

A New Liberal Class in Japan: Based on Latent Class Analysis

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Abstract. Presently, in Japanese politics, the majority of people opt to vote for conservative parties, with anti-conservatives and old liberals losing power and representation in the government. This study explores the emerging middle-class who may potentially lead to an alternative liberal politics in Japan. Using responses to an Internet survey conducted in 2018 as our data, we articulate features of a new liberal class by constructing a theory of class articulation and combining that theory with latent class analysis to compare the new liberals to old liberals and conservatives. This is the first attempt to apply latent class analysis to figure out differences in political orientations among possible social classes. We analyze some personality traits of the new liberals using our original 18 personality categories. We also analyze their social attitudes by comparing their questionnaire responses to those of old liberals. Although our analysis shows that new liberals are not experiencing upward social mobility, their personalities as defined by our study constitute a new political class, that is particularly sensitive to the environmental issues, and prefer

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the nature and minimal consumption. We discovered that these new liberals are in their sixties, graduates of university or graduate school, professionals, and low-income people. We have also discovered that although these new liberals are a coherent political class, they have no representations in our political party system. However, further research based on mail survey especially for elderly people should be conducted in order to conceive more precise features of new liberals.

Key words: latent class analysis, liberal, politics, Japan, personalities, network.

1. Introduction

In contemporary Japanese politics, the opposition to the conservative majority, represented by the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan, is less visible and less powerful than ever. Anti-conservatives and liberals seem to have lost representation in Japanese politics.

This paper examines various social attributes of an emerging middle class which might support new, alternative liberal politics. In order to understand these new Japanese liberals, the authors conducted an Internet survey in 2018. Below, we describe our theoretical framework and the results of our survey. First, we present our framework for understanding a social image of new liberals in Japan. Second, we posit that there are four classes of political orientation and analyze the features of each class. These four classes are: “the conservative class”, “the pending judgment class”, “the new liberal class”, and “the old liberal class”. Third, we analyze socio-economic status of these four classes’ members. Fourth, we analyze the relationship between these four classes and the personalities of their members, using our original categories of “18 personhood clusters”. Fifth, we describe social attitudes of the new liberal class. Sixth, we analyze the relationship between four classes and political parties they support. Finally, we analyze personal networks of new liberal class’ members.

2. Basic framework for understanding new liberals

The term “liberal” is based on the idea of liberalism. Historically, liberalism has been

defined in terms of “enlightenment” and “tolerance” terms, which were often used in the 18th century in Western Europe¹. The concept of “enlightenment” has the following characteristics. (1) It rejects authority and affirms the autonomous life. (2) It criticizes uncritical ways of living, based on traditional practices, and favors rational actions. The concept of “tolerance,” on the other hand, rejects social conformity (homogenization) and accepts various ways of living which may deviate from standard ones and those practiced by a majority of people. These three features, as well as the ones defining personal traits of a liberal, were considered the fundamental features of liberalism.

Also, there is the approach of thoroughly studying the features of liberalism². Let us call the person, assuming such a position, a “radical liberal”³. Liberals and radical liberals believe in three abovementioned features of liberalism. How and when do we differentiate between

¹ See Inoue [1].

² There is also the term “radical left.” Radical left is a roughly synonymous term to extreme left or far left. In the Japanese political context, the Japan Communist Party (especially in the early 1950s); the Japan Revolutionary Communist League; and the Japan Red Army might be considered radical left. Here, we just focus on some of the theoretical features of these groups, and we do not examine the self-contradictory features that emerge from the interest of their members in political domination and authority. On the distinction between left and right, see Bobbio and Cameron [2].

³ Lichtenstein [3] defined this term. According to him, it represents six following ideas: pluralism, developmental individualism, solidarity, egalitarianism, participatory democracy, and social transformation. However, this term has not become popular, and it is mostly ignored in Japan. As discussed later, we use this term differently.

them? A radical liberal denies every authority, tradition, or call for conformity. In doing so, a radical liberal tries to be “avant-garde”, aspiring to make fundamental changes in the existing society. Their ideal is to emancipate people from every type of suppression arising from authority, tradition, and a call for conformity. However, liberals could no longer be considered liberals, if their opinions become too radical: liberal position usually means not pursuing one’s values in an extremist manner.

It is possible to point out that, while liberals use democratic procedures in pursuit of their goals, radical leftists tend to appeal to violence. However, if we focus on three aforementioned features of liberalism without considering the opposition between democracy and violence, can we understand the difference between these two positions? Is the difference between them only a matter of the degree of extremism in pursuing these ideals? Is there any qualitative difference in perspectives between them? When we ask these questions, we find that these qualitative differences have not been investigated in the literature on political analysis through usage of survey data⁴. People tend to think that these two positions have a common political goal of criticizing authority, tradition, and conformity.

Historically, there were periods when anti-authoritarianism, anti-traditionalism, and anti-populism emerged as important political issues. During the transition from pre-modern to modern society, the issues of authoritarianism and traditionalism were in the center of political arguments⁵. During the

transition from early modern society to mature modern society, criticism of populism became an issue [8]. In Japan, these transitional phases took place in the 20th century. Indeed, anti-authoritarianism, anti-traditionalism, and anti-populism were central issues of Japanese political arguments.

In such political context, liberals and radical liberals together criticized these three ideologies, and the difference between them has not been a big problem. As long as radical liberals resort to democratic procedures for implementation of their ideals, their position can be understood as similar to the liberals’ one. As long as Japan’s primary political rivalry goes on between liberals and conservatives, liberals and nationalists, liberals and populists, liberals and radical liberals will be on the same side. They should not be differentiated from each other, at least in terms of their theoretical views. However, Japanese political landscape seems to have changed radically: it has become less clear. It does not matter, whether the dominant confrontation of ideologies goes on between liberals and conservatives, liberals and traditional nationalists, or liberals and populists. Contemporary liberals seem to adapt certain features of authority, tradition, and conformity. For example, as discussed in the universalism section, Japanese liberals have gradually come to accept the emperor system. They have also started to consider conventional uniforms and clothes in business and high school education spheres of life as ethically acceptable. If this is the situation, how can we identify the features of contemporary liberals?

Our hypothesis is that liberals are currently not only becoming less extreme, but core features, defining them, are also changing. In other words, the newly emerging liberals may be qualitatively different from the liberals

⁴ Since political ideology was traditionally measured by the “conservative-liberal” continuum in Japanese political science, scholars mainly focused on the difference between the conservatives and the liberals [4; 5; 6]. As a result, they did not focus on the heterogeneity among the liberals.

⁵ This is analyzed in detail in Ronald Inglehart’s world value study [7].

described above⁶. We assume that new liberals can be broadly characterized by two following features [9]:

(1) They are related to the “creative class,” which emerged during the period of the IT industry’s rise in the mid-1990s.

(2) They, to some extent, support the “Neo-welfarism” (e.g., [10]), practiced by the Nordic welfare states since the 1990s.

Taking into account these two features, we assume that new liberals could be defined by two following characteristics.

The first characteristic is growth- or investment-orientation. Based on the analysis of Pablo Beramendi *et al.* [11], we interpret the concept of growth-orientation as an inclination to invest in educational and/or cultural capital. Growth-orientation is not the attitude toward asset formation or consumption. Instead, these newly emerging liberals prefer to invest their financial resources in various forms of cultural capital rather than to hold assets (such as land and buildings). In addition, these new liberals, by and large, tend to invest in their children’s and grandchildren’s human capital and not to consume resources by themselves. Conventional liberals do not have this investment-orientation.

However, as Tony Blair’s cabinet in UK in the middle of the 1990s showed us, the idea of investment-oriented public expenditure started to be widely recognized. This liberal investment orientation was later classified and theorized by Anthony Giddens [12], who presented his idea as the “Third Way”. Taking into account Giddens’ Third Way, we assume that investment orientation is a distinguishing feature of new liberals.

The second characteristic of newly emerging liberal class is what we name universalism.

Here, universalism is a position that, on the one hand, is opposed to localism and, on the other, to global monism. For example, unlike global monism, universalism does not deny the significance of the nation-state as a unit of culture and governance [13]. Universalism admits a certain role of authority, tradition, and conformity in the nation-state. In Japan, for example, new liberals take a position, concerning the issue of the Japanese Constitution’s Article 9, which stipulates perpetual abandonment of war (absolute pacifism), different from the one supported by conventional liberals. While old liberals deny every authority that has the political power to organize defense, new liberals admit that certain authorities might do so⁷. Another example is the issue of a female successor to the Japanese emperor. While old liberals deny the authority of symbolic emperor system *per se*, new liberals support the idea of a “female emperor” as a step against male domination in the emperor system⁸. Universalism is a position that denies neither nationalism nor traditionalism. It seeks the criteria of liberal soundness while admitting social authority, tradition, and conformity.

⁷ Shinzo Abe, the prime minister of Japan and the president of the Liberal Democratic Party, insisted that the main political issue in the election to the House of Councilors, conducted in the summer of 2019, is the choice between a party that just does not argue about the constitution, and the one that does it squarely. This approach shows that the main political issue in contemporary Japan is contested mainly by the mainstream conservatives and the old liberals: the opposition parties, supported by liberals, find it awkward to change Article 9, which stipulates absolute pacifism.

⁸ According to the Asahi Newspaper group’s survey, among the candidates, participating in the House of Councilors election, conducted in the summer of 2019, 34% of the LDP candidates supported the idea of having a female emperor; the corresponding figure for the National Democratic Party, which was founded in 2018, was 70%. We assume that this difference, concerning a female emperor support, might be a central point of the ideological conflict between conservatives and new liberals. See the Asahi Newspaper article, “Female emperor→favor, matrilineal emperor→carefully”, July 18th, 2019, p. 1.

⁶ Here, we assume that ideal features of conventional liberals are the same as those of radical liberals.

However, the question is how to find such criteria for new liberals. The criteria would depend on a particular context or constellation of political ideologies. We thoroughly discuss this issue in the universalism section. In any case, using the conventional framework of liberal vs. conservative, new liberals, if they accept some aspects of authority, tradition, and conformity, might be seen as being even more conservative than old liberals. Thus, they are considered, more or less, conservative⁹. In addition, although new liberals adopt some of these features, they are unlikely to be aware of the criteria used for doing so, and they might not understand that they are liberals. They are more or less silent about their political stances and may not even be aware of their political orientations. If this is, indeed, the case, how can we define new liberals, who are different from conservatives and old liberals, in Japan?

Our main hypothesis is that new liberals might be defined as the relatively independent class sharing two features: investment-orientation and universalism. However, because the criteria of a new liberal are unclear even to new liberals themselves, we adopt the method of latent class analysis to identify them. We shall explain our methodological ideas in the next section¹⁰.

⁹ Younger people, who are highly educated and work at large companies, had traditionally supported liberal parties, such as the Socialist Party of Japan and Japanese Communist Party [14]. However, in the last years, they tend to support conservative parties, such as the Liberal Democratic Party [15].

¹⁰ One may think that the criterion for liberal soundness is the same as the one for conservative soundness, and that the conservatives can be divided into two classes: the extreme and the sound. If this is the case, we may call new liberals as new conservatives too. However, we use the term “new liberal” because, at least in the Japanese context, the ideological confrontation has been transforming from the old liberal versus conservative opposition to the new liberal versus the conservative opposition in many aspects. The axis of political conflict is almost blurred. For example, the Japanese Communist Party is now seen as being extremely conservative, while the Liberal Democratic Party is seen as mildly reformist, as opposed to being conservative [6: Ch.2].

3. Method

3.1. Data and approach

In order to define social characteristics of new liberals, we conducted a web-based survey in September of 2018. Objects of the survey were Japanese men and women aged from 20 to 70. There were 1,200 respondents. Respondents were chosen from the research company’s registration list using quota sampling method – this is, we aimed at a roughly equal proportion of men and women, an equal representation of their ages, and an equal representation of each Japan’s region.

Our first hypothesis is that new liberals have a different, from conservatives and old liberals, political orientation. To examine this hypothesis, we need to classify, or group, Japanese citizens on the basis of their political orientation. In our research, we use latent class analysis¹¹ to classify respondents’ political orientations¹². There are three reasons to use the latent class analysis in this study. First, latent class analysis can classify respondents on the basis of categorical variables. We measured respondents’ political orientation through binary choice questions. Second, latent class analysis can reveal characteristics of each group in the form of response patterns. By comparing response patterns of different groups (e.g.

¹¹ On the method of latent class analysis, see McCutcheon [16], Hagenaars, McCutcheon [17], Collins, Lanza [18].

¹² There are not many studies on political orientations based on the method of latent class analysis. Hagenaars and Halman [19] examined the relationship between religious and political orientations among people with this methodology. However, they focused mainly on the religious consciousness and did not go into people’s political orientations. Savage et al. [20] applied this method to articulate class structure through the data on economic and social capitals. However, they showed no analysis on the relationship between the classes and the political orientations. In Japan, Nagayoshi [21] used this method to classify people’s orientations on the issue of political right of foreign residents. Kanazawa [22] clarified the relations between types of feeling of unfairness and respondent’s socio-economic status, based on SSM data in 1995 in Japan. However, there has been no study which would focus on people’s political orientations per se through this method.

comparing response patterns of new liberals, conservatives, and old liberals), we can interpret these characteristics. Third, latent class analysis enables us to show the relationship between socio-economic status and the probability of belonging to each group by using multinomial logit latent-class regression analysis [23].

3.2. Measurement of Political Orientation

We measured four aspects of respondents' political orientation: their attitude toward investment, their belief in universalism, their political stances on issues which have been at stake between conservatives and old liberals, and their self-recognition of their own political attitudes.

Investment-orientation

We measured respondents' investment orientation through their responses to the following binary choice questions:

[Q1-1] Mr. [David] has already retired, and is he is living on his pension. He has saved up some money and would like to spend it on his grandchild. On the one hand, he thinks that it would be wise to use this money to fund his grandchild's future education and jumpstart his future career. On the other hand, he also thinks that it would be wise to transform his money into an asset (e.g. by purchasing land or stocks), so his grandchild would be financially stable. If you were Mr. [David], what would you prefer?

(1) Use the money to fund educational expenses.

(2) Use the money to buy land or financial assets.

[Q1-2] Mr. [David] and his wife both work and they have two children. They have saved up some money. Mr. [David] can spend this money on school or lessons for himself or his family or can use it to pay for entertainment. If you were Mr. [David], how would you spend these savings?

(1) Spend it on learning for me or my family members.

(2) Spend it on entertainment.

Universalism

As stated above, the second characteristic of a common citizen is "universalism". In regards of authority, tradition, and conformity, universalism pursues criteria similar to those pursued by "new liberals". For example, it welcomes a female emperor in the conventional male emperor system rather than denies the emperor system *per se*. Universalism welcomes females, LGBTs, physically challenged individuals, foreigners, elderly persons, members of minority groups, and other discriminated people to assume leadership positions, if they are eligible to take it up. In this context, the criteria, followed by new liberals, include the fair election of a leader without taking his or her cultural background into account, even if they admit the need for an authority to organize a group or a nation-state.

The second example is about learning *onsen* (hot spring) culture in Japan. Recently, many foreign visitors have been visiting an *onsen*. However, they sometimes ignore *onsen* etiquette (being bare, not eating, drinking, not dyeing hair, etc.). Liberals may tolerate their behavior and admit that there are as many ways of behaving in an *onsen* as there are cultural backgrounds. Liberals show their support for the cultural diversity in taking *onsen*. However, new liberals would use a criterion that is different from the multi-cultural attitude of liberals. Liberal soundness would require the adoption of an attitude that teaches foreigners the *onsen* culture. Further, the foreigners are expected to learn about *onsen* culture. This way, liberal soundness can be seen as an attitude that expands a domestic culture beyond its domestic scope. It does not

deny traditional culture, but it tries to expand its adoption on visitors, or even on other areas¹³.

Thus, there are two criteria for defining new liberals in terms of their attitude toward universalism. We measured universalism through survey participants' responses to the following binary choice questions:

[Q1-3] Mr. [David] runs a hot spring facility for day-trip travelers. Recently, the number of foreign guests has increased, and so have complaints from Japanese customers accusing their foreign guests of bad manners. As a result, Mr. [David] is wondering, whether he should ask travel agencies to stop booking foreign guests for his hot spring or accept these guests despite their poor manners. If you were Mr. [David], what would you do?

(1) Temporarily stop accepting foreign guests at your hot spring.

(2) Have foreign travelers learn manner and continue accepting them.

[Q1-4] Mr. [David] is a manager of a pub chain and he hires a number of Japanese and foreign part-time workers. Although foreign workers do not speak Japanese very fluently, they work harder than Japanese workers. Later, Mr. [David] decided to recruit two additional part-time workers. If you were Mr. [David], would you prefer to hire additional Japanese workers, or would you consider recruiting both Japanese and foreign workers?

(1) Prioritize hiring Japanese workers.

(2) Do not distinguish between Japanese and foreign workers in the hiring process.

¹³ Another example is the issue of high school uniform in Japan. If the idea of liberals implies anti-conformity, as stated above, liberals should, by and large, be critical to the existence of high school uniforms. However, the criteria of a new liberal would suggest that there are good uniforms and bad uniforms. Good uniforms would not reflect an authoritarian style; it would rather be based on a style that encourages students to participate in public and civic activities.

Traditional issues between conservatives and old liberals

We tried to identify differences between conservatives and old liberals through respondents' responses to four following questions reflecting historical and political context of Japan¹⁴:

[Q-2-1] Japan should hold on to its "absolute pacifism". If another country attacks us, Japan should either surrender quickly, without engaging in armed conflict, or resist without coordinated armed forces (i.e., only policemen, not soldiers, should fight).

[Q-2-2] The Japanese government should continue to apologize for Japan's use of "comfort women" in South Korea during World War II until people in South Korea are satisfied by the apology.

[Q-2-3] Japan should not rely on American military power, and the Japan-U.S. security treaty should be abolished.

[Q-2-4] The symbolic emperor system in Japan should be abolished, because it is not compatible with democracy.

These questions have been decisive in determining the political constellation of post-war Japan. So-called old, or post-war, liberals are likely to answer "yes" to these four questions, since they oppose authoritarianism. On the other hand, conservatives are likely to answer "no" to these four questions, since they share the idea of authoritarianism.

Self-recognition of political stance

We measured respondents' political self-positioning by asking them to identify their political attitudes according to a sliding scale (from 0 to 10). For this purpose, we used the following question:

"We sometimes express our political beliefs using the words "liberal" or "conservative".

¹⁴ On the characters of old liberals in Japan, see, for example, Ikeda [24].

How would you express your political beliefs using these two words? If you do not know the meaning of “liberal” or “conservative”, please select “I do not know”.

We considered this question important, because the word “liberal” is associated with old liberal ideology (as discussed above) in Japan. This might cause some difficulties for Japan’s new liberals to express their own political beliefs. We assumed that these new liberals might not have a clear sense of their own political stances.

4. Results

Our study has three main results. First, the latent class analysis suggested that it is appropriate to divide respondents into four groups according to their political orientation. These groups are: a conservative, an old liberal, a new liberal, and a judgement pending class. Second, we identified basic socio-political features of each group, such as age and occupation. Third, we articulated distinctive characters of new liberals: personality, social attitudes, preferred political parties, and social relationships.

4.1. Political orientation of Japanese people: A latent class analysis

We conducted a latent class analysis to classify respondents according to their investment orientation, belief in universalism,

stance on traditional political issues between conservatives and old liberals, and self-recognition of their political beliefs. We chose the 4class model based on the value of BIC (*Tab. 1*).

On the basis of the analysis shown in *Table 2*, we named each of these four classes the conservative class, the judgement pending class, the new liberal class, and the old liberal class according to salient features of respective classes.

The new liberal class included 28% of all respondents. New liberals stand out for their tendency toward universalism. Some of these new liberals positively identified themselves with the term “liberal”. However, 25% of new liberals said that they do not know their own political orientation.

The old liberal class included about 14% of all respondents. Unlike new liberals, old liberals displayed a negative orientation toward universalism. Old liberals tended to answer the set of questions about historical and political contexts of post-war Japan decisively – for example, they tended to affirm the statement that “Japan should pursue absolute pacifism.” Some of these old liberals identified themselves with the word “liberal” in describing their political orientation, but others self-identified with the word “conservative”. This

Table 1. The result of model selection based on BIC

| Model | L ² | df | P-value | BIC |
|---------------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------|
| 1class model | 4681.66 | 1183 | 0.000 | -3705.90 |
| 2class model | 3659.43 | 1165 | 0.000 | -4600.51 |
| 3class model | 3171.70 | 1147 | 0.000 | -4960.62 |
| 4class model | 3042.83 | 1129 | 0.000 | -4961.86 |
| 5class model | 2964.97 | 1111 | 0.000 | -4912.10 |
| 6class model | 2910.25 | 1093 | 0.000 | -4839.21 |
| 7class model | 2866.71 | 1075 | 0.000 | -4755.12 |
| 8class model | 2821.83 | 1057 | 0.000 | -4672.38 |
| 9class model | 2778.10 | 1039 | 0.000 | -4588.49 |
| 10class model | 2728.33 | 1021 | 0.000 | -4510.64 |

Table 2. Latent class analysis of political orientations, %

| Proportion | Conservative | Judgement pending | New liberal | Old liberal | All respondents |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| | 38 | 26 | 22 | 14 | – |
| | Conditional response probability | | | | |
| [Investment] How to leave assets in grandchildren | | | | | |
| Have them use as educational expenses | 48 | 42 | 49 | 42 | 46 |
| Leave it as land and financial assets | 52 | 58 | 51 | 58 | 54 |
| [Investment] How to spend money | | | | | |
| Lessons of myself and family | 53 | 51 | 63 | 61 | 56 |
| Entertainment | 47 | 49 | 37 | 39 | 44 |
| [Universalism] How to respond to foreign group customers | | | | | |
| Do not accept | 32 | 41 | 5 | 43 | 30 |
| Have customers learn manner and continue accepting | 68 | 59 | 95 | 57 | 70 |
| [Universalism] How to recruit people who work part-time | | | | | |
| Prioritize Japanese people | 35 | 40 | 1 | 52 | 31 |
| Recruit without distinction between Japanese and foreigners | 65 | 60 | 99 | 48 | 69 |
| [Traditional Issues] Japan should pursue absolute pacifism | | | | | |
| Agree | 9 | 5 | 23 | 72 | 20 |
| Neither Agree Nor Disagree | 12 | 91 | 35 | 16 | 38 |
| Disagree | 79 | 5 | 43 | 12 | 42 |
| [Traditional Issues] We should apologize to South Korea for the comfort women issue | | | | | |
| Agree | 3 | 4 | 16 | 64 | 15 |
| Neither Agree Nor Disagree | 5 | 86 | 28 | 17 | 33 |
| Disagree | 91 | 10 | 56 | 18 | 52 |
| [Traditional Issues] We should discard the Japan-US Security Treaty | | | | | |
| Agree | 12 | 6 | 17 | 71 | 20 |
| Neither Agree Nor Disagree | 22 | 87 | 59 | 25 | 48 |
| Disagree | 66 | 7 | 24 | 4 | 33 |
| [Traditional Issues] The symbolic emperor system should be abolished | | | | | |
| Agree | 4 | 3 | 13 | 50 | 12 |
| Neither Agree Nor Disagree | 13 | 91 | 29 | 32 | 40 |
| Disagree | 83 | 6 | 58 | 18 | 48 |
| Political stance | | | | | |
| Self-recognized core liberal (0-2) | 4 | 0 | 13 | 12 | 6 |
| Self-recognized liberal (3-4) | 16 | 9 | 24 | 23 | 17 |
| Neutral (5) | 15 | 33 | 19 | 13 | 20 |
| Self-recognized conservative (6-7) | 28 | 21 | 17 | 26 | 24 |
| Self-recognized core conservative (8-10) | 22 | 5 | 2 | 17 | 12 |
| No idea | 16 | 32 | 25 | 9 | 21 |

contradictory result might appear due to our method of assembling and executing the questionnaire¹⁵.

The conservative class included about 38% of all respondents. They showed a tendency to oppose universalism and beliefs associated with the old liberal class. Unlike other classes of respondents, they were more aware of

their ideological position – they identified themselves with the word “conservative”.

The judgment pending class showed a tendency, regarding their belief in investment-orientation and universalism, opposite to the one of new liberals. Regarding the questions concerning post-war Japan, members of the judgment pending class tended to answer “I cannot say either”. When they were asked to identify themselves with the words “liberal” or

¹⁵ It may be necessary to exclude those who tend to answer “yes” to every question from our analysis.

“conservative”, they often chose the “neutral” answers or “I do not know (the meaning of this scale)”. Judging from these non-committal answers, it can be said that members of this class do not have a clear, or well-defined, sense of political consciousness.

Before conducting the survey, we initially made the following hypothesis: the new liberals do not identify themselves as liberals, whereas the old liberal class strongly identifies itself as liberals. However, according to our latent class analysis, new and old liberals almost equally identified themselves with the political label of “liberal”. However, among new liberals, there were many of those, who stated that they do not know their own political orientation. On the other hand, according to the survey results, many old liberals identified themselves with “conservative” political label. This may indicate that their attitude of “keeping Article 9 of the Constitution” shows a conservative stance in the situation of facing the reformation of the existing constitution. Old liberals may have good reason to identify themselves as conservatives, because they are aware of so-called liberalizing tendency in Japanese society, which has been happening over the last 70 years, and so they name themselves conservatives in the current historical context.

4.2. Socio-economic status of these four classes

What kind of socio-economic status does each of these four classes have? To answer this question, we first analyzed the relationship between these four classes and personal attributes of its members using multinomial logit latent class regression analysis (*Tab. 3*). Instead of dummy coding, we used effect coding of each categorical variable [25, p.16]. As a result, we can estimate the effects of independent variables in all four classes. The regression coefficient values were determined

by the comparison with the grand mean – the value which represents the difference between a given category (e.g., professional job) and average respondents [26].

Socio-economic features of new liberals include the following ones: they are in their 60s, they graduated from a university or a school, they are professionals, they have comparatively low incomes (their household income is less than 3.5 million yen), and they feel that their social status is lower than it was, when they were 15 years old. It is possible that highly educated people over the age of 60 are the center of this class: their low income might reflect the fact that they have already retired and possibly live on a pension.

Features of the old liberal class: its members are in their 30s, they occupy management positions, and they feel that their social status is higher than it was at the age of 15. This result is somewhat different from our initial conjecture. We initially speculated that old liberals would be elderly people over the age of 60. Our survey may indicate that respondents in their 60s represented an unrepresentative group of highly educated people with substantial Internet literacy. If this is correct, it might be difficult to say that our data accurately reflects the political consciousness of elderly people in Japan. It is possible that our survey does not accurately grasp the presence of old or new liberals over the age of 60.

We also made another hypothesis: new liberal class members would respond that they have higher socio-economic status now than they did at the age of 15. Contrary, our new liberal respondents did not answer that they experienced upward social mobility.

Whereas members of the new liberal class feel that their socio-economic status has declined compared to what it was when they were 15 years old, members of the old liberal

Table 3. The result of multinomial logit latent class regression analysis

| | Conservative | | Judgement pending | | New liberal | | Old liberal | |
|--|--------------|-------|-------------------|-------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|
| | B | S.E | B | S.E | B | S.E | B | S.E |
| Male dummy | | | | | | | | |
| Age | 0.348*** | 0.081 | -0.002 | 0.075 | -0.460*** | 0.123 | 0.114 | 0.101 |
| 20–29 | 0.148 | 0.158 | 0.264† | 0.145 | -0.499† | 0.279 | 0.087 | 0.203 |
| 30–39 | -0.151 | 0.141 | -0.012 | 0.134 | -0.206 | 0.224 | 0.369* | 0.160 |
| 40–49 | -0.169 | 0.128 | 0.229† | 0.126 | 0.162 | 0.194 | -0.223 | 0.168 |
| 50–59 | 0.248† | 0.128 | 0.055 | 0.138 | -0.082 | 0.208 | -0.220 | 0.193 |
| 60–70 | -0.076 | 0.133 | 0.536*** | 0.145 | 0.625** | 0.188 | -0.013 | 0.177 |
| Educational background | | | | | | | | |
| Middle School / High School | -0.020 | 0.108 | -0.031 | 0.110 | -0.118 | 0.170 | 0.169 | 0.139 |
| College of Technology / Junior College / Vocational School | 0.188† | 0.110 | 0.116 | 0.113 | -0.151 | 0.161 | -0.153 | 0.156 |
| University / Graduate school | -0.168† | 0.096 | -0.085 | 0.097 | 0.269† | 0.141 | -0.016 | 0.126 |
| Occupation | | | | | | | | |
| Profession | 0.204 | 0.145 | -0.128 | 0.165 | 0.559* | 0.223 | -0.635* | 0.247 |
| Management | -0.321 | 0.207 | -0.301 | 0.242 | 0.143 | 0.329 | 0.479* | 0.227 |
| Clerical | -0.214 | 0.130 | 0.180 | 0.123 | -0.005 | 0.193 | 0.039 | 0.154 |
| Sales / Service | -0.005 | 0.199 | 0.018 | 0.194 | -0.259 | 0.340 | 0.246 | 0.218 |
| Blue collar / Farm | -0.046 | 0.193 | 0.175 | 0.204 | -0.346 | 0.352 | 0.217 | 0.235 |
| Non-worker / Student | 0.382* | 0.162 | 0.056 | 0.154 | -0.092 | 0.254 | -0.346 | 0.220 |
| Non-regular employment dummy | 0.361† | 0.189 | 0.143 | 0.187 | 0.158 | 0.266 | -0.346 | 0.258 |
| Household income | | | | | | | | |
| less than 3,500,000 yen | -0.307* | 0.136 | -0.049 | 0.138 | 0.380* | 0.189 | -0.024 | 0.184 |
| 3,500,000-5,500,000 yen | 0.176 | 0.125 | -0.088 | 0.131 | -0.191 | 0.216 | 0.103 | 0.173 |
| 5,500,000-8,500,000 yen | 0.254* | 0.123 | -0.316* | 0.137 | -0.172 | 0.200 | 0.234 | 0.154 |
| more than 8,500,000 yen | 0.257† | 0.139 | -0.014 | 0.142 | -0.178 | 0.218 | -0.066 | 0.185 |
| D.K. / N. A. | -0.380* | 0.168 | 0.466** | 0.141 | 0.162 | 0.226 | -0.247 | 0.225 |
| Subjective social mobility | | | | | | | | |
| downward mobility | 0.223* | 0.096 | -0.186† | 0.106 | 0.308* | 0.134 | -0.355* | 0.144 |
| no-mobility | -0.063 | 0.093 | 0.448*** | 0.091 | -0.368* | 0.155 | -0.018 | 0.120 |
| upword mobility | -0.171† | 0.098 | -0.262* | 0.110 | 0.059 | 0.149 | 0.373** | 0.125 |
| Pseudo-R ² | 0.102 | | | | | | | |
| N | 1108 | | | | | | | |

† p < 0.10; * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001

class report the opposite. How can we interpret this result? One plausible interpretation is that, although members of the new liberal class have become major players of developing industries, such as the IT industry, they had very high socio-economic status at age 15, due to their parents being relatively affluent, and, therefore, they have experienced a relative decline. Another plausible interpretation is that members of the new liberal class do not necessarily have high incomes. Instead, their jobs are highly creative but generate relatively

low incomes. A third interpretation is that people in their 60s, who have already retired, may now have relatively little disposable income and therefore sense that their socio-economic status has declined. Each of these possibilities needs to be examined in further studies.

Members of the conservative class displayed the following features. They are mostly men in their 50s. They attended technological institutes, junior colleges, and vocational schools. They have no job, or they are students, non-regular employees, or have a relatively high

income. They feel that their socio-economic status is higher now than at the age of 15. We might conclude that the conservative class consists of two different groups: (1) those who are middle-aged and older, having high incomes but low levels of education, and (2) those who are non-permanent workers and feel that their socio-economic status has declined since they were 15. Why do these less-educated and higher-earning people tend to become conservative? One interpretation is that male workers in their 50s support the status quo of our society, because they feel that their hard work enabled them to earn higher incomes over the course of their lifetime despite their poor educational background.

Members of the judgment pending class have the following characteristics. They are predominantly in their 20s and 40s. They reported that they do not know their household income, and answered that their socio-economic status is almost the same now as it was at the age of 15. Given their young age, it is true that respondents in their 20s are still developing their political orientation, and this might explain the ambivalence of some members of this class. However, how can we explain the political ambivalence of those members of this class who are in their 40s? This requires further study too.

4.3. Personalities and classes

Next, let us analyze the relationship between four classes and our original categories of “personhood clusters” (*Tab. 4*).

Our 18 categories of “personhood clusters” which appear in the questionnaire in *Table 4* are gleaned from the works of other social theorists. These categories are: (1) creative class [27], (2) low-income creative class [27], (3) conversation lover (hierarchical transparency) [28], (4) conversation lover (e.g. in a pub) [28], (5) ex-cultural circle [30], (6) Internet

cave man [31], (7) online originator [31], (8) entrepreneurial culture supporters [32], (9) homogeneous intimacy-oriented people [28], (10) herbivorous boy [33], (11) naturalist [33], (12) matter-consumer [33], (13) comedy-loving satire [34], (14) person good at caring [35], (15) enlightened consumer [33], (16) minimalist [33], (17) working poor [36], (18) celebrated housewife [37].

Members of the new liberal class exhibit traits of conversation lovers (hierarchical transparency), ex-cultural circles, homogeneous intimacy-oriented people, naturalists, matter-consumers, people who are good at caring, comedy-loving satirists, minimalists, and the working poor.

Members of the conservative class, on the other hand, exhibit the characteristics of online originators, homogeneous intimacy-oriented people, naturalists, matter-consumers, and enlightened consumers. For example, people in the conservative class are distinctive in their usage of the Internet as a tool for disseminating their own information.

Members of the old liberal class share the characteristics of the low-income creative class, entrepreneurial culture supporters, and comedy loving satirists.

Members of the judgement pending class did not show any correlation with the 18 personality characteristics listed above.

Comparing the new liberal class with the conservative class, we can see that both classes share the characteristics of homogeneous intimacy-oriented people, naturalists, and matter-consumers. However, when we interpreted these findings using correlation analysis instead of latent class analysis, we found significantly different results. While new liberals who are defined by investment orientation and universalism-orientation correlate to the clusters of homogeneous

Table 4. Personalities of the four classes, %

| Вариант ответа | Conservative | Judge me nt pe nding | New liberal | Old liberal | All respondents |
|--|--------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| (1) I want to engage in creative things both in hobbies and work. | 35.7 | 23.7 | 37.4 | 34.2 | 32.7 |
| (2) Even if the salary is low, I want to get a culturally valuable job. | 14.2 | 6.9 | 17.4 | 19.9 | 13.8 |
| (3) I like to talk with people without concern for each other's social status in circles and events. | 21.4 | 8.5 | 31.7 | 26.7 | 21.0 |
| (4) I like to talk to people in a bar or a tavern. | 17.9 | 12.0 | 20.0 | 22.4 | 17.4 |
| (5) I have been active in cultural club activities and circles in junior high school, high school or college (university). | 25.2 | 11.4 | 31.7 | 21.1 | 22.4 |
| (6) I like to do "favorite registration" on the net and to make a list of "my favorites". | 21.0 | 10.4 | 18.5 | 15.5 | 16.9 |
| (7) I like to write and transmit information on the net. | 7.0 | 2.5 | 4.9 | 8.1 | 5.5 |
| (8) I like to support minor idol or artist activities that have not yet been sold so much. | 5.0 | 3.5 | 3.8 | 11.8 | 5.3 |
| (9) I like to spend time with people whose tastes are similar to me. | 34.6 | 14.5 | 37.4 | 33.5 | 29.8 |
| (10) It is OK for me to make lunch box every morning for my partner, so I want my wife (or future wife) to work. | 4.2 | 1.6 | 4.2 | 5.0 | 3.6 |
| (11) I prefer simple and natural life than gorgeous one. | 46.2 | 25.9 | 55.8 | 31.7 | 41.0 |
| (12) I would like to spend money on eating and traveling rather than materials such as clothes and furniture. | 21.2 | 9.8 | 21.9 | 13.0 | 17.3 |
| (13) I like comedy-related performers who will laugh away the authority of the great people. | 14.2 | 6.9 | 21.5 | 21.1 | 14.8 |
| (14) I am good at caring people gently, so I think that it is suitable for me to do medical and nursing care work too. | 8.8 | 3.5 | 11.7 | 9.3 | 8.1 |
| (15) I think it is better to buy items after thinking carefully, not distracted by advertisements. | 42.2 | 18.6 | 35.5 | 23.6 | 32.0 |
| (16) I want to live without material things as much as possible. | 36.8 | 29.3 | 42.3 | 26.7 | 34.7 |
| (17) I am now working with low wage (minimum wage), and there is no hope in the future. | 9.2 | 8.8 | 12.8 | 6.2 | 9.5 |
| (18) I am a full-time housewife of a college graduate, and it is natural to use more than 1,000 yen for the lunch when eating out. | 3.3 | 5.0 | 3.0 | 3.7 | 3.8 |
| Bold: Adjusted residual is +1.96 or more. | | | | | |

intimacy-oriented people, naturalists, and matter-consumers, conservatives did not exhibit the same correlations. Through latent class analysis, the new liberals differentiate themselves from conservatives by being strongly oriented toward communication, culture, and critical thinking.

We did not identify any distinguishing personal characteristics of the old liberal class through our latent class analysis. Further studies are required for examination of old liberals' personal characteristics. Perhaps, it could be done by setting up another questionnaire which would better capture old liberals' personal characteristics.

4.4. Social attitudes of new liberals

What are the social attitudes of new liberals? We would like to address our hypothesis on the differences between conservatives and new liberals using two basic propositions: (A) It is legitimate to choose our leader based on our conventional value scale. (B) On the basis of the conventional value scale, inferior people should be evaluated lower. The sense of a conventional value scale mentioned in (A) and (B) means conservative implications for our society. Other propositions (A) and (B) are essentially meritocratic, i.e., they espouse a social hierarchy legitimated by merit or ability. Our hypothesis is that new liberals would be critical of these two propositions and address the following considerations [9]:

(1) New liberals would welcome those who are inferior, given the existing value scale, to take positions of social leadership. For example, new liberals might believe that the Japanese emperor should be female. New liberals would not deny authority *per se* but prefer to admit sound authority. We call this idea "equalization".

(2) These propositions will serve as a test for defining what liberals consider "sound

authority". New liberals might show their commitment and loyalty to their organization, or nation, when the governing authority is sound in terms of equalization, as discussed above. We call this idea "sound loyalty".

(3) New liberals might think that it is not always appropriate to admit a person into a leadership position according to the existing value scale. For example, new liberals might not think that it is wise, or good, to uncritically follow the whole purpose and structure of their organization. Instead, they might try to maintain a sound, critical attitude toward any kind of subordination. We call this a "critical attitude".

(4) The same way, new liberals would attempt to take a critical stance on their membership in a given organization. They would try not to show too much commitment to their organizations, because it might be deemed uncritical. We call this "de-contextualism".

(5) New liberals would think that a person, who is inferior, according to the existing value scale, is not necessarily inferior in another value scale, and the value of each person should be recognized as universal or intrinsic. They believe that existing value scales are problematic, because the authorities, who create or created these scales, excluded subordinated people on the basis of tradition and social uniformity. New liberals believe that inferior people are not necessarily inferior and that these peoples' universal human rights should be recognized. This position can be called an "anti-prejudice" position.

On the basis of these speculations, we determined few basic social features of new liberals: equalization, sound loyalty, critical attitude, de-contextualism, and anti-prejudice. However, the results of the latent class analysis did not completely support all these features (*Tab. 5*).

Table 5. Social attitudes of four classes, %

| | Conservative | Judgement pending | New liberal | Old liberal |
|--|--------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|
| [Equalization] We should assign a certain portion of leaders to women in many organizations. | 29.1 | 18.3 | 31.0 | 53.4 |
| [Equalization] It is unavoidable that there are social advantages or disadvantages depending on the family environment and the living areas. | 55.8 | 26.2 | 40.0 | 52.8 |
| [Sound Loyalty] If the leaders of your country, region, or organization are those who value freedom and equality, I would like to contribute as much as I can. | 49.4 | 20.2 | 63.4 | 62.8 |
| [Critical Attitude] Even in a convincing organization management at present, it should give the members more opportunities to discuss the management. | 63.9 | 29.7 | 68.7 | 72.0 |
| [De-contextualism] I want to belong to multiple organizations in order not to be bound by human relations in one organization. | 37.7 | 18.0 | 44.2 | 18.3 |
| [De-contextualism] I am the person who accomplishes the task no matter how irrational the request is. | 32.2 | 18.0 | 37.0 | 46.6 |
| [Anti-Prejudice] There is no problem even if a foreigner becomes his / her boss, when the boss doesn't have any problem in Japanese language skill. | 64.6 | 30.9 | 75.4 | 67.7 |

Our analysis shows that new liberals exhibit all five of these features. However, almost 40% of new liberals accepted various inequalities in their family environment. It implies that new liberals do not tend to support egalitarianism which stresses equal opportunities for all, regardless of context.

It should be noted that, in our study, conservatives also showed a positive thinking toward critical attitudes, and old liberals, to certain degree, strongly supported the idea of assigning female leaders. In this regard, old liberals are different from conservatives and new liberals. While new liberals might support a symbolic female emperor, they do not support the idea of assigning certain proportion of women to leadership positions.

More differences appear when we review the classes' responses to the statement, "I am the person who accomplishes the task no matter how irrational the request is". Old liberals tended to answer "yes", which means that they tolerate doing unreasonable work assigned to them. Therefore, old liberals might see themselves as being deprived of autonomous judgment due to their

membership in given organizations. This attitude is opposite to the attitude of new liberals.

4.5. Supporting parties

Next, let us analyze the relationship between four classes, precipitated by latent class analysis, and the political parties' members of each class support (*Tab. 6*).

We see that new liberals support the Constitutional Democratic Party more often than people from other classes. However, nearly 70% of new liberals do not support any political parties. It shows their strong independence regarding existing political parties. It is also interesting to point out that the percentage of those who do not support any political parties is very similar in the judgement pending and new liberal classes. Old liberals support so-called leftist parties: the Constitutional Democratic Party, the National Democratic Party, the Communist Party, and the Social Democratic Party. However, nearly 30% of the people in this group support the Liberal Democratic Party – the dominant and largely conservative political party in Japan. Conservatives favor the LDP more than people of other classes.

Table 6. Supporting party of four classes, %

| Party | Conservative | Judgement pending | New liberal | Old liberal | All respondents |
|---------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Liberal Democratic Party | 33.5 | 18.6 | 10.6 | 28.0 | 23.8 |
| Constitutional Democratic Party | 4.8 | 3.2 | 10.6 | 9.9 | 6.3 |
| National Democratic Party | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.1 | 3.1 | 0.7 |
| Komeito | 1.1 | 1.9 | 1.5 | 1.9 | 1.5 |
| Communist Party | 1.8 | 2.5 | 4.5 | 8.1 | 3.4 |
| Japan Restoration Party | 2.0 | 1.9 | 3.0 | 1.9 | 2.2 |
| Socialist Party | 0.0 | 0.3 | 0.4 | 2.5 | 0.5 |
| Other parties | 1.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.4 |
| No political party | 55.8 | 71.6 | 68.3 | 44.7 | 61.3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Table 7. Marital Status and the Number of Children of four classes

| Marital Status | Conservative | Judgement pending | New liberal | Old liberal |
|---------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Unmarried | 36.1 | 41.0 | 32.8 | 29.8 |
| Married | 57.3 | 51.7 | 57.7 | 67.1 |
| Devorse or Lost | 6.6 | 7.3 | 9.4 | 3.1 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| $X^2(6)=15.031. p < 0.01$ | | | | |
| The Number of Children | Conservative | Judgement pending | New liberal | Old liberal |
| 0 | 49.5 | 57.7 | 51.3 | 41.0 |
| 1 | 15.8 | 13.6 | 11.7 | 11.8 |
| 2 | 25.6 | 23.7 | 28.3 | 35.4 |
| Over 3 | 9.2 | 5.0 | 8.7 | 11.8 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| $X^2(9)=21.694. p < 0.01$ | | | | |

4.6. New liberal class and family

Lastly, we examine the relationship between new liberals and social issues involving their family and friends (e.g., work and child-care reform, LGBT partnership, etc.), which have recently become very important in Japan. We hypothesize that the most important social network for individuals is no longer their family network, but the one based on a wider circle of people outside the family. Firstly, we examined the family structure of four classes – i.e., their marital status and the number of children in their family.

New liberals show higher rates of divorces or lost spouses. On the other hand, conservatives and members of the judgement pending class

show higher rates of non-marriage (*Tab. 7*). We also examined the relations between four classes and social networks outside of the family – e.g., neighbors, friends, and acquaintances (*Tab. 8*).

New liberals have slightly higher number of close friends and neighbors than conservatives, much higher numbers of acquaintances than conservatives and members of the judgement pending class have. These results show that new liberals have weaker but broader social networks than other people do.

5. Conclusions

In this paper, we presented our articulation of various features of an emerging middle class in Japan by using latent class analysis. Overall,

Table 8. Neighbors, Friends and Acquaintances Networks of Four Classes, %

| The number of close neighbors | Conservative | Judgement pending | New liberal | Old liberal |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|
| 0 | 65.4 | 62.1 | 57.7 | 48.4 |
| 1-2 | 20.4 | 21.1 | 25.3 | 20.5 |
| 3-5 | 10.7 | 11.4 | 10.6 | 20.5 |
| 6-10 | 2.8 | 2.5 | 4.9 | 4.3 |
| Over 11 | 0.7 | 2.8 | 1.5 | 6.2 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| $\chi^2(12)=40,431, p < 0,001$ | | | | |
| The number of close friends | Conservative | Judgement pending | New liberal | Old liberal |
| 0 | 65.4 | 62.1 | 57.7 | 48.4 |
| 1-2 | 20.4 | 21.1 | 25.3 | 20.5 |
| 3-5 | 10.7 | 11.4 | 10.6 | 20.5 |
| 6-10 | 2.8 | 2.5 | 4.9 | 4.3 |
| Over 11 | 0.7 | 2.8 | 1.5 | 6.2 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| $\chi^2(12)=42,473, p < 0,001$ | | | | |
| The number of acquaintances | Conservative | Judgement pending | New liberal | Old liberal |
| 0 | 23.9 | 39.1 | 15.8 | 19.9 |
| 1-2 | 15.1 | 20.2 | 16.2 | 23.0 |
| 3-5 | 21.0 | 17.7 | 20.8 | 24.2 |
| 6-10 | 17.7 | 11.0 | 18.5 | 13.0 |
| Over 11 | 22.8 | 12.0 | 28.7 | 19.9 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| $\chi^2(12)=71.033, p < 0,001$ | | | | |

our results prove our hypotheses. However, some results did not meet our expectations. Although our survey might have had some deficiencies, we find that new liberals are not experiencing upward social mobility. On the contrary, members of the conservative class are experiencing upward social mobility. It seems paradoxical and, perhaps, requires more study.

New liberals can be seen as one of four classes in our latent class analysis. Their distinctive features are: people in their 60s, they graduated from a university or a school, they are professionals, they have low income, and they feel that their hierarchical status is lower than it was when they were at the age of 15. Their personalities are: conversation lover (hierarchical transparency), ex-cultural circle, homogeneous intimacy-oriented people,

naturalist, a matter-consumer, a person good at caring, loving comedy satire, minimalist, and working poor. Almost 70% of new liberals do not support any parties. They also have the following characteristics: (1) they are willing to participate in discussions on the management of their organizations, (2) they prefer to belong to more than one community in order not to be constrained by specific common values of a community, (3) they welcome those who are *prima facie* seen as inferior (such as women and foreigners) to become their leaders, and, at the same time, they accept hierarchical relations in their business management, (4) while they think that they need to have a leader for their organization management, they will not obey the leader when their orders are unreasonable, (5) about 40% of new liberals accepted inequalities due to the family environment,

(6) new liberals show higher rates of divorces and lost spouses than other people do. On the other hand, new liberals, in comparison with members of other classes, have broader but weaker ties with people. With the help of our latent class analysis, we discovered that new liberals can be seen as one of four major classes in modern Japan, but they have no political representation in the current political party system.

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