the 2009 revision, the trainee program increased the number of trainees from such countries as China, Philippines and Vietnam (Iguchi 1030). As a result, small companies, “especially in the textile, food, and agriculture sectors or in very small companies,” have fulfilled their need for non- and low-skilled sweatshop jobs with these “trainees”—that is, for extremely cheap wages (Iguchi 1030). Not surprisingly, owners of these small businesses have been put into media scandals; for instance, Iguchi notes that “approximately 410 cases of misconduct, . . . were found in 2009” (1034-35).

Unlike the study of female workers which may possibly reveal historical patterns of discrimination in the Japanese capitalist hegemonic order, investigating these two types of foreigners may demonstrate neoliberal aspects of the capitalist hegemony when procuring

necessary labor forces in their primary industrial sectors (Iguchi 1030). Because these industries are unpopular among young populations due to their “3D”—dirty, dangerous and demeaning—character and less profitable than other employment, a mass of these foreign “workers” becoming the practical labor force in these industrial sectors (Iguchi 1029-32). Due to these conditions, it is expected that investigating different working populations would be able to demonstrate different and possibly important aspects of the hegemonic order of capitalism.

My second suggestion is that more work needs to be done to find other rhetorical performances that resist neoliberal capitalism and produce value for non-traditional workers. This is critical not only in order to understand how capitalism biopolitically regulates economic populations and forms subjects but also in order to better understand the matrix of power relations and its conditions. Specifically, this study selected *Nihon no Ronten* and other artifacts in the popular and public realms in order to understand how capitalist discourses popular and public realms operate. I also examined how books of two major civil advocates, Makoto Yuasa and Karin Amamiya, might operate as examples of voices against the capitalist hegemonic order.

My selections of these texts were deliberative, aiming to achieve the goals uniquely set in this project. Despite the results of the previous chapters, I now understand that these texts did not operate in a resistant fashion. However, this is most likely due to the number of examples explored in this project and does not necessarily indicate that these discourses had no resistant value. What is needed are many more explorations of how employment is valued in society and what elements and technologies construct these valuations. As Foucault suggests, genealogical projects must be wide in scope and prolific because isolated examinations, “by constructing around the singular event analyzed as process a . . . , ‘polyhedron’ of intelligibility, the number of whose faces is not given in advance and can never properly be taken as finite” (“Questions of

Method” 77). In this sense, this study explored a body of literature, or a polyhedron of intelligibility, which suggests that future research along this line has a possibility of describing crucial elements of power relations over the present and future of Japanese hegemonic capitalism. Accordingly, I will list now a few important possibilities that may construct a new and different map of articulations within the modalities of the contemporary capitalist hegemonic apparatus and their struggles over the hegemonic order.

First, such a possibility may be found in a series of voices from critics and scholars who challenge the dichotomy between *seishain* full-time workers and non-regular workers. Even though financial world and most politicians have so far supported the dividing line created by the present distributional system, these critics and scholars claim that, if more and more companies cannot maintain a profitable structure in the face of a bloated human cost of full-time workers, it should be the national government that takes an initiative to fundamentally reform and challenge the dichotomy because it inevitably requires amendment of necessary domestic legislation.<sup>60</sup>

For instance, Hamaguchi proposes a new title of “job-oriented *seishain*” status that should be implemented within the Japanese employment system (260). Hamaguchi’s proposal is designed to reform the working style of older *seishain* full-time workers, who have been strongly encouraged to identify themselves with companies or, as I noted in Chapter 2, to demonstrate strong loyalty and obedience to their companies. Recognizing such strong ties as being obsolete in this post-Fordist era and harmful for contemporary company management in many cases, Hamaguchi claims that his proposed job-oriented *seishain* system creates workers who do not identify themselves with companies but who attach themselves with jobs they can conduct. This

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<sup>60</sup> For instance, see Hamaguchi 25-80; Komikawa 144-74. In *Nihon no Ronten*, critics also mention the harm of the dualistic employment system. See, for instance, Kamata “Sukina”282-83; Miyamoto 358-59; Okuno 460-01.

new group of job-oriented *seishain* workers' futures with certain companies is secured as far as the companies have a demand of human resources and that the employees' salary and other welfare and security benefits are paid like regular *seishain* workers; however, their contracts are terminated once companies do not demand this type of work. Hamaguchi claims that, by a transition from the present employment system to the job-oriented *seishain* system, Japan does not have to produce such a large amount of precarious non-regular workers among younger generations.

In contrast to these calls like Hamaguchi's, the recent government has worked to promote the present *haken* working system while retaining the structure of *seishain* regular contracts. For instance, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe proposed in October, 2014, to terminate the present three-year contract limit and to enable companies to hire as they like with the present non-regular contract (Mizuwaki and Sato 3). Even though Abe stressed that the proposed revision is for improving workers' plights with obligatory vocational training and eventual increases in the rate of full-time *seishain* workers, critics claim that the revision is practically a "life-time *haken*, zero *seishain*" act because the proposal does not prescribe any regulatory principles or punishments of violations (Mizuwaki and Sato 3).

By investigating ideas such as Hamaguchi's in comparison to the status quo's efforts to further entrench the current *haken* system, future research could explore how alternative employment ideas may be valuable in order to more thoroughly explore how current Japanese companyism maintains its legitimacy in a neoliberal Japan. These fairly recent movements may be help reform not only the dominant structures of companyism but also operate as counter-hegemonic advocacies that challenge the larger employment dichotomy. Therefore, studying

other discourses such as these recent movements may highlight how rhetoric operates in the order of domination and struggles for a more democratic and equitable Japan.

However, it is still uncertain what kind of reactions these voices will invite, and so how they are and will be articulated with a matrix of discourses. As Foucault suggests, his genealogical framework is innately open to the future explorations and extensions (“Questions of Method” 75). Therefore, it is my hope that future studies will advance our understandings of how the neoliberal capitalist order regulates citizens and workers and how public advocacy and other resistant acts may secure our civic life. In short, future studies that examine our relations to the capitalist hegemonic order will need to pay close attention to our relationship to ourselves and the capitalist hegemony.

### **Conclusion**

In the last twenty years, instances of derogatory discourses from the state and mass media targeting young populations and non-regular workers have been gradually increasing and now these discourses are prevalent in contemporary Japan. It is only in the last several years that activists and scholars have challenged these discourses by pointing out the fallacies of these arguments and inequality and unfairness of living and working conditions created by neoliberal economic discourse. In many instances, it seems as though most citizens have either ignored or conceded this development. However, some liberal critics and scholars have raised questions similar to civil activist Amamiya’s question, which asks “why are [young non-regular workers’] freedom so limited, so limited to the point at which they have to invest themselves, develop their abilities, and win hard struggles in this market-fundamentalist society before getting such barely livable situations?” (*Ikisaseo!* 7). While this question directed Amamiya to her eventual public advocacy, my answer, as I have made throughout this study, is that our efforts at understanding

neoliberal governmentality and its consequences in constituting subjects and counter-hegemonic advocacies is critical to the attempts of securing non-regular workers' livability. Put differently, my claim is that because neoliberalism is considerably "original and challenging," regularly constituting barriers that restricts and disqualifies activists like Yuasa and Amamiya, our collaborative efforts as critics and scholars should be directed towards mapping the discursive features of neoliberal governmentality and finding ruptures within this system (Gordon 6).

A focus on livable youth employment operates as a stark contrast in terms of the subject constructed during the bubble burst in the early 1990 Japan. More fundamentally, however, my decision to focus on the youth employment is based on my ethical judgment that the youth occupy a critical locus for the entire Japanese nation. In this sense, I share Henry Giroux's concern when he contends that "any discourse about the future has to begin with the issue of youth, because more than any other group youth embody the projected dreams, desires, and commitment of a society's obligation to the future" (108).

I believe that advancing critical and rhetorical investigations of this particular population is significant because it unveils how a society tries to direct, govern, and regulate future generations. In this sense, democratic possibility is intricately linked to the well-being of the youth, while their status provides an important vector concerning how society regulates our conditions and possibilities (Giroux 108-09). Particularly, studying the youth in relation to neoliberalism is crucial because it provides hope and limits. As Couldry claims, studying neoliberalism means "identifying [it] as a *bounded* discourse, a 'term'—in the double sense of word and limit—whose limitations we can think and live beyond" (6, italics original). By that, I have tried to examine the possibilities and impossibilities of securing youth's lives and the rest of our lives, now and future.

In this study, I examined the rhetoric of young non-regular working forces in post-bubble Japan. Young non-regular workers' rhetorical subject has been constituted predominantly by the dominant discourses in the long-term recessionary period, as their material and economic sustainability was eroded. However, public advocates for these workers offer clues to understand specific elements of Japanese neoliberal governmentality, which provide possibilities to explore more meaningful forms and styles of subject rearticulation and social change. Although the rhetorical strategies of current advocates illustrate the limits on radical transformations of the entire distributional structures or workers' rhetorical subjectivity, they also offer a glimpse of the widening future possibility of articulating the youth in other ways to protect and secure their livability. In this sense, their ability to conduct change, both symbolic and economic, should not be underestimated.

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**ABSTRACT****RHETORIC OF YOUNG NON-REGULAR WORKERS IN POST-BUBBLE JAPAN: A  
GENEALOGICAL ANALYSIS**

by

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This work explores the development and struggle of a rhetorical subject of Japanese young non-regular workers against the recent slow economic trend. In Japan, the bubble-burst in 1991 invited a long economic recession, and companies started to adopt non-regular—low-wage, short-term and insecure—contracts from quintessential Fordist full-time *seishain* regular contract; yet, a large body of older *seishain* workers has retained this stable and affordable status. As a result, the vast majority of working forces enrolled in the job market since then has suffered from a low living standard, many on the verge of survival, while domestic mass media discourses have legitimated unfair treatments as if they do not deserve *seishain* positions because they are incompetent and lazy.

Combining Michel Foucault's framework of genealogy with Louis Althusser's idea of interpellation, this study investigates a development of discourses in ways that has legitimated their inferior material and symbolic status as well as activists' attempts to challenge the status. After I provide an overview of the project in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 reexamines the birth and development of *kaisha-shugi*, companyism, or a set of normative ideas that aims at ongoing development of private companies as the national mission. The Chapter 2 remarks an effect of

this system in terms of the poor notion of civic distributional justice and minimum civic life as citizens' rights. Chapter 3 investigates discourses on the national economy, labor relations and youth culture, exploring how domestic mass media with the state hegemony rearticulated the subject of young and non-regular workers. I claim that, in the early era of the post-bubble period, the public subject was conveniently obliterated as working forces, while their future risk was optimistically calculated and underrated. In consequence, however, I also contend that a few new denominations in the middle of the 2000s have reformed their public subject in a way that explicitly degrades their symbolic status. Chapter 4 analyzes activists' efforts, highlighting the effectivity of their rhetorics against the neoliberal dominant capitalist powers. In the conclusion, Chapter 5 claims a few contributions of this study to rhetorical studies and neoliberal studies.

### **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT**

Noriaki Tajima is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Communication, Wayne State University. While attending at Wayne, he held the Ramble Fellowship and a graduate assistantship with the Forensic team, coaching a policy debate team. His areas of study are rhetorical theory and criticism, cultural and critical theories, and argumentation. His academic interest is on intersections of rhetoric, democracy and capitalism.

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