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研究所報告

LETTERS

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**Report on the 12th TU-RIPS Seminar on  
“Shaping Societal Attitudes Towards the Impoverished,”  
held on June 7th, 2024**

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Abstract

The 12th TU-RIPS Seminar, the second seminar on “Poverty and Society”, was held in Hirose Memorial Hall, Alice Mable Bacon Building of Sendagaya Campus, Tsuda University on June 7th, 2024. “Poverty and Society” is the thematic topic of the seminar series of the Research Institute for Policy Studies, Tsuda University this year. We invited Dr. Octasiano Miguel Valerio Mendoza, Associate Professor at IQS School of Management, Universitat Ramon Llull to talk about poverty, inequality, and his research findings on aporophobia. In the seminar, we also conducted a participatory activity to assess the degree of aporophobia at the individual level. This seminar was conducted in a hybrid format. About eighty-five people participated in this event.

The 12th TU-RIPS Seminar, the second seminar on “Poverty and Society”, was held in Hirose Memorial Hall, Alice Mable Bacon Building of Sendagaya Campus, Tsuda University on June 7th, 2024. “Poverty and Society” is the thematic topic of the seminar series of the Research Institute for Policy Studies, Tsuda University this year. The first seminar on “Poverty and Society,” in view of sociology and gender studies, was held on May 16th, 2024. Dr. Ruri Ito, Professor Emeritus at Hitotsubashi University gave a talk on overseas employment and gendered poverty and presented her research results on the life histories of female Overseas Filipino Workers. For the second seminar on “Poverty and Society” with regard to economic policies, we invited Dr. Octasiano Miguel Valerio Mendoza, Associate Professor at IQS School of Management, Universitat Ramon Llull in Spain. His research interests lie in quantitative analyses of development economics and international development. He first presented the basics and backgrounds of poverty and inequality. Then, he explored the societal attitudes towards the poor, based on the outcome of his recent research on aporophobia.

His talk consisted of three parts: inequality and society, poverty and society, and the

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societal attitudes towards the poor and aporophobia.

In the first part of his presentation, Dr. Valerio Mendoza explained the development of different measurements of inequality and the characteristics of each measurement. Then, he demonstrated the relationship between income inequality and key economic variables, such as income per capita, in association with the Kuznets curve. He also stressed the importance of income inequality with their findings of the betterment in health and social development in more equal societies. For instance, better child well-being, fewer chronic disease patients, lower crime rates and drug addiction rates are associated with lower income inequality. He also highlighted that there are various important inequalities other than income, for example, in terms of wealth, opportunities, education, political participation, gender, and race. He concluded the first part of his talk by illuminating the world income inequality. According to his graph based on Chancel and Picketty (2021), the richest 10% rigidly share more than a half of the world income, whereas the share of the bottom 50% is less than 10% and decreasing over time.

In the second part, he described two representative indicators of poverty in development economics: absolute poverty, and relative poverty. Those indicators for China between 1980 and 2016, summarized in Chen and Ravallion (2021), show completely different pictures, the reduction of poverty and increase in poverty.

In the third part, the main part of his talk, he fully explained aporophobia. The emergence of aporophobia in Spain may be recent but the public recognition is intense. Aporophobia, the fear, or rejection of the poor, exists at all levels of the society and it may create problems through the societal/institutional adoption of misleading conformities. Dr. Valerio Mendoza and his team constructed an indicator to measure the degree of aporophobia at the country level and estimated for European countries and the United States. More European countries show stronger aversion towards the poor after the year 2000, compared to before 2000. They also investigated a question to observe, to what extent, individuals agree on the idea that people live in need because of laziness and lack of willpower. They found that if there are proportionately more educated people, less religious people, and more government social expenditure, societies are less likely to be aporophobic. Among characteristics of individuals, elderly people are more, and females are less likely to be aporophobic, according to the recent regression analysis of Dr. Valerio Mendoza and his team (Comim, Borsi, and Valerio Mendoza, 2024). Close to the end of the presentation, he introduced the Aporophobia Implicit Association Test (IAT). This is a part of the project of Harvard University “Implicit” to evaluate unconscious bias of people. His institution contributed to this project on the subject of aporophobia. The audience tried the IAT to assess the degree of aporophobia.

After his lecture, participants raised interesting points, such as the relationship between the religion and aporophobia, the fear of inequality in the society, and the disaggregation of labor

force.

Overall, we have some kind of unconscious bias against certain groups or some matters, but, in general, it is hard to recognize those biases. If we could recognize our unconscious biases from time to time, we may be able to promote more ethical and considerate societies. The IAT seems to be at its trial stage. I hope more people will have access to this test in the future.

About eighty-five people, mostly sophomore students at the Department of Policy Studies, Tsuda University, participated in this event. Naoko Shinkai, Director of the Research Institute for Policy Studies, Tsuda University facilitated this seminar.

Photos:



Dr. Octasiano Miguel Valerio Mendoza during his talk  
(Permission granted by the speaker)