1. The statistics that we examined in class reveal the great extent to which my educational environment was advantaged and blessed with privilege. The most important finding of this exercise is not how may privileges and advantages I personally entertained, but the advantages that my peers and those I associated myself with possessed, i.e., how much of a deviation my ‘habitus’ was from the norm. Specifically, items such as number of books in the 8th grade and parents’ educational background highlight the way in which certain demographics were disproportionately represented in my childhood, while others were underrepresented. In 8th grade, 80 percent of my peers, including myself, had over 100 books in our homes, whereas the national ratio of students with over 100 books in their homes at that age is a meager 31 percent. This is a strong indicator of the abundance of social capital in my educational environment when compared to the average student in Japan. In terms of parental educational background, while nation-wide statistics would predict that only 41 percent of my peers would have at least one parent with a university degree or higher, the actual number was a staggering 100 percent. I did not know a single person whose parents had not graduated university and at least attained a bachelor’s degree. These numbers help elucidate the significant advantages in my educational environment that the average student in Japan does not have access to. It is only reasonable to think that these advantages, unfairly distributed among the population, are a large determinant of success in schools and academic achievement.
2. We have already established that within Japan my educational environment afforded me unfair advantages that the average student has no means of accessing. Even if we extend our frame of reference to include countries across the globe, I am still in a uniquely privileged position. This is apparent for two reasons. Firstly, the nation of Japan already offers considerable educational advantages towards its nationals compared to other nations. Secondly, even in the already privileged environment of Japan, I possess comparative advantage in education compared to other students of my country. The privileged environment of Japan can be observed in the percentage of nationals with a bachelor’s degree or equivalent. Close to one half of the Japanese population possesses a bachelor’s or equivalent degree, an exceptionally high number when compared with other countries. Other Asian countries such as China and Indonesia have numbers around the one fifth mark, while even in advanced economies such as the United States and Canada, degree holding graduates are 38 percent and 33 percent of the population respectively, not nearly as high as Japan. Furthermore, 90 percent of students I know from my age cohort are set to graduate with a bachelor’s or equivalent degree, indicating my privileged position with Japan and, perforce, abroad as well.   
   If I was from a country that was not as economically advanced as Japan and did not have as many educational opportunities for higher education, it is unlikely that I would be attending a reputable institution of higher learning like I am currently. Much of our educational trajectory is influenced by factors determined by the arbitrary conditions we are born in, as can be surmised from the statistics we have examined in class. Stands to reason that being born and raised in a place like South Africa, where the ratio of bachelor’s or equivalent degree holders is 11 percent, would significantly reduce my chances of moving on to higher education.
3. Some may dismiss the effects of university education on one’s life as irrelevant and discredit the power of higher education, but as long as degrees are used to signal ability in the job market, and there exist such striking disparities in incomes between degree holders and non-holders as exist now, the educational competition cannot be considered fair. Many of the factors that determine educational outcomes that we examined in class have close ties to wealth and parental education. If a parent has a degree and is well educated, they are more likely to possess social capital (measured in indicators such as the quantity of books they possess) and have higher expectations for their children’s education. Furthermore, if a parent has a degree they are likely to be able to afford more resources conducive to their children’s education, such as shadow education (which will invariably affect the amount of time a student spends studying outside of school) and their children’s own room and a stable internet environment. These resources available to students translate into merits and help their children complete higher education to obtain a degree. Once children obtain their degrees, they can make more money than their counterparts without degrees and repeat the cycle. Thus, wealth is dynastically transmitted via education and social mobility is trumped. In a capitalist society where wealth directly affects people’s standards of living, education has the potential to condemn an individual to a life of material modesty or ensure them a future of extravagance. For such a process to be considered fair, it must at the very least meet the criterion of equality of opportunity, but as we have examined hitherto, opportunity for education is far from equal. Therefore, the process of educational competition is not fair and the results it yields are far from legitimate.