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**Promoting Political Participation  
through Experience-based Political Education**

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## **Abstract**

The studies of the Japanese political socialization have explained that the principle agents for the socialization are social groups which the youth belong to after their graduation of high school or university, rather than family and school. But our hypothesis is that the conditions the late political socialization model is based on have been disappearing because of the party realignment and the changes in the social and economic structures, especially advancing globalization. These, we assume, have caused the lowering voting rates and the increase in number of independents in the twenties, which is prominent compared with other generations. We claim that it is a time to create a new type political education for promoting the political participation.

Through our survey of the high school students, we found that their political efficacy is very low, and just as the earlier studies have explained, family and school may not contribute to their political socialization. From these findings, we discuss the necessity of an experience-based political education program. When students find that there are confronting values behind social problems and try to formulate the solutions to accommodate them, they can learn the essence of politics rather the superficial image of politics, however small the problems are. They can deepen their understanding of the complexity of politic and the government, and become more confident of their own ability to deal with politics.

Lastly, we discuss the findings from the two-day seminar for junior high school students conducted by the co-authors. The seminar took up the case of “unlawful parking of bicycles,” which is one of the common social problems in Japanese urban areas. Through the analysis of this social problem, students found who the stakeholders are and they came up with programs to solve it. Post-seminar survey suggests that participated students not only deepened their understanding of the problem, but found that politics is involved in such a daily phenomenon and diverse values need to be respected. They extended their interests into other political issues as well. These capacities and attitudes are essential to various type of political participation. Co-authors believe that systematic introduction of political socialization using students’ daily experiences helps them prepare with essential attitudes toward politics, as well as helps them digest the formal political education through schooling

## Introduction

Japanese local policy process has been changing in a certain direction recently, and the emerging type of policy process requires a much greater civic engagement than before. Behind the recent change is the devolution of Japanese politics, triggered by the budget constraint. Under the new system, responsibility for the policy formation, not just for policy implementation, is delegated to the local government, especially in the areas of community development, welfare and education. The expanded responsibility made the local governments look for an active partnership with citizens and not-for-profits, and ordinances are being made to facilitate such cooperation in terms of manpower and budget. Such cooperation with citizens is further encouraged by NPO Act of 1998, which simplified the process of incorporation of civic organizations<sup>1</sup>.

This direction will enrich Japan's democracy, if citizens learn about the problems, have their own opinion, conduct spontaneous discussion, and take action toward problem solution. Once they become familiar with local politics, their political knowledge will increase and their political interest and efficacy will be stronger, which further promotes their political participation. These positive developments are possible only if citizens themselves want to participate in politics. Otherwise, the emerging system will not only lead to few results, but end up subordinating the civil society to bureaucracy as free labor.

The backbone of Japanese civil society organizations is not so strong<sup>2</sup>. It is pointed out that Japanese commitment to "the public" through organized activities is weak, and people are most likely to be self-centered, which derived from the "poor quality of life" caused by long hours of work<sup>3</sup>. Even our survey on high school students found similar "self-centeredness," and students' interest in private matters are greater than that in public matters, leaving their interest in civic participation at the lowest<sup>4</sup>. Thus, it is probably not so much of long hour of work, but political/political-social culture of Japan, which Almond and Verba characterized as subject

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<sup>1</sup> Tadashi Yamamoto, ed., *Deciding the Public Good: Governance and Civil Society in Japan*, Tokyo and New York: Japan Center for International Exchange, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Unlike the U.S., where civic organizations dominate among not-for-profits, Japan's civil society was led by business associations. Civic organization started to increase in the 1970s, and outnumbered business associations in 1985. Still, civic organizations tend to act independently in the community whereas business associations tend to concentrate their activities, and civic activities are not thoroughly enrooted in the community. Yutaka Tsujinaka, "From Development to Maturity: Japan's Civil Society Organizations in Comparative Perspective," Frank J. Schwartz and Susan J. Pharr eds., *The State of Civil Society in Japan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp 83-115.

<sup>3</sup> Tadashi Yamaguchi, "On Civil Society, Public-ness, Policy Studies," *Policy Science* 11-3 (2004): 14-15.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Authors' survey data, Table 3.

culture<sup>5</sup>, that keeps Japanese civic engagement so low.

A historical analysis of Japanese political culture will reveal that Japanese were deprived of the opportunities for civic participation under the strong centrally-controlled political system. Even since the end of World War II, centrally-controlled government made it sure that social services reach throughout Japan, making it unnecessary for citizens to voluntarily participate in civic activities, except for a few major cases<sup>6</sup>. Not only the experience of civic engagement failed to be inherited to the younger generation through agents, such activities competing the government's "monopoly" of the public were negatively regarded as anti-governmental. Furthermore, under the ideological confrontation during the Cold War, conservatives were skeptical of political education at school. Rather than promoting civic ability and conveying the importance of civic participation, as the Education Basic Law stipulates under the category of "political knowledge," the Ministry of Education put more emphasis on the neutrality in political education, thus made the students memorize political institutions<sup>7</sup>. We are starting to see some changes in the curriculum of political education recently, and experience-based learning, problem-solving studies, or collaborations among school, family and community are paid more attention.

Above-mentioned Japanese political education makes the background for this paper, and it will discuss the meaning and effect of the authors' project, "Promoting Political Participation through Experience-based Political Education." In the first chapter, we would like to show the trend of political socialization of Japanese youth, based on the survey the authors conducted. While Japanese high school students are highly knowledgeable of political institutions, their image of policy process is vague. The less specific their image of policy process is, the less politically engaged they are. In the second chapter, we will propose a political education program based on experience as a tool to promote political participation. The authors intend to have the participating students acquire such proactive attitudes toward politics that enable them to analyze the value confrontation behind social problems and to think about solution for those problems. As the last chapter's analysis of our follow-up survey shows, the program produced a certain level of effects. Our program took up a daily issue as a case, thus enabled students to continue thinking about the

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<sup>5</sup> Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.

<sup>6</sup> Since the 1970s, citizens' movements on consumer protection, environmental protection, anti-nuclear and peace issues expanded among Japanese. On the occasion of Kobe Earthquake which victimized over 6000 people, collaboration among citizens, national government, and local governments emerged. These have made the basis for the current activities of Japanese not-for-profits.

<sup>7</sup> As for this point, "Temporary Act Securing the Political Neutrality in Education at Schools of Compulsory Education" was enacted in 1954, and this law was accompanied by penalties.

issue, or expand their interest to related issues.

Since Japan is now considering to lower the voting age to 18, such political education programs as ours that aim to cultivate young people's positive attitudes toward politics can proactively deal with the shared problem of low voting rates among the youth. Furthermore, it is the authors' believe that as these youth sustain their high civic participation, and consequently high political participation as cohort, our democracy will be stabilized.

## **Chapter 1: Where and How Political Socialization Takes Place in Japan**

### 1) Late Political Socialization Model: Characteristics of Political Socialization in Japan

The studies of the Japanese political socialization have explained that in Japan, principle agents for political socialization are not family, school or mass media, but social organizations people belong to, such as corporations, trade unions or business associations<sup>8</sup>. It is supposed that young people strengthen their relations with certain political parties which represent the interest of their affiliating organizations, and in that process, they increase their political interest and start their political participation. The importance of political socialization at a later stage is proven by the fact that people in their late 20s rapidly shift their interests from private matters such as travel or hobby to public matters<sup>9</sup>. The youth before this stage are themselves aware of their political immaturity, thus both adult and young respondents to one survey are opposed to lowering voting age to 18, stating "18-year olds are not capable of making political judgments."<sup>10</sup> This pattern of responses has never changed over a generation<sup>11</sup>.

This means that the formation of Japanese political attitudes are more subject to the social and economic situations of the time, or greater generational effects are found among Japanese. Miller and Shanks, through their cohort analysis for the American voters, pointed out that there are New Deal cohort (1932-64), pre-New Deal cohort and post-New Deal cohort in American

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<sup>8</sup> Kazuhisa Kawakami, "Meaning of Politics for the Youth," in Hiroshi Akuto, ed., *Social Psychology of Political Action*, Tokyo: Fukumura Shuppan, 1994.

<sup>9</sup> Ichiro Miyake, *Political Participation and Voting Behavior: Political Life in Urban Areas*, Kyoto: Minerva-Shobo, 1990.

<sup>10</sup> According to "Survey on Political Opinions (1971)" conducted by the Ministry of Home Affairs, 20.6 % supported lowering voter age while 52.2 % opposed. Among the age group between 16 and 19, 33.8 % supported while 49.0 % opposed. The most-cited reason for opposition was that "18-year olds cannot have enough capability to make political judgments." See Masamichi Ida, *The Tide of Japanese Politics*, Tokyo: Hokuju Shuppan, 2007, pp. 27-39.

<sup>11</sup> According to a survey on voting age by Tokyo Prefecture (2003), 20-year old, 72.9 %; 18-year old, 21.2 %. According to a survey on 18-year old voting age by Kansai University (2005), support, 32.5 %; oppose, 32.2 %; neither, 24.2 %; don't know 7.8 %. Among those opposed, 49.5 % gave "not yet capable to make political judgments" as the reason.

political attitudes or actions<sup>12</sup>. Cox and Campbell found a similar result regarding Japanese<sup>13</sup>, but their findings include four cohorts: the pre-war cohort (pre-1930s), the war/occupation cohort (1940s-1950s), the 1960s cohort, and the Lockheed cohort (post-1970s). Japan had gone through rapid social and political changes after World War II and people's apathy toward politics started to emerge around the time of Lockheed Scandal, a Japanese version of Watergate Scandal of the 1970s.

Now a new cohort that has a different characteristic seems to be appearing. According to the post-election surveys conducted by the Association for Promoting Fair Elections (Tables 1 and 2), voter turnouts continue to decline except for 2005, and especially so among those in the early 20s. The decline in party affiliation is also greater among those in the early 20s<sup>14</sup>. Comparison of voter turnouts and party affiliation by cohort shows that there is a slight increase in both numbers as they get older, but not much can be expected from the life-cycle effect.

We can point out certain incidents that influenced the recent pattern of Japan's political socialization. Lockheed Scandal, as mentioned above, caused political apathy among the youth in the 1970s, succeeded by other corruptions including Recruit Scandal of the late 1980s. Correspondingly, the effects of political socialization at a later stage started to wane. Then came the blow-up of the bubble economy, higher unemployment rate among the youth, and the increase in temporary employments at the cost of the decline in life-time employments, all of which not only weakened their sense of affiliation to certain social groups, but even shut off their opportunities to belong to any social groups. Added to this situation were the successive party realignments, which fractured the stable relationship between political parties and social groups. Under these circumstances, social groups could no longer play their traditionally important function in the political socialization.

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<sup>12</sup> Warren E. Miller and J. Merrill Shanks, *The New American Voter*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> Karen E. Cox and John C. Campbell, "Generational Change or Periodic Fluctuation? Age and Political Attitudes in the U.S. and Japan," paper prepared for the 2001 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, Cal., August 31-September 3, 2001.

<sup>14</sup> Aiji Tanaka and Sherry Martin, "The New Independent Voter and the Evolving Japanese Party System," *Asian Perspective* 27-3 (2003): 21-51.

**Table 1 Percentage of Self-Reported Voter Turnout (by age group)**

age group	1986 Lower	1996 Lower	2004 Upper*	2005 Lower
20 - 24	57%	44%	37%	58%
25 - 29	76	52	48	80
30 - 39	83	73	56	86
40 - 49	89	81	78	93
50 - 59	93	84	84	93
60 - 69	93	90	89	95
70-	81	85	83	88
total	86%	78%	76%	90%
(actual )	71%	60%	57%	68%

Source: Made based on the Association for Promoting Fair Elections data.

\* The Lower House elections of 2005 were greatly influenced by the personal factor of Prime Minister Koizumi, thus the Upper House election data of the previous year are shown as reference.

**Table 2 Percentage of Party Non-Affiliation Rates (by age group)**

age group	1986 Lower	1996 Lower	2004 Upper*	2005 Lower
20 - 24	54%	53%	75%	61%
25 - 29	40	53	65	55
30 - 39	34	46	50	55
40 - 49	23	36	42	42
50 - 59	20	25	35	34
60 - 69	17	21	30	22
70-	18	13	28	23
total	27%	32%	37%	35%

Source: The Association for Promoting Fair Elections.

\* The same in Table 1.

**Table 3** *High School Students' Interests*

rank	matters	percent
1	hobby, sports	81%
2	fashion	62
3	friends	61
4	travel	60
5	love, marriage	50
6	study, future	38
7	family	27
8	environment	26
9	international affairs	17
10	economy, finance	16
11	Japan's politics	13
12	labor, employment	13
13	defense	12
14	others	9
15	volunteer/civic	8
16	religious	7
17	community	6
18	election	3
19	citizens' movement	3%

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Note 1: Multi answers

Note 2: The number of respondents is 562.

Japanese post-war policy toward political socialization could be characterized as “laissez-faire,” and political capacity was thought to be obtained by people spontaneously. This view was not necessarily wrong, given the fact that post-war rapid economic growth and life-time employment system of Japan sustained the social groups relatively stable, and distributional politics made it easy for many to identify which political parties to support based on their group affiliations. These conditions that facilitated Japanese spontaneous political socialization are now disappearing.

One way to reverse this trend toward political apathy and to reactivate political participation is sought through the introduction of new voters. Despite the low support among the public, political parties expect that various reforms, including lowering voting age, help increase the interests for politics among the youth, and all political parties support the 18-year voting age system. Japan has to date kept the 20-year voting age system, even while 162 other nations (as of November 2006) have introduced 18-year voting age system. Will the lowering of voting age attract young people's interests for politics? In order for this change to actually lead to higher political interests among the youth, we need to present a solid plan based on the examination of the state of political socialization of high teens as well as that of the roles played by agents for political socialization, rather than just hoping for the positive effects.



## 2) Political Attitudes of High School Students

Civic Voluntarism Model presents three factors for political participation, namely resources, engagement, and recruitment<sup>15</sup>. Engagement is psychological in nature, relates with political interest, political duty, political knowledge, political efficacy, or party identification, and is thought to be more important when examining the political participation of the youth. The resources and recruitment are closely related with people's economic and social status, which will be decided at a later stage of life. Based on this model, we will analyze the political attitudes of Japanese high school students, focusing on their political knowledge and engagement<sup>16</sup>

### **a. Interests**

Table 3 shows the matters of interests listed by the high school students in our survey. From the first to the seventh are private matters, and public matters come only after them. Matters related with any kind of participation are listed among the lowest. Their interests in their "community," which is the closest place to them, and thus the easiest place to start their participation, remain low. This shows that community activities are outside of their awareness, let alone something of interests for them.

### **b. Political Knowledge**

As for their knowledge of politics, they tend to get higher scores in questions concerning institutions, while lower scores in current affairs. This is partly due to the fact that they have fresh memories of what they learned in the class (civics is taught at the ninth and tenth grades), as well as to the curriculum of civics that focuses on institutions. Current affairs are not formally taught in the classes, so their knowledge is supposed to be influenced by their own political interests, exposure to the media, or conscious political education in their family.

The following are among the questions asked to gauge their optical knowledge. Among the institutional questions, identifying the political representatives whom voters cannot directly elect (Prime Minister), 83 % answered correctly; and identifying the districting system that does not exist in Japan (medium-sized district system), 85 % answered correctly. Among the current affairs questions, identifying the coalition partner of the Liberal Democratic Party got only 42 % correct, while 53 % wrongly selected Japanese Democratic Party, the leading opposition party.

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<sup>15</sup> Sidney Verba, Kay L. Schlozman, Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995.

<sup>16</sup> The survey was conducted by authors in December 2006. See Appendix B.

### c. Self-Evaluation of Capability to Make Political Judgments

Table 4 shows their opinions about lowering the voting age to 18 years old from the Japanese current system at 20 years old. Those supported was 27 % and those opposed was 34 %. They were then asked to choose the reasons for their opinions. Tables 5 and 6 respectively show the supporting and opposing reasons. Those supporting expect that the youth can learn about politics by participating in the system, while those opposing question their limited capability to make political judgments. Although the answers are the opposite, both groups start with the shared, low evaluation of their capability to make political judgment. Interestingly, such tendency to have a low self-evaluation has not changed since a generation ago<sup>17</sup>.

**Table 4** *Opinions about Lowering the Voting Age*

Opinions	Percent
Support	27%
Oppose	34
Neither	21
DK/NA	17
Total	100%

Note: N=562

**Table 5** *Reasons for Supporting Lower Voting Age*

Reasons	Percent
18-year olds have acquired capability to make political judgments	22%
The youth should have their opinion reflected in the politics	26
It is important for the youth to learn about politics and increase political awareness through voting	42
Others	10
Total	100%

Note: N=155

**Table 6** *Reasons for Opposing Lowering Voting Age*

Reasons	Percent
18-year olds cannot make political judgments	64%
Even if given the right, don't think actually casting votes	19
Not many have work experience yet	15
Others	2
Total	100%

Note: N=191

<sup>17</sup> See this working paper, p.2 and note 10.

**Table 7- 1 Indices Related to Political Engagement**

	Sense of Duty for Voting	Political Interest	Legitimacy of the Election System	Legitimacy of the Parliamentary System
Strong/Positive	32%	5%	19%	7%
Relatively Strong/Positive	19	42	40	26
Middle	11	-	-	-
Relatively Weak/Negative	14	32	9	17
Weak/Negative	17	14	5	10
DN/NA	8	8	27	40
Total	100%	100%	100%	100 %

**Table 7-2 Indices Related to Political Engagement**

	External Political Efficacy (1)	External Political Efficacy (2)	Internal Political Efficacy	Political Influences On Daily Life
Strong	17%	36%	5%	25%
Relatively Strong	16	23	12	35
Middle	13	13	13	8
Relatively Weak	27	4	34	19
Weak	18	6	31	5
DN/NA	10	18	5	9
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

#### **d. Variables related to Political Engagement**

Table 7-1 shows the degrees of sense of duty for voting, political interest, legitimacy felt regarding parliamentary and election systems among the surveyed students. Table 7-2 shows the degrees of political efficacy felt by the students. Generally speaking, these indices are supposed to have positive correlations with political participation. If we look at the ratios of those who admit the legitimacy of election system and who have strong sense of duty for voting, they are 59 % and 51 % respectively, thus we can assume that the value of voting is somewhat shared among high school students. Those who answered “politics influences our life” were 60 %, which indicates that the importance of politics is also shared among them. Students tended to agree that “elections are the only means to influence the government” (Table 7-2, external political efficacy (1)). This means that they regard political participation other than voting is difficult, or their sense of external political efficacy (1) is not high. However, they tended to disagree that “one does not have anything to say to the government” (Table 7-2, external political efficacy (2)). This means that they think they can support the government or make demand to and expect response from the government.

**Table 8** *Attitudes toward Voting*

Attitudes toward Voting	Percent
Definitely vote	16%
Probably vote	37
Neither	18
Probably not vote	19
Definitely not vote	11
DN/NA	3
Total	100%

Note: N=562

Thus, students have not developed their understanding of political participation other than voting, rather than they have low sense of external political efficacy.

Students' attitudes toward the legitimacy of parliamentary system also show that they tend to avoid making their definite evaluations. Instead of giving either positive or negative answers, they tended to choose "DK." We should say that they lack in the information and knowledge necessary to make any judgments, rather than having a negative image of parliamentary system. This is proven by the fact that 65 % agreed that he/she "does not know what government or politics is doing," whereas only 17 % disagreed.

We can draw the following picture of students using the survey data above: They find the government and politics too complex to understand, but regard them as important to their life, and expect them to understand their needs and respond to their demand. While they have expectation toward the government and politics, they have weak sense of controlling them, thus tend to have critical attitudes toward policy failures. Recent cases in Japanese politics actually show such characteristics.

Table 8 shows whether they actually want to vote, if they had a right to vote. Only 53 % answered they want to exercise their rights, and this number should be discounted given the fact that people tend to give more positive answers in surveys than their actual conducts. This means that even though voting age is lowered, if the youth do not actually cast their votes, the over-all turnout rate will decline rather than increase as expected by reform supporters.

Tables 9 through 15 show the correlations between such factors as political interest, sense of duty for voting, political efficacy, legitimacy of election system and parliamentary system

**Table 9 Political Interest and Attitudes toward Voting**

		Political Interest					Total
		Strong	Relatively strong	Relatively weak	Weak	DK/NA	Percent
Definitely vote		62%	23%	6%	5%	10%	16%
Probably vote		31	39	42	22	33	37
Neither		0	16	16	29	26	17
Probably not vote		4	14	26	22	17	19
Definitely not vote		4	8	11	21	14	11
Total	Percent	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

$\chi^2 = 99.022, p < .000$

Note1 : Political Interest in this table is measured by asking if “how much attention they pay to politics in their daily life.”

Note2: N=547

**Table 10 Sense of Duty for Voting and Attitudes toward Voting**

		Sense of Duty for Voting					Total	
		Strong	Relatively strong	Medium	Relatively weak	Weak	DK	Percent
Definitely vote		36%	8%	7%	5%	4%	7%	16%
Probably vote		39	51	37	39	21	27	37
Neither		11	19	23	21	15	34	18
Probably not vote		10	16	21	27	30	17	19
Definitely not vote		4	7	13	8	29	15	11
Total	Percent	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

$\chi^2 = 147.143, p < .000$

Note1 : Sense of Duty for Voting in this table is measured by asking “whether it is all right to abstain from voting since many other people vote.”

Note2: N=547

and their attitudes toward voting. All of them turned out to have statistically significant positive relations, thus the lower the indices for their political participation are, the lower their willingness for voting become. More negative attitudes toward voting were found among 65 % who agreed that he/she “does not know what government or politics is doing” (Table 13) or 40 % who answered “DK” to questions that “Parliaments reflect the voice of people” (Table 15). It should be noted that quite a few students fall under these categories. Students in these categories also share the view that the youth are not politically mature enough.

These findings lead us to point out that the keys to promote political participation lie in how we can help students feel that the government and politics is closer to themselves. In the following sections, let us examine the roles of family and school as agents for political socialization of young people.

**Table 11 External Political Efficacy and Attitudes toward Voting ( 1 )**

		External Political Efficacy (1)					Total	
		Strong	Relatively strong	Neither	Relatively weak	Weak	DK/NA	Percent
Definitely vote		29%	22%	6%	14%	14%	6%	16%
Probably vote		31	34	41	39	44	28	37
Neither		11	15	27	18	12	32	18
Probably not vote		13	21	20	23	15	17	19
Definitely not vote		17	8	6	7	14	19	11
Total	Percent	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

$\chi^2 = 52.290, p < .000$

Note1: External political efficacy in this table is measured by asking if “elections are the only means to influence the government.” Note2: N=547

**Table 12 External Political Efficacy and Attitudes toward Voting ( 2 )**

		External Political Efficacy (2)					Total	
		Strong	Relatively strong	Neither	Relatively weak	Weak	DK/NA	Percent
Definitely vote		26%	16%	7%	14%	6%	6%	16%
Probably vote		35	43	41	32	40	30	37
Neither		12	15	27	18	17	25	18
Probably not vote		14	17	19	27	29	25	19
Definitely not vote		13	10	6	9	9	14	11
Total	Percent	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

$\chi^2 = 48.761, p < .000$

Note1: External political efficacy in this table is measured by asking whether one “doesn’t have anything to say to the government.” Note2: N=547

**Table 13 Internal Political Efficacy and Attitude toward Voting**

		Internal Political Efficacy					Total	
		Strong	Relatively strong	Neither	Relatively weak	Weak	DK/NA	Percent
Definitely vote		50%	25%	22%	12%	9%	7%	16%
Probably vote		29	38	35	42	34	31	37
Neither		7	17	17	17	19	31	18
Probably not vote		4	8	13	23	23	17	19
Definitely not vote		11	13	14	5	15	14	11
Total	Percent	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

$\chi^2 = 63.210, p < .000$

Note1: Internal political efficacy is measured by asking if one “doesn’t know what government or politics is doing.” Note2: N=547

**Table 14 Legitimacy of the Election System and Attitudes toward Voting**

	Elections reflect the voice of people					Total Percent
	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	DK/NA	
Definitely vote	32%	12%	22%	31%	5%	16%
Probably vote	37	42	37	15	32	37
Neither	7	20	22	8	23	18
Probably not vote	12	21	18	15	20	19
Definitely not vote	13	4	2	31	20	11
Total	Percent	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

$\chi^2 = 88.170, p < .000$

Note1: N=547

Note2: Legitimacy of the Election System is measured by asking if Election System Reflects voters' Voice.

**Table 15 Legitimacy of Parliamentary System and Attitudes toward Voting**

	Parliaments reflect the voice of people					Total Percent
	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	DK/NA	
Definitely vote	41%	15%	22%	32%	5%	16%
Probably vote	32	46	39	27	34	37
Neither	16	16	13	7	24	18
Probably not vote	8	20	18	14	22	19
Definitely not vote	3	4	9	20	16	11
Total	Percent	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

$\chi^2 = 79.531, p < .000$

Note1: N=547

Note2: Legitimacy of the Election System is measured by asking if Election System Reflects voters' Voice.

### 3) Family as an Agent of Political Socialization

It is often pointed out that Japanese political socialization takes place at a later stage of life because family plays a weaker role as its agent. And why family is a weak agent of political socialization is related with Japanese attitudes toward political parties. Instead of identifying with political parties, Japanese are said to have supportive attitudes toward certain political parties based on the total evaluation of emotional and cognitive factors<sup>18</sup>. Besides conveying broadly-defined political culture, family only plays a limited role in the formation of children's political party support or political attitudes, which is proven by some research<sup>19</sup>. Instead of specific political party

<sup>18</sup> Ichiro Miyake, *Voting Behavior*, Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1989.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Kawakami, *op. cit.*, pp.117-122; Masayuki Fukuoka, *Contemporary Theory of Political Analysis*, Tokyo: Waseda University Press, 1987; Yoshihiko Inoue, "Family's Influence in the Formation of Political Party Support: From the Viewpoint of Political Socialization," *Tohoku Gakuin University Review* 30 (1987): 52-134.

support, “something called personal ideology” is conveyed beyond generation. “Such attitude toward political parties is not conscious engagement nor explicit,” it is said<sup>20</sup>. This situation makes a great contrast with that of the United States, in which family plays a great role in children’s formation of party identification.

Having said that, political socialization is not limited to political attitudes, and a broader context in which children’s political education is encouraged or discouraged should be also taken into consideration. Such context is especially important to study, as the traditional political socialization at the later stage is weakening in Japan. In the survey, we have not directly asked the political attitudes of family members of the students, but rather asked how often they discuss politics with their family members. Let us use the frequency of political dialogue with the family members as the measure to find out how family’s attitudes toward politics influence the formation of students’ political attitudes. Dialogue with family members, either consciously or unconsciously, accompanies political knowledge, political value and a set of standards for political judgments. If the frequency of such dialogue increases, the ability to think about or make judgments about political issues is expected to improve.

Our analysis proved that there is a possibility that the frequency of the dialogue with family members have statistically significant relations with many items the survey asked. Among which, let us focus on the few items closely related with the formation of political attitudes in the previous section. Table 16 shows the relationship between internal political efficacy and the frequency of political dialogue in the family. Those who have more political dialogues with their family members tend to have higher internal political efficacy, which is statistically significant. Table 17 shows the relationship between the views on the legitimacy of parliamentary system and the frequency of political dialogues in the family. The more political dialogues students have with their family members, the more likely they accept the legitimacy of the systems. A more interesting point is that few of those who have frequent political dialogues with their family members answered “don’t know” or provided “no answer” to this question. This shows that they have acquired a certain level of political recognition or certain standards for political judgments, supposedly with the help of political dialogues in the family.

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<sup>20</sup> Junichi Kawada, “Political Socialization,” Juichi Kawada and Yoshinobu Araki eds., *Political Psychology*, Tokyo: Hokuju Shuppan, 2003, pp.43-44.



**Table 16 Internal Political Efficacy and Frequency of Political Dialogue in the Family**

		Frequency of Dialogue				Total
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always	
Don't know what government and politics are doing.	Agree	4%	2%	6%	11%	5%
	Somewhat agree	9	7	16	12	12
	Somewhat disagree	26	34	40	32	34
	Disagree	41	38	20	24	31
	DK/NA	10	6	3	7	6
Total	Percent	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

$\chi^2 = 44.503, p < .000$

Note: N=562

**Table 17 Legitimacy of Parliamentary System and the Frequency of Political Dialogue in the Family**

		Frequency of Dialogue				Total
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always	
Parliamentary system reflects voters' voice.	Agree	10%	7%	7%	8%	7%
	Somewhat agree	21	23	32	25	26
	Somewhat disagree	11	16	18	24	17
	Disagree	14	7	7	20	10
	DK/NA	45	49	37	24	40
Total	Percent	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

$\chi^2 = 34.728, p < .005$

Note: N=562

Our survey data and their analysis show that family functions to promote political development of students, and that at least dialogues in the family play an important role. The two items, internal political efficacy and views on legitimacy of parliamentary system, are correlated with their attitudes toward voting, as pointed out in the previous section. And our additional analysis in this section further proved that political dialogues in the family, through these correlated three items, positively functions to promote the political participation of the youth.

#### 4) School as an Agent of Political Socialization

Japanese educational programs at every school, either national, public or private, from elementary to high schools, are based on the Manuals of Instruction decided by the Ministry of Education. These manuals stipulate the details of the content and hours for each item to be studied and only textbooks which have passed the Ministry's screening can be used in schools. Political education falls under the "Civics" in Japan, and at elementary school, junior high school and high

school have allotted certain hours for civics. For the ninth graders, human rights, governing institution, world peace are among the major items they study under the subject title of “Contemporary Democracy.”

The manual tries to keep the political education away from the direct political participation. Teachers are urged to have students “beware of the importance of” political participation. But the manual only points out that it is important that nation’s will is reflected through public opinion formation and elections, and no positive reference is made regarding more direct political participation. It is also stipulated that “general understanding of the basic institutions of democratic politics” is important, and the instruction “should not go into the details” of the Diet, the Cabinet, the court system or local governments.

Following the policy of the Ministry that emphasizes the principles and institutions, approved textbooks explain the principles but do not refer to the characteristics or the roles of actual political actors. Especially, the manual gives the following complex instruction: it is important “to promote the students’ interests in current political parties, but the teaching material should not deal with the histories or platforms of specific political parties. It is important to have them learn that political parties reflect various standpoints, and each is supported by people.” Such an instruction prevented the textbooks from even referring to the names of political parties. The manual’s instructions are less restrictive with regard to mass media and interest groups, thus their functions and problems in democratic politics are often pointed out.

With regard to civic engagement, institutionalization of voluntary activities at public schools have been proposed by conservative politicians, but not many local governments have introduced it, partly due to the contradiction of making voluntary activities compulsory, and due to the negative recollection voluntary service has with Japan’s prewar moral education. Conservatives tend to look at voluntary activities in the extension of prewar moral education, intended to nurture good subjects, and they are not at all interested in promoting civic education through voluntary activities. Norm is one of the important elements of civic engagement, but moral education tends to define all the questions in moralistic sense, thus presents some limitation as the framework for civic engagement. The Ministry of Education, on the other hand, looks at extra curricula activities such as students’ association or class activities as the vehicles for political education, but many educators view that students can have only limited initiatives in these activities, thus they do not provide the sufficient vehicles.

How has the political education at school influenced the formation of political attitudes of students? Our survey questions include, “how much do you learn about politics from the classes

or textbooks of the school?" Let us see the correlation between their answers to this question and other indices. The levels of political learning at school show statistically significant positive relations with political attitudes, recognition of legitimacies of parliament/election systems, and sense of duty for voting. Those who answered they learn about politics at school understand the norms of political system well, or accept them positively. On the other hand, there are no statistically significant relations between the level of political leaning at school and external political efficacy (2) or internal political efficacy (Tables 21 and 22), and negative relations were found between the level of political learning at school and external political efficacy (1) (Table 20). Our data show that those who obtain political information from sources other than school show higher external political efficacy.

Above analyses prove that schools make educational impact on students' leaning about politics in parallel with their educational principles. In other words, schools successfully promote students' understanding of political institutions and principles, at the same time stop short of proactively internalizing them in the students' political attitudes. The Japanese government (the Ministry of Education) seems to disregard the connection between low voting ratio among the youth and political education at school, and would like to rather blame the Election Administration Committee for its ineffective public relations. Political education programs at Japanese public schools have been the target of partisan war between the left and right during the Cold War, the government tried to make sure political neutrality is maintained, to the excessive level. However, as we have seen, the declining sense of political efficacy among the students make us think that it is high time for the government to change its course, and to allow more space for real politics in the classroom.

In 2000, the Ministry of Education introduced a policy to give more time to activities not directly related with subject matters, thus to shift away from the knowledge-intensive education. Comprehensive Study is among the newly introduced subjects. This is to aim at promoting the sense and ability for problem finding and problem solution, and to integrate in the study such various elements as experience in the nature, voluntary activities, experience in the society, experience-based learning such as observation, experiment, investigation, research, and presentation, and problem-solution leaning.

In the area of civics, new textbooks are being made aiming at political education reflecting this new policy, but their introduction is still quite limited and how to use the contents can greatly influence the effect of teaching. The following shows some of the experimental textbook contents.

- a. Comics describing the process of one amateur woman who decided to run for Diet and actually engaged in the legislation in order to promote a barrier free society.
- b. Pointing out the importance of selecting right political party in the election, and instruct the students how to learn about political parties through internet.
- c. Manual to conduct mock elections, starting from making platform, conducting political speech, and engaging in policy discussion.

**Table18 Political Interest and Influence from School Education**

		Influence from Class and Textbook				Total Percent
		Strong	Relatively strong	Relatively weak	Weak	
Political Interest	Strong	6%	5%	4%	8%	5%
	Relatively Strong	49	44	38	27	42
	Relatively Weak	30	32	38	18	32
	Weak	13	13	11	31	14
	DN/NA	3	5	9	16	7
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

$x^2 = 32.353, p < .01$

Note: N=557

**Table19 Sense of Duty for Voting and Influence from School Education**

		Influence from Class and Textbook				Total Percent
		Strong	Relatively Strong	Relatively Weak	Weak	
Sense of Duty for Voting	Strong	22%	20%	19%	4%	19%
	Relatively Strong	44	29	35	18	32
	Neither	13	12	8	14	11
	Relatively Weak	3	17	14	16	14
	Weak	15	15	16	31	17
	DN/NA	3	7	8	16	7
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

$x^2 = 39.435, p < .01$

Note: N=557

**Table20 External Political Efficacy and Influence from School Education (I)**

		Influence from Class and Textbook				Total Percent
		Strong	Relatively Strong	Relatively Weak	Weak	
Elections are the only means to influence the government.	Agree	18%	15%	14%	33%	17%
	Somewhat Agree	20	13	22	6	16
	Neither	9	15	9	18	13
	Somewhat Disagree	27	31	25	14	27
	Disagree	20	18	19	12	18
	DN/NA	5	10	11	16	10
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

$x^2 = 33.433, p < .001$

Note: N=557

**Table21 External Political Efficacy and Influence from School Education (2)**

		Influence from Class and Textbook				Total Percent
		Strong	Relatively strong	Relatively weak	Weak	
One doesn't have anything to say to the government.	Agree	6%	6%	8%	2%	6%
	Somewhat agree	2	5	4	0	4
	Neither	17	14	12	10	13
	Somewhat disagree	24	21	28	22	24
	Disagree	41	33	35	35	35
	DN/NA	10	20	14	31	18
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

$x^2 = 20.324, p < .160$

Note: N=557

**Table22 Internal Political Efficacy and Influence from School Education**

		Influence from Class and Textbook				Total Percent
		Strong	Relatively strong	Relatively weak	Weak	
One doesn't know what government or politics is doing.	Agree	35%	29%	29%	35%	31%
	Somewhat agree	35	35	36	22	34
	Neither	11	9	15	14	12
	Somewhat disagree	10	15	12	10	13
	Disagree	5	6	4	6	5
	DN/NA	3	6	4	12	5
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

$x^2 = 15.441, p < .420$

Note: N=557

**Table23 Legitimacy of Parliamentary System and Influence from School Education**

		Influence from Class and Textbook				Total Percent
		Strong	Relatively strong	Relatively weak	Weak	
Parliamentary system reflects voters' voice.	Agree	10%	7%	3%	10%	7%
	Somewhat agree	35	27	23	18	26
	Somewhat disagree	18	13	23	14	17
	Disagree	9	8	13	16	10
	DK/NA	27	45	38	41	40
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

$x^2 = 26.931, p < .01$

Note: N=557

**Table 24** *Legitimacy of Election System and Influence from School Education*

		Influence from Class and Textbook				Total Percent
		Strong	Relatively strong	Relatively weak	Weak	
Election system reflects voters' voice.	Agree	14%	12%	19%	34%	19%
	Somewhat agree	35	44	42	32	40
	Somewhat disagree	10	14	5	13	10
	Disagree	14	6	3	2	5
	DK/NA	27	24	31	19	27
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

$\chi^2 = 42.999, p < .000$

Note: N=557

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework for Experience-Based Political Education Program

### 1) The Objectives and Expected Effects of the Program

This chapter examines what kind of political education is needed as we are faced with the emerging low internal political efficacy among the youth and the introduction of lower voting age near future in Japan.

The recent trend that young people expect to be served by the politics, while avoiding even the indirect political participation is unwelcome from the participatory democracy viewpoint. From the competitive elite democracy viewpoint, this trend is unwelcome since the lack of voter involvement deprives the representative democratic system of its legitimacy. Classic democratic theory and participatory democracy not only expect citizens to have input in policy making, but through the educational effects of civic engagement, citizens are expected to enhance their political interest and political efficacy, thus to play active role in the process<sup>21</sup>. Politics is regarded as activities that make the peaceful coexistence of those with various interests possible. And the best way to learn how to coexist with others is through meeting those with different values and actually struggling to find the agreeable solutions. This leads to the answer that citizens can best lean the politics through participating it, and thus emphasis of political education is placed more on practice than on knowledge.

Our analyses pointed out that the lower the sense of political efficacy, the less the youth are inclined to participate in politics. Thus, we are in need of political education programs that help

<sup>21</sup> Naoko Onizuka, "Political Participation and the Theory of Democracy," *Teikyo Sociology* 15 (2001) 14-44; Wataru Sano, Problem Solving Thinking as Norm: The Difference between Policy Thinking and Legal and Political Thinking," in Yukio Adachi, ed., *What is Policy Studies Thinking: Principles of Public Policy Studies*, Tokyo: Keiso Shobo, 2005.

promote the political efficacy of the youth. The sense of political efficacy is closely related with their image of politics: whether they feel the government as complicated or they are unable to express their opinions about electoral or parliamentary systems. These in turn make them feel that they are not capable enough to make political judgments.

To reverse this vicious circle, we have to help them understand the actuality of politics and government, but a knowledge-based program is not the answer, since students have already gone through such programs at school. Also, we have to be quite sensitive to the political neutrality and try not to bring the partisan conflicts or electoral politics straight into the program, although the current government policy tends to overly emphasize political neutrality at the cost of failing to deliver the important elements in the political education. What is more, we have to make sure that students are not just satisfied with following the day-to-day political developments, in place of institutional knowledge they learn at school. Since Japanese junior and high school students are not so much familiar with current affairs, it may take up a greater part of the program time just to have them understand the very basis of the current affairs, such as the coalition partner of the Liberal Democratic Party is not Japan Democratic Party, but Clean Government Party.

When we build the program, civil society and the principles of democracy should be included, and constitute the core of the program. For the civil society is based on the free individuals thinking freely at their own responsibility, and the principles of democracy teach us to adopt the idea as public policies which are supported by the majority of such free-thinking individuals. We should avoid such programs that do not take into consideration the complicated nature of political socialization, and thus might lead to a political indoctrination.

If we focus more on the free-thinking and discussion than knowledge acquisition, the program should emphasize experiences. But our program is not based on actual participation in the politics, but on a simulated process. This is partly due to the time constraint, but more importantly, due to the level of political development at the ages of participating students. Instead of overwhelming them with the details of political actors, we aimed to have them be aware of the existence of various actors with different values. Or instead of feeding the technicalities of interest reconciliation, we aim to have them notice that the essence of politics is such attempt for reconciliation. In these ways, we believe we can build the basis among them to think about politics and understand political participation.

Through the free-thinking and discussion in the simulated political process, students will meet various values and learn the differences, just as through service-learning programs and voluntary activities. Some of the values may be acceptable for them, while others may not. But

through trying to incorporate such values that might be beyond their imagination, students start to learn what politics is.

## 2) Case Suited for the Seminar: What Experiencing “Politics” Means

As the objectives of the seminar, we placed the following three. 1) To help the participating students identify who the interested groups involved are, and what the interests are they each represent. 2) To help them examine the way how interested groups can cooperate, and how they can peacefully reconcile their differences. And 3) to help them find out the role citizens should play and extend their interest into other social issues. All three objectives are pursued in a setting where students freely exchange their views with other participants.

What is most important as we build a political education program is how we define “politics” that students are to experience. Depending on the definition, the contents of the program vary largely. The authors, however, do not intent to present any special meanings of politics here, but rather use the textbook usage of politics. Japanese social studies textbooks for junior and senior high schools defines “politics” as something that “in a society where many people live together, reconcile the interests of each, and forms and maintains the order. For that purpose, some authority is needed to solve the confrontation and to make the people ultimately subordinate to the order.”<sup>22</sup> We do not find any problem using this general definition in our program.

Political process is the very process in which we find the confronting values behind the problems in the public space, and try to formulate the solutions supported by the interested parties. If students simulate the experiences of this process, they can deepen their understanding of complexity of politic and the government, and become more confident in their own ability to deal with politics. This is the most important point of our program.

Accordingly, the case to be taken up in the experience-based political education program should be the issues students find in their daily life, in stead of highly disputed political issues. In the latter case, so much has been discussed and students end up borrowing the existing knowledge instead of forming their own opinions, and thus make the experience less effective for our purpose. Also the gap in the pre-existing knowledge makes barriers among the participating students. In the former case, we can not only expect an additional effect, namely their increased interest in their own community, but also their leaning process repeats itself through extending their

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<sup>22</sup> *Civics: Japanese Society and World*, revised version, Tokyo: Shimizu Shoin, pp. 34-35. Cf. Japanese textbooks for junior or high school students; *Civics: Toward the Global Citizen*, revised version, Tokyo: Teikoku Shoin, p.vi, *Politics and Economy*, Tokyo: Tokyo Shoseki, pp.6-8.



interest to other related problems in their community. In other words, through the experience-based education program, young people can learn what politics is, which promotes the political studies in their daily life, and thus come to look at politics as something they want to participate in.

### 3) Outline of the Political Education Program

Based on the principle above, we made an experience-based political education program using the case of unlawfully parked bicycles. Bicycles parked unlawfully are one of the urban problems in Japan. Bicycles are popular vehicle for shopping and commuting in Japanese cities, along with public transportation. While the road systems have been heavily invested in the post-war period, facilities and rules to accommodate increasing number of bicycles only started to be paid attention by national and local governments in the 1980s. Given the limited space for parking, bicycles started to overflow into the sidewalks and roads in the vicinities of stations or shopping areas. Moreover, many of the unlawfully parked bicycles relate to crimes, such as stolen bicycles.

The bicycle problem is quite suited as daily political issue. Junior and high school students ride bicycle frequently, and often notice unlawfully parked bicycles, or even they themselves park bicycles this way. Unlawfully parked bicycles block the traffic and worsen the scenery, thus are regarded as a bad manner for riders. Just as cars are indispensable in the United States, bicycles are indispensable in Japan. Moreover, they are energy efficient, and can run faster than cars in crowded areas. Bicycles' positive value, convenience and contribution to health and environment, confronts with other values such as safety and good scenery. At the same time, national and local governments are making laws and ordinances to remove the unlawfully parked bicycles, or spend tax money to build more parking lots for bicycles.

To experience "politics" based on this case starts with observing the actual situation, then finding the interested parties, and coming up with the solutions these people are likely to support. Individual students can go through this process separately, but a group work is better suited as students encounter various opinions and view points through group discussion. Once interested parties are identified, we can also simulate the problem solving situation, using role plays in a group.

## **Chapter 3: Analysis of the Seminar**

### 1) Pre-seminar Assignment

The authors publicly called for participants to a seminar, "What is Politics? Learning

through Experience,” last summer, and 12 junior high school students from various school districts volunteered to participate. The issue taken up in the seminar was a large number of unlawfully parked bicycles in the vicinity of stations or shopping areas. The participants were assigned to make a preliminary research of the unlawful parking of bicycles in their own cities themselves. As they gathered, they were engaged in group discussion, formation of alternatives, and presentation of their alternatives, with the assistance of college students as facilitators in each group. The authors observed and analyzed the whole process, and conducted a follow-up survey.

About one month ahead of the seminar, the authors had sent the students applied for the seminar a pre-seminar assignment. The theme of the assignment was to observe the situation of unlawfully parked bicycles near stations or shopping areas they pass by in their daily life, and to make a preliminary analysis of the situation by themselves. The pre-seminar assignment was aimed at heightening their interest in the issue itself, as well as for the authors to see the pre-existing political skills of the participants.

The assignment was given in the following manner:

”In some cities, bicycles cause a big social problem, while other cities are successfully managing this problem. Why are the bicycle problems handled differently? Let’s think about it together. First, we would like you to observe how bicycles are parked near your station or your shopping areas. Your observation will be the basis for our discussion. This assignment is not an exam, and there is no one correct answer to your analysis. Please write what you think freely.

- a. Where did you observe?
- b. What was the situation of the bicycles there?
- c. What do you think is the problem?
- d. Who do you think are involved in this problem?
- e. Please take notes if you find any facilities or signs related with bicycle parking.
- f. What do you think are the causes for this problem?”

Among the items above, we closely examined c (definition of the problem) and d (interested parties involved), for the purpose of the seminar is to find out the confronting values in the public arena, and to cultivate the attitudes toward problem solving.

As was expected beforehand, to find out the nature of the problem and the interested groups involved, as well as their respective interests, from such a daily scene of unlawfully parked bicycles turned out to be a difficult task. They feel something is “wrong” with the situation, but to identify the problem required an abstract thinking. Besides, there are multiple factors involved, and pointing out what is the most important factor out of them was a challenging task. They could

identify those who park bicycles and those who suffer from parked bicycles quite easily, but it was difficult for them to take note of the roles of potentially interested groups such as railway company in control of stations, association of shops, the police, local or national governments, or residents and users of the facilities, which requires a certain level of knowledge and imagination.

Another point we had expected was that their framework for problem solving would be moralistic. Since they are used to be disciplined in family or school in moral sense, they may well use the same approach to understand the social problem. It is easier to notice problems in the public with moral value and moralistic thinking, but they do not necessarily lead to political solutions for the problems.

The students responded to the pre-seminar assignment mostly within the expected range, but some students already noticed the rules or the facilities related to the bicycle parking. Many found unlawful parking of bicycles near the stations or shopping areas as a problem, and pointed out that those who “think only about their interests” or “try to avoid paying parking lot fee” are causing trouble for “pedestrians (especially pregnant women or disable people).” Some refer to the capacity of the parking lots, price of parking lots, or the problem of patrolling, but did not identify who are making decisions and implementing them.

## 2) Discussion in the Seminar

In the seminar, we asked the same questions as in the pre-seminar assignment as the first stage, then after a half-day discussion, asked them to come up with a program to solve the problem. In the discussion, students are left free to state their opinions and discuss each question without any pre-set framework. When the discussion start repeating itself rather than developing, college-student facilitators intervened and gave some cues.

As the discussion took place inside a classroom, we provided about 30 pieces of pictures of such items as facilities, posters, warnings, regulations of bicycles parking lot, workers removing unlawfully parked bicycles, section of local government on bicycle parking. These items reminds the students of the interested parties such as local residents, railways company, association of shops, local or national governments, intending to make it easier for them to notice interested parties.

Most of the students started categorizing the items by their appearances, such as facilities, people, or posters. They place each category of pictures on the whiteboards. They could easily finish categorizing all the items, but could not find out the relationship among the categories. Then they started to try some other ways of categorization, until they could come up with a way to explain all the relationship without contradiction. It was only after facilitators suggested who are behind such facilities, rules, or posters, students moved to categorize the pictures by actors. They

found names of actors in the pictures or guessed the actors from the characteristics or the role of the facilities. Finally, the relationship among the interested parties was shown on the whiteboard.

Based on this analysis, we then moved on to the second stage of the seminar, making the program to solve the problem. They will identify what are the problems based on their analysis, and discussed what can be the possible solutions to the problem. The discussion started with moralistic arguments, but then moved onto such pragmatic questions as the price of parking lots, the location of parking lots, who patrol the area, as well as whom they should be bringing their claims or asking for cooperation.

The first stage took more than two hours, and sometimes silence dominated the group discussions, but once they found the relationship of the interested parties, identifying problems and presenting the possible solution went quite smoothly. This is because their understanding of the problem was deepened while they were trying to figure out the relationship of the interested parties. After spending some time together, communication among the group members became better as well. This also shows that once problem is defined, the students have logical skills to find out the solutions.

When there were enough ideas expressed in the group, we moved on to the presentation stage. Using whiteboard, each group proposed their solutions, such as more patrolling or greater penalty for unlawful parking of bicycles, fundraising for the management of parking lots of bicycles, or launching a program for sharing bicycles.

The seminar was concluded by a short lecture to summarize what the students had learned. Various actors are involved in the problems in the public space as interested parties. Their respective interest can confront each other, and some reconciliations are necessary. And such reconciliations constitute politics. We reviewed the proposed programs for solution from this view point. We found that some programs would balance the traffic safety/good scenery and the interest of bicycle users, while other programs demand cost only on the bicycle users. We did not have enough time to evaluate the programs from the viewpoint of cost sharing, and ended the seminar by just pointing out its importance.

### 3) Follow-up Survey

A couple of weeks after the seminar, we asked the participated students to answer the follow-up survey to reflect on and consolidate their experiences. The survey had three categories: "What you discovered," "What you found interesting," and "How you want to change yourselves." Six out of 12 participated students returned the survey answers. The following are the summaries of

their writings.

- a. Politics and daily life is closely connected.
- b. It is important to respect various values.
- c. Policies made by the national and local governments do not necessarily function.
- d. It is important to come to political decisions in a non-violent way.
- e. The seminar made me interested in other political themes.

The actual wordings varied among the students, and that indicates that students were not parroting what we presented them through our program, but thinking these questions on their own. For example, the close connection between politics and daily life was expressed as follows: “We thought politicians are the only political actors, but there are other actors involved in politics;” “Daily acts such as parking bicycles are actually related with politics;” or “There are many things happening that are related with politics.” By finding various actors of politics, finding the political nature of daily acts such as parking bicycles, or inferring the same relationship in other daily phenomena, students have come to feel connected with politics.

The most common answer was that they came to feel politics closer to their daily life. This feeling may be caused by the fact that they could, with information and time, find answers and make proposals to the social problems, just like adult people do. It did take quite long to identify interested parties, but their proposals included unique ideas such as sharing bicycles, not just ordinary idea of increasing penalties. The proposals need further scrutiny in terms of their feasibility, but the fact that students discussed a real problem in the society and made proposals for political solution made the distance between them and politics closer, we believe.

It was also reassured that group works helped the students realize the value differences. They found that different values are pursued by actors involved, not thorough interviewing these people, but through the discussion in the group. Some students actually mentioned that they could know what other members or college student facilitators were thinking through the discussion. It is said that Japanese youth tend not to discuss politics in their daily life, and such group works provide missing opportunities and can fill the gap. Through such opportunities, they may encounter values different from their own, and to be able to understand and respect such different values constitutes an indispensable political attitude.

Our own reflection of the seminar, however, pointed out that this approach embraces certain limitations. The most important limitation is that this program did not direct them toward civic engagement, as far as we can assume from the follow-up survey. The objective of the seminar was to help students deepen their understanding of politics through “experiencing” the process of

reconciliation of various interests in group works. In that sense, our seminar achieved its objectives. Our next step should be how we connect their experience of simulated process to actual civic engagement. In order to solve problems politically, not only identifying interested parties involved, we need to examine what their interests are and how they can be reconciled. The seminar intentionally avoided the hard question of reconciling confronting interests, and let students find alternatives on which confronting interests are will reflected. In order to have the students interested in civic engagement, our future program should point out that their interests may not be reflected automatically, and their proactive engagement is indispensable in the political process. This may be due to the size and variation of the parties involved, or simple negligence on the side of politicians. Our last objective of the seminar, which is to have the students search for the roles of citizens and expand their interest in other issues through deliberating with other participants, will be successfully achieved once they find what is expected of themselves in the political process.

## **Conclusion**

This paper started with the survey data that young people's image of the government and politics as too complicated reduce their willingness for political participation. And we proposed an experience-based program to help them understand what politics is, accordingly. This program does not include on-the-ground activities of civic engagement, but help them grasp the essence of politics different from their superficial image. Through discussion, the participating students were to find that there exist various conflicting interests in our society, and through the simulated process, were to experience how to reconcile various interests.

The first objective, identifying the interests involved, turned out to be successful. The second objective, interest reconciliation, drew separate results. Some students were able to include multiple values, but others just pursued their interested values in their solutions. We do not regard the latter as wrong answer, but the process of reaching the solutions showed more of their lack of awareness than intentional exclusion of different values. For the low teens, this task might have been too difficult to handle. As for the third objectives, we were not able to get sufficient result, as examined above. We need to include, or create a separate program for, the interface of citizens' interests and policy making process, so that students can find their role proactively connecting these two.

The Japanese traditional model of late-stage political socialization has led the political education to focus on the relations with interest groups and did not encourage, or rather discouraged, the development of civil society. Since the 1990s, as such social groups weakened their function as

agents of political socialization, this model started to fall short of expectation. Instead, there are new agents of political socialization emerging in Japan. Civic organizations are actively involved in political socialization, conducting mock elections or organizing internship at politician's office. Public interest groups focused on election or Election Administration Committee are actively targeting the youth in their public relations and educational programs. Unprecedented variation of agents is entering this field, including one governor who has launched a program for citizenship education<sup>23</sup>. Among these recent moves, the most important subject is the debate over the lowering of voting age.

Existing agents are also expected to transform their roles, responding to the activities of these new agents. For example, the introduction of 18-year old voting age system has been promoted by political parties, mass media, and citizens groups, but the public opinion continues to shows reluctance. The voting age reform is likely to be forced into place from the least substantive reason of adjusting to the world trend<sup>24</sup>, while the important discussion of how to transform the political education to meet the challenge is left in the dark. As we have seen, simply lowering the voting age does not push up the voter turnout. The roles of family and school as agents of political socialization are needed to be enhanced. Our survey found that touching on politics in the family dialogue enhances the children's interest in politics. Parents are encouraged to bring about political matters in their conversation, sometimes intentionally. As often pointed out, political education in school has focused on knowledge accumulation, and intentionally kept some distance from the task of internalization of political attitudes. The Ministry of Education is in the process of reviewing civics curricula and textbooks, but even under the current system, new approaches such as our experience-based program can be experimented.

Observing the recent collaborative development of Japanese civil society, Otsuru states that "making of Japanese citizenship should have been making both the state and the citizens realize the sense of common commitment to their society<sup>25</sup>". As stated in the beginning, such sense

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<sup>23</sup> Governor Matsuzawa of Kanagawa Prefecture (former JDP Diet member) launched a plan of high school political education in May 2006, designating eight high schools as Citizenship Model Schools in order to heighten the sense of political participation among the youth, and promoting experience-based studies through mock voting. *Kanagawa Prefecture Assembly Proceedings*, September, 2007, electronic editions on the website, [www.pref.kanagawa.jp/gikai](http://www.pref.kanagawa.jp/gikai) (accessed November 20, 2007).

<sup>24</sup> Industrial countries lowered their voting ages in the 1970s based on the following reasons: a. earlier social and political maturity of the youth, b. positive contribution to social and political education, c. quid-pro-quo to conscription, or d. related to student movements and campus riots. According to Ida, recent Japanese debate is led by such points as adjusting to the world trend, positive influence to political education, and adjustment to demographic change. Ida, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-36.

<sup>25</sup> Chieko Kitagawa Otsuru, "Toward a Solid Civic Triangle: Civil Society and Citizens in Japanese Political

is emerging in the post-Cold War Japan. At the local government level, measures are already taken, and collaboration with citizens is sought after, while there are not enough citizen groups responding to such calls. The ball is in the civil society's court, and young people's political socialization is increasingly important, from that point of view as well.

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Culture," in Takeshi Matsuda, ed. *The Age of the Pacific: In Search of Emerging Cultures and Shared Values in the Japan-American Borderlands*, Hiroshima: Keisuisha, 2001, pp. 257-299.



## Appendix A: Dataset

### 1) Survey for Political Attitude of Japanese High School Students in 2006

Survey Date: December 2006  
Survey Research Method: Collective Survey at the high school classroom using the survey sheet by self-writing

There are five public high schools and three private high schools in Suita City, Osaka Prefecture. Osaka is the second largest prefecture in Japan, with the population of about 8.8 million, the size of Russia, Belgium, or the Switzerland. Suita City has a population of 350 thousand, and is mostly residential. We picked up three public schools and one private school with almost equivalent academic achievements out of these eight high schools. We requested these four high schools to cooperate with our survey and were granted their permission. The distribution of the survey sheets to sample classes was left to the judgment of the teachers at each school, though we had asked them to pick up standard classes. The co-authors would like to express sincere gratitude to the cooperation extended to us from the teachers at each high school.

Sample Size:  
public high school students 213  
private high school students 349

Investigators  
Shoichiro Ishibashi  
Chieko Kitagawa Otsuru

### 2) Akarui Senkyo Suishin Kyokai (Clean Election Promotion League)

This association conducts a survey to investigate election campaigns, voting behaviors, and Elections: 1986, 1996, 2004, 2005

Sample Design:  
Population: Japanese citizens 20 years old and older  
Initial Sample Size 3000  
Sampling method: Two-stage stratified cluster sampling  
Sampling Selection: Using electoral roll  
Interview Method: Face-to-Face interview  
Response rate: 79.1%(1986), 70.5% (1996), 71.4 % ( 2004), 54 % ( 2005),  
Principal Investigators:  
Joji Watanuki (86, 96)  
Yoichi Akiyama (86)  
Ikui Kabashima (96, 04, 05)  
Osamu Iwata (96)  
Yoshito Ishio (04, 05)  
Polling Company: Shin Joho center, (96, 04) Chuo-chosa Sha (86, 05)

## Appendix B: Survey Questions

1) Survey for Political Attitude of Japanese High School Students in 2006

Q1 Will you tell me your interest? Please select all the items that you are interested in.

1. Travel
2. Defense
3. International Affairs
4. Japanese Affairs
5. Environment
6. Religious
7. Economy, Finance
8. Study, Future
9. Hobby, Sports
10. Fashion
11. Family
12. Love, Marriage
13. Regional Affairs
14. Election
15. Friend
16. Volunteer/ Civic
17. Labor, Employment
18. Citizens' Movement
19. Others

Q6 . Which party is the LDP's partner of the Governmental Coalition?

1. Democratic Party of Japan
2. Clean Government Party
3. Japan Communist Party
4. Social Democratic Party

Q7. Who is the political representative who voters cannot directly elect?

1. Governor
2. Diet Member
3. City council member
4. Prime Minister

Q8. Which rule or principle is NOT adapted in the Japanese Political System?

1. Single-Seat Electoral district System
2. Medium-sized District System
3. Proportional Representation Electoral System
4. Universal Suffrage

Q9. How much do you pay attention to the politics?

1. Never
2. Rarely
3. Sometimes
4. Always

Q13. How often do you talk to your family about politics?

1. Never
2. Rarely
3. Sometimes
4. Always
5. Don't Know

Q15. How much does the government have an influence on the daily life?

1. Insignificant
2. Relatively insignificant
3. Neither
4. Relatively significant
5. Significant
6. Don't Know

Q16. How do you learn about political affairs?

Q16-1 Through family, Q16-2 Through textbook or class

1. Never
2. Rarely
3. Sometimes
4. Always

Q18. Which opinion is close to your idea?

Q18-1 It is Election that reflect the voters' voice to the politics.

Q18-3 It is Parliamentary system that reflect the voters' voice to the politics.

1. Agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Neither
4. Somewhat disagree
5. Disagree

Q19. Which opinion is close to your idea?

Q19-1 one doesn't know what government or politics is doing.

Q19-2 Election System Reflects voters' Voice

Q19-3 one doesn't know what government or politics is doing.

Q19-4 It is all right to abstain from voting since many other people vote

1. Agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Neither
4. Somewhat disagree
5. Disagree

Q5 Did you vote in this election? (2005 Survey)

2) Akarui Senkyo Suishin Kyokai (Clean Election Promotion League)

- 1 Voted in the single-seat election and proportional representation election.

- 2 Voted in the single member election.
- 3 Voted in the proportional representation election.
- 4 Not Voted

Q 24 Which political party do you usually support? (2005 Survey)

1. Liberal Democratic Party
2. Democratic Party of Japan
3. Clean Government Party
4. Japan Communist Party
5. Social Democratic Party
6. Party for Independents
7. Freedom Alliance
8. Other
9. No Support Party

Q22. Vote to right is granted for the citizen over 20 years old and over under the existing electoral system. What do you think of assigning vote to 18 years old and over voting system?

1. Agree
2. Disagree
3. Neither
4. Don't know

Sub Question1 [Only for the person choosing "1" at the Q22]

What is the reason for supporting lowering voting age? Please choose the opinion close to yours.

1. 18-year olds have acquired capability to make political judgments
2. The youth should have their opinion reflected in the politics
3. It is important for the youth to learn about politics and increase political awareness through voting
4. Others

Sub Question2 [Only for the person choosing "2" at the Q22]

What is the reason for opposing lowering voting age? Please choose the opinion close to yours.

1. 18-year olds cannot make political judgments
2. Even if given the right, don't think actually casting votes
3. Not many have work experience yet
4. Others

Q23. Do you want to go to vote if you were granted the right to vote?

1. Definitely vote
2. Probably vote
3. Either
4. Probably not vote
5. Definitely not vote