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School as Classificatory Machine:

Sorting, Socialization, and Class in a Japanese Middle School

By
Jeehwan Park

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of philosophy

in

Anthropology

in the

Graduate Division

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University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Nelson Graburn, Chair
Professor Mariane Ferme
Professor Susan Holloway

Spring 2011

Abstract

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This dissertation calls attention to the ways in which Japanese middle school education creates as well as reflects class divisions. It not only examines conditions in which students' class positions may shape their career choices in the transition from middle to high school, but also illuminates the ways in which class dispositions and practices are constructed through formal schooling in contemporary Japanese society. As such, it aims to understand how class works in the society not only as divisions but also as formations, and to propose how we can do an ethnographic analysis of class.

The second chapter examines high school reforms, teachers' educational movements, and a change in the Japanese model of learning. It shows that structural, social, and cultural transformations surrounding secondary schooling in Japan may contribute to the growing effects of middle school students' family background on the transition to high school.

The third chapter describes how evaluations and tracking in middle school create a sense of one's place in society. It documents sorting processes through which low achieving students coming from lower-class families are socialized to take positions into which they were born without complaint.

The fourth chapter explores how middle school teachers' career guidance works to maintain class division in educational aspirations and then in educational attainment. Teachers try to preserve educational aspirations that students already have rather than to encourage them to have higher goals. Such counseling works to discourage lower-class children more than middle-class ones, thereby leading to the unintended consequence of differentiations of educational attainment along class lines.

The fifth chapter demonstrates how a minority culture is created by schooling and how it is related to the minority's class location. To this end, in addition to referring to the literature on formations of the minority culture, it examines an educational practice through which elementary school teachers prioritize minority boys' manual over academic education.

Finally, the conclusion reconsiders socio-cultural, theoretical, and practical implications of the above ethnographic descriptions, whereby it strives to suggest a way of doing ethnography on class and of reducing the effect of class on education.

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I. Introduction

A 51-year old widow who "works mornings making boxed lunches and afternoons delivering newspapers" cannot afford to see a doctor or has to "cut back to two meals a day" in order to buy her daughter $700 high school uniforms (Fackler 2010). A 38-year-old housewife is worried that her children's places are "already fixed in the new nation of winners and losers" because with the income, which her husband earns by working at a small factory, "she and her husband cannot afford the private schools, or even the cram schools-for-profit supplemental programs-that would raise their children's chances of getting into good colleges and securing their future" (Onishi 2006). You may think that these stories are about people in developing countries. However, "the new nation" where people are sorted into "winners and losers" is no other than Japan, which was once called *sōchūryū shakai*, all-middle-class society. In 2005, Japan's poverty rate, at 14.9 percent, was the fourth highest of the 30 countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD 2008).[1] It seems that the golden age when most Japanese identified themselves with or could expect to become a member of middle class has passed.

Instead, *kakusa shakai*, divided society, has substituted the previous classless model since the eve of 21st century. Even though mass media has concocted a flood of sensational words like *kachikumi*, winners and *makekumi*, losers to capture growing socioeconomic disparities, academic research on inequality in contemporary Japanese society has also been prevalent for the last ten or so years. Tachibanaki (1998) first ignited the debate on economic inequality by arguing that the disparity in income and assets has increased since the late 1980s. Satō (2000) caused more anxiety about the rigidity of social mobility by showing that since the 1990s unless you are born to the upper white-collar class, you are less likely to reach the elite group. Furthermore, other researchers even asserted that people have been divided in terms of their attitude toward life as well as in their material conditions in recent years (Kariya 2001; Miura 2005; Yamada 2004). While Kariya mentioned that social origin has increasingly affected not only academic achievement and attainment but also educational aspirations, Miura showed that the low stratum of people do not even aspire to climb the social ladder. In short, as Yamada summarized, there is a division in aspirations for the future. Thus, all the scholarship suggests that Japan has transformed from an equal society to an unequal one since the 1990s.

Nevertheless, it is hard to say that Japanese society has become more stratified since the 1990s. According to 2005 Social Stratification and Mobility Research (SSM), which has been conducted every 10 year since 1955, the association between class origin and class destination in the society has been remarkably stable during the post-war period (Ishida 2010:45). The 2005 SSM result even suggests that the society might be becoming gradually more equal: parents' educational level affects a child's chances of entering higher education

[1] The OECD measures the extent of poverty in a country by the percentage of people who have below the half of the national median household income. What matters in understanding poverty is the standard of living relative to other people in the country. According to this criterion, a household consisting of four persons needs at least $30,000 in order to meet this standard living in Japan, and yet its poverty rate means that almost 15 percent of people in the nation do not reach this level of income. In 2005, the average poverty rate across the OECD countries was 10.6 percent, and that of the United States which ranks the third highest was 17.1 percent.

less from generation to generation (Kikkawa 2009:206). It is important not to interpret these analyses as proving no effects of class origin on life chances in Japanese society: one's social position shapes one's offspring's education, employment and class affiliation in Japanese society as much as in other advanced societies such as the United States and Germany (Ishida 2010:52). Thus, the 2005 SSM only means that the society has been as much unequal in the period of both "all-middle-class society" and of "divided society."

What is at stake is to understand why the divided society model has such great resonance for all walks of life (Chiavacci 2008; Slater 2011; Sugimoto 2010). We can locate reasons in the transformations in three institutions, i.e., the family, the school, and the workplace, which, in a normative sense, had supported "New Middle-class (NMC) Japan" by the 1980s (Kelly 2002:239-240).[2] School provided Japanese children with standardized education, and helped them to find jobs through a meritocratic referral system. Then the Japanese company recruited school leavers and ensured that they would enjoy seniority-based income and lifetime employment. The smooth functioning of school and work was supported by a strict division of labor between husband and wife in the Japanese family: while the former as a breadwinner (over)worked at companies, the latter as a stay-at-home mother entirely took charge of housekeeping and children's education. Despite "a structured differentiation of work places, family forms, and school outcomes," the NMC Japan, which was founded upon the seamless link among family, school and work, created "standardized patterns of life" and the "mainstream consciousness" of all middle-class members among many Japanese people during the highest economic development period (241).

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[2] We must bear in mind that the "NMC Japan" was a normative model for which many Japanese aspired and yet which they did not reached even in the 1980s. There were always distinctions in employment status, family forms, and school qualities. For example, workers in small-medium size firms did not enjoy as much life-time employment and other benefits as their counterparts in large firms (Kondo 1990; Roberson 1998; Turner 1995). Also, as women were supposed to take care of housework and children if they got married, they were seldom assigned to tenure tracks and only got part-time jobs after giving birth (Brinton 1993; Roberts 1994). Then, as Osawa (2002) showed by statistical data, couples consisting of a *salaryman*, a salaried employee and a sengyō shuhu, a full-time housewife were never a majority group of Japanese families. The proportion of such couples just remained 38 percent even during its peak in the late 1970s. Moreover, more than 50 percent of housewives who got married to salaried workers have worked outside home since the mid 1980s. Furthermore, Japan's high schools were highly stratified by academic achievements of entering students and future paths of graduating ones (Rholen 1983). Thus, even in the 1980s when the "NMC" Japan was supposed to be fully blown, there were significant differences in life experiences relative to firms' size, family types, and high school ranking. Nevertheless, before the bubble economy collapsed in the early 1990s, the relatively small income gap between white-collar and blue-collar workers and the effective working of school-to-work transition, which allowed even low-ranking high school graduates to land on full-time jobs, must have made it possible that many Japanese could achieve middle-class lifestyle or at least imagined themselves to do so in the near future (Brown, Reich, Ulman and Nakata 1997; Honda 2004). That is why the "NMC" Japan was a normative model.

However, the concrete trust of the three institutions started to fray in the 1990s (Kelly and White 2006). At first, with the widening economic gap between families, it became obvious that all families did not see children' education in the same way: "middle-class mothers who can spend time on their children's homework, go to PTA meetings, and arrange *juku* classes or any other necessities to get them through the rigorous exams, tend to believe effort and family mobilization as key to a child's future," whereas "working-class mothers, who work full time outside the home or who themselves lack an educational background that might support children's study, tend to believe that it is genes and luck" (White 2002:103).[3] Additionally, "private secondary schools with six-year middle and high school programs" have increasingly succeeded in "placing their students in elite universities," whereas "public high schools" have been unable to "find jobs for their graduates through the formal job placement procedures" (Kelly and White 2006:65; also Brinton 2011). Finally, as many companies gave up providing life-time employment and replaced former full-time jobs with temporary positions, workers, particularly among younger generations, could not expect to stay with a permanent job any longer (Genda 2007). These transformations in all three core fields, which endorsed the social legitimacy and cultural norms of postwar Japan, led to a cleavage in the "mainstream consciousness" among Japanese people, thereby making them look hard at the differences of experiences in families, schools and workplaces. Indeed, the breakdown of the "NMC Japan" paved a path along which the discourse of "divided society" could be accepted by ordinary Japanese over the past ten years.

Japanese people's response to the divided society model can be also seen as an inevitable consequence of "all middle-class society" (Kikkawa 2009:104-110). Through the rapid economic growth since the 1960s, the younger generation experienced a more affluent life than the older generation. Despite relative economic disparity and immobility among classes, most adults reached a better standard of living compared to their parents during the period, and they could positively identify with the middle class. However, since the high level of economic affluence continued for more than 30 years, it has been very difficult for the current generation of workers to be better off than their parents' generation in terms of the absolute amount of economic wealth. Instead, they came to sense more clearly the inequality in relative social mobility among classes. Even if the relative possibility that people can climb the social ladder has hardly changed throughout a plateau of material affluence, people may be more sensitive to who is more advantaged or disadvantaged in social mobility when the economy no longer thrives as it used to. It was not until the end of the economic boom that ordinary Japanese were disillusioned about the constancy of class structure during the post-war period, which made it possible for various discourses of "divided society" to be popularly circulated.

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[3] *Juku* is an institution for private and supplementary education after school. Even though it is often translated cram schools because some students go to *juku* to learn more advanced contents in math and English for high school or college entrance exams, others attend *juku* to review what they cannot understand in school lessons. Thus, instead of cram schools, I just use the Japanese word in this dissertation. In order to learn about the supplementary education in Japan, refer to Roesgaard (2006), Tsukada (1991), and Stevenson and David (1992).

Thus, this understanding of conditions in which the divided society model makes sense to regular Japanese suggests that post-war Japanese society was always divided, and yet that it may have mechanisms through which resources are unequally distributed without provoking a sense of inequality or unfairness. In short, a system that reproduces class inequalities may be at the root of the divided society model (Hashimoto 2009). In this dissertation, therefore, I aim to explore how such system works in contemporary Japanese society. To do so, I will examine what we can "see as formative of practices in class distinctions" throughout middle school years to the transition to high school (Roberts 2005:105). The reason is not only because schooling is the pivotal mechanisms for the distribution or inheritance of social status in modern society in general, but also because this period in the Japanese education system is one of the crucial points when children's sense of social position as well as their life chances is shaped by educational practices such as tracking and career guidance in Japanese middle schools.

Before empirically examining the working of class differentiations in lower secondary education, however, it would be helpful to clarify the concept of class, and to critically review the scholarship on education and reproduction. The conceptual clarification and the literature review will provide the theoretical and methodological basis on which I examine the Japanese schooling as an apparatus of class differentiations. Also, I discuss my research methodology, which will help to understand my findings in historical and ethnographic contexts. Finally, I will end this introduction by outlining the dissertation's chapter organization.

1. Anthropology of Class: An Exploration of "A Sense of One's Place"

An anthropological analysis of class in Japan faces two fundamental problems or doubts: can we study class when it is a concept that neither the anthropologists nor their informants are willing to use? On the one hand, class has not been one of the key concepts in anthropology (Smith 1984:467; Liechty 2003:27; Ortner 2006:21). The anthropologists have seldom approached class in the way in which they have seen other categories of social difference such as race, ethnicity, and gender (Ortner: 66).[4] On the other hand, class is not "a central category of cultural discourse" in Japan just as it is not in the United States (24). Japanese people still find it difficult to identify their social positions in class terms because a public discourse of class did not exist until the divided society model gained public attention. Rephrasing Ortner's term again, class has been "hidden" in both public and individual levels in contemporary Japanese society (79). Thus, a student of anthropology who strives to ethnographically excavate class practices in Japanese society should embrace the double predicaments that the idea of class is central neither to the discipline, nor among its human subjects.

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[4] This does not mean that there are no ethnographic analyses of class. In fact, we have gradually seen more ethnographic literature on class if we include ethnographies produced by sociologists as well as by anthropologists. Particularly, we have rich ethnographies on class reproduction through education (Bettie 2003; Brantlinger 2003; Eckert 1989; Foley 2010; Lareau 2000, 2003; Willis 1981). Also see Lareau (2008:17 footnote 8), Liechty (2003:27-29) and Ortner (2006:chapter 1) for the reviews of ethnographic studies on other aspects of class. Nevertheless, it is still true that within American anthropology, the idea of class is less brought to an analytic focus than that of race, ethnicity, and gender.

Nonetheless, the reason I would use the concept of class is that I believe there are no better notions than class for understanding both structural inequality (ex. disparities in life chances relative to socioeconomic origins) and the difference of social prestige (ex. struggle toward social respectability among classes) in a capitalist society. "Classes" are "positions in social space defined by economic and cultural capital" (Ortner 2006:78). Along with this objective definition, I also use the term in a descriptive way like middle class children or lower class families. In such sense and usage, class appears like a thing: class seems to correspond to groups with similar kinds of occupation and equivalent levels of income and education. This objective definition and usage of the notion may be unjustifiable in anthropology, which sees "some supposedly hard and objective social phenomenon as culturally constructed" (66).

While I bear in mind the fact that class is a social construct like other categories of social differences such as race, ethnicity and gender, I take the objective and descriptive approach to class as a starting point of anthropological study of class for theoretical reasons. First of all, class is more or less given to the extent that no one can choose in which family he or she is born. Class positions may shape not only how people act in certain social contexts but also how they look at themselves and others even when they eventually depart from their original locations (Hook 2000; Lewin 2005). That is to say, class has a certain degree of fixity. In addition, describing low-income minorities in the United States such as African Americans as the lower class is different from simply calling them poor. "Lower-class African Americans" suggest that they are not only economically disadvantaged but also socially subordinate in comparison to their counterparts like "middle-class Anglo-Saxon Americans." Therefore, I define and use the notion of class in a somewhat objective sense just to reveal the given and structured, even if not unchangeable, aspects of class.

Meanwhile, class means more than socioeconomic disparities. Some recent ethnographic analyses of class show that the notion of class is related to the problem of who counts or not in society, in other words, that of self-worth or self-identity in the cultural economy of prestige. For example, in *New Jersey Dreaming*, an ethnographic study on her own high school cohort, Ortner (2003:47) reads class injuries of "feeling small, low, humiliated, envious," which her classmates experienced through differences in grammar schools and consumption goods "in relation to those who had more goods, money, status." Also, in *Suitably Modern: Making Middle-Class Culture in a New Consumer Society*, an ethnography of consuming practices of middle class Nepalese, Liechty (2003:115-116) powerfully shows that they consume goods in "suitably modern" ways not to disclose their economic capacity to purchase them but to "maintain one's place in the middle class cultural economy" and then to claim their self-worth distinguished from that of upper and lower class. In short, what is at issue in the idea of class is not only differences in material possession (i.e. who owns what and how much) but also distinctions in social prestige (i.e. who is classified more respectable than whom).

Methodologically, ethnographic studies, which are usually based upon working with a small number of human subjects, can make a better contribution to understanding "the interplay between the question of life chances and the problem of subjective identity," i.e., how they interpret or perform their class identity under the conditions of limited materials or social discourses (Wright 2005:188). Thus, an anthropological analysis of class coalesces into an ethnographical examination of formations of a sense of one's place in

relation to others in a given condition. Then, in this reshuffling of anthropological inquires of class, it is understood as "a *relational*, rather than simply *gradational* concept" (Liechty 2003:185, emphases in original) and is, by definition, a social construct of "cultural process-active, fluid, contested, in-the-making- not a timeless, objectlike, social category" (255).

In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Bourdieu (1984:466) brings up the concept of "a sense of one's place," which "guides the occupants of a given place in social space toward the social positions adjusted to their properties, and towards the practices or goods which befit the occupants of that position." However, probably because of his heavy dependence on statistical method in the analysis, he seems to end up corresponding certain practices and tastes to each class without exploring how such sense, or more generally speaking class habitus, is formed (Reed-Danahay 2005:59). In other words, Bourdieu's analysis of "class cultures" in the book is somewhat "static" (Foley 2010:184).

Meanwhile, recent ethnographic analyses of class focus on the very problem of formations of "a sense of one's place." For instance, as I already mentioned, Liechty (2003:73) shows how middle-class Nepalese come to get "one marked sense of middle class suitability" through practices in fashion, music, and movies distinguished from those of their upper or lower counterparts. He particularly emphasizes the pivotal role of mass media in the formation of such sense because people learn from and through the media what and how they should consume. In *Women Without Class: Girls, Race and Identity*, ethnography of distinctions of peer groups in a racially mixed American high school, Bettie (2003:200) also finds that a class identity "appeared less as class conscience than as a sense of place" because among high school girls class is often displaced in the language of race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality. Bettie, like Bourdieu and Liechty, highlights the role of consumption in the realization of the sense because each peer group is largely identified by how they dress and make up even though their memberships are more or less identical to their objective class positions. In sum, both the ethnographies successfully examine formations of a class identity by a thick description of consumption practices rather than a statistical match-up between the identity and the practices.

When it comes to my research, however, Bettie's ethnography is more relevant than Liechty's. First, it is because Bettie provides a concise definition of a class identity: it is "a sense of one's place(s) in a cultural economy of meaning-that is, a sense of place or difference that may or may not contain a feeling of opposition or antagonism and that may or may not (more often the latter) be commonly named and known as class" (43). While I agree with her analytic focus on "a sense of one's place" in the anthropology of class, I do not think that a class identity is just one of a myriad of cultural differences.[5] If we regard the identity only as "a sense of one's place(s) in a cultural economy of meaning," we may run the risk of losing the distinctiveness of the concept of class through which we make sense of the structure of inequality in capitalist society. Instead of putting class together

[5] To be fair to Bettie, she investigates not only how high school girls express their distinctive identities through consumption practices, but also how they look at their future in different ways relative to their peer group affiliations. However, when she conceptualizes "a class identity," she seems to fail to incorporate into the concept the differential aspirations for their future.

with all other categories of cultural difference, I wish to define a class identity by which I mean "an *implicit* awareness of one's position *in a political economy of affluence and prestige*." It is the recognition of one's place in the differential distribution of social respect as well as of goods and services, not a simple awareness of cultural differences among social groups. However, it may not be a fully blown consciousness of socioeconomic inequality in the capitalist society because it is mediated through mechanisms which may obscure one's realization of the inequality or legitimate differences both in economic wealth and in social prestige. For example, a class identity could be a structured feeling of self-entitlement or of self-blame for one's fate.

Then, where should the anthropologist look in order to understand the process through which a class identity is naturalized? Following Bettie (and Bourdieu and Liechty), I do not think the identity can originate only from the relation of production. Instead, like Bettie again, I pay attention to a space other than the workplace: the school. In modern society where individual social status is supposed to rely on not what is ascribed to individuals but on what they achieve, the school may be one of the most crucial institutions, which can differentially and yet legitimately redistribute scarce resources from money to prestige. In this sense, the school is "a huge classificatory machine" (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990: x). Thus, there is no better place to take a close look than the school when a student of class analysis strives to understand how a class identity is produced in an everyday space other than the workplace.

However, keeping apart from her once again, I would focus on schooling itself rather than on students' consumption practices. Even though it is true that pupils often experience class differences from what and how they consume, an analytic focus on the consumption practices is likely to lead researchers to look at the representation of a class identity rather than to observe its formation. Meanwhile, I intend to take formations of a class identity as the object of my research by examining schooling as a system of classifying the student body in a daily basis and of generating a sense of one's place both in school and in society. In sum, in this dissertation, I aim to take a close look at educational practices in school as a part of the mechanisms of class production and reproduction.

I started this section with the double predicaments of an anthropological research on class culture in contemporary Japanese society: neither my own discipline nor my human subjects take the concept of class as a keyword. I will return to this problem in the conclusion. For the time being, it is enough to point out that "the hiddenness of class" is a starting point on which anthropologists should work rather than a theoretical and cultural barrier, which prevents them from studying class differentiations among people with whom they work (Ortner 2006:79). Indeed, the anthropologists have developed a methodology of ethnography, which is the most attentive to something untold. How can we grasp a discomfort from achieving upward social mobility, an anxiety from imagining falling down in the social ladder, or the upper-middle class's confidence in the future or the lower class's sense of failure without observing or talking with the human beings in person about their emotional experiences of success or failure? Thus, I think that there is a key to the solution of the double predicaments in applying the ethnographic sensitivity to examining the process through which a class identity is created or what systems in a society may make its members recognize their proper station. This approach would be particularly conducive to understanding class distinctions in postwar Japan for a reason I

will soon discuss. However, in order to do so, I first refer to the literature on education and class reproduction in western countries as well as in Japan.

2. Schooling, Class Reproduction and Middle School Education in Japan

Many students of education have been engaged in examining how disadvantaged students are more likely to fail in school than advantaged ones. They addressed the issue in terms of the correspondence between schooling and work (Apple 1988; Bowles and Gintis 1976), working-class children's resistance to schooling (Cammarota 2004; Fordham 1996; Mirón and Lauria 1998; Ohrn 1993; Willis 1981), the effect of cultural capital on academic achievement and attainment (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Lareau 2000, 2003), and the difference in linguistic codes and practices between working-class children and middle-class school teachers (Anyon 1981; Bernstein 1971; Heath 1983), only to name a few. In short, this scholarship examines the ways in which academic achievement and attainment are differentiated by class origins of children.

However, the scholarship is all the same to the extent that it tends to attribute the alienation of disadvantaged students from schooling to the mismatch between lower class cultural practices and cultural norms in school which supposedly represents middle class values: as lower class students do not have (or follow) middle class cultural norms which are practiced in school, they cannot adapt themselves to and fail in school. It implies that as they are a full carrier of a specific class culture into which they were born, whether or not children will perform well in school is culturally predetermined regardless of the workings of school. This line of inquiry seems to criticize disadvantaged children for not having cultural forms which are taken for granted in the mainstream society.

If we would avoid blaming the victim for their academic failure, we should examine the conditions by which cultural differences that children may bring to school come to matter rather than just assuming the discontinuity between lower-class culture and school culture (McDermott 1997). In this sense, the proper research question is not "why are disadvantaged students more likely to fail than their counterparts?" but "On what conditions do some children fail to perform well in school?" or more precisely "What mechanisms in school may make a certain stratum of children disadvantaged? Then how do those mechanisms work to create a sense of their place?" In other words, we should pay attention to the crucial roles of schooling in the production of class identity and the reproduction of class positions.

To this end, Japanese schools may provide a case for understanding what roles the school plays in producing not only class disparities but also class dispositions because they have played a pivotal role in creating classes rather than reflecting preexistent class cultures since Japan's late modernization (Amano 2006). For instance, during the pre-war period, imperial universities guaranteed their graduates higher positions in national bureaucracy, thereby producing elite classes. However, given that 18.5 percent of people advanced to secondary schools and only 2.5 percent any type of higher education in 1935 (Takeuchi 1995:114), it was not until post-war period when lower and upper secondary schooling was normalized that Japan's education system fully worked to place most people into differential social status according to their educational level.

In this vein, it is particularly important that high schools in Japan have been highly stratified during the post-war era (Hida, Mimizuka, Iwaki, and Kariya 2000; Iwaki and Mimizuka 1983; Kadowaki and Jinnouchi 1992). Even though during the occupation of

Japan after World War II, the General Head Quarters attempted to plant the American model of high school education, which promotes both general and vocational education within one high school, many Japanese parents thought that their children, usually boys, should go to college in order to succeed in life (Amano 1991). Reflecting the growing aspiration to further education, newly opened high schools in the 1960 and 1970s were mostly general high schools. Then a narrowly stratified high school structure was formulated according to differences in entering students' academic achievement and graduates' career paths: the pecking order was usually old elite general high schools, new general high schools, and vocational high schools.

The rich literature on Japan's high schools has confirmed, either statistically or ethnographically, that the high school structure not only corresponds to entering students' place in the class structure but also shapes their life chances after their graduation (Nabeshima 2003b; Nakanisi 2000; Ono 2001; Okano and Tsuchiya 1999; Rohlen 1983; Yoder 2004). On the one hand, according to their place in the high school structure, high school graduates are displaced into stratified higher education system or segmented labor market. In her recent study of transformations of school-to-work system in Japan, Brinton quoted her interview with one teacher who taught at lower-ranking as well as higher-ranking high schools. The teacher said to her, "When Japanese students move from junior high school to high school they become perfectly segregated by their exam score. … What I feel is that at this school [a low performing high school] we are supplying manual labor and in this way sort of supporting the subcontractors in the economy. But what I felt at xxx [a high performing high school] was that we were developing and supplying high-ability, high-quality 'parts' to the government and to companies. … This is strictly my own opinion, but the university exam system seems amazingly well tailored to Japanese companies" (Brinton 2011:95-96). In this manner, the high school hierarchy in Japan served to assign most Japanese people to a certain social stratum.

Japan's high schools do not simply reflect but also produce class divisions as each stratum of high school socializes their students toward different dispositions, life goals, and social positions. In his comparative study of five high schools in Kobe, Thomas Rohlen (1983) mentioned that low-status high school students differed from their counterparts in high-status high schools not only in their academic achievement but also in their attitude to schools, ways of spending time, the extent of buying clothes by themselves, and self-esteem. He concluded that "high school subcultures and their associated life-styles prepare students to take their destined social stations" (Rohlen 1983:302). Through his ethnographic research at a low status high school in Tokyo, David Slater also elaborated how low achieving students learned a nonchalant attitude in the breakdown of a school as a moral community (Slater 2003). He showed that a moral trust between teachers and students collapsed at the low ranked high school in which the former were not sure of what they should teach the latter who may not take a college entrance exam at all. Instead, these teachers could not help relying on strict rules so as to keep order in the school. Such an arbitrary application of rules made their authority more controversial, thereby resulting in the students' non-participation in the school. However, such non-groupist attitudes and dispositions were well fit to irregular and part-time jobs, which these students were likely to get after graduating from the high school, and which did not usually demand a lasting allegiance to their workplaces. In short, they were socialized to take such unstable jobs by learning "the habit of going it alone, of working without the expectation of paternalistic

support or the desire to define themselves by their work, which is far away from Japanese middle-class norm." Thus, it can be said that Japan's high school system serves to create class dispositions as well as class disparities.

Meanwhile, all the literature on high school stratification in Japan leaves us wondering why the transition from middle to high school is shaped by students' class background in the first place. Rohlen pointed out that "the transition from middle to high school represented an even more crucial juncture in the total process of educational stratification than college entrance in the country" (1983:121). Nevertheless, why and how the transition is related to children's natal class positions has not been a serious object of research.[6] For instance, Nabeshima (2003b:40-41) took for granted that children's place in the class structure corresponds to that in the high school hierarchy because career guidance in Japan's middle schools is conducted on the basis of their academic achievement, which is often correlated to their class position. Even though his claim may be correct, it is a speculative answer to the question, not a finding of research on sorting and socializing processes in Japan's middle schools in a particular historical context.

However, a small amount of literature on the transition has a common feature: it focuses on educational aspirations. Takeuchi (1995) points out that Japan's education system tends to make low-performing as well as high performing children caught with such an intensive competition to gain entrance to higher quality schools. As high school ranks are narrowly sliced by entering students' test scores, middle school students may be encouraged by their teachers to try for just one or two rank higher high schools even if they are discouraged from aiming for the top ones (99). In other words, even non-elite students' educational aspirations are not just "cooled out" but "re-warmed up" by making them try for the second highest goal.[7] As such, Takeuchi says, the myth of Japan's meritocracy is maintained by giving another chance for a kind of "return match" to those who fail to achieve their best goal in the education "tournament," i.e., the matriculation to high school or colleges.[8]

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[6] There is an exception. Slater (2010) mentioned that the emphasis of "group living" in middle schools might differentially work to distract students, making educationally disadvantaged children less prepared for high school entrance exams. Even though I agree with his claim, his findings are somewhat anecdotal because the main focus of his research is a way of socialization in a low status high school. In chapter IV, I attempt to examine in detail how moral education which focuses on "group living" may deter 9th grade students from preparing for the exams.

[7] The term "cooling out" was first used by Erving Goffman (1952) in order to describe processes through which a mark comes to adapt himself to loss or failure. Burton Clark (1960) picked up the term "cooling out" to illuminate the procedures to dissuade over-aspiring community college students from transferring to four-year universities in the United States. Since then, many students of education including Japanese scholars meant lowering educational aspirations by the term. Also, as Takeuchi did above, some researchers concocted other terms "warming up" or "re-warming up" the aspirations by which they meant raising or re-raising them.

[8] For instance, Takeuchi (1991) found that students in lower-status high schools could enter higher ranked universities than those in higher-status high schools if they retook university entrance exams after graduating from high schools and preparing for the exams

As he only focuses on the effect of education system itself on educational aspirations, however, Takeuchi ignores the relation between class and educational attainment in the transition from middle to high school. Furthermore, his logic of thinking is incompatible with class differentiations in educational aspirations since the 1990s despite the constancy of narrowly-stratified high school structure (Kariya 2001). In order to solve this dilemma, I will explore on what condition, historical, social, and cultural, middle school children's class origin affects their educational aspirations in the transition to high school.

Meanwhile, other scholars such as Kariya, Shimizu, and LeTendre delved into the transition further than Takeuchi did. On the one hand, Kariya and Rosenbaum (1987) claims that a cooling-out mechanism does not function in Japanese middle schools because the criterion for educational selection is crystal clear to middle school children. As the format of high school entrance exams is basically multiple-choice tests, of which evaluation is less likely to be biased than that of essays and interviews, they self-select high schools according to their objectified test scores. Thus, Kariya and Rosenbaum emphasize the meritocratic nature of the transition from middle to high school in Japan.

Meanwhile, Shimizu (1992) and LeTendre (1996) find that Japanese middle school teachers pay great attention to children who are likely to fail high school entrance exams to make sure they can get at least one spot in high schools. The teachers even attempt to adjust the number of applicants for each high school prior to the exams, whereby they can prevent most of students from failing the exams. Thus, both Shimizu and LeTendre note the guiding role which middle school teachers play in high school placement by matching students' educational aspirations with their academic achievement.

It appears that Kariya and Rosenbaum's interpretation of mechanisms of the transition is in conflict with that of Shimizu and LeTendre: while the former ignores the role of middle school teachers in high school placement, the latter emphasize their function to support educationally disadvantaged children in the placement. However, if we extend our research focus to educational practices for the whole middle school years rather than limit it to the transition period, we may understand that the former is compatible with the latter.

On the one hand, given the weight of career choice in the transition on the shoulders of fifteen-year-old children, as Kariya and Rosenbaum did, it is not reasonable to say that they are the only decision maker. We may safely say that their teachers and guardians play a pivotal role in the decision making. However, I still find that meritocratic mechanisms in Japanese middle schools do not just select students on their achievement but socialize them to realize their proper place in the intra-school hierarchy and then on the social ladder. In other words, self-selecting processes Kariya and Rosenbaum observes, may take place throughout the middle school years, which prepares students to accept their high school placement.

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for one or more years in *yobikō*, a cram school for the entrance exams (See Tsukada 1991 for the cram school). Nevertheless, his data showed that such "return match" was likely to happen only when the students attended pretty high-ranked, even if not the best, high schools in the first place. More importantly, Nakanishi (2000) showed that the return match was more likely to happen as students came from upper or middle class families. Thus, the return match neither means the openness of the selection system nor undermines the effect of social class on the transition from high school to college.

On the other hand, while I agree with Shimizu and LeTendre about the fact that Japanese middle school teachers intend to help poor-performing students to find a place to go to after graduating from middle school, I find that such an egalitarian career guidance may keep their educational aspirations steady, thereby maintaining the correlation between their class origins and the rank of high schools they enter. In other words, the ways in which middle school teachers guide their students may result in the unintended consequence of social reproduction, i.e., to assign each student to his or her proper place.

In sum, I aim to investigate why and how the transition from middle to high school in Japan is related to students' family background by conducting the following three lines of investigation of Japanese middle schools. First, I will investigate conditions in which students' natal class position matters when they advance from middle school to the next life stage. Second, I will illuminate classifying mechanisms through which students are disposed to accept their proper station in school and society. Third, I will describe selection processes which unintentionally end up reproducing class differentiations in educational aspirations and attainment. Before I go into all these findings in detail, however, I need to put them on a particular context in which I conducted fieldwork.

3. An Effective School in *Buraku*

For this research, I conducted fieldwork at Shōbun Middle School, a public middle school, in Furuyama City, Osaka Prefecture (hereafter Osaka) from September 2007 to March 2009.[9] Furuyama City whose population was about 250,000 during my fieldwork was located at a distance of 60 minutes from the downtown of Osaka City by train. Although the City was one of the most densely populated cities in the prefecture, Shōbun Middle School was located in an area relatively remote from the center of the City.[10] In addition to a big park just next to the middle school, uncultivated fields and low-rise individual housing surrounding the middle school gave an impression that Shōbun Middle School was in the countryside. Also, until the late 1970s when a train station was opened in the center of the middle school district and then several apartments and commercial facilities began to be built in the eastern side of the station, this area had been less populated than other parts in Furuyama City. Even today, the middle school district is the least populated area in the City.[11]

Thus, Shōbun Middle School was one of the smallest middle schools in the City. In 2008, the middle school served about 350 students who mostly came from two elementary schools in the middle school district. Each grade consisted of three or four homeroom classes in which thirty to forty students studied together all day long and five days a

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[9] To protect the identity of the middle school, I use a pseudonym. Also, in this dissertation, I will give each informant (students and teachers) and locality a pseudonym for the same reason. However, I decided to disclose the fact that I researched in Osaka because the regional context matters in understanding my findings in the middle school.

[10] The relative isolation of the area is partly because it used to be the countryside of a different local government and yet was merged into Furuyama City in the early 1960s (Furuyama City 2006).

[11] In 2010, the average population (people 5 years old and older) of Furuyama City middle school districts is 20,233. The number in Shōbun Middle School district is only 12,961 (Furuyama City 2010).

week.[12] About 30 teachers and staffs taught these children and ran the middle school. Such a small school population offered extra classrooms for students and teachers to use, for example, for tracked lessons as well as after-school club activities. Also, the size allowed me to identify all the teachers and 2009 graduates, who were the main human subjects of my research, by their names.

In contrast to such a small-village-like environment, the middle school district was physically and socially divided into two parts. The railroad divided the district almost equally. While the eastern side of the railroad was occupied by ten-story or higher apartments, the western part was inhabited by individual houses, large or small. This contrasting landscape resulted from the time gap in people's settlement and land development. Whereas the eastern side has been mostly developed as housing projects only after the train station was opened in the late 1970s, the western side has been occupied by people even since the 1600s. As a result, Aratamachi Elementary School in the eastern side was built in the late 1970s, whereas Hurumachi Elementary School in the western side was established in 1947 when many Japanese middle schools were opened with the introduction of the new education system in post-war era. As each elementary school district almost corresponds to the eastern and western part of the railroad, from now on I will call the two parts Aratamachi and Hurumachi district respectively.

The socio-economic status of the residents in the two parts was as different as the housing styles. According to the 2004-2006 research on school effectiveness in Osaka, 37.5 percent of parents of Shōbun Middle School graduated from colleges.[13] However, according

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[12] For the 2008 academic year, teachers introduced a new form of homeroom called "unit system" in 7th grade. One unit was composed of about eighteen students, which is almost half of the regular size of a homeroom class in other grades. In the 7th grade, students took English and mathematics classes in their own unit, and yet studied other subjects with those from another unit. Meanwhile, students in 8th and 9th grade took most lessons in their regular-size homeroom except for a tracked class in English and mathematics once a week. Even though I sometimes observed and participated in the unit classes, I mainly focused on the regular-size and tracked classes in the 8th and 9th grade because my research focused on the tracking system and the transition from middle to high school.

[13] The official title of this research was Gakuryoku no kaisōkan kakusa oh kokuhukusuru gakkō kōka ni kansuru rinshōteki kenkyū (A Clinical Study of School Effectiveness to Dissolve Academic Discrepancies among Social Classes). This study was conducted by six scholars from 2004 to 2006. Particularly, for the last two years, these scholars visited several schools which had been confirmed as an effective school by their statistical research in the previous year, and found common features of the schools which may contribute to closing the gap in academic achievement between advantaged and disadvantaged children. As a part of the field research, one of the scholars conducted fieldwork at Shōbun Middle School gave one teacher an unpublished paper in which he remarked the percentage of college graduate parents in the Middle School. Then, the teacher quoted the paper on his own published book from which I got the percentage. However, in order to protect the identity of the Middle School, I will not provide the information of the book in this dissertation. Likewise, even though there are more books and papers about the Middle School whose researchers revealed its real school name, I will not provide any reference information of the literature in my dissertation, either.

to my personal communication with the scholar who led the 2004-2006 research (05/18/2008), 60 percent of parents from Aratamachi district were college graduates, while 30 percent of parents from Hurumachi district were only middle school graduates. One teacher who had taught at the middle school almost for ten years also said, "Many students from Hurumachi Elementary School do not perform well in school. Many of their parents do not fondly remember their own school days, either. Then low academic achievement continues from generation to generation. Meanwhile, there are a lot of good apartments and individual housing in the Aratamachi district, which suggests that living in the district is stable except for some families. Thus, the difference of families in the two districts in their capacities to educate children occurs. I feel like there is an income gap even though it is not that big" Thus, even though there was a public housing project for low-income families in the Aratamachi district, families in the Aratamachi district occupied relatively higher social status than their counterparts in the Hurumachi district.

Meanwhile, Hurumachi district overlapped, if not completely, a *Buraku* (literally, village), which is a residential area where the *Burakumin* (literally, people of the *Buraku*) are supposed to live. Today the *Burakumin* constitute one of the largest minority groups in multicultural Japan (Graburn, Ertl, and Tierney 2008). However, the number of the *Burakumin* can be only estimated from one million to three million partly because it is difficult to define who is a *Burakumin* in a simple way (Boocock 2011:44-45). The *Burakumin* are often believed to be descendants of the outcaste people who were engaged in physically and symbolically polluted jobs such as butchery, tanning and execution as well as in all kinds of odd jobs such as peddling, beggary, and entertainment during the Tokugawa period (1600-1867). However, today it is impossible to say that all residents in *Buraku* have ancestors who were outcaste people in the pre-modern status system. While many low-income families have moved to the residential area to find affordable public housing, which was built as a part of affirmative actions to improve dire living conditions of the *Burakumin* since the 1970s, some successful *Burakumin* have moved out of the community in order to sometimes pass as ordinary Japanese in larger society (Aoki 2009; Okuda 2002). Thus, Hirasawa and Nabeshima regard as the *Burakumin* not only "those people who were born, brought up and living in *buraku*" but also "those who were not from *burakumin* family but came to live in *buraku* in the recent past" or "those who are living outside *buraku* but have blood relationship with *burakumin*" (cited in Boocock 2011:72 footnote 1).

Even though the pre-modern status system was abolished in 1871 by the Emancipation Edict, and since then the *Burakumin* are supposed to be normal Japanese nationals in terms of their ethnicity and citizenship, social stigma from their assumed impure ancestry as well as political discriminations of the Japanese state have prevented their complete integration into the nation-state (Hane 2003; Neary 2009b). Even during the post-war period, they have been discriminated against in employment and marriage, and many of them have still stayed in the lowest position of the class structure. Thus, it may be said that the socio-economic difference between Aratamachi and Hurumachi district, to some extent, derived from the overlap between the *Buraku* and the Hurumachi district.

However, all people in the *Buraku* were not impoverished. According to a survey of living conditions in the *Buraku*, which was conducted by Osaka Prefectural Government in

1990, 29 percent of households in the *Buraku* earned less than ￥2,000,000 per year, whereas 18.1 percent of households earned more than ￥7,000,000 per year (Furuyama City 1993:63).[14] The corresponding percentages were 34.3 and 10.1 in other *Buraku* in Osaka, 16.9 and 15.2 in Furuyama City, and then 3.5 and 37.8 in Japan (63). Thus, even though people in this *Buraku* were much poorer than regular Japanese, some of them were richer than those in other *Buraku* or in Furuyama City, which means that a sharp economic disparity existed within the *Buraku*.

Such internal socio-economic divisions were also reflected on the employment structure of the *Buraku* (Furuyama City 1993:77). While the percentages of professionals/managers and office workers in the *Buraku* (11.7 and 19.1) were higher than those of other *Buraku* (9.4 and 13.3), the percentage of skilled manual workers (17.8) was lower than that of other *Buraku* (30.4) and of Osaka Prefecture (28.0). Meanwhile, the percentage of non-skilled workers (15.0) was much higher than that of other *Buraku* (9.2) and of Osaka (4.7). The distribution of educational levels in the *Buraku* further confirmed such internal class divisions (144). While 59.6 percent of residents in the *Buraku* only had below middle school education, 27.0 percent received high school education and 13.6 percent had higher education. The corresponding percentages of other *Buraku* in the prefecture were 60.4, 30.8, and 8.9. In sum, even though people in the *Buraku* were undeniably located in lower status in comparison with regular Japanese, they were more highly divided than their counterparts in other *Buraku* of Osaka in terms of income, employment, and education.

Moreover, since the late 1990s, the *Buraku* community has been broken by the pros and cons on the *Buraku* Liberation Movement, which has attempted to not only improve dire living conditions of the *Burakumin* but also to resist social discrimination against them. According to a teacher who has taught in Shōbun Middle School for more than 10 years, the local boss, who was a rich businessman, opposed the teaching of *Buraku* issues in Shōbun Middle School, which his child was about to enter in 1998. According to the teacher, the boss did not suffer from discrimination originating from his low genealogy, because this was cancelled out by his enormous wealth and social connection with local politicians. Instead, the boss argued that addressing the *Buraku* issues identified the *Burakumin* and maintained prejudice against them. Otherwise, they would not be distinguished from regular Japanese because they are undeniably Japanese in all aspects of citizenship, ethnicity, and language. Then a power struggle took place in the local branch of *Buraku* Liberation League (BLL) on whether or not the issues were taught in the school. Despite

[14] While I wrote this dissertation in the United States, I found that the library of Buraku Kaihō Jinken Kenkyūsho (Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute) in Osaka had another survey report of the *Buraku*, which was based upon 2000 Osaka Prefecture Buraku Survey, and which was published by Furuyama City in 2002. However, I have not yet accessed the most recent survey report because the library has kept the report in the storehouse since it was made to move to a narrow office with little personnel due to the budget cut in Osaka. Given that Okuda (2002: chapter 4) who conducted the 2000 Survey found the growing instability of *Burakumin*'s employment status in the 1990s when Japan's economy was stuck into deep recession, I suspect that the socio-economic disparity in the *Buraku* might have remained wide during the same period.

the resistance from the left wing of the BLL local branch, the boss was able to prohibit the education of the *Buraku* issues in the Middle School.

His victory in the power struggle partly resulted from the fact that many local residents were hired by him, and could not risk losing their jobs by supporting the education. During the time of my fieldwork in the Middle School, some people still strived to prevent *Buraku* liberation movement from being ended in the local community by distributing leaflets against singing *kimigayo*, the Japanese national anthem, and displaying *hinomaru*, the national flag, on a day of commencement in the Middle School, which had sometimes caused quarrels among parents who attended the ceremony. However, during my fieldwork, no teachers dealt with the *Buraku* issues in classes. Even though the textbook of social studies in 9th grade had a section on the issues, the young social studies teacher skipped the section, which was very unusual because she always explained the contents of the textbook in detail until she filled up the blackboard.

Partly due to socioeconomic disparities and political conflicts in the middle school district, teachers in Shōbun Middle School had suffered from school disorder until the late 1990s. In the 1990s, the Middle School was infamous among the police as well as among teachers for being one of the toughest schools in Furuyama City. After patrolling the district with the teachers during the 2008 fall term, one police officer was surprised to find that the Middle School, whose students had been often caught by the police sniffing paint thinner ten years before, had become stable. One teacher who had taught in the Middle School in the 1990s said that students had smoked in school and ridden bicycles in the corridor. Another teacher who also worked at this school in the late 1990s said that her colleague had been hit in his head by a student with a knife in front of the teachers' office. By the late 1990s the Middle School must have been one of the most difficult schools to teach at.

To make matters worse, teachers in the Middle School could not cooperate to cope with such classroom breakdown and in-school violence until the late 1990s because they were also divided along the political spectrums of teachers' unions. Several teachers who taught in the Middle School in the 1990s said that there had been "three teachers' rooms" at that time. Although there had been only one teachers' room, teachers were politically separated according to their union affiliations which were also related to political parties such as Liberal Democratic Party, Socialist Party, or Communist Party. Thus, they failed to raise a unified voice, which would have been necessary to tackle the school disorder.

Such conflicting situations started to change in the mid 1990s when Mr. Ozawa,[15] the super charismatic teacher, was recruited to keep Shōbun Middle School in order by the then principal.[16] It seems that his career as a regional leader of student movement in the 1960s prepared him for exercising leadership and reorganizing schools in trouble, for which he was known among teachers in Furuyama City. Although he was very intelligent and energetic, he was sometimes dogmatic as he refused to consider other teachers'

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[15] In this dissertation, I will put Ms. or Mr. before teachers' surname. Meanwhile, following Japanese honorific system, I will put *san* and *kun* for girls and boys respectively after their surname.

[16] The following descriptions may sound like a hero story. However, teachers in the Middle School and researchers who often visited the school admitted that without Mr. Ozawa, it would not be as stable as it is.

opinions. For example, within three years since he came to Shōbun Middle School, all teachers who were against his policy to restructure the Middle School left for different schools, he said. Thus, he had as many foes, in his words, as followers among teachers in the City. Nevertheless, he committed himself to transforming the school to the extent that he sacrificed his personal reputation.

Partly thanks to his personal sacrifice, Shōbun Middle School has finally stabilized in the late 1990s. When I arrived in September 2007, teachers in the Middle School was struggling to recover from the second wave of school disorder, which had begun in the mid 2000s. To my surprise and sadness, I was often made to see classroom breakdown, vandalism, and the violence of some students against others and even against teachers. Nonetheless, the teachers agreed that it was one of the most stable middle schools in Furuyama City, and probably in Osaka. For instance, one teacher who transferred to the Middle School in 2007 said that he was surprised at seeing three hundred students follow teachers' directions in the school gym. He also added that in his previous middle school whose district was one of the upper-middle class areas in Furuyama City, he had picked up cigarette butts in corridors every recess time and soon found his bucket full of them. And yet, he was impressed that he hardly found any cigarette butts in Shōbun Middle School.

According to the 2001 School Guidebook, Mr. Ozawa mostly wrote, he was able to achieve this order by first promoting teamwork among teachers who remained in or newly transferred to Shōbun Middle School. He wrote that they began to feel motivated to change the school since they successfully prepared a four-day school trip to Okinawa for the first time in Furuyama City. Then they started to discipline students very strictly. No students who dyed their hair, wore earrings, or just put on school uniforms in untidy ways were allowed to pass the school gate. Also teachers walked around the school site and kept an eye on students between classes and during the lunch break. Mr. Ozawa admitted such a strict atmosphere in the school by confessing, "It used to look like a prison or a juvenile reformatory. It is time to change our school policy" when teachers failed to keep several 9th grade students under control for the 2006-2008 academic years.

Nevertheless, due to such a vigilant control of the student body, teachers in Shōbun Middle School could pay greater attention to improving students' academic achievement. Particularly, Mr. Ozawa created several programs to help students learn the basics. He introduced tracking in English and mathematics, quizzes at the end of one chapter across subjects, after-school supplementary classes every Friday and detailed evaluation records. He believed that children may cause problems in classrooms if they cannot understand what they are being taught. In this sense, these academic achievement programs Mr. Ozawa invented were also disciplinary technologies for producing docile bodies (Foucault 1995).

Thanks to such systematic efforts, Shōbun Middle School was identified as one of the "effective schools" in Japan by several researchers.[17] In the research, which these

[17] Effective schools are schools which close the gap in academic achievement between the advantaged and the disadvantaged or help the latter accomplish better school performance than their counterparts in other schools. In the late 1970s, a series of research on effective schools started in the response to the research that academic achievement has nothing to do with schooling and is a function of family backgrounds (Coleman 1966), and then that school is only the mechanisms of social reproduction (Jencks 1972). In the United States,

researchers conducted in 2006 in order to find out effective schools in Osaka (hereafter "the 2006 Osaka Effective School Research"), 9th grade students in Shōbun Middle School met standards which they set to be admitted as an effective school: while they scored higher than 175 of 300 points on the test of Japanese, English and mathematics, at the same time more than 55 percent of them passed the minimum score regardless of whether or not they went to *juku* and across classes. Not only at the prefectural but also at the national level were students in Shōbun Middle School prominent. Even though 9th grade students in Osaka ranked in the bottom three of 47 prefectures successively in 2007 and 2008 National Academic Achievement Tests, 9th grade students in Shōbun Middle School got scores similar to those of their counterparts in the top third of the prefectures. Thus, there is little doubt that the Middle School is one of the best performing middle schools in Osaka or nationwide.

Considering the divided local contexts I showed above, such a great performance of Shōbun Middle School must be highly praised. However, the positive evaluation of Shōbun Middle School by Japanese teachers and scholars left me, a foreign ethnographer who was about to study class reproduction via schooling in Japan, in a paradoxical situation: I was going to prove social reproduction in the "effective school," which is supposed to lessen the effect of family background on academic achievement. Thus, it is necessary to explain how I arrived at the Middle School as well as how I did my research there.

4. Conducting Fieldwork in School

In fact, I did not mean to do my doctoral dissertation research in such a high performing school. Before leaving for Japan, I had wished to do comparative research in two middle schools which might serve rich and poor students respectively. However, when I visited Osaka in June 2007 to find middle schools to let me conduct fieldwork, it soon turned out to be difficult to get research permission from even one middle school, much more two. Even though I had contacted in advance a professor in a local university who conducted fieldwork in many schools in Osaka Prefecture, I could not avoid being refused access to middle schools in Osaka City by gatekeepers.

I was first introduced to a high-rank staff person in a municipal department related to education by the professor. When the staff was told that I wanted to investigate the effect of tracking on children at middle schools in Osaka City, which was my initial project,

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Ronal Edmonds (1979, 1986) attempted to look for schools which closed the gap in academic achievement across racial and income groups, and to define the nature of effective schools. Following his research procedures, several Japanese researchers also looked for effective schools in Japan and found some common features of those schools (Nabeshima 2003a; Shimizu 2007). They concluded that Japanese effective schools had seven key characteristics: "precautions against students' misbehavior and classroom disorder; empowerment of each student through collective activities; regard for teamwork among teachers as a decisive factor in school management; active and positive school culture; active liaison with parents, community, and other educational facilities; maintenance of an explicit and reliable curricular system to improve students' academic achievement; explicit leadership in school management" (Nabeshima 2010:126). To learn about the development of the scholarship on effective schools, see Sammons (1999), and Sammons, Thomas, and Mortimore (1997).

he expected that it would be difficult for me to get research permission from any middle school in the City because the research topic was too sensitive. Instead, considering that I am Korean, he suggested that I should study *Zainichi* students and their parents in a middle school where he had worked as a vice principal.[18] On the same day when I first met him, he took me to the middle school, and introduced me to the principal.

Although the principal allowed me to attend a practice session of the PTA music band, which he formed in order to solve conflicts between Korean and Japanese parents in his middle school, he politely and yet adamantly refused to let me conduct field research in the school. The principal said that his middle school was not appropriate for my research for two reasons. First, as 70 percent of students in his middle school had ethnically Korean parents or grandparents, it was not the typical Japanese middle school: to him, it was a Korean school in Japan. Second, he hinted that due to the dormant conflict between the two nationals, his middle school, against the direction from the Osaka City Board of Education, did not operate tracking. I was rejected.[19]

Next day I called again on the high-ranked staff person asking him to let me consult with his superior in the department. When I had visited the department previously, his superior had welcomed and talked with me about my research plan, and even told me that if I was disallowed to do research in the "Korean" middle school, I could consult with her to look for other middle schools in Osaka City. However, when I talked to her over the phone, she kept avoiding answering my questions, and eventually gave the phone to her subordinate who had taken me to the middle school in the Korean community. Soon I found that I was rejected once again just within two days.

I was desperate. I consulted with the local university professor about an alternative approach to get permission for my field research. He suggested that I do fieldwork in a middle school in which other researchers including him and a graduate student had done field research as a part of "the 2006 Osaka Effective School Research." Also, that middle school happened to establish tracking whose effects on students I meant to study. Moreover, that middle school might allow me to conduct fieldwork because it had permitted other researchers to do so. A few months later, I got to know that schools with

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[18] *Zainichi* are people of Korean descent who have lived in Japan since the colonization of Choseon Dynasty in 1910 and are often translated into "Koreans in Japan." The Korean diaspora originated from the fact that the first generation *Zainichi* decided to stay in Japan after the end of the Second World War due to their economic basis in the former colonizing country and political unrests in the Korean Peninsula. Even though many younger generations are only capable of speaking Japanese and some of them are even naturalized, others still hold Korean citizenship and live as special permanent residents in Japan. Since Lee and De Vos published *Koreans in Japan* in 1981, the English literature on this minority group has flourished. To understand this diaspora's historical origin, legal status, education, gender, and identities, see more recent scholarship such as Lie (2001, 2008), Ryang (1997, 2000, 2008), Ryang and Lie (2009), and Fukuoka (2000).

[19] However, meeting the principal of the "Korean" middle school was not worthless. When teachers and students in 7th grade in Shōbun Middle School wanted to experience other cultures in Japan as a part of their preparation for the school festival in October 2008, I was able to arrange for them to visit the "Korean" middle school and to learn how to play Korean traditional music instruments with a *Zainichi* teacher and a few *Zainichi* students.

Buraku within their school districts have been more open to outside researchers for some reason, perhaps to help disadvantaged children learn better. Even though I was afraid that I could not find out anything new in the middle school in which Japanese researchers had already studied, I had no choice but to follow the professor's advice since at the time of my first fieldwork in Japan, I had no connection with people other than the professor. A few days later, the professor called a teacher in the middle school, whom he personally knew well, to ask that I could be accepted. The middle school teacher, who was not the principal but the head of curriculum in the middle school, said okay. The teacher was Mr. Ozawa who restructured the middle school since the mid 1990s as I showed earlier. He introduced himself "the key person in the middle school" when I first visited the school to get research permission officially in June 2007. This is how and why I ended up studying social reproduction in the effective school.

Doing fieldwork in the school where other researchers, most of whom were sociologists of education, had done their research had some merits. First of all, teachers and students in Shōbun Middle School were used to being observed by outside researchers even though I cannot say that all of them liked to be seen. I attended the Middle School four out of five school days from September 2007 to July 2008 (the first period of my research), and almost every school day during the remaining research period (the second period).[20] Since I was initially interested in observing the relation between tracking and students' future plans after middle school, I followed students and teachers in 8th grade for the 2007 fall term until the students graduated from middle school in March, 2009. Of the sociologists who did their research in the Middle School, none visited the school that frequently or over that extended period of time. Thus, my mere existence must have been uncomfortable to teachers and students in the Middle School. However, their relative familiarity with outside researchers helped me continue to stay in the school, which otherwise might have been difficult to do.

Another merit of doing ethnographic research in a middle school, which researchers had already studied, was that I was able to learn from the researchers about their research results. There were several books and papers, either published or unpublished, about Shōbun Middle School. Even though the researchers used pseudonyms for the school, teachers and students, I could tell which statistical data was about Shōbun Middle School or with and about whom the researchers were talking. I sometimes had a chance to ask the researchers about their studies as I showed how I came to make sense of differences in education level among parents in Aratamachi and Furumachi districts. Thus, I benefited not only from the openness of teachers and students in the school but also from that of researchers who studied at the school.

With such a doubly opened research condition, I enjoyed another benefit in the Shōbun Middle School: not only academic researchers but also teachers themselves studied the school. There were in-school workshops throughout the 2007-2008 academic years.

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[20] During the first period, I either attended a seminar of the local university professor or visited another middle school in Furuyama City every Wednesday. Particularly, the seminar gave me a chance to learn about other schools from elementary to high schools in Osaka, where the professor's graduate students did their own field research. Meanwhile, I had to miss the first two weeks in January 2009 of the second period because I had to return to Korea for personal reasons.

Particularly, the new-year and summer workshops where teachers reviewed current school conditions and discussed future school policies helped me to understand the general direction of the school over time. Furthermore, the Middle School was chosen as a research model school, which received additional financial supports from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and from local governments to develop several research projects. In 2001, for instance, it started a project to improve the transition from elementary to middle school. Even though the project had been completed by 2003, since then Shōbun Middle School teachers have regularly held meetings with teachers at the two feeder elementary schools, Hurumachi and Aratamachi. I was allowed to attend some of the meetings such as summer workshops and "open classes," which helped me to understand the difference between Aratamachi and Hurumachi Elementary Schools and the middle school district in general from the perspective of teachers, either of the Middle School or of the Elementary Schools.[21] Thus, I could make sense of what was at stake within and outside Shōbun Middle School by learning from teachers' own analyses in those workshops and meetings.

No matter how hospitable people in the field site are to an outside researcher, and no matter how much data they produce, the ethnographer must still gain their trust in order to gain access both field site and data. To this end, I tried to become one of the members of Shōbun Middle School by participating in as many school routines as I was allowed to do. Even though the first class started at 8:45 AM, I arrived at the school by 8:10 AM in order to stand next to teachers at the school gate and to say hello to students in the morning. Then I attended the morning teachers' meetings in which teachers checked the day's schedule and shared some information of each grade. During the school hours, I observed classes standing in the back of classroom or helped students in general and basic tracks to learn English or to solve mathematics questions. At 12:35 PM, I had lunch with students and teachers in a big dining room. After all classes of the day were over at 3:15 PM, I usually participated in girls' softball tennis club and practiced with the club members until 5:30 PM. Or, I attended teachers' meetings, attended by either all teachers or by teachers in a particular grade, which included discussions about various topics such as monthly school schedules, student discipline, and career guidance. Thus, I became almost like one of teachers to the extent that the principal half-jokingly introduced me as one of the teaching staff to a visiting scholar or that my occasional absence led to a curiosity among some students: when I had to stay in Korea for two weeks in January 2009, one 9th grader sent me a text message and asked me if I would not return to the school.

Nevertheless, I cannot say that my position in Shōbun Middle School was unambiguous to myself and to teachers and students. I was not a person who was supposed to be in the school because I was neither a student nor a teacher. My ambiguous

[21] Teachers in Aratamachi Elementary, Hurumachi Elementary, and Shōbun Middle School took turns holding "open classes" each term through which they allowed their colleagues from the three schools to observe their classes. After all the teachers of the three schools attended the open classes, they formed small discussion sections in which they not only examined the classes themselves but also shared information or opinions on students, for instance, who tended to be absent from school. There were similar discussion sections in the summer workshop, too. During fieldwork, I attended the "open classes" five times and the summer workshops twice.

position in the Middle School was reflected upon by how teachers and students addressed me. Some called me Park *sensei* (Teacher Park), others Park san (Mr. Park), and still others, mostly students, Park without any honorific. The same persons sometimes called me in different ways, Park *sensei* or Park *san*. Compared with Japanese professors who visited the Middle School, my subjectivity must have been enigmatic to teachers and students in Shōbun Middle School: A Korean graduate student affiliated with an American University. Particularly, there was no wonder that the students could not understand that a thirty-something man was still a student, much less an international graduate student.

My middle-class subjectivity also made it difficult to understand ideas and practices of students and teachers during my fieldwork. In *Culture and Truth*, while Renato Rosaldo (1989:8) described his difficulty in understanding headhunting practices, which the Ilongot explain come from their grief and rage when they experience the loss of close persons, he concocted a concept of "positioned subjects" who "are prepared to know certain things and not others." Just as Rosaldo's scarce experience on the death of close persons affected his comprehension of the practices, so my little experience of any dissatisfaction toward schools shaped my understanding of students and teachers in Shōbun Middle School.

As the first son whose father was a branch manager at a bank and mother was a full-time housewife, I was expected to study hard and also did well throughout my school years. Thanks to my parents' devotion to my education, when I was an elementary school student, my family moved to the most competitive school district in Seoul, Korea. Throughout my secondary school years, I had studied hard for college entrance exams, and eventually matriculated in the most prestigious university in the country. In short, I was the model student in the Korean cultural context.

Thus, during fieldwork, it was difficult to make sense of why some students disliked school itself, others did not study hard or still others did not even aspire to move upwardly through education. Also, I often had to wonder why some English teachers did not prepare students to develop reading skills until high school entrance exams were near at hand even though the exams were almost all about reading. Even though I strived to understand what the students felt about studying and how the teachers taught and guided them, my middle-class and model-student identity must have affected my interpretation of what I observed in the Middle School. As it was not until Rosaldo (2) lost his wife during fieldwork that he grasped "the cultural force of emotion," which led to the headhunting practices in the Ilongot society, I might need some personal experiences to understand thoroughly the affect and reasoning of students and teachers in the Middle School.

In addition to difficulties resulting from my ambiguous identity and middle-class habitus, I had to struggle with the issue of how I would position myself between teachers and students in the Middle School. On a sultry day of the fall term in 2008, I was helping 9th grade teachers and students practice performances for sports day on the playground. All of a sudden, the physical education (PE) teacher who was in charge of the practice started to hit a boy on his face. The teacher thought that the boy pretended to be sick and did not work hard. Ideas occurred to me in a flash. Even though I knew that I must stop the teacher from beating the boy, I also thought that the head teacher of the grade might want the PE teacher to do that a little more, thereby making other students concentrate on the practice. My guess was confirmed later when the head teacher admitted in the grade teachers' meeting that he let the PE teacher hit the boy to arouse other students' attention. While I stood still for ten seconds or so, the boy's homeroom teacher began to stop the PE

teacher. Then, another boy who stood next to me whispered, "Park san…," suggesting that I should help the boy. I eventually did, but too late. The homeroom teacher had almost stopped the PE teacher by the time I intervened. When the practice was over, another boy cynically said to me, "your action was too late and useless." I knew that I was useless at that moment. However, I still do not know what I should do if I again face situations which put me between teachers and students. This was particularly the case considering that except for the homeroom teacher and me, no teachers on the playground intervened to stop the PE teacher, and later at a party, which was held after sports day was over, the head teacher advised me to stay away from relationships or interactions between teachers and students.

I had to put up with my in-between status, not only in confronting the above embarrassing moment but also just to stay in school.[22] Do I have to report students' minor vandalism or slight violations of school rules to teachers, which might undermine my relationship with the students? Would it be appropriate for me to tutor after school some students, who are on the verge of failing high school entrance exams? However, such intervention into the domain of teaching beyond assisting teachers might compromise their authority by unintentionally suggesting that they are not preparing students for the exams in school. Thus, I neither reported students' trivial wrong-doings to teachers nor volunteered to teach low achieving students after school. I ended up hoping that students would behave properly by themselves or that teachers would do something to motivate and even compel children without aspirations to study for the exams.

In addition to the ambiguity of my position, some distinctive factors made me feel uneasy about doing research in Shōbun Middle School. As I mentioned earlier, I started to conduct fieldwork when the Middle School was about to go through the last moment of school disorder, which reoccurred in the mid 2000s. For the last half of the 2007 academic year, some 9th grade students disrupted classes, bullied their classmates or did violence to lower grade students and teachers. 9th grade teachers had to suspend the students from school or put them in classrooms apart from their classmates. Other grade teachers kept their students under constant surveillance by patrolling classrooms and restrooms between classes and at lunch time. Since the 9th grade students graduated from the school in March, 2008, the Middle School appeared to gradually recover from school turmoil. However, veteran teachers in their forties and fifties who still vividly remembered more serious classroom breakdown at Japanese middle schools in the 1980s and the 1990s were always afraid that school could become unstable at any time.

Furthermore, to overcome the 1990s' school disruptions in Shōbun Middle School were other unintended consequences. The "academic achievement programs," which ultimately intended to discipline students effectively, required teachers in the Middle School to do extra work, which otherwise they would not need to do in other middle

[22] Even though I was neither a teacher nor a student in Shōbun Middle School, I have to admit that my position was closer to the former than to the latter. I sometimes put myself in a student's position in order to observe classes by saying to teachers "I need to learn more Japanese or Japanese history in your classes." Nevertheless, I often assumed a teacher's role, for instance, by teaching English and mathematics in tracked classes for twenty hours a week. Additionally, my desk was physically not in classrooms but in the teachers' office.

schools. For instance, regardless of their own subjects, they had to teach English or mathematics in order to provide lower-track students with a face-to-face tutoring. Thus, individual teachers had little time or discretion to do anything else. When a homeroom teacher let his students write some compliments about their classmates at the end of 2007 academic year and made booklets including the praising comments and the students' pictures and caricatures, he was reprimanded by the principal for this individual act. One year after the homeroom teacher was forced to transfer to another middle school, he said to me, "In Shōbun Middle School, teachers just work without saying anything. So did I. It is like a machine."

In such a tense and tiring workplace in which teachers avoided making jokes in the teachers' room and where they became so exhausted from their work that some of them got seriously ill, I had to wonder again and again if it would be ethically right to bother them only for my research. I could not help restraining myself from doing anything that might lead to breaking school routines. How could I ask teachers to be interviewed or request them to arrange interviews with students or parents while they managed to keep the school order by patrolling during lunchtime even sometimes going without any lunch at all? I voluntarily put off asking them to be interviewed until the last several months before I left Japan. I also was asked to restrict any research activity which might disrupt the precarious school order: the head teacher of 2009 graduates, whom I had followed since the 2007 fall term, allowed me to interview them only during the lunch break which spanned 20 minutes or so.

After all, I came to prioritize participant observations over formal interviews with teachers and students. Even though I did some teacher and student interviews, I usually obtained ethnographic data by informally talking with teachers and students on a daily basis and by attending teachers' meetings, and listening to/overhearing teachers' and students' conversations or those between the two. Particularly, attending 9th grade teachers' meetings and career guidance meetings helped me to understand some students' family backgrounds as well as teachers' ideas on and practices for guiding students. Also, observing the mock interviews between the principal and 9th grade students in which the latter prepared for interviews in high school entrance exams gave me an opportunity to learn about what these students thought about their future after middle school and beyond. In short, I collected data by participating in everyday school lives and observing what is happening there rather than having formal interviews with teachers and students.[23]

Meanwhile, I did additional research in order to better interpret my field data about Shōbun Middle School. First, I did archival research at local and regional libraries such as

[23] Due to this research method, I could not use any recording machines during fieldwork. Except for the interview with a teacher who himself offered his recording machine, I did not make use of visual or vocal recorders in interviewing other teachers and students. Thus, quotations from informants in this dissertation are not verbatim. Nevertheless, my command in Japanese allowed me to record correctly what I was told or overheard. Also, whenever I found something to write in field notes, I returned to the teachers' office as soon as possible to record it. As I was the only person in the office who could write and read Korean, in most cases, I wrote what I observed and (over)heard in my native language in front of teachers without worrying about being read. Then, in most cases, I transcribed the hand-written field notes into electronic ones at home on the same day.

Osaka University Library, Osaka Municipal Library, Osaka Prefectural Library and Libura, a library at Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute. The literature of Japanese education system and class structure, which I found through this archival research, allowed me to examine my field data in the national context. I also regularly attended seminars and workshops which were organized by the professor who introduced me to Shōbun Middle School. Furthermore, I attended summer and fall meetings of Osaka Prefectural Human Rights Education Research Association in which teachers from elementary to high schools presented their activities in schools. In these seminars, workshops, and meetings, I learned about the tradition of prioritizing human rights education in Osaka.

In sum, while I took a close look at what was going on in a Japanese middle school during fieldwork, I sought to contextualize what I experienced in the particular institution in the regional and national contexts. Thus, in this dissertation, I strive to find social and cultural implications of Japanese lower secondary education for contemporary Japanese society, particularly for the formation of class identity and the reproduction of class structure rather than to end up offering a thick description of the middle school. The findings of this research will be presented in the following way.

5. Structure of Dissertation

In this dissertation, I call attention to the fact that Japanese middle schools create as well as reflect class divisions. I will not only examine conditions in which students' class positions may shape their career choices in the transition from middle to high school (chapter II and IV), but also illuminate the ways in which class dispositions and practices are constructed through formal schooling in contemporary Japanese society (chapter III and V). As such, I attempt to understand how class works in the society not only as divisions but also as formations, and to propose how we can do an ethnographic analysis of class (chapter VI).

In chapter II, I examine transformations of Japanese secondary education, which may bring into relief the impact of students' social origin on the transition from middle to high school. Since the 1990s, high school reforms in Japan have facilitated the stratification of high schools. Meanwhile, as we can see that middle school teachers' education movements for promoting local high schools have declined since the mid 1990s, they have lost their authority to affect students in the transition. Fewer students think that should follow their teachers' words and work hard in middle school since it became easier to go on to high school due to the decrease in the number of school-age children in the country. However, lower-class children are more likely to lose their commitment to schooling than middle-class children. With such class divisions in children's devotion to working hard in school, a cultural model of learning in Japanese society has moved its attention from effort to habit. According to this new model, habit, which is by definition inculcated into children's mind and body through socialization at home, may determine academic success or failure in school. In this corollary, families, not individuals, become responsible for children's academic performance. All these structural, social, and cultural transformations may contribute to the growing effects of middle school students' family background on the transition to high school.

In chapter III, I describe how evaluations and tracking create a sense of one's place in society as well as in school. Japan's middle school, unlike elementary school, has

sophisticated assessment systems and ability grouping through which students are sorted. As this sorting process is basically predicated upon multiple choice tests, it appears fair and objective to the students. Low achieving students blame themselves for poor academic performance rather than question the sorting process. Furthermore, they are disposed to think about where they are likely to stand in society relative to their academic standing in school. Even though most underachieving students come from lower-class families, they are socialized to take positions into which they were born without complaint through the fair selection process. As such, Japan's middle school plays a role in rationalizing social reproduction.

In chapter IV, I explore how middle school teachers' career guidance works to maintain class division in educational aspirations and then in educational attainment. Teachers refrain from telling their students to enter as high a status high school as they can because it may cause too much competition. Instead, they want the students to make a safe high school choice, through which they wish to make sure all the students, particularly low achieving ones, get a secure destination in the transition to high school. In fact, they guide these students to avoid challenging themselves academically, because it is in their best interest. They try to preserve educational aspirations which the students already have rather than to cool off or to heat up them. However, such counseling works to discourage lower-class children more than middle-class ones. Thanks to their educated parents, the latter can pursue and achieve their educational goals, which the former cannot afford to do. Thus, I find that egalitarian norms and practices of Japanese school teachers have as their unintended consequences differentiations of educational attainment according to students' socio-economic background.

In chapter V, I demonstrate how a minority culture is created by schooling and how it is related to the minority's class location. To this end, I observe *Buraku* boys who do not go on to high school. Japanese people including teachers and researchers tend to attribute their misbehaviors and low academic achievement/attainment to a cultural distinctiveness of the *Burakumin*, i.e., *Buraku* culture. However, I find that youth culture in *Buraku* results not only from class situations in which these boys have lived but also from an educational practice through which elementary school teachers prioritize the boys' masculinities over learning in order to incorporate them into the school system. Finally, consulting historical studies of the *Burakumin* in modern Japan, I mention that *Buraku* culture may be a lower-class culture, which is a product of modern forms of discrimination.

In chapter VI, I reconsider socio-cultural, theoretical, and practical implications of my ethnographic descriptions of a public middle school in Japan. Drawing on my investigation of educational mechanisms in the school, which create an identity and aspiration corresponding to one's position, I will first deal with why Japanese hardly conceive their social status in a language of class despite sharply stratified life experiences by education levels and working conditions. In order to partly address the above dilemma about Japanese society, I will then try to rework the concept of class by focusing on affective dynamics of class identity as a sense of one's place. Additionally, I will discuss how we might work on educational aspirations lest class differences lead to fewer opportunities in life as a result of stunted aspirations. Finally, I will end this chapter suggesting some research problems for further research.

II. Transformations Within and Outside Japanese Middle School

One day in November 2008, I was helping several 9th grade students to read English texts and to solve mathematics problems at an after-school class. Teachers in the grade had just launched the after-school class to prepare students for high school entrance exams, which were approaching in four months. At the end of the class, Kanemoto san, who was in the advanced track and lived in an apartment for middle class families, started to grumble about her mother. According to her, she was about to take a short break to watch TV in her room after studying for five hours. At that time, her mother squeezed into her room and found her watching TV. Angry at her negligence, her mother took away the TV set from her room. It seemed that her mother felt as stressful about the result of the exams as she did. Last year, her cousin made it to a top-ranked high school in another high school catchment area in Osaka. Her mother pressured her to try to enter as high status a high school as she could, so that the high rank of the high school would reflect well on the mother.[1]

While I conducted fieldwork in Japan, I often heard similar stories. The point is that the rank of high school a child enters affects not only children's self-esteem but also the parents' dignity. Which high school you attend becomes visible at least within a local area because each high school sets a distinct school uniform with its own school crest. Local people can tell where you are in the high school structure just by looking at your school uniform. As a result, while top-rank high school entrants may pride themselves on their achievement, low-rank high school incoming students may feel ashamed of themselves (Yoder 2004:53-56). Concomitantly, the former's parents may be proud, while the latter's may feel embarrassed.

I could not help wondering why the high school structure persisted in Japan despite such a huge pressure on students and parents. My experience in South Korea, which along with other East Asian countries, is known for education fever, particularly made me curious about the status quo in Japanese society. Due to the extreme competition for high school entrance and its devastating effects on children, the Korean government has leveled high schools by reforming high school entrance exams in metropolitan areas like Seoul since the 1970s. I benefited from the reform as a Seoulite born in the mid 1970s. In addition, when I researched for my master's thesis in South Korea, I observed that some middle-class parents in a suburban city around Seoul, which still had a stratified high school structure, successfully changed the high school entrance system so that they could prevent students from being humiliated by entrance to low status high schools (Park 2005). All these experiences in my home country made me feel uncomfortable with the high school hierarchy and its impact on students' identity in the neighboring country of Japan.

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[1] Ortner writes, "[M]y sense is that it is parent-child relations in the middle class that carry much of the burden of introjected class struggle and even class war. In any event, it is clear that the discourse of parent-child relations (specifically parent-child conflict) in the middle class, like the discourse of gender in the working class, is simultaneously a class discourse. It draws on and feeds the fears and anxieties that make sense if we assume that the classes view each other as their own pasts and possible futures" (2006:31-32). The displacement of class relations into generational ones which Ortner suggests on the above is exactly what we can observe the relationship between Kanemoto san and her nervous mother.

Partly looking for an answer to my uneasiness, in this chapter, I will first explore how since the late 1990s, high school reforms in Osaka promoting meritocratic selection in the name of individual choices and diversity have intensified high school stratification. Then, I will go back to the 1970s-1980s when middle school teachers in several cities of Osaka led a movement to change the high school structure, only to fail. This failed education movement suggests that middle school as an institution has lost its authority over students and parents, and that there are no social forces to abolish the high school hierarchy. In addition to the above institutional and social transformations, I will finally describe the subtle change of a cultural model of learning in Japan. The emergence of a cultural model, which prioritizes habit over effort for learning, hints the increasing effect of family background on academic achievement and attainment, and social differentiations of effort in contemporary Japan. Thus, I aim to find that social and cultural conditions, which middle school teachers and students face today, have changed to the extent that family background may shape the educational transition from middle to high school even more than before.

1. High School Reforms in Osaka

In 2007, Osaka Prefectural Education Committee (hereafter the OPEC) launched a new public high school catchment area system. In 1973, it increased the number of high school catchment areas from five to nine, thereby decreasing the number of high schools within each catchment area than before. After maintaining that system for thirty four years, however, the OPEC decided to rearrange the areas from nine to four, thereby including more high schools in each catchment area. The new high school catchment area system is only applied to public high schools, particularly general and semi-general high schools.[2] However, vocational or comprehensive high school aspirants may also apply for general high schools within their catchment area if they fail to pass entrance exams for vocational or comprehensive high schools: in Osaka, high school entrance exams for vocational and comprehensive high schools are taken in mid February, whereas those for general and semi-general high schools in mid March. Thus, unless they decide to advance to private high schools for some reason, this change of high school catchment area system may affect practically all middle school students in Osaka regardless of the types of public high schools which they wish to enter.

The OPEC set into motion the new catchment area system to balance the number of general high schools in each catchment area as well as to meet diverse needs and interests of individual students (Osakahu Kyōiku Iinkai 2005). In the 1970s and the 1980s, it

[2] As the result of a series of high school reforms which I will describe soon, today there are several types of high schools in Japan. In addition to general and vocational high schools, there are semi-general (*hutsuka sōgo sentakusei*) and comprehensive high schools (*sōgo gakka*). Both semi-general and comprehensive high schools have selective courses of specialized areas such as arts, information technology, welfare, or international understanding as well as traditional academic subjects such as English and mathematics. However, students in semi-general high schools can take selective courses only in an area in which they decide to major, whereas students in comprehensive high schools can take any selective courses in which they are interested.

established new general high schools in proportion to the increase of the population in old nine catchment areas. However, as the populations in the different areas grew disproportionately, the number of general high schools in each catchment area became uneven: while the largest area had 18 general high schools, the smallest only 6 in 2005 (Kyōikujigyōsha 2005:413-415). With the introduction of the new system, such imbalance has been corrected: in 2007, in counting both general and semi-general high schools, the largest had 32 high schools, and the smallest had 23 (Osakahu Kyōiku Iinkai 2007:13).

However, when the OPEC announced the rearrangement, some citizens in Osaka expected that the expansion of the high school catchment area might lead to the sharper stratification of general and semi-general high schools (Osakahu Kyōiku Iinkai 2005). This expectation seems to come true because since 2007, high schools in Osaka have fallen into *wagiri*, a situation of slicing high schools into pieces according to the academic achievement level of entering students.

Table II-1. High School Ranking in Osaka

High Schools	Years	Courses	*Hensachi*	Types of School Records
A	**1886**	**General**	**66**	**I**
B	1903	General	66	I
C	1909	General	62	I
D	1976	General	57	I
E	**1923**	**General**	**56**	**I**
F	**1941**	**General**	**53**	**I**
G	1963	General	52	I
H	1980	General	51	I
I	**1952**	**General**	**50**	**I**
J	1973	General	48	II
K	1974	General	47	I
L	1971	Semi-general	47	II
M	**1916**	**General**	**45**	**II**
N	1979	Semi-general	45	I
O	**1911**	**General**	**44**	**I**
P	**1942**	**General**	**43**	**II**
Q	1986	General	42	I
R	1978	Semi-general	42	II
S	1972	Semi-general	40	I
T	1983	General	39	II
U	1977	General	38	III
V	1980	General	36	III
W	**1978**	**Semi-general**	**35**	**II**
X	1976	General	34	II
Y	**1921**	**General**	**34**	**III**
Z	**1975**	**General**	**34**	**III**

The Table II-1 High School Ranking in Osaka shows the rank of 26 general and semi-general high schools in the new catchment area to which Shōbun Middle School has belonged since 2007. Following the Japanese norm to rank high schools, in the table I used average *hensachi* of boys who passed entrance exams for a particular high school, which I quoted from one booklet published by *Itsukishobō*, a company which organizes practice high school entrance tests in Osaka (Itsuki no mogi testo kai 2008). In the context of high school entrance exams in Japan, *hensachi* is a means to measure one's relative academic ability regardless of the difficulty of the exams, and then to rank high schools according to the average of entering students' academic achievement. For instance, if a student's *hensachi* is 65, this means that he or she may get higher than 65 in a test of which average score is regularized to 50. Thus, *hensachi* is a universal index through which we can tell how smart students are and which high schools are more difficult to enter. Meanwhile, the bold letters in the table represent high schools which are newly added to the previous catchment area by the new high school catchment area system in 2007.[3]

In the table, it is clear that the high school structure is more narrowly divided than before. Except for the top three high schools, we can find a high school whose *hensachi* corresponds to almost every number from 57 to 34. For instance, there was a five-point gap between high school D and G in the old high school structure, whereas there is only a one-point gap between high school D and E in the new high school structure.[4] Those who are not accustomed to such a narrowly differentiated high school structure may think that it does not matter whether or not you go on to one-point higher (or lower) high school. However, some Japanese middle school students and parents are very sensitive to such a small difference in *hensachi* between high schools, for instance, U, V, and X because the rank of high school into which they get signals to others their self-worth as well as their parents' dignity: if a Japanese middle school student who wished to advance to high school U ended up getting into high school V, he or she might consider him- or herself a humiliating failure. In this manner, as all high schools are stratified by the same measure of academic achievement, the high school structure itself has become the criterion of self-worth among individual students (Takeuchi 1995). Thus, the rearrangement of high school catchment areas is only to create a condition in which the OPEC can allow students to have more high school options, and yet only more stratified choices.

This rearrangement of high school catchment areas in Osaka was only part of a series of educational reforms, which the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in Japan (hereafter the MEXT) has promoted nationwide since the mid 1980s

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[3] In Table II-1, "years" are when each high school was established. For high schools which were middle schools or women's high schools in the prewar education system, I used the year when the previous schools were established. For semi-general high schools which merged two general high schools, I chose the year in which the first of the two general high schools was established. The category, "types of school records" shows differences in the proportion between school records and entrance exams according to high schools. I will use these two columns in layer analyses.

[4] When I need to identify the name of a public general high school in the catchment area, I will use these alphabet high school names in Table II-1 instead of their proper ones. Meanwhile, for the name of a private high school, I will use its initials in order to distinguish private from public high schools.

(Goodman and Phillips 2003; Hood 2001; Schoppa 1991; Tsuneyoshi 2004). The catch phrase of these education reforms was to promote "individuality, diversity, and flexibility" among the next generation of students (Okano and Tsuchiya 1999:210-213). The education reforms were based upon a reflection that post-war Japanese education was too uniform to raise children capable of competing in the globalizing world (Kariya 2002). Instead, the MEXT intended to incorporate students' different interests, aptitudes, and career plans by transforming the upper secondary education system from a simple division between general and vocational high schools to the multiple divisions of general and vocational high schools such as general, semi-general, comprehensive, and specialized-course-attached (for instance, math-science studies), and vocational ones (Monbukagakushō 1991, 1997).[5]

Following the MEXT's policy, the OPEC also launched the Prefectural High School Specialization Project, *huristu kōtōgakko tokushoku tsukuri*, in 1999 (Osakahu Kyōiku Iinkai Jimukyoku Sutapu 2005:44-47). Through the Project, the OPEC meant to allow students to choose one of the diverse types of high schools which would fit their own interests, aptitudes, and future career plans. As one way to develop the Project, since 2001, it has formed semi-general high schools by merging general high schools which were located nearby. The merger definitely intended to tackle the decrease in the number of school-age children in Osaka. However, given that the *hensachi* of every semi-general high school in the Table II-1 is below 50, it can be said that middle and lower rank general high schools were mainly subject to the merger of high schools. This might mean that the OPEC intended to encourage students in low quality general high schools, who may not plan to go to college, to remain in and graduate from high school by providing non-academic selective courses which are not required for college entrance exams. It is because "preparing" such students "for college entrance exams never to be taken" does not help to keep high schools in the bottom of high school hierarchy in order (Slater 2010:152).

Meanwhile, the OPEC aimed to distinguish top-ranked public high schools from their counterparts in terms of school ranking by introducing a gifted program to the former. In 2009, the OPEC designated ten elite general high schools *shingaku shidō tokushokukō,* schools focusing on guidance for college entrance, and decided to establish *bunrigakka*, science and humanities, in these schools by 2011 (Osakahu Kyōiku Iinkai 2010a). In 2011, while these elite high schools still select the half of their students for general courses, they satisfy the remaining half for advanced courses. Even though two elite high schools in Osaka had had a similar gifted program since the early 1990s, they had selected only 160 students, which corresponded to the one third of their total student population. Meanwhile, the ten elite high schools select 1,600 students for the new gifted program. As such, the OPEC clearly revealed its intention to promote top quality public high schools whose students are supposed to aim for prestigious national universities in Japan.

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[5] In addition, the Ministry would transform the education system from cramming method of teaching to children-oriented education by dropping learning contents, introducing a five-day school week and new subjects like sōgōteki gakushū, "integrated study," and expanding elective courses (Kariya 2002). However, it is not easy to define characteristics of the education reforms, neoliberal (Hood 2001; Schoppa 1991) or democratic (Cave 2001), because its core concepts such as individuality could be mobilized in very different and often conflicting ways (Goodman 2003).

Such expansion of the gifted program had something to do with the politics in Osaka. In December, 2007, Mr. Hashimoto was elected as the Governor of Osaka. He was very critical of teachers in Osaka who were known for prioritizing human rights education over academic achievement. Instead, he wanted to introduce more competition to the education system of the prefecture. Particularly, when elementary and middle school students in Osaka ranked at the bottom at the national academic achievement test in both 2007 and 2008, despite the opposition from several mayors in the prefecture as well as even from the MEXT, he announced the test results of each city in the prefecture, thereby aiming to spur competition among public schools and to raise the academic achievement level of Osaka children to "the number one in Japan" (Mainichshinbun 09/19/2008; Sankeishinbunn 10/17/2008). Also, he allowed local education committee to introduce after-school programs run by a private *juku* to public schools (Mainichshinbun 01/18/2009). Likewise, the designation of "schools focusing on guidance for college entrance" reflected his idea of developing elite public high schools in Osaka despite the opposition from 70 percent of high school principals in the prefecture (Mainichshinbun 03/14/2008; 02/03/2009).

Such change in the high school entrance system is likely to advantage high achievers over middle and low achievers. Even in the previous system, if high achievers failed to pass the first-round high school entrance exams for the two elite high schools with an advanced course, they could retry for the second-round ones for other top quality high schools. However, this did not make a big difference to the high school entrance system because the enrollment for the advanced course was very small. Meanwhile, in the current system, as the ten elite high schools select ten times more students than before for their gifted programs, a larger number of high achievers may reapply to top-ranked high schools in the second-round high school entrance exams if they fail to enter these gifted programs in the first-round exams. In fact, they may have another chance to try for good quality general high schools. However, middle and low achiever cannot have such an opportunity anymore because semi-general high schools also begin to select students in the second-round exams in 2011 (Osakahu Kyōiku Iinkai 2010b). Thus, these middle and low achievers might have to change their first-choice high school in the second-round exams in order to avoid competition with their counterparts in terms of academic achievement.

Thus, it is obvious that a series of education reforms, which the OPEC has led since the 1990s, not only intensify the high school hierarchy but also probably give high achievers more advantage than low achievers in the name of respecting children's individuality and diversity. According to these education reforms, low status high schools may play a role in keeping non-college-bound children in the education system by allowing them to select non-academic subjects, while top-ranked high schools may function to support college-bound students by providing them with more advanced courses. This is a division of labor among high schools according to students' academic ability and their probable future plan. Thus, the education reforms may reflect "a radical change" in the cultural model of learning "from the standard post-war position in Japan of viewing all children as having equal potential and for teachers to treat them all as the same, to seeing them as having different innate abilities and for teachers to recognise and develop those differences" (Goodman 2003: 22).

In addition to these education reforms, the OPEC carried out a series of reforms in high school entrance exams such as an introduction of more detailed evaluation scales, and

a division of written tests according to the degree of their difficulty. These reforms may also have as great an impact on the high school hierarchy in Osaka as the transformation of high school catchment areas and the diversification of types of high school. Thus, it is worthwhile to examine changes in the exams in Osaka.

Osaka had had a particular high school entrance exam from the 1960s to the late 1990s (Osakahu Kyōiku Iinkai Jimukyoku Sutapu 2005:57-58). Other prefectures determined high school entrance exam scores from the simple sum of scores in middle school records and the scores on written tests of five core academic subjects such as Japanese, English, mathematics, social studies, and science. In Osaka, on the one hand, students in a middle school were ranked by their teachers into 10 grades on the basis of their school performance. On the other hand, the students were graded by high school teachers into 10 grades on the basis of both the written tests on the five academic subjects and the school records of four non-academic subjects such as arts, music, technology education/home economics, and physical education. Then the sum of the two sets of ten-scale grades determined the student's final score for their entrance into high schools.

To make sense of the Osaka system, let me suppose that one middle school has 100 students in 9th grade and that all the students apply to the same high school of which full enrollment is 90. If a student ranks the top 10 in the middle school, he or she gets 10 grades. Then, if he or she ranks 11th by the sum of scores in the written tests of the five academic subjects and the school records of the four non-academic subjects, he or she gets 9 grades regardless of his or her actual scores. Thus, his or her final grades for high school entrance are 19. After all the students are marked in this way, those who rank from 1st to 90th can enter the high school. In other words, it is a kind of relative evaluation through which the school records and the written tests are considered in almost similar proportions.

However, this system became at odds with the OPEC's plan for the diversification of types of high school. It was too simple to reflect "students' diverse individuality" and had to be changed to fit well with "the characteristics of each high school" (Osakahu Kyōiku Iinkai Jimukyoku Sutapu 2005:58). Thus, the OPEC has taken a series of actions to simplify the way of evaluating students for high school entrance and to prioritize the results of the written tests over the middle school records. When I attended at a meeting, which a *juku* held in order to inform parents of the high school entrance exams as well as to advertise its own educational programs for the exams, a teacher in the *juku* explained what a series of educational reforms in Osaka including the change in the high school entrance system meant.

> Please let me explain the general tendency of the high school entrance exams in Osaka. Some parents who recently moved to Osaka ask us why the OPEC changed the high school catchment area as late as 2007. The OPEC has gradually reformed the high school entrance system for the last ten years. Before 1998, the OPEC selected students by combining 10 grades in middle school records and in written tests respectively. In this system there were often too many students in the same grade and it was difficult to precisely measure their scholastic ability. In 1998, the OPEC changed the middle school records into a total possible score of 440, and in the written tests a high score of 400. In 2003, the OPEC divided the written tests of English and mathematics into type A and B according to the difficulty of questions.

> Most top-ranked high schools chose the type B which included more difficult questions than the type A. In 2007, the OPEC also subdivided the middle school records into the type I, II and III (265, 440 and 615 scores respectively), thereby differentiating the extent to which each high school considers the records.[6] Again top-ranked high schools chose the type I in order to prioritize the written tests over the school records. After all these reforms, the OPEC finally decided to reduce the number of high school catchment areas from nine to four. Considering these changes, it is obvious that the OPEC intends to select high achievers for public general high schools. In other words, it means to make high school entrance dependent upon academic achievement.

Through these ten-year-long reforms of the high school entrance system in Osaka, the process of high school entrance has come to appear more meritocratic. However, this objectification process of the system accompanied the stratification of high schools in the name of facilitating diversity. High schools were divided into the type A and type B high schools according to the difficulty of the exams. They were also divided into the type I, II and III according to the value they placed on middle school records: at the last column of "Table II-1. High School Ranking in Osaka," we can see that top-rank high schools choose type I, and yet low-status high schools tend to choose type III. In short, even though the plan for the diversification of high schools itself intended to meet varied needs and interests of individual students, the concomitant reforms led to the clearer stratification of high schools.

It must have been too embarrassing for a middle school teacher to reveal to parents such a clear division of high schools. The Principal of Shōbun Middle School told me that he had to omit names of high schools corresponding to the three types of the school records when he explained to parents about the high school entrance system. He was afraid that paralleling the types with the names would disclose not the diversity of but the hierarchy of high schools. Other teachers and students in Shōbun Middle School were also well aware of the ramifications of the refinement of the high school entrance system. For instance, as the high school entrance exams neared, a math teacher had students in a basic track solve only the type A questions by saying, "High schools to which you guys may apply will choose this type." She did not expect those students to apply to the type B high schools, which were more difficult to enter than the type A high schools. To take another example, when a

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[6] The middle school records are an evaluation of nine subjects which students learn in middle school. The nine subjects are divided into two parts, A subjects (five core academic subjects) and B subjects (four non-academic subjects). Each subject is graded from 10 to 1. For instance, if one student gets 10 in all the A and B subjects, his or her total grade is 90 (10*5+10*4). When the student applies to a high school, the grade is multiplied differently according to how much or how little value the high school places on the student's middle school records (Osakahu Kyōiku Iinkai 2007:77). For example, if he or she applies to a type I high school, his or her school records are 265 (50*2.5+40*3.5). In case of type II and III, his or her schools records are 440 (50*4+40*6) and 615 (50*5.5+40*8.5). As the full scores of the written tests are 400 across all general high schools, type III high schools (615+400) come to prioritize the middle school records over the tests more than type I (265+400) and II (440+400) high schools do.

student in the middle level of academic achievement in the Middle School failed to solve the type B questions, she asked her teacher if the type A was for slow students like her. It was certain that the sophistication of the exams signaled to middle school students as well as to teachers the degree of their smartness or dullness, not their "diverse individuality."

When I came to understand the high school structure in Osaka during the first one year fieldwork in Shōbun Middle School, I asked an experienced teacher what he thinks about the stratification of high schools in Japan. He answered, "Scholastic ability is a kind of individuality. In this regard, the stratification of high schools can be accepted." I am not sure how many middle school teachers in Osaka are willing to agree with his idea given that they have been critical of dividing students by their academic achievement (Shinbo 2008). Another teacher expressed her frustration about the stratified high school structure during the interview by saying "Now no one is concerned with problems resulting from the high school stratification. Successful students make efforts by themselves in order to enter a high school, whereas slow students feel hopeless." Whether or not middle school teachers in Osaka approve the stratified high school structure, however, it is certain that the structure is now a given condition in which academic achievement appears to determine students' success or failure in high school entrance, and which middle school teachers and students need to accept in either carrying out career guidance or in making their high school choice.

2. Local High School Promotion Movement

Only about ten years or so ago, the high school structure was not taken for granted by middle school teachers in Osaka. At that time, the idea that the high school hierarchy should be rectified was prevalent among them. Thus, middle school teachers who were involved in the Teachers' Union and/or in the education for minority students such as *Buraku* and *Zainichi* children had led an education movement called *jimoto shūchū juken undō,* local high school promotion movement, in one third of the cities in Osaka prefecture from the early 1970s to the late 1990s (Abe 1986:188; Osaka 15 Kyōshokuin Kumiai Renrakukai 1983: chapter 5).

Jimoto shūchū juken undō literally means a movement through which middle school teachers guide their students to apply for designated local high schools.[7] In the movement, the teachers matched a middle school with one or two local high schools as *jimoto kōkō*, its own local high schools, and then strove to send to the designated local high schools as many children from the middle school as they could regardless of their academic achievement and often against their wish for different high schools. In other words, by placing students with varied academic ability in the same high school, they aimed to close the academic achievement gap between local high schools and to promote them as all equal. This is why I translate the Japanese words local high school promotion movement.

[7] It bears remembering that public general high schools were mainly subject to the movement. The problem of high school hierarchy developed in the 1960s and 1970s when many new general high schools were established in accordance to Japanese people's increasing demand for that type of upper secondary education (Amano 1991; Sakai 2010; Tsukada 2010). Even though there were some attempts to incorporate private high schools in local communities into the movement, most efforts were made to close the gap in academic achievement and attainment among public general high schools.

The local high school promotion movement in Osaka occurred in a particular local condition that other education movements failed to bring about the legal transformations of the upper secondary education system in the prefecture. For the 1960s and 1970s, several education movements and reforms took place in the whole country as well as in Osaka (Yamanoteshi Kyōshokuin Kumiai 1990:22-27). First of all, *kōkō jennyū undō* a movement, which aimed to allow anyone who wishes to go on to high school to do so, spread nationwide. As the post-war baby-boom generation started to graduate from middle school, the supply of high schools could not satisfy the demand of students who wished to get a high school education. Particularly, with the high-speed economic growth, many parents also wanted their children to receive the upper secondary education for better employment chances, which made high school entrance more competitive. Then, this movement resulted in *kōkō jōsetsu undō*, another movement which requested the national and local governments to found more high schools. To deal with such a great demand for high school education, the governments continued to establish new high schools. As a result, the number of high schools in Japan suddenly increased in the 1970s: while about 500 high schools were founded from 1950 (4,292) to 1970 (4,798), more than 400 new high schools (5,208 in 1980) were opened for the next ten years (Hujita 1983:34).

However, most of the new high schools were doomed to rank below established high schools (Amano 1991; Tsukada 2010). Japanese parents and students preferred so-called traditional high schools, which had been middle schools or girls' high schools in the pre-war education system and which had already proved to be effective in sending students to colleges. If you look at the column of "years" in the Table II-1, you can find that the pre-1945 high schools (B, C) rank at the top of the high school hierarchy, while the early 1970s high schools (J, K, L) in the middle, and the late 1970s high schools at the bottom (Q, R, T, U, V, X).[8] Despite all efforts to found new high schools in local communities, these new schools were very likely to become those which no one wanted to attend. Thus, it was obvious that without transforming the high school structure in itself, just building more high schools would fail teachers' devoted efforts to provide all students with equal education chances.

In order to rectify the stratification of high schools, several prefecture governments began to transform the high school entrance system in the late 1960s (Kariya and Rosenbaum 1999). For instance, Tokyo prefecture government decided to distribute all students who passed public high school entrance exams to high schools in their own catchment area instead of allowing students to apply to a particular high school (*sogosenbatsusei,* unified selection system). Kyoto prefecture government reorganized

[8] I compared only the high schools which had belonged to the same high school catchment area by 2007, which I thought may help to better understand the relation between the rank of high schools and their starting years which have been formulated since the 1970s. However, the rank is not necessarily determined by the starting years. The accessibility to high schools, rumors about them, and career guidance in middle school can also affect the rank. For instance, the reason O and Y High School rank low despite their long history is that before 2007, middle school teachers in Osaka City tended to guide smarter students to high schools run by the City, not by Osaka Prefecture. As the two high schools are run by the latter, therefore, they could help recruiting less smart students than otherwise they could.

each high school catchment area to have fewer public high schools within it, thereby actually making it meaningless to rank them (*shōgakkusei,* small-size high school catchment area system). These new systems could make all public high schools relatively equal in terms of the academic achievement level of entering students by evenly placing successful and slow students in all the schools.

However, the Osaka Prefectural Education Committee did not accept the unified selection system for several reasons. The OPEC was afraid that high achieving students might prefer private to public high schools or that some students might drop out when they were placed in high schools where they did not want to go, both of which had actually happened in Tokyo and Kyoto (Yamanoteshi Kyōshokuin Kumiai 1990:34). Even though the OPEC increased the number of high school catchment areas from five to nine in 1973 and made each catchment area have fewer high schools,[9] it finally refused to introduce the unified selection system in 1975. To change the high school hierarchy, therefore, middle school teachers in Osaka could not help relying on social activism rather than on official education reform.

From the early 1970s when many general high schools started to be opened, middle school teachers in several cities of Osaka prefecture decided to lead the local high school promotion movement. In fact, they regarded the movement as a tentative step to force the OPEC to introduce the unified selection system (Yamanoteshi Kyōshokuin Kumiai 1990:41). They expected that preventing students from making a high school choice on their own would be a tough job. Actually, it was difficult to persuade some high achieving students and their parents who aspired to enter a top-ranked high school to go on to designated local high schools. Thus, when middle school teachers conducted career guidance, they often had to quarrel with parents and students who refused to follow their career guidance. In some extreme cases, which I heard about from several teachers in Shōbun Middle School, the high officers in a municipal education committee met such parents and students in person in order to dissuade them from applying for high schools other than the designated ones. Or some middle schools in another city required students to explain in front of the principal or all their classmates why they did not want to go to the local high schools.

In spite of such a coercive drive, the movement lasted for almost thirty years partly because of strong egalitarian orientations among Japanese school teachers. Middle school teachers in the movement mentioned that students would learn and grow up better when children with various social backgrounds as well as with different scholastic abilities studied together in the same high school (Yamanoteshi Kyōshokuin Kumiai 1990:6). They criticized the high school entrance system for preventing children from learning from diverse classmates by tracking them to high schools by academic achievement, which actually caused the grouping of students according to their social origin. The teachers were also concerned that the system made slow students feel humiliated by their placement in low status high schools, thereby leading them to commit juvenile delinquency (12). Instead of differentiating one student from another according to their academic achievement, they wanted children to learn and grow up with their middle school classmates in the same high school rooted in their local community. In sum, the local high school promotion movement

[9] Despite the introduction of the smaller-size high school catchment area system, in 2005, 8 of 9 catchment areas in Osaka still had 10 to 18 high schools which were good enough to rank (Kyōikujigyōsha 2005:413-415).

was predicated on the ideal of egalitarianism in post-war Japan that regarded distinguishing students by academic achievement as discrimination (Kariya 1995): in the motto of "Let's make high schools locally rooted and equal," the middle school teachers aimed for "a challenge to meritocracy" (Yamanoteshi Kyōshokuin Kumiai 1990:11, 13).

In the high school catchment area, which encompassed several cities including Furuyama City in which Shōbun Middle School is located, the local high school promotion movement began as early as 1973 (35-38). As in 1973 J High School was founded in Yamanote City, the biggest city in the catchment area, middle school teachers of the City Teachers' Union and of the City Association of Education for Liberation suggested that all middle school teachers in the city should prevent the new high school from becoming a low status one. The principals and several teachers from each middle school in the city held a meeting in which they finally decided to launch the movement. Due to their enormous efforts, in just two years after they began to lead the movement, 83 percent of middle school students who went on to public general high schools in the city chose the designated local high schools (44). As of 1990, the proportion still remained about 70 percent (7).

Considering that this movement had no legal grounds, the relatively high rates could not have been achieved without the cooperation of middle school teachers in other cities of the catchment area. If they had allowed their students to apply for high schools in Yamanote City, the high schools would not have been local ones. Thus, from the beginning of the movement, middle school teachers in Yamanote City were aware that it was important to persuade their colleagues in other cities to also join the movement (47).

For several reasons, the attempt to extend the movement from one city to another in the catchment area worked well (48-52). Middle school teachers in Yamanote City started the movement in 1973, the very year when the OPEC rearranged the high school catchment areas in Osaka. Despite the rearrangement, the county of which the city was a part continued to constitute an independent catchment area: both the county and the area kept including the same cities. Thus, there had already existed multiple organizations in the county corresponding to the catchment area such as the Principals' Meeting, County Teachers' Union, County Association of Education for Liberation, and most of all, County Career Guidance Committee.[10] Through these organizations, middle school teachers in Yamanote City attempted to induce middle school teachers in other cities to participate in the movement. In 1978 when every city except for one in the catchment area came to have a new high school, the County Career Guidance Committee finally decided to implement the movement in all middle schools in the area.

Even though the commitment to the movement was varied according to middle schools or even individual teachers in the same middle school, the regional framework helped to facilitate the movement in the entire catchment area. The movement seemed to

[10] The County Career Guidance Committee originated from County Job Placement Commission which was founded in 1949 (Yamanoteshi Kyōshokuin Kumiai 1990:50-51). The Commission was renamed into County Career Guidance Workshop as more students went on to high school instead of getting employment after graduating from middle school. In 1972, the Workshop was finally changed into the Committee in order to improve the function of career guidance among middle schools in the catchment area. Even though in 2007, the catchment area was rearranged to include other regions, the Committee still works. See chapter IV to learn about how the Committee functions today.

contribute to less stratification of high schools in Osaka than in the neighboring prefectures such as Kyoto and Nara. A teacher who had been subject to the movement as a middle school student herself said, "Thanks to the movement, high schools in this county are not completely stratified by academic level. There are many high schools which have various levels of students. Some successful students still want to go to local high schools, for instance, V High School, because it does not cost money to commute to the schools. Thus, teachers in the High School come to our middle school every year and express their gratitude to us for sending good students to them. (Because of the high school reforms) Now the High School is going to be closed [precisely speaking, to be transformed from general to semi-general high school with a different name], though."

However, middle school teachers in Yamanote City who launched and led the movement in the strictest way decided to stop the movement earlier than any other teachers in the catchment area (Yamanoteshi Kyōshokuin Kumiai 1996). Facing the growing opposition from students and parents, the middle school teachers had to admit that they had violated children's right to choose their own future career for their ideal of abolishing the high school hierarchy and promoting local high schools. The termination of the movement in Yamanote City was particularly expedited as a candidate who pledged to stop the movement was elected as a mayor in 1995. Just one year later, the City Teachers' Union declared that career guidance in middle school must not be an object of social movement, and that the local high school movement was abnormal. As the stronghold of the movement collapsed, it could not move forward any longer in other cities. The education movement, which had lasted for more than 20 years, gradually ended by the late 1990s.

However, the termination of the movement cannot be simply understood as a product of the mayoral election. It must be understood in terms of structural conditions in which middle school teachers in the area found themselves in the late 1990s. First of all, the political economy of cities in the county prevented teachers from maintaining leadership in the movement. Yamanote City had the largest population in the county and then the biggest student population. Additionally, as the population in the city was not only larger but also richer than that in other cities, according to teachers in Shōbun Middle School, students from Yamanote City tended to perform better academically and beat their counterparts from other cities in high school entrance exams.[11] Thus, as they began to apply for high schools in other cities, they not only outnumbered but also scored higher in the exams than their counterparts from other cities.

Additionally, the high school reforms which started in the late 1990s left no choice to middle school teachers who devoted themselves to the movement. As I showed above, the thrust of the reforms was to diversify the type of high schools. Until the late 1990s, there were only two types of high schools: general or vocational. Thus, teachers could ask students why they bothered to enter a general high school other than a designated one even though both were the same type of school. However, as high schools were divided

[11] In the 2008 National Academic Achievement Test, the average scores of 9th grade students in Yamanote City were the second highest in the County, just 0.1 point lower than those of their counterparts in the top rank. Also, the average scores were 4.5 point higher than those of 9th grade students in Furuyama City, and 9.2 point higher than the lowest average scores in the county (Sankeishinbun 10/17/2008).

into general, semi-general, and comprehensive high schools by the high school diversification project, the designated local high schools might not provide particular courses which students wanted to take. Also, as the project led to the merging of some high schools, many local high schools were closed. Thus, the teachers could not persuade their students to apply for the local schools which did not provide specific courses or did not exist anymore.

Furthermore, the movement failed to entirely abolish the stratified high school structure and the differential effects of the structure on students' aptitude and future career. For instance, middle school teachers in Furuyama City excluded B and C High Schools from the movement. Even when the movement came to a climax, they did not think that they could prevent all top students with high aspirations from choosing the top high schools. Instead, the teachers tried to proportionately place middle to low level students from a middle school in one or two local high schools. Even though some high achievers agreed with teachers' ideology of egalitarianism and went on to local high schools, the middle school teachers in Furuyama City still allowed high achievers to apply to the top-ranked high schools. As a result, the upper stratum of high school structure in the area hardly changed despite the movement.

Meanwhile, newly-founded high schools, which were in danger of being trapped into the low stratum of the structure, could not become high status high schools simply by admitting a small number of high-achieving students along with a larger number of low-achieving classmates. Instead, the new high schools often ended up leveling down rather than enhancing entering students. Thus, even the high-achieving students who agreed to advance to the newly-opened high schools eventually became disappointed with the movement because the low quality of the high schools undermined their own future. In other words, the high school structure was strong enough to perpetuate itself.

In Shōbun Middle School, I had a chance to meet both Ms. Arai, a lecturer in her late thirties without a teacher's certificate and her own 9th grade homeroom teacher in his mid fifties. According to her ex-homeroom teacher, the lecturer had been a leader in her homeroom class as well as a high achieving student. He persuaded her to go on to a local high school, and she followed his advice. Although she had graduated from university and had worked at a stock company before getting married, now she was preparing to get a teacher's certificate. When I asked her about the local high school promotion movement, she felt ambivalent about not having advanced to a higher rank high school corresponding to her academic achievement.

> Ms. Arai: The movement reached a climax when I was a middle school student [in the early 1980s]. More than half of students in my middle school went on to the same high school. Only ten or so entered top-ranked high schools.
> I: How did the ten students persuade teachers?
> Ms. Arai: They did not persuade. They did quarrel with their homeroom teachers.
> I: Why did teachers lead the movement?
> Ms. Arai: In order to make local high schools better. However, it does not seem that they have gotten better. When I was in 10th grade, junior and senior students wished to go to college, and yet they failed to do that. More than half in my high school cohort got a job after graduating from high school. I cannot help thinking that where you are situated matters. In my high school, teachers had never

completed a textbook. Thus, if you had wished to go to college, you had to study for yourself. However, it was difficult to study for myself when my classmates did not study at all. My friends invited me to participate in after-school club activities or to hang out on weekends. I could not say no. When no one attended *juku*, it was hard to say that I should go to *juku*. Additionally, the atmosphere of the high school was listless. For instance, no one except for those in the brass band was actively engaged in school festivals. Then, as students went up from one grade to the next, they gradually gave up on receiving further education. My friends did not like to study and wanted to get employed and to earn money without going to college. At that time, getting a high school diploma made sure you got a job. I did not want to begin to work at such a young age, and I went to college. However, I wonder if I could have made it to a better university if I had entered a high status high school. Unless you are determined, it may be difficult to study in such a low status high school. It is only an excuse, though. However, I have a friend who felt stressful in a top-ranked high school and did not enter any college. Thus, it is difficult to say which high school choices were better.

Today when ten years have passed since the movement ended, we have to ask what the termination of the movement implies for our understanding of the transition from middle to high school in the 2000s. It reflects the fact that Japanese middle school teachers have been losing their authority over students and parents. They can no longer compel children and their parents to follow their advice in the transition. Then what could result from a faltering of the authority of Japanese middle school teachers? The following interview with Mr. Takamura, which is somewhat long and yet worthwhile to read, fully articulates social and cultural implications of the change in the transition to high school after the end of the local high school promotion movement.

I: It is inevitable that students are divided into high and low achievers in school. What do you think makes the division?
Mr. Takamura: Definitely, their family background shapes their academic achievement. This is particularly the case now rather than before. Also, the weakening of the importance of the (middle) school contributes to that division. In the past, it was very likely that you got a job in a good company if you worked hard in middle school, went on to high school and graduated from it. That was a sure warrant of success. Giving up on advancing to high school meant that you could not be an independent individual in the future. Thus, coming to middle school every day, and obeying teachers' directions affected your future. Otherwise you might have bad school records. Generally speaking, however, the significance of middle school is faltering now. You may ask why you have to come to middle school every day when you may get better test scores if you study at *juku*. Whether or not you come to middle school every day does not matter now. Furthermore, in the past, you could not pass high school entrance exams unless you worked hard. However, even though you do not study for the exams, you can go to private high schools now if you can afford the tuition. High school entrance used to be more competitive than now. You may say that it is still difficult to enter public high schools, and yet it is nothing compared to the competition for high school entrance in the past. Due to the

decrease in the number of children, it is easy to enter a low status public high school like X High School. In other words, without making efforts, you can go on to high school. Current 9th grade students know that older delinquent students made it into, even if they soon dropped out of, X High School even though they did not study at all. Thus the current students feel they have little reason to study. They are losing the motivation to keep coming to middle school. They know they can go to high school even if they spend time hanging out. Thus, even 9th grade students are not serious enough to study hard for the exams. This is much truer of students in the middle or low level of academic achievement. As the status of middle school is falling in Japanese society in general, low achievers are more likely to stop studying than high achievers. Meanwhile, parents with college diplomas do not leave their child alone to be caught by this change because they want to make him or her successful. Whether or not middle school matters in Japan, the college-graduate parents make their child try hard to receive a higher education. In sum, even though most of middle school students do not study at all, children of college-graduate parents are made to study harder. As a result, family background may make further differences. While middle school becomes nothing, *juku* is going to count more. Parents with a high level of education carefully select *juku*. Before sending their child to a *juku*, they investigate which *juku* has what advantages. In contrast, parents without a college diploma just send their child to a *juku* to which he or she wants to go. This child may just get along with friends there. Thus, even the effect of the private education depends upon parents' education level or family background. As middle school is losing its authority, parents think that their child can achieve better test scores by studying hard in *juku* than by attending middle school without truancy, thereby doubting the significance of middle school.

In sum, after the termination of the local high school promotion movement, on the one hand, the middle school per se as well as its teachers is losing their importance for the transition to upper secondary education. Instead of public education, private supplementary education appears to take responsibility for the transition more than ever. On the other hand, the high school hierarchy has become irrevocable. It is very unlikely to find any social force in the near future which might change the hierarchy. Instead, highly stratified high schools may work to socialize their students for different dispositions and life chances more than ever. Finally, all these structural changes are creating the conditions of possibility for the differentiation of students' commitment to schooling according to their class positions. Children from educationally disadvantaged families seem to lose the motivation to try hard more than their counterparts whose parents are college graduates. This suggests a surprising departure from the cultural model of learning in Japanese society. Thus, in the next section, I will explore the cultural change of achievement ideology in the society.

3. From Effort to Habit: A Subtle Change of the Model of Learning

Most of teachers whom I talked with or interviewed during my fieldwork gave me the same answer to my question of the difference between high and low achievers in middle school: *katei kankyō,* which is a Japanese equivalent for family background. However, they meant by the Japanese word more than objective conditions of families such

as parents' income, employment status, and educational level. As Mr. Hukuyama, the vice principal in Shōbun Middle School said, it also implied parents' strategy for their child's education even though we may expect the socio-economic conditions may affect the strategy.

> I: Do you think why in Japan, the rank of a high school becomes identical with the level of family background of students who enter the high school?
> Mr. Hukuyama: They are not identical, but correspond to each other. In the current high school entrance system in Osaka, if you want to enter A High School, you must get grade 10 in all nine subjects. To achieve this grade, your parents must make you learn how to play a musical instrument or play sports when you are little. [Otherwise, you cannot get grade 10 in non-academic subjects such as music and physical education.] Then if you get grade 10 in most of the nine subjects, you are likely to enter B High School. However, if you have a grade 7 or 8 in one or two of five core academic subjects or if you are poor at non-academic subjects, you can only go to C High School. In other words, your parents have to plan on your schooling in advance. Thus, one's academic achievement depends upon one's parents' competence to educate their child. For instance, if parents can come up with historical or geographical issues while watching with their child a history drama of NHK (*Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai*, Japan Broadcasting System), he or she may get interested in [history or geography] classes in school. Whether or not parents can do this makes a difference.

In another interview with Mr. Hukuyama, he suggested that this strategic approach to children's education may be more effective when they are still young. On the basis of his experience with his three daughters, he pointed out that parents' competence can shape child's achievement only until he or she is a middle school student. Although all his daughters graduated from the high school, which ranks second in a high school catchment area in Osaka, his second daughter, unlike her other sisters, could not enter a national university. Even though Mr. Hukuyama managed to prepare her for entrance into the high status high school and a private university by sending her a *juku*, he could not compel her to study in high school because she started to voice her own opinion as she got older. He suggested that she had applied herself to reading books and doing after-school club activities instead of concentrating on studying for college entrance exams. He ended his words by saying, "I used to tell my students that what they have achieved up until their middle school years is not a proof of their ability but of their parents' competence. As I mentioned earlier, their achievement in high school proves their genuine ability." This developmental psychological factor may be one of the reasons the transition from middle to high school is shaped by a non-objective aspect of family background like parental engagement in schooling.

Furthermore, when teachers in Shōbun Middle School discussed the impact of students' family background on their academic achievement and attainment, they thought of it not only as a function of parents' strategic approach to schooling, but also as a product of their ways of child rearing: school performance depends on the extent to which parents can make their child develop a habit of studying at home. That is why to close the academic attainment gap of children according to their parents' educational level, Ms. Ohira

suggested that teachers should take a step in the earlier stage of schooling to make children and their parents realize the importance of developing a habit of studying at home.

> I: For the last 18 months, I have seen how hard teachers work. Nevertheless, some students do not understand anything even if teachers repeatedly explain the same thing at remedial tracks. Others do not have the motivation to study and to go on to high school. So I come to wonder how we can motivate them to study.
> Ms. Ohira: Is it your research topic? Tracking is one way to motivate them to study. However, when we led the local high school promotion movement, we refused to introduce tracking. A homeroom culture that classmates teach and learn from each other must precede the ability grouping. Meanwhile, I think that elementary school teachers should emphasize more the significance of studying at home. They not only should give more homework, but they should tell parents to help their child make a habit of studying at home. Both parents and elementary school teachers must emphasize the importance of studying at home beginning in 1st or 2nd grade. Parents tend to consider their child's academic attainment in terms of their own education level. No college-graduate parents would let their child get a job after graduating from middle school. They will tell their child to do something for the future. Meanwhile, middle-school-graduate parents tend to think that their child can manage to live just the way they did. To minimize the influence of parents' educational level, teachers must approach students and their parents as early as possible. Do you know Nakatani san in my [7th grade] homeroom? It seems that her mother skipped classes in elementary and middle school. The mother even failed to enter a low status private high school. As the mother herself could not perform well in school, she has left her child alone without studying since elementary school years. Thus, Nakatani san has been poor at learning since she was in elementary school. Then this led to bullying when she was little.

As the above interview suggests, habit is, by definition, what is supposed to be inculcated into children's minds and bodies through socialization at home when they are little. Thus, whether a child has a certain habit is an issue beyond whether or not he or she has an inborn ability or makes an effort. In other words, creating a habit of studying at home is not what you can do by and for yourself but what your parents must instill in you.

> I: Finally, I would like to ask what makes the division of high and low achievers in school. Traditionally, the Japanese have prioritized effort over ability for learning. In recent days, some people ascribe the division to family background.
> Ms. Tanaka: I think that family background makes a fundamental difference. I am not saying that families are responsible for everything. However, I cannot say that Nomura kun and Nishikawa kun should be responsible for their low achievement. Since their families manage to make both ends meet, these children cannot study [at home] at all. In addition, habit is also crucial. Children are supposed to get up in the morning, eat breakfast and come to school. However, some students just do not have a habit of doing those things. Just as you must get up and brush your teeth, so you must come to school, sit on your chair and study. And yet, some students cannot do that. This is a problem beyond if they like or dislike studying. This is a

problem beyond ability and effort. Unless children learn these habits at home, they cannot perform well in school.

As Ms. Tanaka does above, comparing the habit of studying with that of living with regularity may make the former look like habitual repetition. However, teachers in Shōbun Middle School including Ms. Tanaka meant more than an automatic action by habit. Instead, it is similar to "habitus" as "systems of durable, disposable *dispositions*" (Bourdieu 1977:72, emphasis in original). Bourdieu defines habitus as "structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structure, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' *without in any way being the product of obedience to rules*, objectively adapted to their goals *without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them* (72, emphasis added)." Likewise, the habit which is required by the teachers for good school performance would be "internalized and preconscious" dispositions which "were socially produced" rather than either simply following everyday rules or consciously trying for academic goals (Reed-Donahay 2005:107). The following conversation between Ms. Kitayama, the school counselor, and Mr. Takamura, the head teacher in 9th grade, shows such nature of habit.

> Ms. Kitayama: I just began to let my child attend a *juku* which prepares students for high school entrance exams for A or B High School. After attending some classes, my child told me that students in the *juku* seemed to have a different kind of brain. I also happened to know that they were very smart and that their parents often graduated from Kyoto University. Even though I wish my child continue to attend the *juku*, he seems mediocre.
> Mr. Takamura: To students who attend A or B High School, studying is not painful to them. No matter how difficult it may be to understand what they learn in school, studying does not give them any pain because they have learned a habit of studying. They may look like they are playing in school. Even though they spend much time studying at home, they can enjoy school life because studying is not a pain to them. They have been accustomed to studying since they are in elementary schools.

In this vein, the habit which is required in the Japanese education system today is neither a series of repeated actions nor is it simply trying hard, but rather an embodied disposition to study: just as you can get up at a regular time without an alarm clock if a kind of physiological clock is built in your body, so you can study for long hours without suffering if your body gets used to doing that.

Here I find a subtle change in the cultural model of learning in contemporary Japanese society. It was known that in the society, learning is not to draw out innate abilities from children but to let them absorb what others have done through imitation and effort (Rohlen and LeTendre 1996; Singleton 1998). Unlike the westerner who tend to believe that inborn ability is responsible for academic achievement, it was also said that the Japanese believe that all children are hardly different in terms of their talents and that they can achieve if they make efforts (Holloway 1988). Thus, Japanese and western scholars have regarded the belief that efforts shape school performance as the distinctive character of a Japanese cultural theory of learning (Singleton 1989; Takeuchi 1995).

In fact, the belief in the effect of effort on academic performance is rooted in the modern ideal of meritocracy. Referring to Michael Young's *The Rise of the Meritocracy*, Kariya says, "The meritocracy is a system in which individuals are selected not by their ascribed positions like social origins but by their achievement, i.e. merit, thereby leading to social equality. In this vein, either ability or effort, which form merit, is supposed to be equally distributed across classes and other ascribed categories. In order to fulfill social equality through the meritocracy, it is a precondition that neither ability nor effort is related to individuals' social origins." (2001:147) In this sense, the Japanese cultural theory of learning is predicated upon the modern ideology that effort is an individual initiative.

However, the moment we say school success or failure is a function of habit, not of individual effort, we cannot help suggesting the significant impact of family background on school performance because the habit is supposed to be a product of socialization at home. We cannot ascribe individual students' academic achievement to their own responsibility any more. It may be harsh to blame them for not making an effort to learn if their parents did not or could not bring them up to be habituated to studying. Thus, this new model of learning, which prioritizes habit over effort, hints that even the will to try hard is not an innate nature of individuals but a disposition that they are made to acquire by their guardians at home.

In this corollary, unlike the modern ideology of meritocracy, the new model of learning means that effort is likely to be unequally distributed among families in contemporary Japanese society. Some sociological research seems to confirm this reasoning. For example, when he compares the change of study time beyond schools from 1979 to 1997, by which he observes the change of the amount of efforts Japanese high school students make for learning, Kariya finds that the amount of study time in 1979 has nothing to do with the students' family background, while the amount of study time in 1997 is differentiated by their mothers' educational level (2001:158). As such, Kariya shows that the inequality of effort along class lines accounts for the growing gap in academic achievement according to children's class origins in recent years.

Also, Honda (2005:85) develops the idea that effort is not a product of individual will but a learned ability. When she analyzes the change of factors from 1989 to 2001 which contribute to making elementary and middle school students try hard, she shows that parents' expectation toward their child and living habits at home as well as test scores and study time shape whether or not the students make efforts (100). It is particularly important to remember that for the twelve years, overall, Japanese children not only have studied less hours and got lower test scores, but also have felt less expected to do well from their parents and behaved less regularly (96-99). These findings suggest that families are more likely to shape whether or not children make efforts than before, thereby making a difference in their academic achievement.

The phenomenon that effort is socially divided does not seem to be restricted to Japanese children. Ordinary Japanese have been losing their belief in effort as a guarantee of social success since the burst of the economic bubble in the 1990s (Miura 2005; Satō 2000; Yamada 2005). For instance, Miura (2005) identified an emergence of *karyū*, low-stream people who "not only earn little money but also have little ability to communicate with others and to live by, and have low aspirations to work, learn, and consume, i.e. those with little aspirations toward their own life." However, everyone in the society is not losing

faith in the value of effort in the same proportion. Kikkawa (2009:163-164) found that such people are likely to come from high school graduates rather than from college graduates. According to his analysis of 2005 Social Stratification and Social Mobility Research, 70 percent of people who consider themselves as *karyū* were non-college graduates. Also, 47.6 percent of non-college graduates identified themselves with *karyū*, whereas only 26 percent of college-graduates did so. In short, it seems that in contemporary Japanese society, educationally disadvantaged people tend to disbelieve in the value of effort more than their counterparts are.

In this context, it can be said that the new model of learning is a folk concept through which middle school teachers grasp the very class division of effort in the 21st century Japan to which the above sociological research bears witness. Also, the model is "a language of class" by which they mean the increasing effect of family background on school performance and the transition to high school (Corfield 1991). In sum, in a society in which class is not part of everyday terminology, teachers in Shōbun Middle School point out the growing correlation between students' social position and their academic achievement and attainment through the ordinary language of habit.

Nevertheless, the teachers do not give up on closing the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students. As I will show in the next two chapters, they try to make their students develop a habit of studying and to motivate them to try hard by introducing several education programs such as tracking and after-school classes. Also, they strive to make sure their students get a destination after middle school. However, as I showed in this chapter, it should be remembered that they are doing so in extremely difficult conditions in which the high school structure is becoming more stratified and more rigid, in which students from lower class families are reluctant to try to learn, and yet in which the teachers' status and authority over students and parents falls. Thus, in the following two chapters, I will investigate the unintended consequences of their devoted educational practices to overcome these conditions on students' self-identity and educational aspirations.

III. Differentiated Socialization in Middle School

If I try hard a little more, I will meet with a sparkling light of hope. (Yoshida kun, *advanced track*)
Parting is not the end but a start. My dream will blossom from there. (Katayama kun, *advanced track*)

I pray for not becoming a NEET ten years later. (Ashida kun, *remedial track*)
As a 15-year-old, I have behaved too stupidly. I regret having done so far. (Hatoyama kun, *remedial track*)

At age fifteen when compulsory education ends in Japan, more that 90 percent of children go to high school but do so with different expectations for their future. On the one hand, successful students leave middle school expecting a bright future. The light of hope will shine on them so that they can go for their dream. On the other hand, slow pupils depart from middle school worrying about the future. They are afraid that what they have done up to the middle school years might lead them to a precarious status for instance that of being labeled a "NEET" (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

Academic success or failure in the lower secondary school shapes future expectations. At the end of middle school education, students sense, even if they do not exactly know what they are to be like, where they are going to stand, or more precisely, where they are likely to be placed in society. To understand the formation of a sense of one's place in contemporary Japanese society, we need to take a look at what is going on within Japanese middle school as "a huge classificatory machine" (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990: x).

In chapter III, I will examine mechanisms through which children learn where they are in middle school, and then realize where they are likely to land in society. To this end, I will explore the workings of examination, evaluation and tracking in middle school in contrast with these processes in elementary school. These apparatuses create a condition in which academic achievement looks like a product of merit and students are classified in a hierarchical but apparently fair way. As they are selected and tracked throughout middle school years, individual students learn to position themselves in relation to other pupils and to project themselves in social positions equivalent to their ranks in the school. In this hierarchical socialization, slow students whom teachers intend to support through such classification systems, end up resigning themselves to the social location that this relegates them to, which tends to be the one they originally came from. In other words, I find a self-classifying effect of middle school education on the low achieving students, whereby Japanese middle school may play a role in keeping the lower social order in line rather than advancing the higher order.

1. Examination and Relative Evaluation

When they first enter middle school, children have a lot of things to learn, not only new academic subjects such as English but also new school rules which were not specified in elementary school. For instance, in the very first week at middle school, they are told where they sit in their homeroom and lunchroom, and who should erase the blackboard, clean the windows, and sweep the corridor (2008 7th grade news no.2). They are also

taught to abide by classroom rules such as "You should look at the clock and sit in your chair before the class begins because there is no bell," "You must not chat with your classmates during the class, and should listen to what teachers and other students say," and "You are not allowed to cause disruption in the classroom because everyone has a right to learn." (2008 7th grade news no.3) Mr. Ishibashi who was a homeroom teacher in 7th grade said, "We, teachers, should redefine what [middle] school is in the very first semester while we confront students and their parents. Otherwise school disorder could take place." That is to say, the transition from elementary school to middle school is "the first path to rule-laden and formalized adulthood," which is intended to keep order in the school (Fukuzawa 1994; Fukuzawa and LeTendre 2001; LeTendre 1994).

In addition to these general school rules, students learn in middle school that there are regular examinations like mid-terms and finals as well as more frequent weekly quizzes. For the exams, Shōbun Middle School stipulated nineteen rules, some of which read: "You sit on a designated chair according to your number," "You leave nothing in your desk drawer," "You put only your pencil, mechanical pencil and eraser on the desk," "You must not turn over the test paper until you are told to do so by the teacher," "You should raise your hands to pick up your pencil or eraser if they drop on the floor. Otherwise you could be regarded as cheating," and "Even if the examination is over, you cannot leave the classroom until the teacher tells you to do so." (2008 7th grade news no.23) The minutiae of these rules suggest that fairness is the biggest concern in tests.

However, middle school teachers want students to learn more than to follow such minute rules. They think that the regular examination should be a stimulus through which pupils not only are motivated to study harder but also learn to discipline themselves in relation to others: "You have no problem in your life if you neither watch TV nor read comic books three days before the midterm." (2008 7th grade news no.21) or "You have to realize other classmates may study more than you do before taking the examination." (2008 7th grade news no.22) As such, they require children as middle school students to not only take an exam fairly but also try harder for it and consider it seriously for their own growth.

Still, you may wonder why examination is taken so seriously at middle school. Are such detailed rules even necessary? Why do middle school teachers go in detail into how students should take a test and how they should study for it? Haven't children ever taken any in elementary school? It may be obvious if we take a look at how differently examinations are handled in elementary school vis-à-vis in middle school.

First of all, Japanese children do not take exams regularly in elementary school. There are neither midterms nor finals. They still take quizzes and tests, but even when they do, they sometimes have textbooks in hand. This is a description of how a test was given at Furumachi Elementary School, which is one of two feeder primary schools for Shōbun Middle School.

> At 10:50 AM, the class began with a group activity through which students got ready for a presentation on cooking. However, the homeroom teacher said that she would have children take a test in social science at 11:10 AM. It seemed that the test was not announced in advance. One boy was shocked. The teacher reassured him by saying, "You can refer to your textbook because we have not yet studied this topic enough. Please arrange your own desk and chair for the test." Another boy

grumbled that it was unnecessary to rearrange them because they could refer to their textbook. No one would cheat in the test. The students were to write about a country they were interested in. They were to say why, and they should describe the main characteristics of the country. During the test, some students kept asking the teacher questions about how they should answer. Then she gave them some hints. About 20 minutes later, she even wrote down which pages they should read in the textbook when she found that some students did not answer the questions. At 11:35 AM, she said that the test was over and that the desks and chairs should be returned to their regular positions.

When a test is given in this way, it is no wonder that elementary school teachers do not know precisely which students do better or worse in terms of academic performance. They do not have a means for assessing students' achievement precisely. In fact, they were also aware of this problem. Mr. Nagano who was the principal of Aratamachi Elementary School, which is another feeder primary school for Shōbun Middle School, and who had also taught at Furumachi Elementary School, pointed out the problem when he explained why graduates of Furumachi Elementary School perform worse in the Middle School than those of Aratamachi Elementary School at a discussion session which teachers of those three schools attended.

Mr. Nagano: The biggest problem at elementary school is the means of evaluation. At the school, teachers make tests whose average score could become 80 of 100. Then students who get 70 misconceive that they are doing well. They do not know where they are ranked. I often told children that they should know they might get 50 at middle school even if they got 80 at elementary school. Those who got 70 at elementary school might get only 20 or 30 in middle school. When the test result is below 80 at primary school, homeroom teachers often remake test questions of their own and keep retesting until the average eventually becomes 80. Then they feel relieved. Actually, they do not know about students' academic situations. They do not know what each child is poor at. Probably, this is going on at most of elementary schools in Osaka. It is no wonder that Osaka children did worse than their counterparts in other prefectures at the National Academic Tests. At elementary school, teachers need to make examination and evaluation more thorough.

This obscurity of academic ranks in elementary school results from "absolute evaluation" that is often used in the school. There are only three loose scales for the evaluation: "You did very well," "You did well," and "Let's try more." This means that teachers set minimum goals which children should understand, and then examine whether or not they have satisfied the requirement. Here the comparison between the previous and current test result of each child is more important than their ranking in the tests. In other words, such evaluation focuses on the individual growth of a student rather than his or her relative position in academic achievement. Thus, neither elementary school teachers nor their students can know exactly whether or not an individual student is doing well (Kaneko 1999).

As a result, some new 7th graders misrecognize that they are good at studying due to the obscure way in which they have been evaluated during elementary school years. Sooner or later, however, as they go through the first year at middle school, they come to recognize clearly who performs better and that they are not in the "You did very well" group any more. The following conversation between general-track students and their teacher, which took place at the end of 7th grade, shows the ways in which children see the difference between elementary school and middle school in terms of evaluation.

> Kishi san: Ms. Ikeda. In the final year at elementary school, I got straight "You did very well" in every subject except for just one. Wasn't I great?
> Sato san: I first got six or seven "Let's try more" and yet I just got two at the end of elementary school.
> Ms. Ikeda: You guys were great. Aren't you evaluated in any other way in elementary school?
> Kishi san: Yes. There are three scales of evaluation. "You did very well," "You did well," and "Let's try more." This is different from the grading of middle school.
> Ms. Ikeda: At middle school, your academic rank is clearly revealed by scores per se.
> Sato san: That is too harsh.
> Ms. Ikeda: That is what it is. If you go to high school, it becomes much harsher.
> Kishi san: By the way, could you let us know how you will place students to each homeroom next year?
> Ms. Ikeda: Basically by academic ranks. Teachers place high achievers equally in each homeroom. Now computers automatically sort them out, though.
> Sato san: Then why do smart students at that homeroom outnumber their counterparts at other homerooms in our grade?

When the class was over, Ms. Ikeda said to me, "It is true that we place students equally in each homeroom by their academic scores. Although I did not say it to those children, however, we cannot help considering the placement in terms of student guidance. For example, we consider who can never be in the same class with whom. Meanwhile, elementary school teachers made the placement for the 7th graders. However, they hardly know about the students' academic scores. Then they ended up putting more smart children in a particular homeroom as those girls said. However, there are many tests at middle school, and scores tells the truth, which is definitely different from elementary school."

What distinguishes middle school from elementary school is, therefore, the significance of tests and evaluation. First, the regular examinations such as mid-terms and finals in middle school are not essays, but multiple-choice or short-answer tests. They can be graded with strict objectivity and there is little room for subjective evaluation. Thus, in terms of their formats, they are a fair game for any student. It is also important that "relative evaluation" is used in middle school in contrast with "absolute evaluation" in elementary school. According to the 2008 school guidebook of Shōbun Middle School, this is a way of evaluation for "checking the position of a student in a group" and "clarifying individual differentiations" (Shōbun Middle School 2008: 11). To this end, the middle school has chosen a one to ten scale of evaluation, which "will be used as a school record in

high school entrance exam" (11). Pupils are ranked from 10, the top, to 1, the bottom in each of nine academic and non-academic subjects.

There is a stipulation which prescribes what percent of students should be given to a particular grade. For instance, if a child is in the top three among one hundred students in English, he or she gets grade 10 in the subject. Then the next four students get 9, the following nine students 8, and the final three students 1 (Shōbun Middle School 2000:36). This rule applies to other subjects in the same way. Middle school teachers rank students according to their test scores in each subject. They also rank children by the sum of test scores in all nine subjects. At the end of each semester, even though teachers also consider how actively students participated in classes and whether they turned in homework on time, they rank all the students by calculating the average score of midterm and final exams within and across all the subjects. Finally, through a school report, they inform children of their relative place in each subject, not across all the subjects, by dividing ten groups by their ranking in the subject.

Thus, middle school students may not know their own rank in the grade as precisely as teachers do. While the latter know children's specific rank within and across subjects, the former only their relative location in each subject. Nevertheless, middle school children sense where they are ranked in their grade across the subjects because the classificatory system of "relative evaluation" per se always makes them compare each other's academic achievement. They weigh who is higher and lower in terms of academic performance. The following excerpt from my field notes describes what happens whenever the results of a regular exam are announced. Students who were at the end of 8th grade compared their score with those at a similar academic level, thereby suggesting that they recognized with whom they should compare themselves.

> It was the fifth lesson of the day in Ms. Tanaka's homeroom. When Mr. Miki, an English teacher, marked and distributed final exam papers, as usual, students asked each other their test scores in public. And yet, they only asked those who were on the same academic level. For example, Fukuda san was happy to find that she got the same score, 32, as Suzuki san. Hearing their talk, Nakasone san became excited and said that she did better than them. She got 38. Meanwhile, Takeshita kun first talked with Kaifu kun and Uno kun about their test score in the subject. Takeshita kun got 87, while Kaifu kun 92. Then they asked each other the sum in four subjects whose scores had been released up to that point, whereby they weighed who was higher than others.

Meanwhile, Shōbun Middle School also has another evaluation system, a kind of absolute evaluation, because the relative evaluation cannot tell if students are really doing well. Then it issues an unofficial school report once (for 9th graders) or twice (for 7th and 8th graders) a year. The report shows what a child does and does not do in each subject. Taking a look at the subject, Japanese, for instance, it let a student know if he does homework properly or how he performs in the area of listening, writing, and reading during the semester. According to the 2008 school guidebook of Shōbun Middle School, therefore, his homeroom teachers, who may not teach the subject, as well as the student and his parents, are informed of his "*gakushūshūkan,* habit of learning," which you "cannot see by test scores only" (Shōbun Middle School 2008:12). The guidebook even reads,

"Academic achievement is the accumulated product of habit. Even if his test score is high, you should be worried about his achievement in the future if he often forgot to bring or submit homework on time" (12). In this way, teachers at the middle school not only improve students' academic achievement, but also inculcate in them a disposition to study in the right way.

In 2001, teachers decided to carry out extra quizzes in addition to mid-terms and finals, and set up after-school supplementary classes on every Friday to make an even stronger case for instilling appropriate habits of work in students. At Shōbun Middle School, quizzes which are called "check tests" may be arranged in mainly academic subjects such as English, Japanese, mathematics, social studies, and sciences whenever one chapter in the textbook is done. For instance, during a quiz on the infinitive in English, students may be asked to arrange words in a proper order and make sentences including the infinitive. It is not that difficult to pass the quiz because they have already learned by heart the same sentences during the class. Nonetheless, some students still fail to pass it. Then they must stay for an after-school supplementary class on the last school day of the week in which they took the quiz. They cannot return home unless they pass the same quiz during the supplementary class.

Even though students hated to be left in school for the additional class on Friday, teachers in middle school tried to help particularly low-achieving students. Mr. Ozawa, who first planned these quizzes and supplementary classes, explained what he intended by creating them to other teachers at a workshop in the beginning of spring semester in 2008.

> Mr. Ozawa: I do not regard scholastic ability from a meritocratic perspective. Rather I am thinking about it in terms of creating a safety net. I hope that you understand our system to enhance academic achievement in this way. For example, "check tests" play a role in informing slow students of what they should study. Through the tests, teachers can also find how much children understand what they are taught. The low achievers could be helped to study for regular exams by the check tests. The current system in which examinations are taken once per several months is for high achievers who study every day. Those who seldom study cannot catch up with lots of things all at once even when they want to get ready for midterms. I am assured of the advantage of the tests. When I began the tests seven years ago, some smart students complained that everyone came to perform well due to the tests, and asked me to stop them. "Supplementary classes" also intend to make slow students learn the basics. Furthermore, it would let them have at least a minimum skill, so as not to be tricked when they go into society. To take an extreme example, I hope that they can do sums even when the machine is out of order at a convenience store where they might work as a part-timer. Many teachers were against the classes, which prevented them from doing after-school club activities on Friday. Still, I persuaded them to stop the activities on Friday by proclaiming that most of all, public school should focus on facilitating academic achievement.

At Shōbun Middle School, therefore, we find a set of apparatuses which are supposed to improve academic achievement, particularly that of low achievers, thereby helping them to lead a basic life in the future. However, the system has its own pitfalls. First of all, it seemed that students in the middle level of academic achievement were

helped to understand better by such systems, but those in the bottom were not. As a teacher who transferred from another middle school in 2008 mentioned, "Students who are in the bottom at Shōbun Middle School are no better than their counterparts in other middle schools. Those in the middle are slightly better, though." More seriously, children's relative rank in their grade tended to remain the same over time. Such immobility even started in the first middle school year as two teachers in 7th grade found after reviewing the results of mid-terms and finals at the end of the second semester in 2008.

> Mr. Ozawa: Some children who were regarded as smart by elementary school teachers have scored firmly in the middle. For example, Miyazawa kun. This is because they did not evaluate students thoroughly. In general, academic ranking has not changed at all since the first mid-term in May.
> Ms. Ohira: Does this mean that everything had been already decided in elementary school?
> Mr. Ozawa: Well… Even if we enhance students' academic achievement in general, their relative rank hardly changes. It is too terrible.

When the second semester just began in September, 2008, I stopped by the arts and crafts club at the middle school. Since 9th grade boys had stopped coming to the club in order to study for high school entrance examinations, all its members were 7th grade boys, one of whom was Miyazawa kun, the very student whom Mr. Ozawa had discussed in the above conversation. As usual, Miyazawa kun was chatting with Hosokawa kun whose low academic achievement worried his homeroom teacher.

> I: How do you feel about middle school? Are you guys accustomed to it?
> Hosokawa kun: Elementary school was more interesting than middle school.
> I: Why do you think so?
> Hosokawa kun: At middle school, I have too much homework to do… Although I went to Juku in elementary school years, I stopped going because it was not interesting.
> I: How about you, Miyazawa?
> Miyazawa kun: It seems that my first year at this middle school is already over.
> I: Why? You just spent four months at this school!
> Miyazawa kun: Well, I did not get a good grade in the first semester. I should have got higher scores in the first mid-term.
> I: You still have a chance to catch up, Miyazawa! It is not too late.
> Miyazawa kun: Well… I have already screwed up too much. Nothing is going well.

Why was Miyazawa kun so dispirited? Do the sophisticated evaluations based on many quizzes and regular examinations influence children who just graduated from elementary school to the extent that they are resigned just in one semester at Shōbun Middle School? I will leave this issue for a moment to address the role of tracking in shaping students' sense of place in school and, likely in society.

2. Tracking

According to the 2002 survey by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, "more than 60 percent of public elementary and middle schools" adopted "ability grouping, especially in mathematics, in some form" (Tsuneyoshi 2004:385). This is quite surprising given that tracking had not been a part of primary and lower secondary education in Japan until the 1990s (Hill 1997; Shimizu 1992). It may undermine a cultural belief among the Japanese that every student is hardly different in terms of their talents and that they can achieve if they make an effort (Holloway 1988). From this perspective, learning is not to draw out innate abilities from children but to let them absorb what others have done through imitation and effort (Singleton 1998; Rohlen and LeTendre 1996). Furthermore, Japanese teachers who shared this belief opposed the ability grouping because it might cause discrimination against slow students (LeTendre, Hofer, and Shimizu 2003; Shimizu 1998).[1] They were worried that those children might be stigmatized as dull and stupid, thereby losing self-esteem and the initiative to learn. In other words, the opposition to tracking was based on the egalitarian idea that dividing children by their academic achievement is discriminatory.

However, as I mentioned in chapter II, education reforms which the Ministry has put forward since the 1980s in the name of individuality, diversity, and flexibility assumed a different view of ability and learning (Goodman 2003:22).[2] It "introduced a wide range of choices [in schools, courses, and subjects in high school education] for students and parents" rather than provide every child with all the same education, thereby promoting individual differences in scholastic ability (Okano and Tsuchiya 1999:233). As a part of educational policies through which it would accommodate such individual differences, it also encouraged teachers to bring tracking into operation at elementary and middle schools (Tsuneyoshi 2004:385). To do so, the Ministry designated various primary and middle schools as "academic achievement frontier schools" to develop the strategy of

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[1] Some scholars argue that the literature on tracking has revealed inconsistent results about its effects on academic and non-academic outcomes for students, including their self-esteem, attitudes towards school, and alienation (Ireson and Hallam 1999; Pallas, Entwisle, Alexander, and Stluka 1994). However, more researchers have criticized the negative effects of tracking and its unfair operation. In addition to its academic disadvantage to lower-track students, tracking negatively affects the ways students interact each other, thereby defining their self-identify and dispositions (Bowles and Gintis 1977; Berends 1994; Orellana and Thorne 1998; Page 1990; Schwartz 1981). Also, track placements of students are determined by their social locations such as class and race, not simply by their academic achievement (Lucas 1999; Lucas and Berends 2002; Oakes 2005). Thus, Japanese teachers' anxiety about tracking may be correct, which makes the recent introduction of tracking into the Japanese education system much more surprising.

[2] In addition, the Ministry would transform the education system from cramming method of teaching to children-oriented education by dropping learning contents, introducing a five-day school week and new subjects like sōgōteki gakushū, "integrated study," and expanding elective courses (Kariya 2002). However, it is not easy to define characteristics of the education reforms, neoliberal (Hood 2001; Schoppa 1993) or democratic (Cave 2001), because its core concepts such as individuality could be mobilized in very different and often conflicting ways (Goodman and Phillips 2003).

ability grouping. As such, it intended to not only ensure a basic scholastic ability to all students but also facilitate the academic achievement of high achievers. Even though it did not deny the needs of low achievers to learn the basics, it seemed to be more interested in nurturing bright students with advanced content by promoting so-called "individually tailored teaching" in the public education system. For instance, in the 1992 Course of Study for middle schools in which the Ministry suggested that middle schools should "increase ability-based classes," "no reference was made to slow learners, in contrast to the previous Course of Study" and "the changes seem to stress the kind of ability-based teaching that tries to identify talents at an early stage and then nurture them through streaming, without due attention to slow learners and learners with special needs" (Okano and Tsuchiya 1999:217-218). Also, in "A Guideline for Individually Tailored Teaching," which it published in 2002, whereas the Ministry gave fourteen examples for advanced studies in primary-school mathematics, it did six for basic courses (Nishikawa 2006: 33). Thus, it is certain that the Ministry would make use of tracking as a means to develop successful students rather than to support slow children.

In fact, Shōbun Middle School was also designated as one of the "academic achievement frontier schools" by the Ministry in 2003, whereby it could legitimate and promote tracking which it had managed to introduce in 2001. In contrast with the intention of the Ministry, however, the middle school paid greater attention to supporting slow students by the ability grouping than to nurturing smart children. This difference may result from the tradition and transformation of *kaihōkyōiku*, "education for liberation" in Osaka: Shōbun Middle School used to be a "*dowa* education development school."[3]

Teachers who endorsed values of "education for liberation" were concerned about the longstanding social discriminations against the *Burakumin*, and taught the history of their struggles, striving to develop a sense of human rights. In Osaka, until the 1990s, they attempted to inculcate an anti-discrimination ideology in students in general, and to give more personal attention to minority children rather than focusing on enhancing their academic achievement, which they thought might cause too much competition in school (Nabeshima 1999). Although they even willingly went to local communities to teach minority children after school, they often ended up forming a personal relationship with those students without helping them improve their academic performance.

When school teachers in Osaka faced the criticism from the minority group that the gap between *Buraku* and *Non-Buraku* students in educational achievement and attainment seldom closed, they adapted "education for liberation," so that the school as a whole took a responsibility to ensure minority students could reach a basic scholastic level (Nabeshima 2003a). In other words, "education for liberation," which empowered the disadvantaged children came to focus on meeting their individual educational needs as well as giving personal attention to them. The introduction of tracking to help slow students into Shōbun Middle School could be also understood in the transformation of educational practices within "education for liberation" in Osaka.

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[3] *Dōwakyōiku* is the official name of "education for liberation." The Ministry preferred the latter to the former which was strongly connected to *Buraku* liberation movements. For a broad and historical review of *kaihōkyōiku*, see Gordon (2008).

I: You just said that teachers in Kansai (western Japan) were reluctant to differentiate students by their academic scores. Then was it not difficult to introduce tracking into this middle school?
Mr. Ozawa: In fact, it was a bold task to do so at the school which has Buraku in its school district. I was criticized by some teachers at Furumachi elementary School. Still, the ability grouping is not completely new in Japanese society. Juku already uses it. the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology also wanted to implement it at middle schools, which helped our school to further it. Nevertheless, the tracking which is working at this school is intended to guide students rather than improve their academic achievement only. For example, I am opposed to tracking in every mathematics class, which makes it impossible for children to teach and learn from each other. In fact, I first divided one class into two regardless of academic performances. That did not work at all. Low achievers did not change. In contrast, the current system aims to let those slow students realize "I can do it." By reviewing in tracked classes what they already learned, they could be helped to understand what is taught in other untracked classes. In other words, it would change their attitude toward the classes by making them learn at least the basics. Then couldn't their scores get better?

Here we can see again the idea that teachers at the middle school intended to not only promote children's test scores but also to facilitate the formation of a disposition to learn. As they would socialize students to study regularly and to discipline themselves in relation to others through frequent tests and detailed evaluation, they tried to encourage them, particularly low achieving students, to learn through tracking. Presumably reflecting such teachers' wish to motivate their students to learn, tracking was called *chalenji gakushū*, "challenge classes" at Shōbun Middle School.

Table III-1 The Structure of Challenge Classes in English

English	Challenge A	Challenge B	Challenge C
Test Score	More than 70	50~60	30~40
The number of students	15~17	15~17	6~10
The number of teachers	1	1~2	5~7
The content of lesson	Reading long articles, listening, and writing	Reviewing grammar and reading short articles	Practicing pronunciation, spelling, and grammar

In English and mathematics, there were three levels of track: advanced, general, and remedial tracks, which were called "Challenge A, B, and C" respectively. In 2007, 8th and 9th grade students had the challenge classes once a week in the two subjects respectively, while 7th grade children in mathematics only.[4] In other words, even the former still took

[4] For the 2008 academic year, 7th graders did not have the challenge classes because as I

most classes with their homeroom classmates, including English and mathematics three times a week. As such, teachers expected that this limited ability grouping might not have deteriorating effects on remedial track students.

In terms of track placement, teachers also tried to minimize the discriminatory impact of ability grouping on remedial track students by basically allowing individual children to choose one of three courses. Even though the teachers first placed a pupil depending on his or her academic achievement, they usually, if not always, respected his or her request for placement and replacement. Furthermore, they tried to help slow students by placing fewer students and more teachers in remedial tracks as we can see in the Table III-1 on the structure of "challenge classes" in English for the 2007 academic year. This made remedial track classes more or less private tutoring. By decreasing the ratio of students per teacher in the "challenge C", they would teach, take care of, and at the same time control effectively children in the track, some of whom are likely to disrupt the school. Mr. Ozawa said, "Every teacher should know about the children in challenge C classes because the stability of this school depends on controlling them."

However, in order to lower the student-teacher ratio in remedial tracks, even teachers who are in charge of subjects other than English and mathematics had to teach the two subjects in the challenge classes. That was possible because the classes were more or less self-learning by students rather than a lecture by teachers. English and mathematics teachers were responsible for preparing handouts for all the classes, while other teachers helped students who could not answer some questions in the handouts. Still, it was not an easy job even for young teachers in non-academic subjects. I often saw a young gymnastic teacher preview the handouts, so that she could explain to remedial track students when she was asked questions. Thus, teachers at Shōbun Middle School must have been exhausted from having more teaching hours than their counterparts in other middle schools.

Despite such devoted efforts of teachers at the middle school, however, the problem is that the track location of a student does not change that much over time as we saw in the case of academic rank. The Table III-2 and III-3 show the track mobility of 2009 graduating class children from 8th to 9th grade in English and mathematics respectively. In English, 69 percent of students (32+32+18/119) remained at the same level in two years, while 18% went up and 13% went down. Meanwhile, the corresponding numbers in mathematics were 66%, 13%, and 21% respectively. The tables show that the track locations of these pupils are relatively stable even though the placement is dependent upon not only their academic achievement but also the students' request.

Therefore, just as the academic rank did, it may be said that tracking has a constant effect on their dispositions toward learning and eventually themselves. Particularly, remedial track students seldom developed a motivation for learning, much less studying hard. When the students were not present, teachers could not help calling them *yaruki no nai yatsu*, "those without will." Few students in remedial track made it to higher track

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mentioned in chapter I, Shōbun Middle School began to introduce a new class placement system called "unit system." Instead of having a tracked class in English and mathematics respectively per week, the 7th graders took all English and mathematics classes in their unit. Meanwhile, for the academic year, 8th and 9th graders still had the ability-grouped classes in the same way as I described above.

throughout their middle school years not only because they did not get enough grades to do so but also because they did not aspire to. Given that teachers let students choose their track level, they could have transferred to upper tracks if they had wanted to do regardless of their grade. Still, some remedial track students did wish to stay in the level.

Table III-2 The Change of Track Location in English from 8th to 9th Grade

English	9th Challenge A	9th Challenge B	9th Challenge C	sum
8th Challenge A	32	10	0	42
8th Challenge B	10	32	6	48
8th Challenge C	0	11	18	29
sum	42	53	24	119

Table III-3 The Change of Track Location in Mathematics from 8th to 9th Grade

Mathematics	9th Challenge A	9th Challenge B	9th Challenge C	sum
8th Challenge A	32	18	1	51
8th Challenge B	10	25	6	41
8th Challenge C	1	5	21	27
sum	43	48	28	119

It was a day in October, 2007 right before the mid-term exam. After a remedial track mathematics class was over, one 7th grade girl in the class left the classroom saying to a math teacher, "I want to stay in this class even if I get higher scores in the next mid-term." I wondered about this and asked the teacher why the girl would want to stay. The teacher said, "They are taught with kindness in this remedial track class. The atmosphere of this class is also relaxed. However, I think that all the members in this class are likely to remain here (even after the mid-term)." Despite or because of teachers' commitment to remedial track students, ironically, they were not motivated to leave but resigned to staying in the track.

Meanwhile, the tracking at Shōbun Middle School could not help but inform students of who is smart or not. This is most clearly evident with 7th grade students who are tracked for the first time in their schooling. The following is a conversation between Ms. Ikeda and Kishi san who had boasted about her academic achievement for elementary school years in the previous section but who was transferred from advanced to general track in the first two terms at middle school.

> Kishi san: Who decided to have challenge classes?
> Ms. Ikeda: They already existed before I transferred to this school last year.
> Kishi san: Aren't they discriminatory? Don't they differentiate us into *aho* (dull), *hutsū* (mediocre), and *kashikoi* (smart)?
> Ms. Ikeda: Not at all. They are intended to facilitate academic achievement by tailoring instruction to students. No middle schools teach students as thoroughly as our school does.

If students go up to 8th and 9th grade, they seldom criticize tracking that openly. However, students in general tracks are still more sensitive to which tracks they are in than

those in advanced and remedial tracks, presumably because they may be transferred to the lower ones. The following case shows not only how general track students felt apprehensive about being put into basic track, but also how teachers could take advantage of their precarious position to control them. In a math "challenge B" in 8th grade, four boys were always engaged in chatting loudly, which was reported to Mr. Takamura, the mathematics and head teacher in the grade. One day in January when they were playing with each other as usual, he took them by surprise.

> Mr. Takamura: Who makes noise during the class! (Pointing to the four boys) You guys all together will be transferred to "challenge C" unless you keep quiet. There is enough room for you all. Murayama, I told you about this replacement the other day, didn't I? Don't chat at all!
> Hashimoto kun: (After Mr. Takamura left for the "challenge C" class in which he was supposed to be) I cannot read what he wrote on the blackboard. He is so poor at handwriting.
> Murayama kun: If I am dropped to the "challenge C," I won't go to the class at all. Instead, I will go to the school nurse every math challenge class.

Why was the boy so reluctant to be transferred to the remedial track to the extent that he would instead go to the school nurse? This may partly be because he would be under the surveillance of Mr. Takamura who was in charge of the class. However, it could likely be because such replacement is too humiliating to him. Each time the mathematics challenge class met, the other classmates could see him go downstairs where the classroom for the remedial track is located. Classrooms for other tracks are on the same floor with their homeroom. Even if the tracked classes are taken just once a week, children still could feel embarrassed and be informed of who is smart or not just by looking at who stays in their own homeroom class for "challenge A" or at least in the same floor for "challenge B" and yet who goes downstairs for "challenge C."

Thus, we find an unintended effect of prioritizing academic achievement on students. Without tracking, they would realize where they are ranked in their grade only when they got marked test papers and school reports. However, with tracking, students are informed of their rank every week, thus adding to the differentiating effect on them. This would be the last thing that teachers meant to do by introducing tracking and, more generally speaking, by creating an education system to promote academic achievement. Through the system, they intended to facilitate not only students' academic achievement but also their motivation and aspiration for learning. In contrast with teachers' wishes, however, they did not get the desirable disposition through this system. Instead, they learned to keep thinking of themselves in their relative academic location to their peers because of the stability of the position. That is, regardless of or even against teachers' good intention, the system ended up having students disposed to sort themselves according to their relative academic standing in middle school.

3. "Taking One's Proper Station"[5]

In the interview with the vice principal, he admitted, "We, teachers, never said to our students that it was okay if they were just good at tests. As we attempted to facilitate academic achievement, however, we cannot deny that we ended up making them think like that." As they are socialized in an environment where academic achievement is thought of most highly, they cannot help dividing their peers into low and high groups by their relative academic rank. Such everyday classification by tracking as well as by examinations makes children realize where they stand at school in relation to others.

As students near 9th grade, the division becomes more obvious to them because they start to think about what they are going to do after graduating from middle school. We can see it from the following conversation which took place among several 8th graders at lunchtime in the last term of the grade.

I: Did you play volleyball yesterday in the homeroom class?
Obuchi san: No. Instead, we were told about high school entrance examinations.
Mori kun: Can you even go to high school?
Obuchi san: (In a silent voice) I can.
Mori kun: By your marks? Is there any one whose scores are lower than yours?
Koizumi kun: Why did you say that impolitely!
Obuchi san: Yes, there is. For example, Nakasone san… I might be able to go to N High School.
Takahashi san: N High School? Where is it?
Mori kun: That damn bad high school!
Takahashi san: (Talking about the final examination in the semester) I got 96 in English.
Obuchi san: Did you cheat? Who sat beside you?
Takahashi san: No, I didn't. Actually, you were beside me during the test.
Obuchi san: (Embarrassed) Was it me?
Mori kun: If I sit next to you in taking a test, I had better not look at your test paper!

What matters more is that the distinguishing workings of middle school via tests, evaluation and tracking have children not only realize where they stand in school but also where they are likely to stand in society. In other words, they come to forge their educational and occupational aspirations relative to their academic standing in middle school. The following interviews and conversation with students clearly show the extent to which their educational and occupational aspirations are correlated to their track locations.

[Student in advanced track]
I: Do you think that the transition from middle school to high school is important?
Yoshida kun: Yes.
I: What type of high school will you go to?

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[5] I borrowed this phrase from the title of chapter 3 in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (Benedict 2005) to suggest a selective similarity between the pre-modern status system and modern education system of Japanese society in creating a sense of one's place.

Yoshida kun: General high school because I am not inclined to having a specialty at high school.
I: Then do you want to study for a specialty at college? Would you go to college?
Yoshida kun: I would like to go to college because I had better study more in order to get a job. If I graduate from college, I think that I can choose what I want to do.
I: What kind of job do you want to have?
Yoshida kun: I would like to work at an office.[6]
I: Do your parents also want you to go to college?
Yoshida kun: Yes, if possible. My mother graduated from high school and then started to work. She said that she might have gotten a better job if she had entered college.

[Students in general track]
I: What do you think about today's lecture on getting a job?
Kondo kun: It made me think about my future seriously.
I: What do you want to do?
Kondo kun: I want to be a computer programmer.
I: Then would you go to college?
Kondo kun: College…
Ota Kun: College is like something over the clouds for us.
I: What do you mean by that?
Ota Kun: It means that college is a thing in the high place where our hands do not reach. We cannot go to college with our current marks. We might not even be able to go to high school.

[Students in remedial track]
Toyota kun: I would like to go to a high school where sports club activities are prevalent.
I: (Knowing that he is in the boy's tennis club at the middle school) Do you want to play tennis at high school, too?
Toyota kun: Yes, I do. Any high school is OK if it has a tennis club.
I: Would you go to college after graduating from high school?
Toyota kun: Probably I will get a job after high school. Now you cannot get a job even if you graduate from college.[7] Then you had better get a job and have work experiences right after high school.

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[6] In December, 2008, seven months later after I had first interviewed him, he said that he would become a medical doctor because "I have no particular reason for that, but the job ensures a stable income, and seems to be fit for me."
[7] However, it bears remembering that college-graduates do still fare better than high school graduates in landing regular full-time jobs after graduation even though the former also have had as much difficulty in finding such jobs as the latter do since the 1990s. Mary Brinton (2011:69-79) compared three generations of Japanese workers in terms of employment status according to the timing in which each generation got their first job, i.e., before the 1980s, in the 1980s, and after the 1990s. She named each generation "high economic growth cohort," "economic bubble cohort," and "lost generation" respectively.

I: Why do you think so? Where did you hear about it? TV news or newspapers?
Toyota kun: Definitely TV news. You can hear stories that even college graduates cannot get a job.
I: Where did you do your one-week work experience in 8th grade?
Toyota kun: At kindergarten. I loved to help and teach children there.
I: How about becoming a preschool teacher?
Toyota kun: That is beyond my ability. I do not perform that well at school.

I: Do you think it matters which high school you enter?
Hamabata san: Not much. I don't think that is important.
I: Why? You may find more opportunities at some high schools than at others?
Hamabata san: …
I: Which type of high school do you want to go to?
Hamabata san: General high school. That is not much different from middle school. I won't go to vocational high school. I do not have a specific dream.
I: What do you want to do after high school?
Hamabata san: Furita.[8]
I: Don't you want to go to college?
Hamabata san: Not at all. I hate school. It also takes money to go to college. Instead, you can earn some money if you work. Working looks more interesting than learning at school.
I: How about your parents? Don't they say that you had better go to college?
Hamabata san: No, they don't. They want me to go to high school, though.
I: Don't you think that college graduates are more advantaged than high school graduates?
Hamabata san: Well, that may be true. However, I do not care about it because I may become a store clerk rather than getting a job at a big company.

According to her analysis, regardless of educational level, the lost generation suffered from less regular full-time jobs (79.8%) than the two previous generations (93.6% for high economic growth cohort and 91.9% for economic bubble cohort). However, 73.4 percent of high school graduates in the lost generation got regular full time jobs by comparison with more than 90 percent of their counterparts in the previous generation. Brinton wrote, "These men [high school graduates in the lost generation] thus fell way behind prior cohorts of high school graduates, in addition to faring worse than their same-age counterparts who are university educated" (76). As with the lads in *Learning to Labor*, therefore, in the above interview, Toyota kun's "partial penetration" into the labor market in Japan today seems to make him underestimate the value of higher education in finding jobs (Willis 1981:119).

[8] *Furita* is a term to indicate "workers who quit their job regularly to spend what they have earned before returning to another short term and often temporary and part-time job, rather than seek lifetime employment opportunities." (Goodman 2003:25) Although they are criticized for the lack of commitment to work with *parasite singles* dubbed by Yamada (1999), as Goodman (2003) points out, they are victimized due to transformations of employment practices in Japan such as the decrease of lifetime employment and full-time jobs.

While children in upper tracks are self-assured and eager to climb the social ladder through higher education, students in lower tracks are resigned and uninterested in going to college. This difference between high achievers and low achievers is interesting considering the growing suspicion of the benefit from getting a college diploma in Japan since the 1990s when even big companies hiring college graduates began to go bankrupt. However, despite such seeming devaluation of college education in the society, high achievers still believe in educational attainment as a way of gaining social status. Meanwhile, low achievers who are the most unlikely to go to college based on their level of academic achievement doubt the advantage of further studies and lose their interest in higher education.

Regardless of academic performance at high school, much less at middle school, due to the decrease in the number of children in Japan, Japanese students could go to college if they did not care about the status of college, and of course, if they or their parents could afford to pay the tuition. Such demographic transformation has made it much easier to get a college degree at present than before. Nevertheless, low achievers give up on going to college as early as middle school years. They just do not aspire to do it.

Instead, they legitimate no interest in higher education by resigning themselves to a certain job like a clerk at a convenience store or *furita*, which may not require a college degree. Additionally, they do not think that they are smart enough to choose some service-sector jobs like preschool teachers. Their occupational aspirations are strikingly different from those of high achievers who say the occupation of medical doctor is fit for them. Thus we cannot fail to notice the self-selecting effect of stratification by academic performance at middle school on the educational and occupational aspiration of children, particularly those in the low rung of academic rank (Kariya and Rosenbaum 1987).

If we say that the self-selection is a function of academic merit only, however, we just take a look at one side of the whole self-classifying process among low achievers at middle school. Considering that most of them come from families with little economic and cultural capital, it is hard to say that they deserve to have their low status, which they come to assign to themselves during their school years. Table III-4 shows the different amount of such capital that 9th grade students in each English track for the 2008 academic year got from their parents. From this table, we can find that remedial track students are not only academically slow but also socio-economically disadvantaged.

In the table, each column except for the last one means the number and percentage of 9th grade students who have described characteristics. "Number" means how many students are placed in each track. "Juku" means those who go to *Juku* or have private tutoring after school. "Couldn't apply" means those who could not apply for private high school entrance exams or had to go to correspondence high schools because of economic burden. "Buraku" means those who live in *Buraku*. Finally, "Cultural Capital" means the sum of indexes to indicate how children have been raised by their parents. Those numbers in the first and the last column were obtained from the survey in January, 2008 when the students were in the last term of their 8th grade years.

When it comes to "Cultural Capital" in the survey, I asked students to check from 5 (absolutely positive) to 1 (absolutely negative) about the following six statements: "Your parents ask you about what is going on at school," "Your parents are interested in whether your academic achievement progresses," "Your parents wait for you when you return to

home after school," "Your parents wish you to succeed in society," "Your parents read you (picture) books when you were little," and "Your parents have taken you to museums and art galleries." Then I calculated the sum of scales which every student checked and the average in each track. The reason I did this way is that I was not allowed to ask them about the academic attainment and job of their parents in the survey. Instead, I used these statements to make some sense of students' family background as other Japanese scholars who faced the same problem in their research (Kariya and Shimizu 2004; Shimizu 2005). In so doing, these Japanese scholars distinguished "cultural class" from "socioeconomic class," which is measured by income, employment status, and education level.

Table III-4 Economic and Cultural Capital of Students in Each English Track

Track	Number	*Juku*	Couldn't apply	*Buraku*	Cultural Capital
Challenge A	42	35/41 (85.37)	1/42 (2.40)	4/42 (9.52)	860/37 (23.24)
Challenge B	53	33/53 (62.26)	5/53 (9.43)	9/53 (16.98)	998/51 (19.57)
Challenge C	26	7/23 (30.43)	15/26 (57.69)	8/26 (30.77)	220/13 (16.92)

First of all, about 85 percent of students in the advanced track went to *Juku*, while only 30 percent in the remedial track did. This may reflect different economic conditions in the family because having such supplementary education requires extra money. From the next column "Couldn't apply," you can find more striking economic disparities between the two groups. Almost 60 percent of students in the remedial track did not even apply for private high schools because their parents expected they could not afford to pay for the private education, which costs twice or even three times more than public high school education. In contrast, only one student in the advanced track did not.

In addition to such economic disparities, we can also perceive the social and cultural difference between high achievers and low achievers. First, minority students are disproportionately placed in the remedial track. We can see students from *Buraku* in the low track three times more than in the advanced track. Then, the column "Cultural Capital" suggests that if you go to lower track, we may meet parents who are less interested in their children's schooling and social success, and (probably, have no choice but to) spend less time taking care of and educating them.[9] Although these numbers are only the indirect

[9] Only 13 of 26 students in the remedial track were counted in the survey, which may undermine the result shown in the column "Cultural Capital." However, the total number in the track includes two students who transferred from other schools after the survey was conducted. In addition to four students who were absent on the date when the survey was done, it also includes seven *hutōkō*, students who attend school less than the half of school days a year. Particularly, three of those seven *hutōkō* lived with their single or remarried mother, and four lived in *Buraku.* Thus, I do not think the result would have been better even if those who were not surveyed had been counted.

indexes of economic and cultural capital the children may have, they suggest that low achievers are less economically and culturally advantaged than high achievers.

Nevertheless, low achievers tend to attribute their "school failure" to themselves rather than to the school system and/or their socioeconomic background. Right before he graduated from Shōbun Middle School, Hatoyama kun, a boy who lives in *Buraku*, said in the letter written to the 10-year-later person himself, "As a 15-year-old, I have behaved too stupidly. Now I am trying hard to study for high school entrance examinations. I regret having studied so little before now. Don't you regret what you have done? I do not know what you are doing there [ten years later], but I hope that you are happy." Still, it is very hard to say that he is to blame for his low academic achievement considering that he had to take care of his younger siblings until his parents came home late after work and that even when they returned, they could not help him study because they did not make it to high school.

Then the disadvantaged students in remedial track have low expectations for their own future: they do not dream of becoming more than *heibonna otona*, an ordinary adult. Obuchi san, the girl who was ridiculed at her low academic achievement in the above, lived with her single mother, and her divorced father was a manual worker in construction. When she had a mock interview for high school entrance exam with the principal, she said "I have never thought about what I will do after high school. I have no dream. I just want to be happy and have a normal family. I tend to be pessimistic. I am worried that I could not understand mathematics in high school." Due to her low test scores, she actually thought about working without going to high school. When she talked with her friends about the option, she said "How can I work at a mobile phone store? Wouldn't I have to explain to customers monthly plans in detail? That is beyond my ability."

Furthermore, these disadvantaged children begin to sense what might await them in the future, probably unstable and precarious conditions, when they are about to leave middle school. One month before graduating from middle school, Nishikawa kun, a boy who lives in *Buraku* and whose father is an ex-inmate gangster, said that he could not get a full-time job. Instead, he said half jokingly, said "I am clever enough to rip off others without being arrested." Another boy, Ashida kun, a baseball boy who lives with his single mother and younger sister, said in the mock interview with the principal, "Even when I got hurt during practice, I could not give up playing baseball. Otherwise nothing would be left to me." Then, before graduating from middle school, he said in the letter sent to the 10-year-later person himself "I pray for not becoming a NEET ten years from now. I would be happy to become a professional baseball player. It doesn't matter even if I cannot. No. I really want to become the player." Even if they do not become a criminal or a part-time worker, they implicitly knew that they might have to look for occupations where the outcome of education does not count.

When they give up climbing the social ladder via schooling, however, the disadvantaged children are likely to end up landing in the social position from which they came. Nomura Tetsu kun was a boy who also lived in *Buraku* with his remarried parents and five siblings including one older stepbrother. According to one teacher, his father only graduated from middle school and had to return to the *Buraku* after experiencing job discrimination against the *Burakumin* outside the community. Also, another teacher said that his mother did not clean the house at all so that it was always full of waste. The teacher added that his parents had not often bathed him either when he was little.

Although they worked at a recycling center in the community, they still wanted their children to earn some money. Then his second eldest brother, Nomura Shigeru kun, dropped out of a night high school, which Nomura Tetsu Kun himself is doomed to enter one year later.

It was when teachers had meetings with students' parent(s) at the end of first semester in 2008 that I happened to have a chance to talk with these brothers together. Nomura Tetsu kun was also waiting for the meeting where his homeroom teacher would ask about what he would do after graduating from middle school.

> I: You also graduated from this middle school, didn't you?
> Shigeru kun: Yes, I did. Then I went to a night high school, and yet dropped out.
> I: Why did you do that?
> Shigeru kun: While going to high school, I also worked in the daytime. Today I do not have anything to do, though. Anyway, I did not dislike the school. Rather I wanted to concentrate on my job. That is why I stopped going to high school. How about you, Tetsu? What will you do after middle school?
> Tetsu kun: It is already decided. The eldest brother said that I would work at a [fence repair] shop. I may go to high school until I can get a driving license. After that, it is already decided that I will work there.
> Shigeru kun: You should go to at least night high school.
> Tetsu kun: Well, that is beyond my ability.

It is not hard to imagine that Nomura Tetsu kun was not convinced of why he should go to high school when he was told to do so from his brother who had dropped out of high school for jobs in manual labor. According to him, his parents who did not go to high school also told him that he had to choose his career because it concerned his life. Thus, there is little wonder that he had no motivation to keep studying at high school, and resigned himself to getting the manual job which was not even his choice. Namely, his low educational and occupational aspirations were not only a product of his low academic achievement but also of little economic and cultural capital he inherited from his family.

Nevertheless, he hardly attributed his school failure to the education system and his family background. The following conversation took place when he was preparing for the mock interview with the principal in which he would be asked about his career plan after graduating from middle school.

> Nomura Tetsu kun: How can I explain the reason I would go to this high school?
> Harumi kun: Which high school will you go to?
> Nomura kun: (mumbling) X High School …[10]
> Toshiko kun: X Park?
> Harumi kun: Ah… That school has a night program, too.
> Nishikawa kun: He cannot go to a higher status high school than the night high school.

[10] The high school is one of the elite public high schools in the catchment in which these children can apply for. The next student's response derived from the fact that he could not imagine Nomura kun will make it to such a high status high school.

I: (I saw that he had a note "The school is close to my place, and I cannot get to other high schools.") How about considering different reasons? Also, you had better say "It is easy to commute to the school" than "It is close to my place." Why will you go to that school?
Nomura kun: My brain is just fit for that school.
I: You must not say that. Nishikawa, did you study during the winter vacation?
Nishikawa kun: Yes, I did. One minute per day.
Takahashi san: Can you guys pass high school entrance exams?
Nishikawa kun: Yes, I can.
Nomura kun: If not, it is over.

Nomura kun thought that he had no choice but to go to the night high school not because he was too disadvantaged, but because he was too stupid to go to a higher status high schools. Then he probably felt that he could not help becoming a manual worker not because his parents and brothers were also manual workers but because he was not smart enough to do any office work: he wrote, "I want to do something to make use of my physical strength." In short, his poor performance and low academic rank in middle school made him sort himself out of educational competitions through which his high-achieving classmates would climb the social ladder.

In sum, through hierarchical socialization in middle school, low achieving students internalized the very negative dispositions or a habitus of the dominated classes that Bourdieu and Passeron defined. In *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990:204-205) wrote, "Even the negative dispositions and predispositions leading to self-elimination, such as, for example, self-depreciations, devalorization of the School and its sanctions or resigned expectation of failure or exclusion may be understood as unconscious anticipation of the sanctions the School objectively has in store for the dominated classes." In this sense, we can tell "dispositions guide the actions of social agents through future-oriented perceptions of chances for success or failure" (Reed-Donahay 2005:108-109). At the same time, since such dispositions come from past and current experiences of objective sanctions in the School, "agents may explicitly state plans and strategies [for their own future], but these practices are the product of habitus and not rational calculation." (109) Nevertheless, as they internalized such a negative feeling of self-worth through continuously objective evaluations and classification for middle school years, low achieving students could only blame themselves for their school failure and blighted expectation for their future. Even though they were often disadvantaged in economic and cultural capital, they could help thinking that they "take their proper station" in society for their own faults. Thus, they may not feel like their destiny is unfair. Here "the School" appears as a tool for "symbolic violence" in a sense that the dispositions which disadvantaged children inscribed in their body through hierarchical socialization in middle school let them "often unwittingly, contribute to their own domination by tacitly accepting, in advance, the limits imposed on them." (Bourdieu 2000:169)

4. Japan's Middle School as Classificatory Machine

Here we face the embarrassing reality of middle school education in Japan. It ends up making disadvantaged students, whom it means to support most, resign themselves to

their social origin. As Dell-Amen and Rosenbaum (2002:249) wrote in their analysis of the unintended consequences of stigma-free approach in U.S. community colleges, "social stratification may emerge within efforts to reduce it." However, we must not mistakenly blame well-intentioned middle school teachers for the paradoxical result. Instead, we should first look for an answer in the in-between position of middle school in Japan's education system (Shimizu 2002). Then we must reflect on the implications of self-selecting practices in middle school for class reproduction in Japan.

On the one hand, elementary school is so "child-centered" as to respect and nurture individual talents and to socialize children to social norms in Japanese society rather than to promote academic achievement (Cave 2007; Lee, Graham, and Stevenson 1996). As I showed above, teachers in elementary school seldom evaluate their students in as strict a way as their counterparts in middle school do. This relatively weak focus on academic achievement may be allowed because they do not have to worry about sending their pupils to the next stage of schooling, i.e. middle school education, which is compulsory in Japan.

On the other hand, high school tends to prioritize facilitating academic achievement rather than taking care of individual students (Rohlen 1983). It has to prove its status and reason for being by sending to colleges as many students as they can or by introducing them to stable and decent jobs. Students need to have a good school record not only to go to higher-status colleges but also to get better jobs: the transition from high school to work in Japan is also dependent upon students' academic rank within high school (Okano 1993). Thus, it is taken for granted that high school students are placed in different courses and tracks by their academic performance, whereby they are drawn into the differentiated world of education and work.

Japan's middle school is caught between elementary school and high school with their distinct orientation, i.e. "socialization" and "selection" respectively. As the middle institution, it is supposed to mediate the cultural difference between the two. It tries to balance such orientations by not only promoting individuals' academic achievement but also by emphasizing *shūdansekatsu*, group living through everyday small group activities in classrooms, school trips, sports day, cultural festival, and most of all club activities.

However, the middle school has no choice but to gradually put an emphasis on the former more than the latter as its students advance from one grade to the next. They eventually have to pass entrance exams for high school, which is not a part of compulsory education and which is highly stratified by incoming students' academic achievement. Thus, it has to play conflicting roles: whereas it should nurture individual students as a member of group who are on an equal footing with other children, it is expected to differentiate them in a hierarchical way by their academic performance. Even if they think more highly of the first role than the second one, which is often true, its teachers are reluctantly constrained to promote academic achievement by the structural location of middle school in Japan's education system.

For children, such liminality means that in middle school they may for the first time experience being positioned against others in a hierarchical way. LeTendre (1994: 85) said, "Socialization in hierarchical organizations-the Japanese life of senior-junior relations, individual sacrifice, the near-total involvement with the institution-first occurs in middle school." However, he failed to notice that the hierarchical socialization in Japan's middle school is not only an age-based but also a merit-based classifying process. As we saw in the above, Japanese children are stratified by objective standards such as multiple-choice tests

and tracking in middle school, which they seldom experienced in elementary school. Then they come to internalize an implicit sense of their place by which they recognize themselves as well as their classmates as high or low, and which might guide them to social positions corresponding to their locations in middle school.

As such, socialization is not distinguished from selection in Japan's middle school. Here we find that the function of education for socialization is consistent with that for selection. Considering that one of the most important things individuals as a member of society should know is where they (may and should) stand, the two functions cannot be separated from each other. In other words, Japan's middle school is an organization for differentiated socialization through which students learn to locate themselves in a right place.

Still, it would be wrong to say that middle school is the only social organization in Japan through which children realize where they (may) stand. Many middle school students do know whether or not their family has economic and cultural capital. At home, some of them may be told that they cannot go to *juku* because their parents cannot afford it. They may also recognize that they cannot expect their parents to help them to study for high school entrance exams with which their middle-school graduate parents have no experience. Additionally, they may become interested in what their parents do for a living when their father or mother takes them to his or her workplace. In an absolute sense, therefore, they may get a sense of their place through socialization at home, too.

Nevertheless, such a sense can be fully developed only when children are placed in an environment where they are always compared with others because "the realization of self, whether we call it subjectification or identification, can only occur through its relation to others" (Best 2005). In this point, middle school is the primary institution in Japanese society through which Japanese children are socialized to sort themselves into social locations which fit well with them. Therefore, I would say that Japan's middle school is a "classificatory machine" and yet with a role and significance, which are different from what Bourdieu meant by the phrase.

In the new preface of *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, Bourdieu named school "a huge classificatory machine," by which he meant school, particularly in higher education, serves to create state nobility (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990: ix-x). He mentioned that it legitimates their power and prestige by obscuring the fact that their merit is actually a product of cultural capital which they inherited from their family. With the phrase "classificatory machine," therefore, he emphasizes the fact that school contributes to consecrating elites more than excluding non-elites.

Meanwhile, I would interpret "Japan's middle school as classificatory machine" as meaning that it would play a role in keeping the lower social order in line rather than advancing the higher order. Middle school education is too early to select the highest in society. Instead, it decides who could be the lowest. Still, this apparently limited role does not undermine the significance of middle school education in social stratification in post-war Japanese society. It justifies the low status of non-elites by letting them blame themselves for failing in a fair competition like multiple-choice tests whose outcome is less shaped by what they inherited from their parents than what they learned from school teachers. Furthermore, the objectivity and fairness of the evaluation makes it easier for the selected to justify their status in the name of merit. Above all, both the future elites and non-elites are disposed to attribute where they are in society to what they achieved in

school, not what they received at home, during middle school years. In short, all Japanese may go through this self-justifying stratification, concomitant with a sense of their proper station, through the compulsory education system. As a result, it might be said that social stratification in post-war Japanese society has progressed with such merit-based self classification, thereby causing little antagonistic class consciousness and yet still a sense of their proper place among the Japanese.

IV. Educational Transition from Middle to High School

A survey on how worried Japanese students are about taking entrance exams for high schools and colleges reveals an unexpected result (Nabeshima 2003b:11-12). It may be expected that high school students are more anxious about the exams than middle school students. However, the survey result is the other way around. While 70 percent of middle school students feel nervous about the high school entrance exams, 27 percent of high school students feel uneasy about the college entrance exams. Only 34 percent of students in *shingakkō*, elite high schools whose students are supposed to advance to college, are concerned about the exams. Thus, we cannot attribute this result to the fact that only 50 percent of high school graduates in Japan will go on to advanced education. Rather it informs us of how much more weight is put on the transition from middle to high school than from high school to college in the society.

The enormous pressure middle school students feel about high school entrance exams may result from the fact that this transition is the first turning point in their school experience. While they could advance from elementary to middle school without any exams as both elementary and middle school education is mandatory, they have to pass the entrance exams for high schools which are not a part of compulsory education. Furthermore, as my informants in Shōbun Middle School did, most Japanese children who attend public schools in local communities go from elementary school (and sometimes preschool) through middle school with the same friends unless they transfer to other schools for some reason.[1] Only in high school for which the catchment area is much larger than that for elementary and middle school may they meet with new peers from other communities. Meanwhile, they might not often see the old friends who have gone on to different high schools. For middle school students, therefore, it is time to depart from the old world and join the new world.

Still, the transition carries more meanings than a rite of passage from one stage of life to another. As I mentioned in chapter I, the moment matters because which high school to enter may shape middle school students' life chances in the future. Unlike American high schools, which are mostly comprehensive schools including both general and vocational courses within one school, and which are difficult to rank by the same standard, Japanese high schools are not only divided into several types (for example, vocational or general) but also stratified by common criteria of both the academic achievement of entering students and of the academic attainment of graduating students (Brinton 2011). Thus, sensing the significance that the transition may carry for their future, 9th grade students in Japanese middle schools do care about which types of and what ranking of high school they can get into.

You might expect that these students are clearly aware of what ranking of high school they could enter because as I showed in chapter III, they have obtained a sense of one's fitting place during their middle school years. Even though they know to some extent

[1] In 2010, 92 percent of middle school students in Japan attend public schools in local communities (Monbukagakushō 2010). Also, as LeTendre wrote, "there is little student turnover in Japanese middle schools" because "when job transfers do occur, many families opt to have the father move away for a year or two into temporary housing rather than disrupt the education of a young adolescent" (2000:20). Thus, the transition to high school often means to most Japanese children the first parting from friends of their childhood.

where they stand in their homeroom class or in their middle school, however, you should remember that they are not informed of their exact ranking in the class and school by their middle school teachers. Additionally, unless they attend *juku* or take mock examinations managed by private companies, they do not have a way to compare their academic rank with that of their counterparts in other middle schools until their middle school teachers begin to conduct career guidance.

Thus, when they go on to 9th grade, some successful students who do not attend *juku* wonder which level of high school they are likely to enter on their current test scores. Those in general or remedial tracks reassure themselves that they still have enough time to catch up even though they are afraid they might not be able to enter public high schools. Children in the very bottom of 9th grade even agonize over a decision on whether or not to go on to high school. In this manner, around the beginning of their final year in middle school, most 9th grade students are uncertain about which rank of high school they might get into. As they have a sense of their fitting place, they seldom aspire to get to much higher quality high schools than their academic achievement. Nevertheless, as high schools are sharply stratified, their educational aspirations should be finely tuned. Thus, career guidance comes to matter in Japanese middle schools where students' educational aspirations are constructed in particular ways.

In chapter IV, therefore, I aim to examine the unintended consequences on students of teachers' egalitarian career guidance in Japanese middle schools, i.e. a class division of their educational aspiration and attainment. In the first two sections, I will describe the ways in which teachers in Shōbun Middle School guide their students during the 9th grade year: while they strive to make sure every child has a place to go after graduating from middle school, they have no means to raise educational aspirations among their students. In the next three sections, I will observe what effects such career guidance may have on students' educational aspiration and academic attainment according to the type of high school which they go on to, i.e. private, vocational, and general high schools. In the process, I find that middle class parents promote their children's educational potential to the maximum, while lower class parents cannot afford to do that for their children. Finally, I will discuss what unequal effects on the educational transition from middle to high school the egalitarian culture in Japanese middle schools may have, particularly when the social pressure toward higher education has decreased and yet educational aspirations seem to be divided along class lines (Kariya 2001; Nabeshima 2003b; Nakamura 2003).

1. Delayed Efforts and Career Guidance: 9th Grade Life in Shōbun Middle School

In Osaka, 9th grade students take high school entrance exams from early February to mid March, right before a new academic year in Japan begins in April. In early February, many of them take the exams for one particular private high school in Osaka. Only a few students who are mostly high achievers or whose parents can afford application fees amounting to $120 per school might apply to another private high school in neighboring prefectures such as Kyoto and Nara whose exam dates are different from those of private high schools in Osaka. Also, some students only apply to a particular private high school on condition that they will not try for any public high school. If they are admitted to the private high school, they must advance to the school, and cannot take public high school entrance exams.

Table IV-1. 9th Grade Career Guidance Activities with Other Important School Events

Terms	Months	Activities
1st term	April	*the beginning of a new academic year*
	May	the first career guidance committee meeting high school entrance exam explanatory meeting for parents mid-term exams
	June	*four-day school trip for Okinawa* the first survey of high school choice
	July	final exams the first homeroom teacher-student-parent meeting *summer break (continued in August)*
2nd term	September	the first in-school practice test the second survey of high school choice
	October	*sports day* the second in-school practice test mid-term exams *cultural festival*
	November	the third in-school practice test the third survey of high school choice the second homeroom teacher-student-parent meeting
	December	final exams the second career guidance committee meeting the third homeroom teacher-student-parent meeting mock interview practices with the principal (continued in February) *winter break*
3rd Term	January	the fourth in-school practice test the fourth survey of high school choice the fourth homeroom teacher-student-parent meeting final exams
	February	**private high school entrance exams** the fifth homeroom teacher-student-parent meeting the third career guidance committee meeting **the first-round public high school entrance exams**
	March	the sixth homeroom teacher-student-parent meeting *commencement* **the second-round public high school entrance exams**

However, most of 9th grade students apply for both private and public high schools. Even though they have to apply to one particular public high school at a time, there are two rounds for public high school entrance according to the types of high school. In mid February, students who wish to get into vocational, semi-general, or comprehensive high schools take the first-round public high school entrance exams.[2] Meanwhile, children take

[2] In 2011, Osaka Prefectural Education Committee has moved entrance exams for semi-

the second-round entrance exams only for public general high schools in mid March. If you pass the first round exams for a high school, you must proceed to the school, and cannot take the second round exams. Also, if you pass either the first or second round exams, you must enter the public high school to which you applied even if you have also passed entrance exams for a private high school. In other words, when you pass entrance exams for both private and public high school, you must enter the latter.

As these three sets of entrance exams are all different in their forms and contents, the academic calendar for 9th grade in Japanese middle schools is often full of activities which aim to prepare students for these exams. The Table IV-1 summarizes career guidance activities in Shōbun Middle School for the 2008 academic year.

During the first term, 9th grade teachers held a career guidance committee meeting, a high school entrance exam explanatory meeting for parents, and homeroom teacher-student-parent meetings. In the second term, they more frequently met with students and parents for career guidance, and organized another career guidance committee meeting specifically for private high school entrance exams. Students also had to take in-school practice tests every month and to submit their high school choice accordingly. In the third term, the 9th grade teachers invested most of time in preparing students for high school entrance exams, talking with their parents about their high school choice, and processing a series of applications and documents for high school entrance. Thus, it appears that the 9th grade year in Shōbun Middle School was devoted to guiding pupils for a high school. However, a close look at the 9th grade life in the Middle School would reveal some different pictures of it. In this section, I will describe aspects of the 9th grade life in the Middle School, which cannot be read from the above table.

In April when a new academic year started in Japan with cherry blossoms blooming, 8th grade students went on to the next and final grade in middle school with great anxiety but also with a decisive attitude toward high school entrance exams. Many students expressed their thoughts as examinees in short poems. Some students indirectly revealed their decision by wishing they could see and smile at the flower blossoming in the next year. Others disclosed their strong decision by saying they would try hard for the exams so as not to be regretful in the following year. Even a boy who eventually turned out to give up advancing to high school still had an aspiration for high school entrance. He wrote in his poem, "As a 9th grade student, I may have a tough time in studying for the high school entrance exams. However busy I may be every day, I will try hard."

Still, unlike the firm decision to study for the exams in spring, many 9th grade students seldom put their resolve into effect in the first term. In fact, they were distracted by one of the biggest school events of their middle school years: a four-day school trip to Okinawa in June. For this school trip, the 9th grade students in Shōbun Middle School not only skipped classes for four days but also spent most of homeroom hours in the spring term preparing for the trip, for instance learning the wartime experience of the Okinawans during World War II.[3] Although it was not exactly related to the preparation for the exams,

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general high schools from the first round to the second round. In this chapter, however, I will describe the previous high school entrance system through which 2009 graduating classes in Shōbun Middle School went.

[3] Okinawa was the only island in Japan where ground warfare took place during the War even though as an internal colony occupied by the Empire of Japan after the Meiji

this trip was legitimized for its significance for human rights education. Whatever educational goal the trip had, however, the 9th grade students were excited about the fact that they (for many children, for the first time) boarded a plane for the island, and then did not feel anxious about the exams in the term.

In fact, neither did their 9th grade teachers feel serious about the exams yet. These teachers were too busy preparing for the school trip to conduct any career guidance before June. At several meetings for the school trip, they not only planned schedules for each day by minutes but also even decided who would stay in which rooms in a hotel and patrol at night in order to effectively prevent some students from causing trouble during the school trip. Only after the trip could they have time to hold two homeroom sessions in which the high school entrance process was explained. However, even these sessions could not be fully used for career education because of other school events such as a morning gathering of all grades and an earthquake drill. As a result, the 9th grade students were left with little career guidance during the first term.

As I mentioned above, there were several meetings concerned with career guidance in the spring term. For instance, in May, the 9th grade teachers held a workshop for parents to explain the process of high school entrance. In the same month, they also had the first career guidance committee where they and other teachers including the principal and vice principal reviewed the result of high school entrance exams in the previous academic year, and they were supposed to come up with a plan of career guidance in this year. However, they were not so serious in the committee. When the meeting was over, one veteran teacher in the grade just mumbled, "My mind is not yet ready for career guidance."

Just as the 9th grade students had little career guidance in the spring term, inexperienced teachers in 9th grade were also left with little preparation for career guidance. Although homeroom teachers also held teacher-student-parent meetings (hereafter three-party-talks) in the Middle School in July, they did not think that the three-party-talks were about discussing in detail which high school to go to: it was just regarded as a review session of the spring term. Thus, a young and first-time homeroom teacher who had never conducted career guidance could not answer questions about high school entrance processes which some parents asked in the talks.

After a seven-week summer break was over, the fall term started in September. Despite in-school practice tests which were formatted in the same way as high school entrance exams, and high school choice surveys every month, the 9th grade students could not concentrate on preparing for the exams again because of two big school events in the term: sports day and the cultural festival.

Shōbun Middle School held sports day and cultural festival in early and late October respectively. Still, some of the 9th grade students who developed the choreography for sports day started to prepare for the event even during the summer break. Other students in the grade also felt responsible for those events because they were the last events in their middle school years. They endured many long hours practicing dances and gymnastics for sports day in the sultry playground. For the cultural festival, the 9th grade students all together prepared for a play about wartime experiences in Okinawa in addition to two

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Restoration, it had not been seriously regarded as a mainland of the Empire by the Japanese for prewar eras.

choruses for each homeroom. Students in one homeroom even voluntarily gave up their lunch break in order to practice their singing for the choruses.

The 9th grade teachers also believed the events were the arena for learning the significance of cooperation and responsibility in *shūdanseikatsu*, group living. Almost every task in the events such as dance, gymnastics, plays, and chorus was impossible to accomplish without teamwork. Additionally, they thought that the events were a chance to set out difficult tasks beyond the students' ability and make them try hard to carry out the tasks. To this end, during the sports day, they asked boys to make a five-story-body-tower by stepping on each other. For the cultural festival, they made the students create traditional Japanese drums for themselves by recycling hardboard boxes even though they could borrow genuine drums from other schools. As such, they expected the 9th grade students to not only learn to work with others in a group but also to confront and achieve the difficult tasks. They hoped that a sense of fulfillment through such trials could make the students face the difficulty of studying for the exams without giving up.

Despite the significance of the school events for moral education, for the first two months in the fall term, the 9th grade students must have felt the most nervous about their future after middle school. Many children were apprehensive about forthcoming high school entrance exams so that during class, they often chatted about which high school they might get into by their practice test scores. Until November when the school events would be over they were without career guidance but were left to find where they ranked on the practice tests, and then to select for themselves what to do after middle school.

These first two months in the fall term were not less hard on teachers in Shōbun Middle School. Some teachers named this period "the long two months" because they were too tired from preparing for sports day and cultural festival, while teaching students and processing paperwork. As students and teachers of other grades prepared for neither dance/gymnastics nor plays for the events, the 9th grade teachers particularly felt a tremendous responsibility for ensuring that the school events would be successful. Thus, while worrying about distracting the 9th grade students from studying for the exams, they had to put up with class cuts for the preparation for those school events, thereby undermining regular lessons as well as career guidance.

As a result, it was not until the festival was finished on the last day of October that career guidance was put off. Only after "the long two months" could the 9th grade teachers' minds finally get ready for the guidance. On the very day that the festival was over, a teacher who first took the position of *shinro shidō shūnin,* the head of career guidance said, "9th grade begins from now on. I may often ask Mr. Yamamoto [who had been in charge of career guidance in another middle school for several years] about career guidance."

In November, the 9th grade teachers finally began to invest significant time in preparing the 9th grade students for the exams and conducting career guidance. In that month, based on the results of three practice tests and surveys of high school choice, they held the second three-party- talks where they discussed with the students and their parents which high school was their first choice. Mostly, this was a discussion of which private and public high school they wanted to apply to in February and March respectively. In December, the teachers also held the second career guidance committee meeting in which they reviewed the results of consultations at the second three-party-talks with advice from other experienced teachers including the principal and vice principal. All the teachers judged whether or not each student could pass the exams for a particular private

high school to which he or she wanted to apply. Then homeroom teachers in 9th grade brought the review results of the committee to some students who were thought likely to fail the exams and asked them to look for another high school to apply for.

After a short winter break, in January and February career guidance was more intensively conducted. The 9th grade teachers discussed the students' career plans whenever they held 9th grade teachers' meetings or whenever they happened to be in the teachers' office at the same time. In addition, they not only held three-party-talks but also often talked about the plan with parents on the phone. They also held the third career guidance committee where they finally confirmed which public high school to apply for with other teachers' advice. When the result of the second-round high school exams was finally announced on the last school day of the 2008 academic year, they even searched for any high schools for a few students who failed to pass all three sets of high school entrance exams.

During this five-month intensive career guidance, the 9th grade teachers hoped that their students would choose a high school not by just considering their test scores and school records, but by thinking of what they wanted to do in and after high school. However, it was too late for many students to think seriously of the remote future and to choose high schools at that point. It was also too late for most students to set a higher goal than they could reach with their present test scores. By October when career guidance had not yet begun, two low achieving students including the boy, who wrote the poem in March through which he revealed his resolve to go on to high school, had already given up advancing to upper secondary education. These teachers as well as their students finally ended up finding a high school corresponding to their academic achievement and their parents' finances.[4]

Then we are left to wonder why teachers deferred giving guidance until just five months before the exams. The answer can be found in their cultural norm of career guidance, and more generally speaking, Japanese middle school teachers' culture. Before taking a close look at this, it may be good to hear how students felt about the delay of career guidance in middle school. The next interviews with students who were sent to *juku* by their college-graduate parents suggest that the lag of career guidance in middle school may have a differential effect on not only being ready for the exams but also on realizing the significance of the transition from middle to high school (also see Slater 2010).

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[4] In 2009, while one who advanced to a daytime public high school was expected to pay about 330,000 yen ($3,993; 100 yen=$1.21) per year including 144,000 yen ($1,742) for the tuition, another who entered a daytime private high school about 840,000 yen ($10,165) for the first high school year. Meanwhile, in 2010, the Japanese government passed a law through which the tuition of public high school becomes free, thereby aiming to "build a society where every willing student can concentrate on learning without worry regardless of family finances" (Monbukagakushō 2011). The government also created High School Enrollment Support Fund through which the government supports educational expenses for students at national and private high schools from 118,800 yen ($1,437) to 237,600 yen ($2,875) per year. Even though students still have to pay educational fees for matriculation, textbooks, school uniforms, and school trips, this policy must lessen economic burdens of students and parents.

I: Do you think that the transition from middle to high school matters?
Watanabe san: Yes, I do. I was told in *juku* that my future depended on which high school to enter. If you go to a higher status high school, you have better chances of going to college. If *juku* teachers had not said this to me, I would not have thought that the transition was particularly important.

I: Do you go to *juku*?
Ito kun: X *juku*. I attend the *juku* four times a week.
I: What is the difference between middle school and *juku*?
Ito kun: I have no time to chat with my friends in *juku*. I become quiet there. I am used to the calm atmosphere in *juku* because I have attended it since I was in elementary school.
I: It seems to me that *Juku* teachers often talk about the high school entrance exams, don't they?
Ito kun: Yes, they do. They hold a meeting for parents in order to provide some proper information about high schools and the exams. In that sense, *juku* deals with the exams more carefully than middle school does. The latter does career guidance only before taking the exams and when giving school reports.
I: What do you think about such difference?
Ito kun: I think that my school is better than others. And yet, *juku* aims to send students to high schools. Meanwhile, middle school education is compulsory. Middle school teachers do not need to send pupils to high schools. They also have too many students to guide them as carefully as *juku* teachers do. Simply speaking, they do not have any enthusiasm for career guidance.

2. **Preserving Educational Aspirations: The Way of Teachers' Career Guidance**

It is a misunderstanding of Japanese middle school teachers to say that they are not interested in having their students go on to high school. They do care about the students' future more than anyone else does. First, we can perceive teachers' genuine concern about students from the fact that they try to make sure that any high school a student is interested in is not too much over-applied for, thereby minimizing the number of students who fail to pass high school entrance exams. They do so by counting and controlling the number of all applicants to each high school within a high school district before students apply for it. This means that they track one by one to which high schools hundreds of thousands of middle school graduates in the district will apply.

Such a tedious task is possible because there is a local and regional career guidance committee.[5] Each city in the high school district to which Shōbun Middle School belongs has its own career guidance committee where teachers who are in charge of career guidance in their middle schools attend. In the meeting, they share information on how many students in their middle schools will apply for which high schools. As I mentioned in chapter II, three teachers from the career guidance committee in each city attend the

[5] I was lucky enough to attend the local and regional committee several times thanks to the principal in Shōbun Middle School who was in charge of the local committee in Furuyama City. The following description of these local and regional committees is based upon my own observation of them.

County Career Guidance Committee to do the same job: they calculate the number of applicants for every high school in the high school district.

As the high school entrance exams are just around the corner, these committees begin to be held from once a month to almost every day. The information obtained from them is reported soon to 9th grade homeroom teachers in each middle school. Then the homeroom teachers can immediately let students who are unlikely to pass the exams for an over-applied high school try for another less-applied-to high school. As such, they can minimize competition for the exams and strive to make sure every student has one high school to get into after graduating from middle school.

This method of career guidance that middle school teachers conduct for their students makes a sharp contrast with that of *juku* teachers. Although both teachers do care about students' high school choice, they do so with a different intention. On the one hand, *juku* teachers wish to send as many students to higher status high schools as they can. The more students make it to elite high schools, the more new students the *juku* will have next year. Thus, they have a rewarding reason to encourage their students to try for higher goals. I had a chance to learn their concept of career guidance by attending a workshop for parents on the high school entrance exams held by a *juku* with many branches in Osaka. On the workshop, one *juku* teacher explained to parents how they should guide their children.

> Please let me explain what attitudes your child should have toward the private high school entrance exam. Even if your child applies to both private and public high schools, he or she must not use the option of private high schools as a safety net on which they can rely when they fail to pass public high school entrance exam. They should use the private high school entrance exam as a chance to improve their academic achievement before taking the public high school entrance exam. The more students have preferred public high schools to private high schools in recent years, the more children fail to go to the former, and have to go to the latter. However, if they chose the latter as the safety net or due to commuting distance, they might not like to go to the private schools. Thus, you should choose private high schools that can help your child succeed three years later [in college entrance exams]. Meanwhile, if your child only applies to private high schools, he or she can apply to higher-level ones than they can when they apply to both private and public high schools.[6] Then you should check the private high schools carefully. During career guidance, many parents say, "I cannot even expect my child to go to A High School." Or "C High School is close to my house, but far from my child." But students are still in progress at present. It is too early to decide on which high schools to apply for. I want you to talk with your child about which high school he or she aims to enter and what they should do in order to get to the school. The higher goal they

[6] Since the 1990s, many private high schools have had difficulty satisfying the full enrollment due to the decrease of the number of children in Japan. Thus, they tend to allow students who promise to only apply for them, not for public high schools, to pass entrance exams even if they cannot outperform other students who apply for both private and public high schools. As such, the private high schools get students willingly paying the expensive tuition, whereas some over-aspiring students can go to higher ranked high schools than they could on their academic achievement.

set, the harder they study for that. In the first place, you, parents, must not ask us to send your child to a high school whose entrance exams he or she is most likely to pass. You should set a higher goal.

Unlike *juku* teachers who tend to encourage students and parents to try for higher ranking high schools than where they can enter right now, middle school teachers are not interested in sending their pupils to elite high schools. They would never tell parents to "set a higher goal" for their child. If they push successful students to apply for top-ranked high schools while slow students are even in jeopardy of failing to pass the exams, they may undermine the ideal of public education in Japanese society, i.e. dealing with all the students in a fair and equal way regardless of their academic achievement (Kariya 1995).

As stated earlier, middle school teachers pay greater attention to the guarantee of a place to all their students in the transition to high school than to motivating them to enter as high a status high school as they can. To this end, as I mentioned above, they do the counting job for high school entrance exams. In December and January before private high school entrance exams, 9th grade teachers also visit private high schools for which their students want to apply in February and discuss with the private high school teachers whether or not individual students are likely to pass the exams. They do so until they find a private high school which will let the students in. Then they can know the result of the exams before they are taken. Thus, despite the exams, little competition actually takes place in the matriculation to (particularly low level) private high schools. Unlike *juku* teachers, as one experienced 9th grade teacher in Shōbun Middle School said at a grade teachers' meeting, middle school teachers tend to use the exams to assure their students' security.

Ms. Tanaka: Frankly speaking, we go to consult with private high school teachers. They usually let us know whether or not individual students can pass the private high school exams. Because we have sent many students to SG High School, it will admit our students unless they are too behind the standard it requires. If we get an okay sign from a private high school, they will pass. If we get a no sign, they will fail. In this case, we have to visit other private high schools until we get the okay sign from one of them. We never let students and their parents know about this consultation result.[7] Low achieving students are the main issue in career guidance. Top-level private high schools seldom have a consultation session with us. They just sort and select new students according to their test scores in the exams.

As the experienced teacher says in the above, middle school teachers make special efforts for low achieving and disadvantaged children so they will not fail the high school entrance exams (LeTendre 1996; Shimizu and Tokuda 1991; Shimizu 1992). For these students, 9th grade teachers in Shōbun Middle School not only bothered to visit several private high schools but also spent more time in advising them on their high school choice.

[7] Middle-school teachers do not exactly inform students of the consultation result with private high school teachers. If the students knew the result before the private high school entrance exams, the teachers worry that they would lose the motivation to study for the exams.

They also tutored the low achieving students after school, expecting them to learn the basics and get higher, if only slightly, scores in public high school exams.[8] They even took these students to open days at low rank public high schools in order to find out if those schools might not meet the entrance quota. Thus, there is no doubt that Japanese middle school teachers are full of enthusiasm for career guidance, particularly for securing a high school destination for the slow and marginalized children.

However, as teachers guide students to make a safe career choice so that they can have somewhere to go after graduating from middle school, the former lose a powerful means to encourage the latter to study for the high school entrance exams: try harder to get to higher-level high schools and you may be rewarded. Instead, they suggest that it is rational to pursue a goal that is only within your reach: what matters is to exactly know to which high school you are likely to get with your current test scores, and to study for the achievable goal. In this process, they end up with a dilemma, in which without discouraging them, they have to guide the students to work hard for a high school where they can enter without making any greater efforts. The following conversation, which the 9th grade teachers in Shōbun Middle School had at a teachers' meeting, clearly revealed such predicament as they faced in the guidance.

> Ms. Yamada: The borderline in the entrance exam of a high school, which we set in middle school, does not mean that students under the borderline cannot pass the exam. It means that they are safe enough to pass the exam when their test scores are higher than the borderline. Mabuchi [a *Juku* with many branches in Osaka] can let children apply for high schools whose borderline they slightly go over. However, we, middle school teachers cannot do that. We need to be sure that our students will pass or fail the exam. It would be awkward to say, "You might either pass or fail the exam."
> Ms. Ueno: It is the toughest job to place students whose practice test scores are from 100 to 150 [of 500 possible points]. We have to let them make a safe choice, but must not discourage too much.
> Ms. Yamada: That is true. We have to get along with them until March next year. It may be wrong to cool their aspirations too much. If we discourage them too much, they may make trouble in school.
> Ms. Tanaka: Thus, the point is that we should encourage them to study as much as we can.

In this manner, middle school teachers tend to preserve students' educational aspiration rather than to raise or to lower it. They persuade their pupils to stay within their capacity in their best interest, i.e., to find a likely destination after graduating from middle

[8] The teachers held the tutoring session to prepare slow students to study for the public high school exams because there are no consultation meetings in public high schools through which they can know whether or not the students can pass the exams. However, they seldom forced the low achieving students to stay in school for the tutoring sessions. They waited until the students finally made up their mind to study hard and voluntarily show up in the after-school sessions. Unfortunately and yet expectedly, few students did that: in some tutoring lessons, there were three teachers but only one student.

school. However, this preserving-educational-aspiration career guidance does not work to every student in the same way. On the same day when the above conversation happened, Ms. Tanaka added, "We cannot stop high achieving students and their parents from applying to a particular private high school even if the career guidance committee in our school judges that they are unlikely to pass the exams for that high school. They can also pass public high school exams. However, if low achieving students do not get an admission letter from a private high school before taking the public high school entrance exams, it could be a serious problem when they fail to pass the exams." There is a difference in career guidance based on students' achievement level. Thus, the ways in which middle school teachers conduct career guidance may lower low achieving students' educational aspiration more than that of their counterparts in academic performance.

Table IV-2. Academic Achievement and the Fulfillment of Educational Aspiration

Academic Rank / Aspiration	Upper 40 students	Middle 40 students	Lower 40 students	Total
Raised	8	4	1	13 (11%)
Constant	21	14	19	54 (45%)
Lowered	11	22	20	53 (44%)

We can see such a differential containment of educational aspirations by tracking high school choices of 2009 graduating classes in Shōbun Middle School. To do so, I first arranged 120 students of the graduating classes by the average of their in-school practice test scores, and divided them into three groups, i.e., upper, middle, and lower 40 students. I did not count one student who gave up on advancing to high school for medical reasons, and yet ascribed two students who pursued immediate employment after middle school to the decrease of educational aspirations because they had wished to go onto high school at the beginning of their 9th grade year. Then, I compared the rank of high school to which each student wished to get in November, 2008 with that of high school to which he or she finally advanced in April, 2009. As I did in chapter II, I again used *hensachi* from one booklet published by Itsukishobō, a company which organizes practice tests in Osaka as an index of rank of each high school (Itsuki no mogi testo kai 2008). The Table IV-2 "Academic Achievement and the Fulfillment of Educational Aspiration" summarizes the result.

It appears that all students' educational aspirations were hardly raised, but instead were as lowered as preserved. Only 11 percent of students advanced to higher ranking high schools than they aspired to do. While 45 percent of students matriculated in the same or the same-rank high schools as they wished to enter, 44 percent of students got to lower ranking high schools than they wanted to get in. However, 72.5 percent of upper 40 students (8+21/40) advanced to as high status high schools as they wished to do, while only 50 percent or less of middle and lower 40 students (4+14/40 and 1+19/40) did that. Additionally, if you read the "raised" row in the table, you can see that upper 40 students were likely to over-fulfill their educational aspiration two or eight times than middle and lower 40 students. As middle school teachers conducted career guidance in a manner

which preserved rather than raised students' educational aspirations on the whole, they worked to "cool out" middle and lower achieving children more than high achieving children.

In the following sections, examining to which high schools 120 children who left Shōbun Middle School in March 2009 got, I will show that this differential containment of educational aspiration may make significant differential effects on their educational attainment in the transition from middle to high school along class lines. I will start with students advancing to private general high schools, and then move onto those making it to public vocational and general high schools.

3. Preemptive Parental Engagement: Entrance into Private High Schools

Of one hundred twenty 2009 graduating classes in Shōbun Middle School, thirty one students entered private general high schools. However, only four of these high school entrants did that because they failed to pass public high school entrance exams. Meanwhile, twenty seven students did so without applying to any public high school. In this section, I focus on the latter, who may be called genuine private high school aspirants, to examine differences in the reasons they decided to choose private instead of public high schools.

First of all, three students entered private high schools by sports recommendation because they made an accomplishment in club activities such as *judo*, volleyball and baseball. For instance, Takeuchi kun, one boy who lived in *Buraku* with his single mother and elder brother made it to a private high school with his tuition and fees partly remitted when he won the first prize at a prefectural *judo* competition. Otherwise he could not have entered any high school due to his low academic achievement. Additionally, he was lucky enough to get the recommendation from the private high school whose foundation has also its own university. As such, he may have made his dream of becoming a physical education teacher come true: it may not be difficult for him to matriculate in the annexed university again by sports recommendation. The path to the upper secondary education via being an athlete seemed to work for him very well.

However, this kind of door to private high schools is not wide open. It is not always easy for marginalized students to fight against the odds by being a good athlete. Even though he received an offer from another private high school, Mihara kun, a *judo* boy who also came from *Buraku* could not take advantage of this chance just because his middle-school-graduate parents could not afford the tuition.[9] He did not make as great an accomplishment in sports as his counterpart did, and he had less a favorable scholarship offer from the private high school. Finally, after failing to pass the public high school entrance exams, he ended up entering a night vocational high school. Thus, it is hard to say that playing sports gives a reliable opportunity for disadvantaged children to bypass the exams and go further than their parents did.

Despite the conflicting names, the "disheartened," those who could not help only applying to private high schools because otherwise they might not get to any high schools,

[9] I do not think that Mihara kun's family was economically worse than Takeuchi kun's because both of them lived in the same public housing project. However, the fact that Mihara kun's grandmother often had to stay in the hospital and his older brother was still a high school student might make it more difficult for his parents to pay the tuition even though they wanted him to continue to play *judo*.

had a larger share of high school "aspirants." Eleven of the twenty seven aspirants, about 41 percent, belonged to this group. They ended up with low status private high schools because they did not perform well in middle school. Still, they did not jump into the option from the beginning: they had wished to try for low rank public high schools. Rather their homeroom teachers recommended only applying for private high schools in the best interests of these students.

In some cases, their homeroom teachers made such recommendations too early. For instance, a homeroom teacher strongly suggested that a low achieving girl should only apply for private high schools at a three-party talk in the first term in 9th grade (June 2008). The other homeroom teacher told another girl to go to night high schools in the first place rather than encouraged her to try harder before the fall term started in 2008. Even though she wanted to go to a low status public high school, she had been already discouraged and was led to only apply for a private high school by the homeroom teacher. Although these teachers advised these girls to do that on their behalf, it is undeniable that by doing so early they stopped them from even trying.

However, even these low achieving students did get to different destinations relative to their family background. While some were able to go to non-elite general high schools because their parents could afford the school fee, others had to go to correspondence high schools because it was all their parents could afford. For instance, Hamabata san and Obuchi san were in the same homeroom, and members of a girls' clique. Both were in the bottom quintile of practice tests in Shōbun Middle School. Until December, 2008, Hamabata san and Obuchi san wished to try for V and X High School respectively whose *hensachi* was 37 and 34.

Still, as career guidance progressed, the difference in their familial economic condition became clear. In February, Hamabata san changed her mind and decided to apply for a non-elite general high school whose *hensachi* was 41. She was the only one of the lower forty students in the in-school practice tests who made it to a high school which ranked higher than they wished to enter (See the Table IV-2). Also, she was the very girl that had been told by her homeroom teacher to go onto night high schools. Meanwhile, Obuchi san chose a correspondence high school whose *hensachi* was 30. Obuchi san's single mother could not simultaneously support her and her brother for high school education. Despite the small gap in academic achievement between the two girls, Obuchi san ended up going to the correspondence high school with her homeroom teacher worrying that she might not be able to graduate from it.[10]

> Mr. Takamura: Some parents happened to have money to pay the tuition fee for private high schools as Hamabata san's parents did. However, Obuchi san decided to go to a correspondence high school. In that high school, students only have to pay the fee for the units they register for every semester. That makes the fee lower than

[10] Other teachers also had such gloomy presentiments about other students entering the same correspondence high school because of their absenteeism. Of six students who entered the correspondence school, for the 2008-2009 academic years, two did not attend middle school at all, and four including Obuchi san were often absent from or late for school. However, those who went to non-elite private general high schools did not have such absenteeism in 9th grade even though two of them did so in 8th grade.

that of other private general high schools. Her parents could not afford the tuition for private general high schools. In addition, she disliked studying and her parents knew that. Then, they thought that she might be able to graduate from high school if she went to the correspondence high school to which she did not have to arrive at 8 AM every day. Actually, it is okay that she goes to the school at 10 AM three times a week. Her parents chose that school because they wanted her to graduate from high school.
I: It seems that Hamabata san and Obuchi san made the best decisions for themselves.
Mr. Takamura: Well… The point is whether or not Obuchi san can graduate from the correspondence high school. Unlike other private high schools, it does not enforce students not to be late for or absent from school. She might skip classes little by little. Then she might not get enough units to advance to the next grade. Finally, she might not graduate from the high school in three years. If she feels unlikely to graduate from the school in three years, she may drop out of the school.

Meanwhile, there is a quite different picture of children entering private high schools. Even though they had high enough test scores to pass public high school entrance exams, in 2009, thirteen students in Shōbun Middle School decided to go to private high schools. We may call these students "college aspirants" because their parents, who were mostly college graduates, chose elite private high schools to better help these students gain entrance to college. For instance, according to her homeroom teacher, as early as May 2008, Ishida san's mother, who graduated from a top national university and became a high level public servant, had already decided to send her to an elite private high school in a neighboring prefecture, of which most students are bound for top national universities. According to his ex-homeroom teacher and a colleague of his mother at a different school, Koizumi kun's mother, who graduated from another public university and had a teacher certificate, sent all three sons to an elite private high school in Osaka, which she expected would better prepare her sons for prestigious universities. These educated mothers not only considered which high schools to enter right now but also carefully planned to let their children go on to higher education. Although it was time to decide on which high school to go to, they already had a prospect of postsecondary education for their children.

I: It is said that these days Japan is experiencing its biggest economic crisis since World War II. Nevertheless, some students who are smart enough to go to public high schools like Ishida san, Uno kun and Kimura Kun have only applied for private high schools.
Ms. Tanaka: The private high schools to which high achievers go put a greater emphasis on guiding the students to the next stage, i.e. college entrance. Those schools advertise that advantage as a kind of commodity. I do not mean that public high school teachers are lazy. However, if you compare one student in the public high school with the other student in the private high school of the same rank, the former has to study more in addition to what he or she learns at the public school. They need to try harder by themselves or to go to *juku*. Meanwhile, the latter may take supplementary classes as well as seven regular classes a day in the private high school. The private high school pays greater attention to their students. In the first

place, however, students' family can afford the tuition for the private high school. Then, both parents and students consider the future after graduating from high school. That is why Ishida san bothers to go to RN High School even though she can go to B or C High School.

Furthermore, thanks to economic and cultural capital, which they received from their parents, some of these college aspirants could be free from teachers' "preserving-educational-aspirations" guidance and make their own decisions which might be more favorable to their future education. When they were not allowed to go for their first-choice public high schools by their homeroom teachers, they were made by their parents to only apply to private high schools which ranked as high as their most preferable public high schools.

For instance, until January 2009, Kimura kun insisted on applying only to C High School of which *hensachi* was 62 even though his test scores were way below that. Other students whose test scores were as similar as Kimura kun's entered no higher than K High School whose *hensachi* was 47. His homeroom teacher reasonably disagreed with his plan to apply only to the elite public high school. When he was not allowed to do that, in February, his father who was a manager at one of the biggest electronic companies in Japan, could easily let him apply only to a *hensachi*-60 private high school which has an annexed private university. Thanks to his middle class parents, his improbable educational aspiration came true.

This was also the case with Matsuda san whose family was one of the richest in the middle school district, and whose parents were also college graduates. In November, I saw her disappointed because her test scores were not good enough to allow her to enter G High School (*hensachi* 53) which she wished to go to.[11] By her scores she could enter no higher than K High School (*hensachi* 47). According to her homeroom teacher, in December when her mother also realized that her daughter was unlikely to go to G High School, she decided to send her to the same status private high school (*hensachi* 54). However, her mother was careful not to inform her daughter of this plan until the private high school entrance exams were near at hand. The mother worried that Matsuda san might not study hard if she knew that she could easily advance to high school by applying only for the private high school. The following conversation with Matsuda san and her friend shows how carefully her mother paved the way for her future.

I: Do you guys take the private high school entrance exams next week? Are you nervous about that?
Ueda san: Not really. I am not worried about that. [Pointing to Matsuda san next to her] She only applies for a private high school.
Matsuda san: Ahh… Everything will be over next week. Then can I be relaxed?
Ueda san: Do you have an interview for the entrance exams?
Matsuda san: Yes, I do.

[11] Girls' *hensachi* may be slightly different from boys' *hensachi* even for the same school because public general high schools in Osaka should select 45 percent of their full enrollment from boys and girls respectively. Thus, in some high schools, particularly lower ranking ones, girls' *hensachi* is often higher than boy's one.

I: Then, please let me pretend to be your examiner. Why did you apply for our school?
Matsuda san: I want to study hard here.
I: Really? Don't you choose the school to join in the tennis club?
Matsuda san: The tennis club in the school is not that strong. Neither does the school invest efforts on other club activities. There is nothing to say except for studying hard.
I: Why did you decide not to go to the public high school?
Matsuda san: I cannot go to public high school higher than K High School. Then my mother said...
Ueda san: Ah! Your mother is very careful, isn't she?
Matsuda san: Yes, she is. She said that I had better go to private high school and matriculate in college through recommendation from the private high school than going to low level public high school and studying for college entrance exams. (2008/02/02)

In *A Social History of Education and Selection*, Amano Ikuo said, "the outcome of schooling, which is represented by parents' academic attainment, is not just accumulated in the family and inherited by their children as cultural capital. The chance of social mobility of the children and the family is shaped by what kind of education their parents can give them an opportunity to receive" (2006:45). In other words, the expectation of education, which the parents have depending upon their own history of schooling, affects the educational aspirations and courses of their children.

We can see this happen when Japanese middle school students decide to go to private high schools. What parents expect from schooling on the basis of their own experiences in education shapes the type of private high school to which their child advance, and his or her plans for the future. On the one hand, parents who send their child to non-elite private high schools only hope that their child will get a high school diploma. They have little idea what their child is to be after high school as they did not have advanced education. Neither does this child from educationally disadvantaged families have a definite picture of his or her future career after high school. As I mentioned in chapter III, Obuchi san who ended up with a correspondence school is the very student that had said, "I have never thought about what I will do after high school. I have no dream."

Meanwhile, parents who have their child go to elite private high schools know what the child should do in order to go on to college on the basis of their own experiences in higher education, and carefully prepare safe and definite ways for their child. Then this child from educationally advantaged families takes it for granted that he or she will proceed to higher education. In May 2008, when I asked Koizumi kun, whose college-educated mother had sent his older brothers to an elite private high school, if he thought that the transition from middle to high school mattered, he asked back if the transition from high school to college was more significant than the earlier transition.

Then middle school teachers' career guidance which tends to contain students' and their parents' educational aspirations works differently with these two groups of children. While children of non-college educated parents cannot but follow teachers' advice on high school choice, those of college-educated parents do not need to rely upon teachers' words in order to judge which high school choice is more beneficial to them. Thus, these latter

children can disregard the discouraging effects of school teachers' guidance. Their educational aspirations are not only maintained but also carefully built and raised by their educated parents.

4. **The Road to Blue Collar Employment: Entrance into Vocational High Schools**

In the first round of public high school entrance exams, 2009 graduating classes in Shōbun Middle School took the exams for vocational, comprehensive and semi-general high schools as well as for high schools which provide specialized courses such as arts, music, and physical education. A few top ranking students applied to elite high schools with specialized courses such as math and science study and English study. Also, some students applied to semi-general high schools which provided both general and special courses such as arts, sports, international studies, or humanities: as semi-general high schools were very similar to general high schools, they thought they had another opportunity to gain entrance to general high schools by applying to the former in the first round.

Meanwhile, still other students applied to comprehensive schools, which used to be vocational high schools and provided courses such as accounting, marketing, or information technology, and vocational high schools, which taught courses such as commerce and industrial technology. Thus, even though there were elite-general and semi-general high schools in the first round, the image that high schools in this round focus vocational education was strong among teachers and students. One teacher in Shōbun Middle School simply divided students who apply for the public high schools in the round into those who will not go to college and those who want to have one more chance to apply for general high schools. She must have thought that the former were the applicants for vocational high schools, and the latter were those for semi-general high schools.

As this teacher suggested, it is close to the truth to define middle school students applying for vocational high schools as non-college-oriented students. Among 2008 vocational high school graduates in Japan, 14.7 percent entered four year universities, 5 percent two-year junior colleges, and 20 percent *senshūgakkō,* special training schools. And yet, still more than half of them, 52.2 percent, sought immediate employment (Monbukagakushō 2009). Meanwhile, among 2008 general high school graduates, the corresponding percentages are 55.1, 6.7, 21.7 and 9.5. Vocational high school graduates were five times more likely to begin working than those who graduated from general high schools. Also, one third fewer of them went on to four year universities.

Actually, in Shōbun Middle School, only one of seventeen students who entered vocational high schools in 2009 aspired to advance to college according to the survey I conducted in 2008. Instead of preparing for college entrance exams in high school, these students wanted to learn skills in vocational high schools because they liked to make things manually. All three boys who were in arts and crafts club at Shōbun Middle School entered technical high schools. Another two boys who were absorbed in handling personal computers and playing video games also chose to do that. This relation of their personal taste with the decision on the entrance into vocational high schools makes sense. Unless they like vocational courses, they have little reason to get a high school education as they have little expectation of higher education.

However, the taste for manual work is not just personal but social as we can learn from the ethnography of Japanese working class lives (Roberson 1998). Children may feel inclined to use tools when they grow up in an environment where they have a chance to see

their parents handling machines. Thus, it is not accidental to find incoming students in vocational high schools whose parents earn their living dealing with machinery. Kojima kun was a smart, and yet macho boy. He told me that he had learned to run machinery from his father, a technical high school graduate for himself. His conversation with one young teacher showed that his father advised him to go to vocational high schools, to which the teacher agreed.

> Ms. Miyamoto: Which high school will you go to?
> Kojima kun: I plan to go to Ude Technical High School. If I cannot enter that school, I will try for X High School. It is more difficult to go to Ude Technical High School than before. Additionally, if you are a student in the Technical High School, girls might not like you.
> I: (laughing) However, attracting girls cannot be the reason to go on to high school.
> Kojima kun: Aren't you laughing at me too much? In fact, that is also why I want to advance to high school.
> Ms. Miyamoto: If you enter Ude Technical High School, you can learn skills and something else, which is great. If you do not plan to advance to college, it is difficult to put up with studying in general high schools.
> Kojima kun: My father said that, too. General high schools are only for studying.

In addition to parents, elder siblings may also affect students' decision to go to vocational high schools. Several boys entering vocational high schools had brothers or cousins who were students in the schools, and got advice from them when they decided on their entrance to high school. The Ota brothers' case is an example. They were brothers born within a year of each other, and both entered technical high schools. They also had an eldest brother who had graduated from a correspondence high school. As the next conversation with the second Ota kun shows, the eldest brother's experiences in the high school and in his workplace influenced their high school choice.

When just one month had passed since I started to conduct fieldwork in Shōbun Middle School, I found the second brother's short poem on the blackboard in his homeroom, which read "Next April will be the turning point in my life. I will study hard this year." I wondered why he felt concerned to the extent that he defined the transition to high school as the turning point in his life.

> I: Could you explain what you mean by the poem? You wrote, "Next April will be the turning point in my life."
> The second Ota kun: In Japan, which high school to enter shapes your life course. I wrote that phrase in order to disclose my decision to try hard and improve test scores as a 9th grade student. If you go to a high school which only idiots enter, it is hard for you to find a job. However, if you go to a good high school, you can get a good job. Thus, I will try hard to enter a higher, if a little bit, status high school.
> I: From whom did you hear the fact that in Japan it matters which high school you enter? The second Ota kun: My elder brother said that. Although he works now, he only gets a small salary because he did not graduate from a good high school. He said that I had better go to a higher status high school. Isn't it the case in Korea?

I: Not so much. Due to a policy to equalize high school quality, Korean high schools are not as stratified as Japanese high schools.

Before he graduated from the Middle School, I asked him why he decided to go to a technical high school rather than a general high school which he could have entered with his test scores. He answered, "In order to go on to high school and acquire something. I am not interested in general high schools. Technical high schools are better than general high schools in acquiring skills with your body (*kijutsu oh mini tsukeru*) during high school years." About nine month later, when the third brother also decided to go to another technical high school, I heard him saying almost same words. He said, "I do not like general high schools (*hutsūka*). I dislike the word, general (*hutsū*). My brother said that I could go to a technical high school if I try harder."

It is certain that both brothers preferred vocational education to general education during high school years for economic reasons. They did not even try for the private high school entrance exams. They knew it was useless to do so because their parents could not afford the tuition fee. How could they have imagined that their parents might be able to afford the fee when there were three younger children in addition to the three brothers in the family? Then, both brothers were sure that they had to seek immediate employment after high school as their eldest brother did. It seemed that their parents would not support general high school education either. According to his homeroom teacher, if the third brother had not passed the exams for the technical high school, he would have been doomed to go to the correspondence high school from which his eldest brother graduated without even trying for general high schools in the second round. These family conditions compelled them to make a realistic career choice like "acquiring skills with your body" during the high school years.

The shortage of economic and cultural capital restricted further marginalized students' opportunities to grope for paths other than vocational high schools. This was particularly true of four students who landed in a night technical high school. All of them were from the *Buraku* community. Their parents did not make it to high school at all, and could not prepare them for going to high school as their counterparts with college diplomas did. As middle school graduates, these parents even had difficulty in convincing them to advance to high school. Thus, despite their sincere wishes to send their child to high schools, these parents sometimes ended up yelling at their child not to go to high school when they found that he was unlikely to pass the high school entrance exams. Therefore these night technical high school entrants were doubly disadvantaged at home: they were least motivated to gain upper secondary education by their dire economic situations and parental discouragement.

For these disadvantaged students, their middle school teachers were often the only people who could guide and encourage them to get more education for their future. However, the teachers had to consider the students' miserable family situation as well as their low academic achievement in career guidance. Then, they could not help letting the students make a decision suitable for their family background rather than encouraging them to grope for a different possibility via postsecondary education. They thought that the students had better acquire manual skills in vocational high schools than "prepare for college entrance exams never to be taken in low status general high schools." (Slater 2010:152)

This was the case with Mihara kun who, as we saw above, had to refuse the offer of recommendation entrance from a private high school for purely economic reasons. When he realized that he could not enter the private high school, he was going to give up on going to high school. However, his father, a middle-school graduate and manual worker, did not know how to persuade him to go to high school and ended up quarrelling with him. Thanks to the devoted persuasion of Mr. Takamura, his homeroom teacher, however, he changed his mind and tried for a technical high school in the first round, and a low status general high school in the second round, only to fail in both trials. As soon as Mr. Takamura found that Mihara kun failed to pass the second-round exam, he began to look for public high schools which could not meet the full enrollment and would recruit more students. At the teacher's room where my desk was located just across that of Mr. Takamura, he mumbled as if he wanted me to overhear his words.

> Mr. Takamura: I should have had him apply for V High School, not X High School, in the second round. Now he has two options: a martial art course in P High School and a mechanics course in Ude High School.[12] Which one is better for him? P High School recruits only five students for the course. He might not be able to get one spot among the five. In addition, he might not be able to understand what he is taught in P High School which ranks higher than Ude High School. Although he wants to keep playing judo in high school, considering his family situation, it may be better for him to go to the night technical high school and work in the daytime. I will inform him of the pros and cons of each high school and let him discuss the options with his parents. Then they will decide where he will go.

Although Mr. Takamura let Mihara kun and his parents choose one of the two high schools, he prioritized the night technical high school over the general high school with the martial art course. Finally, Mihara kun entered the night vocational high school. In fact, Mr. Takamura consistently recommended that his other students, who were in economically difficult situations, go on to vocational high schools rather than general high schools: of seventeen students who entered vocational high schools in 2009, eleven students were from his homeroom. As we saw in Kojima kun's case, however, other teachers also tended to recommend that students choose vocational high schools when they did not like to study and/or came from low-income families.

It may be wrong to say that these teachers misguided these students. Rather than aspiring for the unlikely world, i.e. college, it would be rational to acquire useful skills in vocational high schools and to jump into the market of immediate employment after high school. This advice makes sense given that even during the economic depression in the 1990s, the Japanese system of the transition from school to work worked for vocational high school graduates better than for lower ranking general high school graduates (Brinton 2011). However, it is also true that as they guide the marginalized students to enter vocational high schools with little aspiration for or expectation of higher education, these students may end up staying at the same location into which they were born. As the

[12] Although this technical high school is the same high school as Kojima kun wished to enter, it has not only daytime courses but also night courses. While Kojima kun advanced to the daytime courses, Mihara kun got to the night courses.

teachers consider the students' family background and lead them to the vocational tracks, they actually encourage them to remain in the social status from which they originated.

However, the students may not blame their teachers for discouraging them from groping for different paths other than the vocational high schools. In some sense, the status is an achieved one because not school teachers but students and their parents have made a final decision to go on to the vocational high schools. The students' distaste for studying academic subjects and inclination toward manual work also make the career decision appear a personal choice even though such dispositions are the product of socialization at home. Additionally, the decision even seems reasonable to these students considering the prospect of their future.

Therefore, these children may stay in the same class position in which their parents landed by making such a rational career decision on their own. Even without dreaming of climbing the social ladder via education, they choose to remain in the same location as that of their parents in the class structure. When career guidance is conducted in such a way that teachers let students only pursue a destination fit for their family situation, the shortage of economic and cultural capital in their family may shape their career decision in the transition to high school, and justifies social reproduction.

5. **Differentiated Aspirations: Entrance into Public General High Schools**

Sixty seven of one hundred twenty students who graduated from Shōbun Middle School in March 2009 entered public general and semi-general high schools. However, these public general high school entrants were as divided into college and non-college aspirants as private high school entrants. On the one hand, high achievers decided on general high schools in order to prepare for college. Unlike their classmates who entered vocational high schools because of their current interests, these students did not allow their current hobbies to compromise their entrance to high school and to college. For instance, Koyama san was a girl who was in brass band at the Middle School. She played drums in the club, and she has also played the piano since she was an elementary school student. As the following conversation between Koyama san and a young gymnastic teacher shows, she would not undermine the opportunity of going to college for her hobby even though she eventually wanted to get a job related to music.

> Mr. Hirano: Which high school will you go to?
> Koyama san: For public high school, I would like to go to G High School. For a private one, OI High School.
> Mr. Hirano: Why don't you go to Y Commercial High School? Its brass band is the best in Japan. When I commuted to my high school which was close to the Commercial High School, I saw that the band even practiced in the morning.
> Koyama san: I do not like to practice in the morning. Additionally, isn't it difficult to enter the School?
> Mr. Hirano: If you can enter G High School, you can enter Y Commercial High School, too.
> Koyama san: However, the Commercial High School may work to my disadvantage in going to college.
> Mr. Hirano: Do you want to be a music teacher or a pianist in an orchestra?

Koyama san: Neither one. I would like to act as an independent musician like playing music in a fancy restaurant.

To these high achievers who aspire to go to college, high school is not a final destination but a point of passage. However, the point of passage is still very important. Above all, they wish to go to higher status general high schools, which might help them enter prestigious universities. Their parents encourage them to pursue a higher education because it will develop their potential. Even when they do not have any particular dream, they are told that further education eventually will help their dream to come true. This was the case with Takahashi san whose parents were actively engaged in her learning by letting her have Kumon math/reading and other supplementary education ever since she was in elementary school. Finally, she made it to a high rank high school with a special course in English.

Kubota san: What will you do after middle school?
Takahashi san: I would like to go to as high-ranked a high school as I can.
I: Why do you wish to do so?
Takahashi san: Because I want to go to college.
Kubota san: Do you have a dream?
Takahashi san: No, I don't. But it seems okay that I will think about my dream in college. My father said that the higher level college I enter, the more likely I am to develop my talent. According to him, it is fine to consider what I want for a career after I get to college.

It is also important to go to high status general high schools for social reasons. The parents of high achievers think the children are more likely to meet friends who are similar to themselves. The high achievers have in common not only good academic achievement but also high aspirations for further education. Additionally, the parents know that the children may meet other students from the same social status if they go to top general high schools. The following interview was conducted with Watanabe san who made it to C High School.

I: Do you want to go to college?
Watanabe san: I am going to do so. I have no apparent reason to go to college, but my parents said that it could be easier to get a job if I graduated from college.
I: Do you often talk with your parents about your future?
Watanabe san: Not much. When my test scores are bad, they blame me, though. In comparison with other parents, however, my parents tend to be more engaged in my schooling. My father himself graduated from A High School. He said that because friendship mattered, it was better to meet classmates similar to me.

However, low achievers did not necessarily go to general high schools expecting a preparation for further education. Some chose the schools just because the schools were close to their home. Others did so because they wanted to participate in club activities in the schools. Still others were okay with any general high schools which their test scores allowed them to enter. For them, entering and graduating from high school was the only

goal. A 9th grade teacher sarcastically said that these students and their parents would be satisfied with any school if it had a title of high school in the school name. Matsuoka kun was one of such general high school entrants.

He was the youngest son of parents who ran a small local store. One of his two older brothers even made it to college through an athlete-student program. However, his homeroom teacher said that his parents were not interested in his future. In fact, Matsuoka kun himself did not expect a bright future, either. When he was asked by the principal about his future dream, he answered, "I would like to graduate from high school and get a part-time job." Although he managed to pass the entrance exams for a low status private high school, his parents could not afford the tuition fee. Finally, his homeroom teacher could only find for him a public correspondence high school whose graduation rate is lower than fifty percent. The following conversation between Matsuoka kun and the head teacher of career guidance shows that gaining entrance to any high school was his goal.

> Matsuoka kun: I was told by my homeroom teacher that I could go to MK Private High School.
> Ms. Yamada: What?
> Matsuoka kun: Last year a graduate who had the about same test scores as I do managed to pass the entrance exams for the high school.
> Ms. Yamada: Are you okay with that high school? How about other high schools? You are not the same as that graduate in every aspect. You still have time to think it over.
> Matsuoka kun: Is the High School far? Do I have to pay $3,000 for its tuition?
> Ms. Yamada: It takes one hour by train. In addition, if you wish to get a loan from the Prefecture of Osaka, you should choose a high school only in the prefecture. That high school is in Kyoto, therefore you are not eligible for the loan. How about going where you can learn computers or other skills?
> Matsuoka kun: If I could go to such a school, that would be great. But my test scores are not even close to it. If I can go to any high school, I do not care what high school it is. If I can enter it, I am fine.

However, there were still some low achieving students who care about the prestige of the high school and wish to advance to college. And yet the desire of these students for higher education was not used by their parents and teachers to motivate them to try for higher ranked high schools. As we saw, high achieving students were supported by their parents to pursue higher education. Teachers also let them apply for high-ranked general high schools even if they thought the students were unlikely to pass high school entrance exams. The teachers could not bend the high achieving students and their parents' strong aspiration to access higher education via high-ranked general high schools.

This was not true of low achieving students. When some low achieving students wanted to go on to further education, they were counseled not to raise but to lower their aspiration to apply for higher ranked high schools. Honda kun was a boy who liked to participate in school events more than studying in school. He was also an active member in the boys' tennis club at the Middle School. When I interviewed him in May 2008, he sincerely wished to go to college, and to become a sports instructor. However, he just ranked at the bottom third in the practice tests at the Middle School. Thus, his homeroom

teacher did not allow him to apply for Q High School, his first-choice high school whose *hensachi* was 42. Instead, his homeroom teacher persuaded him to go to V High School whose *hensachi* was 36 by saying that he would be more likely to go to college when he was at the top in the lower status high school rather than at the bottom in the higher ranked one. Additionally, his parents wanted him to go to public high school for economic reasons, which left him little room for pursuing his goal. He would easily make it to V High School but looked bitterly disappointed after a final career guidance meeting with his homeroom teacher.

> I: (I saw that Honda kun leaned against the door in the school building.) Whom are you waiting for?
> Honda kun: No. I am shocked and disappointed.
> I: (I doubted what I heard.) You are shocked? What happened to you?
> Honda kun: I have several problems but I was told that I could not apply for my first-choice high school. It is over but… Now my homeroom teacher, parents, and *juku* teachers may be relieved because I have lowered the rank of high school to apply for. My homeroom teacher said, "If you could not understand classes in the first-choice school, you might have nothing to do other than playing tennis there. Then, you might only graduate from high school." So I agreed with him, but… I cannot calm down my mind.

Here we again find that middle school teachers fail to build low achieving students' educational aspirations. When they conduct safety-first career guidance through which they aim to guarantee a destination after middle school, they end up containing even small educational aspiration of the low achieving students. They suggest that the low achieving students only have desires that are within their academic and economic capabilities to achieve. By restraining the aspirations of the low achievers, however, these students might have difficulty maintaining their hopes for further education in low status high schools where few students try for college entrance exams.

Meanwhile, thanks to their educated parents, high achieving students can be free of such containing effects of career guidance on educational aspirations by middle school teachers. Their parents carefully lead their children to believe in the idea of meritocracy. They promote the children's aspiration for higher education by saying that their hard work will be rewarded by not only a good employment but also social ties with educated people. The teachers can only let those students and parents go the way they choose. Thus, the high achieving students can keep the aspiration for social mobility via education, which is a driving force of their present and future life.

Then we cannot help wondering why public middle school teachers are reluctant to or fail to facilitate educational aspirations despite possibly non-egalitarian effects of such guidance. More generally speaking, it is a question of why Japanese middle school does not offer a culture of aspiration.

6. **Egalitarian Culture, Non-egalitarian Effect**

Around the end of 8th grade or in the first semester of 9th grade, experienced teachers at Shōbun Middle School knew who could go to which level of high school. Particularly, they knew that some low achievers might not get to high school. In June 2008,

one teacher talked to me about Nomura kun, a *Buraku* student whose parents only graduated from middle school. "If he wishes to go on to high school, he can only hope to go to a night high school." In fact, Nomura kun fulfilled the prediction nine months later. In this manner, teachers often ended up seeing their gloomy expectations come true. However, why did not they in the first place think about making students like Nomura kun wish to go on to high school?

First, as middle school teachers, like other Japanese people, have been suspicious of the likelihood of social mobility through education ever since the economic bubble burst in the 1990s, they have been reluctant to persuade their students to study hard for social success. Almost every teacher in Shōbun Middle School and other schools with whom I talked pointed out that now even college-graduate white-collar employees in big companies could be laid off at any time, which was unimaginable before the economic crisis. They said that the Japanese lost the motivation to try hard when their hard work was not rewarded any more as it had been. When children were also seeing on the news that it was difficult even for college students to find a job, adults including these teachers themselves who faced their own salary cuts despite their demanding work, could no longer tell them to study hard and enjoy a bright future.

Nevertheless, it seemed that middle school teachers were not completely skeptical about the value of further education. Among mid-career teachers in their forties and fifties, of whose cohorts no more than 40 percent went to college in Japan, most benefited from their own academic attainment, so the suspicion of higher education may be a self-contradiction. Presumably reflecting their belief in education, most children of middle school teachers I met in Japan entered or graduated from high status high schools and colleges. Some of them made it to top national universities such as Kyoto and Osaka University. When the children failed to pass college entrance exams, they did not hesitate to become a *rōnin*, which literally means a masterless samurai, but also a student retrying for the exams for two or more years. The middle school teachers as parents with college degrees may be less doubtful about the value of education as a tool for social mobility than other Japanese people are. Thus, it is necessary to understand the reason the teacher cannot raise their students' aspirations in a different context: it is not due to their personal ideas as individuals but their cultural orientation as a group.

In post-war Japanese society, school teachers' cultural norms were distinctively egalitarian (Kariya 1995). Against the Ministry of Education, which intended to facilitate education corresponding to students' ability and aptitude in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Teachers' Union of Japan protested that such education could stigmatize low achieving students by dividing the student body by academic achievement. This criticism was based on the belief that every student can perform well in school if he or she tries hard and also that grouping students by their scholastic ability will have discriminatory effects on slow students' self-esteem. However, the egalitarian belief of human being's innate ability and the fairness of an educational selection system supporting and supported by such a belief worked to prevent teachers and, of course, ordinary Japanese people and even researchers, from questioning the relation between class and education, for example, the gap in academic achievement and attainment by students' classes of origin. As such, the issue of discrimination in schooling in the society got concerned with its psychological influence on children.

Due to such an egalitarian ideal, however, middle school teachers cannot encourage their students to maximize their potential through further education. Instead, they end up seeing the marginalized children giving up on advancing to the upper secondary education. At best, they only allow these students to fulfill what they are likely to achieve on the basis of their academic and economic capability. As they are reluctant to cultivate the aspiration to social mobility through education, they unintentionally lead low achieving students who are least likely to be motivated by their parents with low educational attainment to stay at the low social location from which they often come. Thus, the teachers' egalitarian cultural norms and practices may create the condition for a non-egalitarian consequence, i.e. the differentiation of students' academic attainment relative to their family background.

I do not mean that teachers stood with folded arms seeing their (disadvantaged) students about to fail. They did try to persuade the students to go on to high school. They advised the students to start to prepare for high school entrance exams earlier. Some teachers even encouraged them to climb the social ladder though education.[13] However, they more often than not failed to explain to the disadvantaged children who were most likely to give up advancing to high school why they should get into high school. In the following conversations between *Buraku* students and young teachers, which took place right before these students went up to 9th grade, we can see how unconvincing and unrealistic the logic through which the latter tried to persuade the former to go on to high school was.

> Mihara kun: As it is time to go up to 9th grade, I do not feel like going to high school.
> Mr. Hukui: That does not make sense.
> Mihara kun: Why not?
> Mr. Hukui: Many people recollect that high school years are the happiest time in their life. You had better go to high school even if you do not bother to go to college.
> Mihara kun: Really? My brother also managed to go to high school.
> I: Why don't you want to go to high school? If you do so, you can continue to play Judo.
> Mihara kun: Studying becomes harder and harder. I do not like to play Judo, either.
> Mr. Hukui: Even though you do not go to high school, you still have to learn a lot of things in society.
> Mihara kun: Really?
>
> Yokota san: I don't want to go to high school.

[13] In an extreme case, a teacher's attempt to motivate students to seek higher social positions backfired. I was told that one math teacher was beaten by several students some months before I started to conduct fieldwork in Shōbun Middle School. The teacher intended to encourage her students to study hard by making an example of another teacher who retired from the school in April 2008 to spend time traveling overseas and living in her villa in the countryside with her husband who also retired from a big company. The math teacher told her students to study hard in order to lead a life like this teacher and her husband. However, her talk irritated some marginalized students who knew that they were very unlikely to do so, and they became violent. And the teacher was also criticized for her reckless remark by other senior teachers.

Mr. Miki: I did not intend to go to college, either.
Yokota san: My father gets mad at my bad test scores. He said, "Your sister is smart. What is the problem with you?" And yet, my mother only graduated from middle school.
I: Do not most classmates go to high school?
Mr. Miki: Yes, they do. I could not pass college entrance exams when I was in 12th grade. My classmates who passed the exams boasted about it. But I did not care about that. As soon as the exams were over, I started to work at a restaurant. While working there, I realized that I should go to college. Then I prepared for and passed the exams. You do not need to go to high school right after graduating from middle school. Regardless of what others say, it is important that you think about your future for yourself.

As I mentioned above, Mihara kun finally got to a night vocational high school after losing a chance to play *judo* at a private high school for economic reasons and failing high school entrance exams in the first and second round. After graduating from the technical high school, he might become like his father who was a manual worker. Meanwhile, Yokota san ended up with a correspondence high school, which requires students to attend classes three times a week. Given that she played truant regularly in her middle school years, as her middle school teachers worried, she might not be able to graduate from high school as if her mother did not. Thus, it is sad to witness that the younger teachers with whom these marginalized students felt comfortable to talk failed to convince them to study hard to advance to high schools, which might give them opportunities other than following the paths which their parents had already passed.

It may be unfair to blame only school teachers for low educational aspirations and poor academic attainment of disadvantaged children. As Mr. Ishikawa, the head teacher in another grade, said, there may be "the barrier of home culture" which teachers cannot overcome. He could not help admitting, "Frankly speaking, I have no idea how to tackle the barrier of home culture. Some children are just not prepared for studying at home. These days affluent parents can give their child a good education. Meanwhile, low-income parents just manage to survive. Although studying in school is important, studying at home must follow it. However, students from low-income families do not have a habit of studying at home. No matter how much homework teachers may assign them to inculcate such habits, it may be useless if they do not do their homework."

Nevertheless, if the insufficient spur to educational aspirations contributes to the low academic attainment and even self-condemnation of disadvantaged students whom teachers would support most, the ideal of egalitarianism and its concomitant educational practices are difficult to justify. Those students are least likely to aspire to further schooling as a means of social mobility because of "the barrier of home culture." It is contradictory to deny such aspiration when they do not have it from the onset. Rather it is imperative to raise or cultivate educational aspirations of the disadvantaged students so that they may see schools as a means for social mobility as their counterparts normally do that thanks to their educated parents.

In his research on "the content and effect of a college entrance support program" on some students in a low status commercial high school many of whom come from complicated family backgrounds, Sakai (2010: 88) proposes the idea that such

disadvantaged students should be encouraged to pursue further education to increase their chances of social success. Otherwise they would lack concrete perspectives for their future and resign themselves to unstable jobs after high school. He writes, "Due to frequent testing and examination, high schools in Japan are precisely divided by academic level, and students judge their own abilities based on the rank of the school they attend. They tell their career narratives accordingly. These narratives are further reinforced by a downturn in the hiring market for high school graduates. In fact, there are a number of chances for young people to recover in society after high school, but few of them attempt it actively. The tracking system moves students along, and their grades at the end of junior high school largely determine their futures (105)."

This is exactly why I problematize the forms of career guidance in Japanese middle schools. The "preserving-educational-aspiration" career guidance only perpetuates the disparity of the aspiration among students as it is. As a result, the well-intentioned teachers end up with an unintended situation in which students' family background may make a difference in what they are going to do after graduating from middle school. As Sakai set up in the low status vocational high school, therefore, I think Japanese middle schools need to have career choice support programs through which marginalized children can be motivated to maximize their potential and climb the social ladder through education.

This may be an urgent issue because in recent years, educational aspiration itself seems to be split along class lines in Japan (Kariya 2001; Nabeshima 2003a; Nakamura 2003). There is no longer the social pressure toward further education in the society that existed during the high-speed economic growth (De Vos 1973; Dore 1976). The term "exam hell," which symbolized intensive competitions for gaining entrance to high schools and universities, sounds archaic. In addition, today Japanese schools do not offer the culture of aspiration that life chances may depend on academic achievements in school (Okano 2009:107). Here the difference of family background could cut into the void of aspirational culture in the society and in the schools. The difference in expectations of education among classes would create the differences in distributions of educational attainment, worldly benefits, and social prestige. In order to break that loop of social reproduction, Japanese schools, particularly middle schools, should revive or enhance a culture of aspiration within them.

V. Opting out of Schooling

Today most Japanese children go on to high school. Since 1974 when the rate of high school entrance first went over 90 percent, this tendency has continued nationwide (Hida, Mimizuka, Iwaki, and Kariya 2000). Although it is still not compulsory, high school education has been already universalized in Japan. Indeed, with the normalization of upper secondary education in Japan, as I showed in chapter IV, there are some children who just matriculate in high school without any clear goals.

However, this does not mean that children from all social classes have had equal access to upper secondary education. In an analysis of the change of type of high school which middle school students entered from 1968 to 1979, which was the very period of the universalization of high school entrance in Japan, Hata (1983:166-7) found that working class children enrolled less (particularly prestigious) general high schools and instead more in vocational high schools, whereas middle class students were overrepresented in (again, top-ranked) general high schools. The normalization of high school entrance simultaneously progressed with the differential placement of students to stratified high school structure according to their class position.

In the differentiated high school structure, *Buraku* children have been more disadvantaged than their national counterparts. According to Nabeshima (1993:211-213), thanks to the quantitative expansion of upper secondary education, by the mid 1970s, the gap in high school entrance rate between *Buraku* and non-*Buraku* students had narrowed from more than 30 percent (30% versus 66.8% in 1963) to more or less 5 percent (87.5% versus 91.9% in 1975). However, such a constant gap in high school entrance rate between the two groups has never closed since then (87.5% versus 94.4% in 1990). For instance, *Buraku* children in Osaka still go on to high school 3 or 4 percent less than their counterparts in the prefecture do and more seriously, they are more likely to drop out of high school (Osakahu 2001a, 2001b). Despite such a huge advancement in the educational attainment of the minority group, *Buraku* children still suffer from having less high school education than non-*Buraku* children.

Since the mid 1980s, the overrepresentation of *Buraku* students among non-high-school-bound students and high school dropouts has been examined in terms of "the psychological and cultural aspects of *Burakumin* children's lives" (Nabeshima 2010:124). It is because despite the Dowa Measure Special Law, which mobilized affirmative action efforts for the minority children such as scholarships for high school and college entrance and the placement of additional teachers in their schools, *Buraku* students have fallen behind non-*Buraku* students in terms of educational performance.[1] Instead, the reason the

[1] The Dowa Measure Special Law is the affirmative action law which was legislated in 1969 in order to improve living conditions, social welfare, industrial development, employment, education in *Buraku* communities. Even though it contributed to improving physical conditions of *Buraku* communities by providing public housing and several community facilities, it failed to declare discrimination illegal and to enable individual *Burakumin* to move into the mainstream of Japanese society (Upham 1993:328-329). In addition, the Measure Special Law was only applied to *Buraku* communities designated as *dowa* districts by local governments, and some local government such as the Tokyo prefecture government refused to designate any *dowa* districts because the designation might make *Buraku* communities more visible and cause further discrimination against the *Burakumin:*

former as a group fail to achieve in school more than the latter do is attributed to the fact that the *Burakumin* tend to believe that educational attainment does not help them move up the social ladder in the mainstream society, and that they had better learn skills which can provide immediate material benefits (Asō and Miyajaki 1983:137-142; Nabeshima 1993:27-28). Given that they have been engaged in "small business and low wage-labour such as construction and public works, car and house wrecking, junk dealing, garbage and human waste treatment, cleaning and peddling," which do not necessarily require that much educational qualification, it may make sense that they have developed "utilitarian and flexible" orientations (Aoki 2009:188). However, without paying sufficient attention to how their cultural attitudes toward education have been formulated, we may end up reducing the fact that the *Burakumin* are more likely to receive only compulsory education to their particular cultural norms and practices, i.e. the *Buraku* culture.

In chapter V, I dissect the concept of the *Buraku* culture by taking a close look at middle school graduate *Buraku* children in Shōbun Middle School. To this end, I will understand their career choice in terms of the transformation of *Buraku* community as well as their family background. I will also document how a youth counter culture of some *Buraku* boys is created though schooling, thereby presumably contributing to their premature opting out of the education system. Finally, drawing on the literature of the *Burakumin* as well as on my own findings, I will show that the *Buraku culture*, particularly their cultural model of education, is a function of their experience of discriminations in formal schooling, and of class reproduction over several generations.

1. Middle School to Work: The Waning of *Buraku* Community

During my 18 months of fieldwork in Shōbun Middle School, I sadly witnessed five students choose not to go on to high school.[2] Four of them, one girl and three boys, came from the *Buraku* community in the middle school district. For some reason, I would separate and analyze the non-high-school-entrants rather than understand them all together. That is partly because I had more opportunities to observe the girl, one of the 2009 graduating classes on which I mainly focused during my fieldwork, than the three boys who were the 2008 graduating classes: if they had not been suspended for several levels of misbehavior from smoking, bullying, and vandalism to violence within and outside the school during their last two terms in middle school, I might have interacted with them more often than I did. However, more importantly, I intend to explore different mechanisms which affected their respective decision to leave out of schooling earlier than their peers. Thus, I will first address the girl in this section, and then move on to the three boys in the next.

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about 1,000 communities were left without any *dowa* measures (Nabeshima 2010:114-115). Although the Dowa Measure Special Law which was originally planned for a ten-year period was renewed several times with different names, it finally expired in March, 2002 for diverse reasons such as financial problems of the national government, the improvement of the *Burakumin*'s physical living conditions, claims of counter discriminations, and social welfare dependency among the *Burakumin* (120-121).

[2] In this number, I did not count one girl who did not go on to high school for her medical treatment in 2009 although she wanted to do so.

In fact, Gambara san, the girl, was not an exemplary student, either. According to her teachers, she smoked and shoplifted. She was also responsible for spreading obscene photos of and false rumors about her classmates on the web. However, what most irritated her teachers was her appearance. I found that she sometimes came to school without cleaning up heavy makeup and taking off earrings that she might put on during the weekends. Additionally, she transformed her school skirts to the extent that she exposed her thighs. To her teachers, such poor outfits were a sign of more problems in the future. For that reason, they stopped her from being a homeroom leader although she was elected by her classmates in 9th grade. Nevertheless, she was socially wise enough to perform with good manners when she had a job interview, which was held on February 2009, just one month before she graduated from middle school. Despite her teachers' worries, she gave a good impression to the interviewer, and got a full-time job at a fast food company.

Her school performance was not so bad that she could not enter any high school. Her school record during the 9th grade was 34 out of 90 full score. During the fall term in 9th grade, her average scores in practice tests were 130 out of 500. The scores could have been higher because she missed the practice test in October, which was the easiest of three practice tests by November. Even her current scores were the same as or higher than those of some students who took all the practice tests and passed entrance exams for not only low ranking private high schools but also public high schools, general and vocational. Thus, it is difficult to ascribe her career choice of immediate employment after graduating from middle school to her bad school performance.

At the beginning of 9th grade, Gambara san had not yet given up on going on to high school. In a short poem she wrote in April 2008, she said, "When spring comes, I settle down. In this season I try to do what I can do now." However, after she took the first practice test in September 2008, she lost her confidence in studying for high school entrance exams. Then she asked her homeroom teacher about going on to training school. It seemed that she was much more disappointed than other students at the same academic level. After skipping the second practice test in October, she started to consider getting a job. Although her homeroom teacher advised her to only apply for private high school or to advance to training school, in December she finally decided not to go to any kind of school at all.

According to Ms. Ueno, her homeroom teacher, one of the reasons Gambara san chose immediate employment was that she did not like to study. However, who would like to cram for the high school entrance exams? Then, Ms. Ueno attributed her career choice to her family situation. Gambara san lived in a public housing project for which only the *Burakumin* used to be eligible and yet in which now low-income families are also eligible to live. For economic reasons, therefore, getting into a private high school was not an option for her. However, Gambara san did not give up on going on to high school just because her parents could not afford private high school tuition and fees. In the second career guidance committee, which was held in December 2008, Ms. Ueno explained to other teachers why Gambara san decided not to go on to high school.

> Gambara san has not performed well in school, but I recommended going on to high school for her future. However, her brother got a job after middle school. And although her sister went to a private high school, she quit and got employed. Gambara san appears to follow the same path as her siblings took. Additionally, her

mother is not much interested in sending her to high school, either. If Gambara san cannot get a job through the Job Placement Bureau, her mother will introduce her to her own workplace where she works as a part-timer."

It did not seem that Gambara san had a role model in her family, through whom she could believe in schooling as a means of social mobility. In fact, the lack of such a role model was not only limited to individual families in *Buraku* but also applied to the minority community in general (Nishda 2001). In his interview research in several *Buraku*, Osaka, Nishida Yoshimasa found that as few college graduates lived in the minority communities, *Buraku* children seldom felt inclined to pursue higher education (244). This does not necessarily mean that even today the *Burakumin* are either unaware of the importance of education or are in opposition to schools (Ikeda 2001). Indeed, Nishida found that an earlier generation of parents, who had to endure discriminations and stay with manual jobs due to their little educational qualification, was committed to sending their children to high schools, hoping their children could become *salaryman* (Nishida 2001: 238-243). However, as they did not have any experience in applying to high school or college, they could not teach their children how to maneuver through the education system (247). Furthermore, a younger generation of parents, who could lead a stable life by easily getting a job in public service sectors thanks to the Dowa Measure Special Law, tended to think that their children could also lead such a life without trying hard for further education: these parents had an attitude like "whatever will be, will be" (248-249). In short, Gambara san's final decision on opting out of schooling at age fifteen may reflect the *Burakumin*'s little experience and lower aspiration to move up the social ladder through formal schooling.

There is another factor within the community which may contribute to her career choice: the waning of *Buraku* community. When the career guidance committee officially confirmed Gambara san would look for a job instead of going to high school, one school staff was frustrated. He felt sorry for her not only because he led the girls' volleyball club of which Gambara san was a member but because he himself was from the community. He was close to tears as he blamed the homeroom teacher for failing to persuade her to go on to high school. He said, "I do not know how the homeroom teacher guided Gambara san, and yet the teacher seems to just allow her parents to do as they want. How can the teacher who transferred to our Middle School this year understand the student's family background? How can the teacher know the history and tradition of our Middle School? Our Middle School is different from other middle schools in this city. Our teachers have worked to persuade students to go on to high school by any means. Because of this, 99 percent of students have done that so far even if they have to work in the daytime and go to high school at night. Our teachers have made them do that. I am afraid that the new teacher is destroying such history and tradition."

As other *Buraku* communities did (Okubo 2006), this *Buraku* community ran programs specially designed for *Buraku* students until the late 1990s, and its members requested school teachers to participate in the programs. Some teachers held tutoring sessions for the students in the community center or education center during semesters or even summer break. Particularly, they bothered to have intensive review sessions only for the minority students before mid-terms or finals. Others also took a trip with the students and studied together the history of *Buraku* liberation movement. The following words

from a teacher who taught in the middle school for ten years reflect the commitment of the community to its children's education.

> People in this middle school district are very committed to guaranteeing that students go on to high school. It is a local tradition to send children to high schools by any means. Even if a student's parents don't mind that their child does not go to high school, other residents will blame us for not taking care of the student so that he or she can make it to high school. If you send a student even to a vocational high school where he or she might get some certificates, you and our school are respected by the local people. Otherwise, bad rumors from the community would continue to haunt you and other teachers in your grade while you are in this Middle School.

At the same time, however, experienced teachers did not forget to point out that the commitment to high school entrance in the community as a whole has weakened with the nationwide dwindling of *Buraku* liberation movement since the 1990s. With the change in policies on public projects from government-led to nonprofit organization-initiated, several scandals in which the movement leaders embezzled the financial support from national and local governments ruined the popularity of the movement (Nabeshima 2010:119). These scandals partly resulted in terminating the Dowa Measures Special Law in 2002. With the end of the special funding for *Buraku*, however, many *Buraku* facilities and programs could not be used to promote *Burakumin* identity, academic achievement, and educational aspirations among *Buraku* youth.[3]

The nationwide weakening of the movement was more painfully felt in this *Buraku* community due to its political divisions toward the movement. As I mentioned in chapter I, in the late 1990s when his child was about to enter Shōbun Middle School, a boss in the community stopped any kind of *Buraku* education and activities in the community as well as in the middle school. He argued that identifying and treating the *Burakumin* differently perpetuated discrimination against them. The other movement leaders in the community opposed him, only to fail. Many local people were employed in the boss' company and could lose their jobs if they were against his policy. Since then, the community has lost the centripetal force, which had made it possible to improve the educational achievement and attainment of *Buraku* children and which is much more needed these days when social and economic divisions are widening. The head teacher of the 2009 graduating classes of which Gambara san was a member pointed to the deteriorating effect of this loss on the educational attainment of *Buraku* students.

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[3] In addition to the termination of the Dowa Measures Special Law, social transformations in *Buraku* communities must have made it difficult to promote the education focusing on *Buraku* identity. "Because of the improvement in their living conditions and because of the decrease in the actual Buraku population in the community," Okubo (2006:156) wrote, "the children and even some of their parents lacked self-identification as a discriminated group in my field site [Osaka]." In this vein, she said, "since the mid-1990s, the education of Buraku children has changed direction from focusing on the issue of Buraku children to human rights education."

> When *Buraku* liberation movement was active, local people had a consensus that it was important to make sure *Buraku* children have a basic scholastic ability for their future. They requested us to do that. Then our teachers got to the Education Center in the community at night and taught the children. We tutored them instead of *Juku* teachers. However, since the Dowa Measure Special Law expired, it was difficult to run the after-school program without any support. In addition, many parents in the community no longer wanted to have the program specialized for their children. The local people are divided. Some distribute leaflets [on which they protest the use of the national anthem and flag in school ceremonies such as commencement], whereas others do not. The latter want them to be equally treated because they believe the different treatment of the *Burakumin* leads to discrimination. Since more local people started to think that way, the commitment to guaranteeing to all local children a level of education by promoting good academic achievement has weakened.

Today, whether or not a child goes on to high school appears to be in the hands of individual families in the *Buraku* community. The effect of each family's situations on the transition to high school may become more obvious, particularly among lower class families in the community like Gambara san's. They may have insufficient cultural and social capital to take advantage of in order to promote educational aspirations as well as academic achievement of their children. However, this predicament is not merely a problem of individual families but also that of the community. On the one hand, the division of the local community by the pros and cons of *Buraku* liberation movement deprived the most marginalized children of organized support from the community which had contributed to advancing educational attainment of *Buraku* children in general. On the other hand, the fact that there are few success stories involving formal education in the community seems to further contribute to limiting marginalized children's career choices. In sum, Gambara san's case reflects not only her family situation, but also shifts in the positive (the organized commitment to educational attainment) and negative (the lack of a role model for social mobility via formal education) effect of socio-cultural capital within the community on minority children's career choices.

2. A Formation of *Yancha Gurupu* Via Schooling[4]

In January 8th 2009, I first went to Shōbun Middle School after the winter break. I found that many windows in a school building were very clean. Even though students had cleaned them up before the break, the glass could not be that clear. Soon my uneasy feeling changed into shock. I was told that on New Year's Day, someone had broken 136 pieces of glass in the building. It cost 860,000 Yen ($9,530 by the exchange rate at that point) to

[4] *Yancha gurupu* literally means a naughty or mischievous group of children. As I will describe soon, however, the 9th grade boys who were called *yancha grupu* by teachers were engaged in a lot of delinquent behaviors in and out of school. Thus, it may be more correct to translate the Japanese words into delinquent boys. Nevertheless, when I have to call the boys, I would use the boys of *yancha gurupu* or in the group in order to avoid reducing their identity to a single negative attribute like delinquent. I am grateful to Professor Susan Holloway for having me sensitive to the issue of labeling marginalized students.

replace them all, which amounted to the one-year maintenance allowance in the middle school. Teachers reported this vandalism to the police, and asked students to give any information concerning it. They failed to find out who committed the crime. However, they suspected that several 9th grade boys, who were often called *yancha gurupu*, might have done it.

There was a good reason to suspect the boys. According to teachers, every single problem of student behavior guidance in the middle school concerned them. They frequently committed minor vandalism such as breaking a few windowpanes and smashing trash cans. More seriously, they were violent to students and teachers. One teacher said that when they were in 8th grade in 2006, they bullied a classmate, who could not attend school for a while. In December, 2007, when four months had passed since I was in Shōbun Middle School, teachers happened to know that the boys of *yancha gurupu* had abused boys in 8th grade for several months. Teachers' further investigation showed that they not only extorted money from the younger students on a regular basis, but also assaulted them by beating them on their chest or burning their arms and backs with cigarette ends.[5]

I also saw them attack some teachers twice just for seven months before they graduated from middle school. One incident took place in the school yard when teachers stopped them from fighting each other, and yet they got mad and fought back at the teachers. In another case, one boy of the group rushed into the teachers' office, pushed his homeroom teacher on the wall and seized him by the throat. Due to all these misbehaviors, some boys of the group either were suspended from school during most of the last two terms of 9th grade or were made to remain at one of the unused classrooms under the surveillance of teachers without attending classes with their classmates even when they were allowed to come to school: even though teachers felt bad about making them stay out of their classes, otherwise they could not teach other students properly.

When they finally graduated from middle school in March, 2008, it turned out that only the boys in the group of the 2008 graduating classes opted out of high school education. Except for one boy in the group who went on to a vocational high school, all six boys stopped going to school at age 15. Three of them did not even try to take high school entrance exams. Another three students passed the exams, and yet middle school teachers found that they dropped out of high schools in the first year: a teacher from the high school, which one boy managed to enter thanks to fewer applications than the full enrollment, informed the middle school teachers that he never attended the high school after the first-day school ceremony.

However, these six boys did not work regularly, either. According to one student who had been abused by the boys of *yancha gurupu* and yet still hanged out with them after they graduated from middle school, these boys frequently moved one job to another. Also, when they earned some money by doing (usually manual) work, they spent it buying expensive goods like motorcycles. When they had nothing to do during the daytime, I found that they rode on the motorcycles and hung around the middle school honking the horns or that they waited for younger middle school students until they left school for

[5] The vandalism of the glass breakage happened after some of the 9th grade boys were suspended for this bullying.

home and then induced the students to play with them. It appeared that they pursued immediate fun rather than future preparation even after graduating from middle school.[6]

Although they were tired of keeping the boys of *yancha gurupu* from bullying current students even after they graduated from middle school, middle school teachers felt sorry for them. The teachers thought that their misbehaviors resulted from their miserable family conditions. For instance, the Hosogai twin brothers in the group lived on welfare benefits with their single mother and one older brother in the *Buraku*. When they were little, the twin brothers had been left by their mother for two years and raised by their grandparents. According to the teacher who was in charge of *judo* club in which the older Hosogai was, even when the mother was back to the community, she often had to leave them alone during the night when she had work shifts.

At the same time, except for the vocational-high-school entrant who transferred to the middle school, since the boys were all from the *Buraku* and/or graduated from Furumachi Elementary School including the community within its school district, middle school teachers related these boys' premature entrance into (un)employment to the dire socio-cultural condition of the community. In the community where few adults had white-collar jobs or college degrees, they thought that local children were seldom motivated to earn such degrees and achieve any other jobs than blue-collar jobs (also Buraku Kaihō Jinken Kenkyūjo 2001:244). Rather, those boys became an enviable model for younger boys in the community. It is not hard to imagine that considering that manual labor jobs do not necessarily require a high level of education, the children in the community may not feel inclined to pursue their career via schooling. Instead of seriously studying in school, they tend to get involved with all kinds of misbehaviors. Mr. Ozawa, who as the head of student guidance department talked with the boys and has worked at Shōbun Middle School since the mid 1990s, witnessed a kind of "culture of poverty" in the community (Lewis 1961, 1970).[7]

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[6] Nishida (2005) also focuses on the effect of playing on social reproduction among marginalized children, mostly *Buraku* youth. He maintains that the disadvantaged children would absorb themselves in having fun in their teens rather than study in school for social mobility, whereby they follow the same path that their uneducated parents went through. Because of the limitation of life chances resulting from their lower class positions, those children neither think that they have something to lose nor know what they have to do in order to lead a stable life. Then Nishida says that they just live in a world which has nothing to do with educational competition itself.

[7] The notion of "the culture of poverty" has been highly criticized among anthropologists because it blames the poor, not the unequal social structure, for their dire socioeconomic conditions (Goode and Eames 1996; Leacock 1971). In the past twenty years, however, the relationship between culture and poverty has been reexamined by social scientists who often adopted ethnographic approaches (Lamont and Small 2008). For an updated review on the relationship, refer to "Reconsidering Culture and Poverty," a special issue of *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. The editors of the special issue mention that a cultural approach to poverty per se does not cause the problem of blaming the victims for their problems (Small, Harding, and Lamont 2010). Instead, they say "whether, when, and how cultural tools and cultural constraints matter is ultimately an empirical, not a political, question" because "human action is both constrained and enabled

> Curiously, there is a small income gap between high school graduates and college graduates in Japan. Comparing their income when both become 25 years old, you find that they earn almost the same amount of money. Even if you are *freeta*, you may have as much disposable income as high school and college graduates [in full-time jobs] do because you do not have to pay multiple insurance fees. A greater income gap might motivate the youth to try hard. Of course, *freeta* feel unstable. In addition, as they get older, the income gap between part-time and full-time workers will widen. However, those in their twenties do not think about the future in their forties and fifties. For instance, the Hosogai brothers hang around wearing work clothes and priding themselves on earning some money. For them, that is the goal of their life. That means to them a coming of age. They long for making money and drinking. That is exactly the local culture, home culture, and class culture [in the *Buraku* community]. Thus the school must provide students with diverse aspects of society. Otherwise, reproduction may continue as if a status system still exists.

However, the formation of the *yancha gurupu* cannot be attributed only to the poor socio-cultural condition of the community. Social identities among *Buraku* boys are not simply a reflection of "oppositional culture" in *Buraku* communities as John Ogbu (1978) claimed, but a product of interactions between the boys and school personnel as Hiroshi Ikeda (2001) rightly pointed out.[8] Teachers in Shōbun Middle School also thought that the way the elementary school from which the boys in the *yancha gurupu* graduated worked contributed to the formation. To understand this relationship between the group formation and elementary school education, we need to first know the nature of the group

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by the meaning people give to their actions" (13, 23; also Holloway, Fuller, Rambaud and Eggers-Piérola 1997:11). Thus, they insist that we should examine "how meaning-making factors into the production and reproduction of poverty" (20).

[8] In addition, Ikeda (2001) pointed to the diversification among *Buraku* boys due to the increasing social divisions within *Buraku* communities. He identified four types of *Buraku* boys: delinquent, corner, college and liberatory boys. It is important to remember that Buraku boys do not necessarily belong to *yancha gurupu*. Meanwhile, my analysis of *Buraku* youth as well as Ikeda's has the same problem as youth culture studies like Paul Willis (1981)'s *Learning to Labor* have often ignored girls (Bucholtz 2002). In contrast, Sarane Boocock (2011) documents ways in which *Buraku* girls are treated by teachers in elementary schools, thereby showing why these girls end up performing as poorly in the schools as *Buraku* boys do. According to her analysis of elementary schools in Osaka, both *Buraku* boys and girls found it difficult to transfer from preschool to elementary school because they were not used to rigid routines in the latter. "The *[Buraku]* boys tended to respond to their new environment with disruptive behavior," while "the *[Buraku]* girls became more passive" (66). However, teachers did not notice either "the accomplishments of individual girls" or "their disengagement from classroom life." Then Boocock concludes that ignoring girls' needs have damaging effects on their school performance. I am deeply thankful to Professor Nelson Graburn for reminding me of this gender difference among minority children.

and then to explore how it may be created through schooling during their elementary school years. To this end, it bears taking a closer look at the incident in which the boys attacked teachers who tried to stop them from fighting each other.

In January 18th 2008, the boys in the group were playing baseball in the courtyard during the lunch break. All of a sudden, Hosogai kun and Shibahara kun began to beat Kobayashi kun for some unknown reason. Teachers who watched them play the game immediately intervened in the crisis. Then other boys in the group who were seeing Kobayashi kun beaten prevented the teachers from coming to stop the fight. Meanwhile, Hosogai kun and Shibahara kun became angered and fought back at the teachers. In the process, one female teacher fell down and hurt her elbow. Another male teacher had his shirt torn and his glasses broken. Nevertheless, while grinning, the two boys continued to hit the male teacher with a plastic baseball bat. It appeared that they were enjoying the disturbance. Only after Mr. Ozawa, the sternest teacher in the middle school, came did they stop attacking the teachers.

After the incident, Shibahara kun was suspended for 8 days, and Hosogai kun for an unlimited number of days. According to their homeroom teachers, however, the two boys wanted to return to school as soon as possible. They basically liked to come to school where they could play with friends. They only disliked sitting in the classroom and studying academic subjects, not the school itself. For them, the school was a place for fun. To maximize the fun, they knew exactly with which teachers and in what circumstances they could play or not. Thus, the boys' misbehavior was, in some sense, not a sign of counter school culture as Willis (1981) observed in a British school but a product of their complete penetration in the school system.

Based upon her fieldwork experience at technical high schools, Okano provides a similar interpretation of student counter culture in Japan. She said that students enjoyed testing school authority to see how far they could bend the rules, but always to the extent that they did not face confrontation with teachers. She saw "young peoples' defiance against adults" as "playful activities that students create to entertain themselves and which, from their perspective, give meaning to their time at school" (2009:104). The boys of *yancha gurupu* might think that even such violence to teachers were within "the rules" because they knew that teachers could neither inflict corporal punishment on them, which is banned in school, nor expel them from middle school which is a part of compulsory education. In a sense that they knew with whom and in what circumstances they could play in school, the boys "played the game" as well as Okano's high school students did.

Furthermore, this incident suggested that the group was organized hierarchically on the basis of physical strength. According to Mr. Ozawa, the reason some boys in the group stopped teachers from intervening in their brawl was that otherwise they could be punished or kicked out of the group by leaders of the group, clearly Hosogai kun and Shibahara kun. When the two boys were not in school, I saw the other boys in the group attend classes and conform to the school rules. For instance, these obedient members even asked me to help them to solve math questions in the general track class. Meanwhile, in terms of the two leaders, the disturbance was a good chance to show off their physical strength to the other group members and other students by doing violence to some easy

teachers.[9] Thus, their misbehavior was a reasonable action through which they could keep or promote their status in the group and among other students.

Teachers in Shōbun Middle School ascribed the formation of such a hierarchical relationship among the boys to an educational practice of Furumachi Elementary School from which they graduated. Teachers in the elementary school tried to let the boys learn the basics, only to fail. One elementary school teacher said that the Hosogai twin brothers and Shibahara kun, the three boys who did not take the high school entrance exams, had neither understood nor concentrated on lessons since they were in 2nd grade. Unless a teacher sat next to and tutored them, they did not study at all. Instead, they always played soccer after school.

Nevertheless, the elementary school teachers managed to have them attend school by respecting only what they could do well: sports.[10] This strategy worked well to not only the boys but also to the elementary school teachers. For instance, the boys' physical strength helped to prepare school activities such as sports day. As such, the teachers got along with those boys and could make them come to school even though the students did poorly in school. However, this educational practice through which the teachers meant to help the marginalized children stay in the school system backfired: they ended up allowing the boys to control other students with their physical strength and to form a group of boys in which the strength dominated.

This problem was again revealed when in late March 2009, middle school teachers had a meeting with elementary school teachers in order to learn about incoming middle school students. After the meeting was over, Mr. Takamura, who might have to teach the incoming students for the next academic year, was frustrated with the policy of Furumachi Elementary School.

> The Elementary School is terrible. A six-grade homeroom teacher said, "If you admonish this student, he will react violently. Thus, you should praise him whatever he does. Then he will make an effort." Students from the elementary school have never been admonished by their elementary school teachers. That is

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[9] In her unpublished paper, Morimitsu (2007), who had conducted fieldwork in Shōbun Middle School one year before I did, also pointed out that the Hosogai brothers thought highly of physical strength. According to her, the brothers were obedient to teachers who were stronger than them. For instance, they neither were late nor chatted with classmates in classes of which their sports club (soccer and judo) teachers were in charge. The soccer teacher said to the researcher, "He (the younger Hosogai kun) does violence to others in order to measure their strength. Like animals, he lives in the wild."

[10] In *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity,* Ann Arnett Ferguson (2000) ethnographically analyzes disciplinary practices in an elementary school in the United States which make African American male students "bad boys." My analysis of the boys of *yancha gurupu* is similar to her analysis given that both of us point out the effect of elementary school education on masculinities among minority students. However, whereas she suggests that teachers in her school socialized African American boys to be macho by punishing them, I find that those in Furumachi Elementary School unintentionally led the boys in the group to be masculine by encouraging them to do what they can do well in school.

> why current 9th grade students [from the Elementary School] do not accept our admonishment. The elementary school teachers just flatter their students. However, will that policy really make students better? It just makes the teachers be on good terms with the students. The teachers do not scold some students for bullying their classmates. The elementary school teachers who used to promote human rights education do not pay attention to children who really need their attention. Instead, the teachers marked with an "S" some students who were helpful in school events. This means that they are good at sports. And yet, don't the teachers have to pay greater attention to children who are poor at sports? On the contrary, they only attend to the former. This policy creates *yancha gurupu*. The teachers get along with the boys in *yancha gurupu*, and make them conceited.

Thus, a formation of the *yancha gurupu* is not just the product of a culture of poverty in the community, i.e. the so-called *Buraku* culture. Rather it may be a ramification of the educational practice through which elementary school teachers intended to incorporate the boys into the school system. In other words, *Buraku* boys more often than not form youth counter culture groups not only because their uneducated parents or guardians do not discipline them properly at home, but also because their elementary school teachers help them prioritize physical strength over academic achievement in school. Then the educational practice, which is intended for the disadvantaged boys, may help to create the group. Finally, given that six boys of the group did not go on to or dropped out of high schools, it seems that this practice ironically ends up alienating them from rather than integrating them into the education system.

3. The *Buraku* Culture

Despite the complicity of school system with the formation of *Buraku* youth culture, teachers in the middle school district, even those who were sympathetic with the youth, often ended up ascribing their misbehaviors and low academic performance at school to cultural features of the minority families. Such cultural features went from untidy living conditions, single parenthood due to divorce, loose discipline, little engagement in education even to the antipathy toward the school system as an arm of the state. When I asked Ms. Ohira, who had taught at Shōbun Middle School by the late 1990s before again returning to the school in the late 2000s, about economic changes of the *Buraku* community in the middle school district, she answered, "What is at stake is what kinds of jobs and family cultures people in the community have rather than how much money they earn. I feel both jobs and family cultures in the community were more distinctive [in the 1990s] than today. What I mean by family cultures is… For example, a parent returned to the community after getting divorced or siblings dropped out of high school. Many families had both a divorced parent and drop-out siblings at the same time. Additionally, children from the community were less likely to go to high school."

However, Ian Neary rightly questioned whether some of these features can be described as distinctively those of the *Burakumin*. "There may be low expectations of educational performance in *Buraku* families but they are shared by all families where there have been generations earning low incomes, not all of whom will be *Buraku*" (2003:287). During her study of *Buraku* children, June Gordon also found that all the features such as "the lack of reading material in the home, the penchant for all-day television viewing, and

the use of direct language" ascribed to low-income households in the United States and Britain, are "laid upon the *Burakumin*, not on low-income Japanese" (2008:144).[11] Then she pointed that the regular Japanese tend to allocate behaviors that they do not approve of to a separate culture (41).

Drawing on Neary and Gordon, I think that the process by which something intolerable in mainstream Japanese culture is attributed to another culture effectively prevents the regular Japanese from understanding class aspects of both mainstream culture, and that of minority groups' culture. In other words, mainstream Japanese may maintain the classlessness of their culture by regarding cultural norms and practices which *Buraku* families may share with non-*Buraku* Japanese families who have been poor over generations as the cultural essence of the minority families. In order to better understand this process, I will leave my own field data for a while and consult the historical literature on the *Burakumin* in the modern era.

To identify the culture of the *Burakumin* with their minority status, not with their position in the class structure, comes from the fact that they are assumed as descendants of outcastes in the Tokugawa society (1600-1868). The assumption has led to the idea that the *Buraku* issues including discriminations against the *Burakumin* are essentially feudal remnants of the status system in the Tokugawa era and of the cultural idea of impurity even in earlier periods. However, to establish their ancestry before the Meiji period (1868-1912) is not only difficult (Lie 2001:85), but also is greatly different according to which *Buraku* communities you look at. Quoting the 1993 Japanese government survey on the *Burakumin*, which is the last nationwide survey of the minority, Neary (2003:284) says, "We know that in the early 1990s on average only 41.4 percent of those living in areas defined by the local government as *Buraku* were linear descendants of prewar *Burakumin*, let alone pre-twentieth-century *kawata* (leatherworkers), with the range going from 2.7 percent to 97.7 percent." Furthermore, the suspicious genealogy is playing a less important role for *Buraku* and non-*Buraku* Japanese to identify themselves and others as the *Burakumin* than local residence or birthplace (Kadooka 2005:62-63).[12]

Furthermore, outcastes in the Tokugawa society were heterogeneous groups. While *eta* (filthy mass) were butchers and tanners whose occupations were related to death and

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[11] We may add the likelihood of juvenile delinquency to this list of cultural features of the *Burakumin*. Even though only *Buraku* boys seem to misbehave in Shōbun Middle School, recent research shows that juvenile delinquents are more likely to come from single parent, blue-collar, and low-education families (Yoder 2003; Yonekawa 2003). Considering that the *Buraku* boys also came from disadvantaged families, it is hard to regard their misbehavior, like other features which June Gordon pointed out above, as an evidence of the *Buraku* culture.

[12] Meanwhile, there are researchers who emphasize the genealogy as the fundamental factor which defines the *Burakumin*'s identity. For instance, Aoki (2009:182) regards the *Burakumin* as "a genealogical minority in contemporary Japan." Siddle (2011:153) also writes "Put simply, what makes you a Burakumin today is who your parents were, not where you reside." I do not deny the fact that some people currently called as the *Burakumin* may have a genealogical relation with outcastes of the Tokugawa society. However, I think that various forms of modern discrimination, which I will soon address in detail, transformed former outcastes into the *Burakumin* in the modern era.

then regarded as symbolically impure in Buddhism and Shinto, *hinin* (non-human being) were beggars, dancers, peddlers and temple sweepers (Pharr 1990:76). Furthermore, "in most areas outcastes lived mainly by farming, the manufacture of footwear and leather goods, or commerce, with their status specific duties at most a part-time pursuit" (Howell 2005:58). Thus, it is illogical to reduce the *Buraku* issues to a product of the unchanging cultural idea of pollution, which is applied only to a part of outcastes' occupations in the early modern era. Rather, it is more illuminating to explore "the modernity of *Burakumin* identity" or the ways in which people with or without outcaste ancestry were constructed as the *Burakumin* through modern forms of discrimination (Lie 2001:85).

In this context, the Emancipation Edict in 1871 matters, which was issued only four year after the Meiji Restoration in order to abolish the outcaste statuses and to give former outcastes the same position of commoners as peasants (Howell 2005:79; Ishitaki 2003:97; Neary 2009b:65). During the Tokugawa period, particularly since the 1720s, outcaste people had been subject to legally endorsed discriminations (Neary 2009b:63). For example, when they encountered a majority Japanese like samurai and peasants, they were expected to move away or to prostrate themselves until the others had passed (Pharr 1990:76). They were also forbidden to wear silk or to enter towns at night and were excluded from majority temples, shrines, and festivals (77). In other words, peasants and other *yōmin* (good people) enjoyed superiority against *senmin* (outcastes) in the status system.

However, the Edict suddenly withdrew the institutional distinctions between commoners and outcastes which had sanctioned legal discriminations against the latter. Analyzing changes of the nature of peasants' discriminations including fatal violence against former outcastes after the Edict, Howell pointed out the modern nature of *Buraku* problems:

> Discrimination had assumed a new character. Unable to shield their loathing behind the institutions of the status system, the *Burakumin*'s commoner neighbors were forced to enunciate it clearly: the *Burakumin* had to play a marginal role in the festivals not because their place in the political order so demanded, but rather because the commoners feared the *Burakumin* and the pollution that they assumed adhered to their participation. Despising the *Burakumin*, in other words, was no longer a mostly unspoken response to their political identity as outcastes; instead, contempt had to be constantly articulated and thereby reaffirmed, for it had no basis other than its constant reaffirmation. Therein lay the virulence of modern discrimination: instead of saying, in effect, "We have to hate you because you are outcastes," the commoners said, "We choose to hate you because you defile our community" (2005:88).

The new logic of modern discrimination began to work in various ways. In rural areas, for instance, it served to confiscate agricultural lands from former outcaste people who now became "new" commoners (Amos 2005). Before the Edict, rural *Buraku* communities had the lands as branches of commoner villages. The Edict declared that individual households in the *Buraku* communities should pay taxes on their lands. However, peasants in main commoner villages made use of the Edict to deprive the former outcastes of their land ownership. Now that they became new commoners, they should

return their lands which they had been entitled to own and cultivate by the feudal status system. Amos says, "In a strange twist of logic, the former outcaste became responsible for his future exile from the village by virtue of the fact that he had once been the forced owner of irrational spaces, ones that could not exist in a rational modernity" (27). As a result, the new commoners, who were supposed to be liberated from legal discriminations and to perform as the same duty of imperial subjects, i.e. taxpayers, as peasants, were only freed from their own lands by the modern ideology of freedom.

Then, a way of life of people in *Buraku* changed in the transition from pre-modern Tokugawa society to modern Meiji Japan (Ilbonburakhaebangyeonguso 2010:200). In the country where people were supposed to work in the paddy field, the *Burakumin* who had lost their lands or had not had any in the first place often depended on seasonal labor and other marginalized jobs such as peddling for their livelihood. This different way of livelihood made them distinguished from neighboring farming population, thereby contributing to reproducing a sense of discrimination against them (208). In short, their marginalized mode of labor in rural areas led them to be an object of social discriminations.

Likewise, the low status of work in which the *Burakumin* were often engaged in the urban economy led to the discrimination against them. In cities, they often worked in marginalized industry such as butchery, tannery, and shoe making and other odd jobs such as scavenging (Hujino 2009a:23-25). For instance, even though the leather-related industry as the munitions industry played a crucial role for Japan's colonial expansion, i.e. the very process of modernization, it was looked down upon not just because it was a work for which pre-modern outcastes had been accountable but because it caused environmental problems such as odor and water pollution in modern cities (Tomotsune 2003:112). In the early twentieth century, such a negative conception of the industry put into the category of *tokushū Buraku*, "special villages," some urban areas which had not necessarily been former outcaste communities and yet to which people happened to flock in order to work in the industry (Hujino 2009a:26-29; Yoshimura 2003:183-185).[13] In other words, people in the "new" urban *Buraku* were ignored not because they were confirmed as predecessors of outcaste families but because they lived and worked in unhygienic conditions (Ilbonburakhaebangyeonguso 2010:199).[14] In the popular imagination of *tokushū Buraku*, historic outcaste communities and urban slums overlapped, which generated problems such as "poverty, low matriculation rates, and questionable

[13] *Tokushū Buraku* can be also translated "different species villages" because the term was written alternatively by two different Chinese letters which were pronounced in the same way, 特殊 (special) and 特種 (different species). Here we can tell that in the early 20th century, there was a tendency to categorize the *Burakumin* as a different racial or ethnic group distinguished ordinary Japanese. I will soon return to the discourse of otherness of the *Burakumin*.

[14] The same point may be made for the case of *Buraku* communities in coal mining areas of Kyūshū, the most southern one of the four main islands consisting Japan archipelago. The new *Buraku* communities formed in the modern era as the coal industry recruited laborers from former outcaste villages in other regions (Aoki 2009:191). Thus, such mining communities in Kyūshū did not have any precedents in the pre-modern era, and were literally a product of the marginalized status of the industry despite its significance in the modern economy.

hygiene" to be "treated as the exclusive deficiencies of historic outcaste communities rather than as a shared characteristic of areas with low socio-economic status" (Amos 2007:158-159).

Furthermore, the modern idea of public hygiene contributed to consolidating a kind of racism against the *Burakumin* (Hujino 1998; Kurokawa 1999; Kobayashi 2001). While national and local governments set a series of rules of public hygiene and campaigned to change urban life to the modern hygienic standard, they often picked on the *Burakumin*'s communities as hotbeds of cholera and other epidemics. Based upon governmental reports on the poor hygienic conditions of former outcaste communities, mass media like news papers also spread the bias that the *Burakumin* were not only physically unclean but also morally inferior: they were depicted as shallow, lecherous, debauched, cruel, and violent. As reflected on another meaning of the term *tokushū Buraku*, "different species village," these discourses justified ordinary people's prejudice against the *Burakumin* as a different race even though there was no evidence to prove their foreignness. Even though such uncivilized living conditions of the *Burakumin* were actually a product of their economic poverty, they were reclassified as an object of discrimination for the reason that they were a different race below the modern norms of hygienic and moral life (Fujino 2009b:9-10).

All these processes of modern discrimination effectively assigned most of the *Burakumin* to underclass by the 1930s. At that point, *Burakumin* households earned income perhaps one-half of the national average (Lie 2001:87). In terms of employment, the urban *Burakumin* were largely engaged in secondary sectors such as butchering, raising pigs, making and repairing footwear, rag picking, peddling, rickshaw pulling, day labor or miscellaneous craftwork (Hane 2003:152). The rural *Burakumin*'s economic condition was not better than their urban counterparts'. According to a 1931 survey, only 16 percent of *Burakumin* farmers owned the farms they worked, whereas 31 percent were part-owner/part-tenants, and 53 percent, full tenants. The national figures for non-*Burakumin* were 31 percent, 42 percent, and 27 percent (153-154). Thus, it is obvious that the *Burakumin* as a group were left out of the modernizing process of Japan, and were forced to remain on the fringe of the modern society before the World War II.

In sum, the existence of the *Burakumin* in modern Japan does not reveal an intact survival of a pre-modern status group but proves a birth of a modern lower class: as Hatanaka says, "[I]t is unreasonable to say that as their ancestors were outcastes, they became the *Burakumin*. The *Burakumin* did not come first. Clearly speaking, discrimination came first, with the result that *Buraku* and the *Burakumin* came into being. Thus, if it had not been for *Buraku* discrimination, descendants of former outcastes might not have become the *Burakumin*" (2004:86). In this corollary, cultural norms and practices which they appear to share as a whole must be considered as a product of their lower class position in the modern society, not of their polluted ancestry. In short, the *Buraku* culture may be a class culture. Then, can we say this is still the case in post-war Japan in which at least visible discriminations against the *Burakumin* have gradually diminished?

Despite the enormous advancement of living conditions, which the Dowa Measure Special Law brought to *Buraku* communities, the *Burakumin*'s socio-economic status is still well behind Japan's national average. Quoting from the 1993 survey, which is the last one conducted in the national level, Neary (2009b:79-80) shows that the *Burakumin*'s relative

status has hardly changed since the affirmative action.[15] For instance, only 52 percent of *Buraku* households received livelihood security support in 1993, compared to 76 percent in 1975. However, this was almost twice as high as the non-*Buraku* households in the same areas (28.2 percent) and well above the national average of 7.1 percent. Also, only 10.6 percent of *Burakumin* were reported to be employed in enterprises of over 300 employees, well below the national average of 23.3 percent. Furthermore, even though the entry of *Burakumin* children into high schools was close to that the mainstream (91.8 percent versus 96 percent), their experience of higher education, over 20 percent, still lagged behind the figure of nearly 40 percent for the rest of the population. It is clear that even by today, the *Burakumin* as a whole have remained in the lower class than ordinary Japanese.

Given the lower educational attainment of the *Burakumin*, schooling must have led to the reproduction of the minority group as the lower class even during the postwar period. The post-war literature on the *Burakumin* has attributed their poor educational attainment to the fact that the minority group does not value climbing the social ladder through formal schooling (Nabeshima 1999; Shibahara 1993). The surveys on and interviews with the *Burakumin* conducted from the 1950s to the 1970s show that knowing their children might face a job ceiling in formal economic sectors even with proper academic credentials, *Buraku* parents recommended their children to learn skills rather than to study and advance to the next level of education (Asō and Miyajaki 1983:137-142; Nabeshima 1993:27-28). Another recent interview research on the part-time and unemployed youth who were mostly recruited from *Buraku* also confirms that their parents who themselves had been poorly educated did not urge them to get stable jobs by advancing to high schools and beyond (Tsumaki 2005:48; Nishida 2005:94).

Even when Nabeshima compares the *Burakumin* and their counterparts with the same level of education, i.e. supposedly in the same class position, he finds some differences in the attitude toward child rearing and educational attainment between the two. In a survey of *Buraku* and non-*Buraku* high school students and their parents, Nabeshima (2003b:80, 91) finds that *Buraku* parents tend to spend more money on buying their children consumer goods such as TV's and phones and to want their children to get a job instead of getting higher education than non-*Buraku* parents in the same level of

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[15] Considering that the *Burakumin* were less educated and more employed in small and medium size companies, we may expect that economic downturns since the 1990s are likely to hit the minority people harder than others. The 2000 survey which was conducted in forty eight Osaka *Buraku* seems to prove this expectation. For instance, the rate of male and female workers with full-time jobs decreased from 89.5 and 72.4 percent in 1990 to 78.8 and 51.4 percent in 2000 respectively (Okuda 2002:57). During the decade, the rate of male and female workers with monthly income also decreased from 72.5 and 58.5 percent to 64.8 and 51.5 percent (58). The unemployment rate of the *Burakumin* and the annual income of *Buraku* households simply reflect the above unstable employment. In 1995, the unemployment rate of *Buraku* men and women, 9.7 percent and 8.2 percent, is higher than that of their counterparts in Osaka, 6.6 percent and 5.6 percent (15). In 1998, 31.9 percent of *Buraku* households annually earned less than 2,000,000 yen (approximately $20,000) compared to the national average of 15 percent, whereas only 12.1 percent of *Buraku* households earned more than 8,000,000 yen compared to 29.5 percent of the national population (16).

education do. Also he shows that comparing *Buraku* and non-*Buraku* high school students whose fathers have an education level of high school and beyond, *Buraku* students who do not wish to be successful in society goes to college rather than *Buraku* students who wish to be, which is opposite to the case of non-*Buraku* students (93-94).

In another research through which Nabeshima examines the difference in educational achievement between *Buraku* and non-*Buraku* students, he finds that *Buraku* students perform worse in mathematics than non-*Buraku* students do across cultural class lines (2004:204).[16] Particularly, the achievement gap in the subject becomes wider in the low strata of cultural class than in the high and middle strata (204). He also observes that *Buraku* children in the low cultural class and of non-college-graduate fathers have more characteristics, which may hinder academic achievement, such as studying little at home, not trying to understand what they do not know, and hanging out for longer hours, than non-*Buraku* students with the same backgrounds do (208-209).

These survey results suggest that there may be cultural features of the *Burakumin* which cannot be explained by their class position. Particularly, they seem to have a cultural model of schooling which their counterparts in the same class position do not share: they seem skeptical and distrustful of the mainstream education system, thereby not considering it as a route of social mobility. Then, is the *Buraku* culture a status-specific culture, not a class culture, in post-war Japan?

However, we must not perpetuate the cultural model as if it is a cultural essence of the *Burakumin*. Otherwise we may make the same mistake the Japanese made in the early 20th century by attributing unsanitary living conditions in *Buraku* communities to moral inferiorities of the *Burakumin*. Instead, it bears remembering that the *Burakumin* were excluded by and from the modern education system prior to the postwar period (Andachi 1983; Yasukawa 1998). In the early Meiji modern education system, each community was financially responsible for establishing and running elementary schools. However, as many former outcaste communities could not support their schools due to dire economic conditions, their children were left with inferior school facilities and few teachers or without any schools even by the 1880s. Even after governmental supports for the compulsory education began, the communities were segregated as individual school districts, and the children still had to go to "status schools" with resources and faculties scarce.

Integrating "status schools" with other "ordinary" schools in the 1890s caused another problem. In the integrated schools, *Buraku* children were abused, insulted and harassed by teachers and students. For example, Hane (2003:157-158) quotes the recollection of a *Buraku* woman born in 1934 whose classmate refused to hold her hands in the first day of elementary school. According to the woman's words, even though there was nothing on her hands, the classmate thought that they were dirty because the classmate's mother had told her child not to play with smelly *Buraku* students. Continuous discriminations from schoolmates and teachers finally made her have eye trouble. Even though she recovered her sight, her education was over. She was unable to read the biggest letter on the optical chart, even with glasses, until she reached the age of fifteen.

During the postwar period, particularly since the active politicization of *Buraku* liberation movement and the implementation of the Special Measure Law, such a harsh

[16] See p. 65 in chapter III for the concept of cultural class.

discrimination in school has gradually dwindled. However, the expulsion from the education system over generations forced many old generations of *Burakumin* to remain illiterate and unschooled even during the post-war period. For example, given that Japan is "a nation free of illiterates," the survey result that more than 45 percent of the *Burakumin* had "great difficulty" (16 percent) or "a little difficulty" (29.7 percent) in reading and writing in 1984 shows "particularly among elderly Burakumin, still many people do not read or write at all or easily" (Murakoshi and Miwa 1986:82). Also, in the early 1980s, 32.7 percent of elderly persons (over 65) in Japan have completed secondary and higher education, while only 7.2 percent of their counterparts in *Buraku* have done it (87). Furthermore, 33.1 percent of elderly people in Osaka have never enrolled in schools in comparison to only 1.8 percent of their counterparts (86). The higher illiteracy rate and less formal education among the *Buraku* elderly must have made younger generations of *Burakumin* perform poorly in school and even disbelieve in the formal education system as a means of social success. Thus, with the result of staying in the bottom of class structure over generations, such a cumulative isolation from formal schooling may inculcate into the *Burakumin* a sort of habitus, i.e., a system of negative dispositions toward the Japanese education system.

After reading Nabeshima's 2004 article, which Mr. Takamura, one of the most intelligent teachers I have ever met during my fieldwork in Shōbun Middle School, happened to have already read, I asked him why *Buraku* students perform worse in school even compared with non-*Buraku* students in the same social position. Saying that he had been unsatisfied with Nabeshima's explanation about this problem, he answered:

> My impression is that a kind of lifestyle or habitus, which the *Burakumin* as the lowest rank have formed over several generations since the Meiji Restoration, is reflected upon *Buraku* children's lives in various ways.[17] For instance, they tend to give up early, to refrain from speaking up their own opinion, or to flow into groups. Particularly, I can see more clearly these tendencies among low-education and low-income families (of the *Burakumin*). Children in those families neither have a habit of studying nor can they afford to go to *juku*. Thus, they face many problems in school. Then they end up accepting as a model the lifestyle of adults in their families and neighborhood such as parents, grandparents, uncles/aunts, and others whom they have seen since they were little. The means of tackling a problem which the *Burakumin* have learned while living in [segregated] *Buraku* communities over several generations might be to give up [on trying], to put up with [difficulties], and to hang out with friends [instead of facing the problem]. I can see these behavior patterns from students like Mihara, Hatoyama, Nishikawa or Nomura [those who all ended up with evening high schools].

What is at stake is the extent of class reproduction, i.e., how long the *Burakumin* as a whole have stayed in the bottom ladder of Japanese modern class structure so as to acquire

[17] The term habitus is Mr. Takamura's own word. During my fieldwork, he also recommended me some books about school to work transition in Japan. As he was conversant with the literature on Japanese education, I was not surprised to hear that he mentioned the jargon.

a class habitus. In the contrast, the intergenerational stability of the working class in Japan is relatively low compared with its counterpart in other advanced countries such as the United States and Germany (Ishida 2010:42-43). In other words, Japanese who come from working class families are less likely to become manual laborers than their counterparts in the two Western countries. Then Japanese working classes might not yet have as a particular form of class norms and practices as their counterparts in *Buraku* communities have acquired over time. I think differences in the extent of class reproduction is why we are observing differences in educational achievement to attitudes toward education between the *Burakumin* and non-*Burakumin* in the same class, particularly between the lower class members of each.

Meanwhile, as Hideo Aoki points out, whether or not how to respond to government aids and other assistance provided to *Buraku* communities, social stratification within the communities have sharpened in recent years: "Those equipped with economic resources have taken advantage of these opportunities and acquired upward mobility, while the economic condition of others at the subsistence levels have remained unchanged, with the result that intra-community social disparities have widened. Such increased social stratification within *Buraku* communities cause *Burakumin* to lose their sense of homogeneity and cohesiveness as a group" (2009:195). Thus, it is likely that the opinion of schooling also divides along class lines within the *Burakumin*.

My findings provide a springboard for discussing this issue. On the one hand, as I showed in this chapter, all *Buraku* children such as Gambara san and Hosogai brothers who gave up on going to or dropped out of high schools were from lower class families. As I described in chapter IV, *Buraku* boys and girls, who managed to enter private low-status high schools or public evening high schools, also had parents who did not graduate from high school, and who were too busy surviving to take care of their child's education. On the other hand, there were some *Buraku* students who entered top ranking high schools. For instance, Ishida san was one of the top three students in the 2009 class in Shōbun Middle School. Her mother who graduated from a top national university and became a high-level public servant carefully planned Ishida san's educational career. Then she made it to a prestigious private high school whose students plan to enter Tokyo or Kyoto University. Thus, we may say that the middle class *Burakumin* with higher education in this *Buraku* community are more well-informed about what and how they should do for their children's schooling than the lower class counterparts with little education are, and that the former do not share the cultural model for education which ordinary Japanese and Japanese scholars tend to attribute to the particular cultural nature of the *Burakumin*.

In sum, the *Buraku* culture is a class culture which the lower strata of the *Burakumin* have acquired through their experiences in the modern classificatory machine, i.e., the school. Just as the *Buraku* youth culture I discussed in the previous section is a product of educational practices in elementary school, so the negative dispositions toward the formal education system are a function of this very system. Nevertheless, the reason the *Buraku* culture looks like an inherent nature of the *Burakumin* may result from the cumulative effects of staying in the lower class over several generations on their body: due to the class reproduction from generation to generation, they have internalized some class dispositions which could not be acquired in one or two generations. However, with the gradual class divisions within the *Burakumin*, it becomes obvious that such dispositions are shared only by the lower class *Burakumin*. We mistakenly identify the *Buraku* culture with the culture

of the *Burakumin* because many of them still stay in the low stratum of class structure. However, with Japan's class structure becoming rigid, among Japanese families who have stayed in the low rank of class structure over generations, we might find cultural norms and practices which we have assigned only to the minority. Then we could correctly understand the *Buraku* culture as a condensed form of Japanese lower class culture.

VI. Conclusion

In his critical assessment on globalization, James Ferguson remarks, "Detailed anthropological knowledge seems to have very little impact on broader discussion about *Africa*" (2006:3, emphasis in original). Despite or because of anthropologists' devotion to particularity, they often fail to or are reluctant to present a big picture of the society about which they are supposed to have as extensive knowledge as other scholars such as sociologists and political scientists.

In fact, such failure or reluctance is found not only in anthropological studies of Africa but also in those of Japan. In his review article of class and social stratification in Japan, Ian Neary (2009a:398) writes, "[M]uch of the writing about class and social status in postwar Japan has been descriptive, often written by anthropologists using some form of participant observation. … However important these [ethnographies] are in extending our knowledge of the texture of the lives of Japanese people and in challenging stereotypes of Japanese behavior, it seems to me that in the end they do not have much to say about the central theme of class and social stratification in late twentieth-century Japan."

Drawing on Ferguson and Neary's problematization of anthropological knowledge, I think that mere ethnographic descriptions would be not only insufficient for a thorough understanding of a society in which an anthropologist researches, but also ethically irresponsible considering comprehensive influences of globalization or stratification on everyday life of people with whom he or she works. Also, a simple presentation of ethnographic facts would not be good enough to spark interdisciplinary discussions about concepts on which both anthropologists and other social scientists rely to make better sense of social and cultural phenomena. Instead, I will invest this concluding chapter in reconsidering socio-cultural, theoretical, and practical implications of my ethnographic descriptions of a public middle school in Japan rather than in summarizing what I have already described above chapters. In so doing, I am going to follow the words of Clifford Geertz. "Anthropologists don't study villages (tribes, towns, neighborhoods, …); they study in villages" (2002:22). He may agree that I replace "villages" by "schools."

Drawing on my examination of educational mechanisms in Japanese secondary education, I will first deal with why Japanese seldom conceive their social status in a language of class despite their sharply stratified life experiences according to education levels and working conditions. In order to partly address the above dilemma about Japanese society, I will then try to rework the concept of class by focusing on affective formations of a class identity as a sense of one's place. In addition to this conceptual engagement, I will discuss how we might work on educational aspirations lest class divisions in the aspirations should lead to those in life chances writ large, thereby figuring out how to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children and for the hard working teachers who advise them. Finally, I will close this chapter suggesting some research problems for further research.

1. School, Reproduction, and Classlessness

In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Jacques Rancière (1991) introduces a pedagogical experiment in which in the early 1800s, Joseph Jacotot, a French lecturer with little command of the Flemish language, successfully taught French to his Netherlander students who had little knowledge of French: Jacotot just gave room for his students to use their own intelligence through which they learned the unknown language. Counting on other

intellectual experiments Jacotot did, Rancière says that the unequal relationship between teachers and students is based upon the ideology of their intellectual inequality. "Explication is not necessary to remedy an incapacity to understand. On the contrary, that very incapacity provides the structuring fiction of the explicative conception of the world. It is the explicator who needs the incapable and not the other way round" (6).

On the basis of the principle that everyone has an equal capacity to know, Rancière critically observes the birth of public education in the transition from absolutist to modern society. Even though the Progressives believed in the equality of right and duty in society, they did not accept the equality of intelligence between all human beings. Instead, they invented a system through which they instruct the right path to the ignorant People and in which the intellectual gap between the Explicators and the Ignorant cannot be bridged. The system is public education. Quoting from a journal published in 1833, Rancière writes, "[W]hat is necessary to every republican government is a vast system of graduated teaching, national and professional, that sheds light onto the dark souls of the masses, that replaces all arbitrary demarcations, that assigns each class to its rank, each man to his place" (125). In this corollary, modern education system is all about distinctions at the very outset. Thus, it would be redundant to say that school is a means for social reproduction.

Nevertheless, school may serve the reproducing role in particular ways in each society. My research on Japanese secondary education suggests a way through which we may make sense of the nature of post-war Japanese society, i.e., how it could be that such a hierarchy-stricken society was not considered as a class-divided one until as I mentioned in chapter I, discourses of divided society have become popular for the last 10 years or so. It is worthwhile to read how Andrew Barshay defines postwar Japan in contrast with prewar Japan Empire.

> An ethos or more cynically, a guise of equality was precisely the element of "postwar" social practice that legitimated the demands of corporate life, as that life was reworked into the modal form of Japanese democracy and into the modal form of Japanese capitalism. That is, when compared to the prewar years, it is the narrowing of social distinctions and the abolition of the most invidious of them that is striking. It is true that Japan's industrial society was highly segmented and ridden with status distinctions ostensibly based on education and merit, with the important dividing line being that between employees of "the modal firm" and those who worked in less favored settings. But the overall narrowing of status differences relative to prewar society must be kept clearly in view, as Riesman here does not. It is a major achievement of postwar society (1997:331-332).

Even though Barshay mainly discusses a relative equalization during the postwar years, for instance, with the abolition of landowner-tenant relationship, the decrease in economic disparities between white-collar and blue-collar workers, and the expansion of education opportunity into the mass, he also points out the apparent importance of "education and merit" for "status distinctions" in postwar Japanese society. Here we can find a clue to the paradox that the society is "highly segmented" and yet is seldom experienced by its members as class-divided.

In chapter III, I showed that constant classification via objectified evaluation and tracking in middle school inculcated in children predispositions to rank themselves and others by school performance, which is regarded as a function of merit and through which they imagine what they are to become in the future. Just as they come to attribute their school success or failure to their own ability or inability, they come to misrecognize the proper positions as a product of their own choice. Particularly, disadvantaged children expect themselves to arrive at the bottom layer of the social pyramid with little resentment against the social order even if it is likely that arriving at the proper station is a ramification of their natal class. Instead, negative emotions of self-worth such as shame, self-blame, or self-depreciation occur to them. In this supposedly meritocratic Japanese society, therefore, "status distinctions" may not be considered as "class distinctions."

We can also see that *gambarizumu*, or the ideology of "Try hard, and you can do it!" is working to legitimate the "status distinctions" in post-war Japanese society in that school performance is believed by the Japanese to be a function of individual efforts. However, as I showed in chapter IV, teachers keep students' educational aspirations steady according to their academic achievement and family background instead of raising or lowering them. In this vein, "efforts" in Japanese middle school only imply the extent of endeavors that children must exercise to achieve an accessible goal which is fit with their place, either academic or socioeconomic. As a result, without desiring a place which they may not be able to access, "in most case, those who have experienced Japanese schooling can maintain a certain level of aspirations which are fit with their own social positions" (Shimizu 2002:128).

In sum, it is obvious that middle school in Japan serves to create and maintain a sense of classlessness in post-war Japan. Hierarchical socialization makes class divisions less visible by disposing marginalized children to sort themselves out of educational competition without resentment. Egalitarian career guidance preserves class differentiations by preventing children from aspiring to achieve beyond their capacity. As middle school education in post-war Japanese society becomes a minimum level of schooling required for everyone, therefore, there is little wonder that class has not been experienced as a primary axis of self-identity in the society which is "highly segmented and ridden with" divisions in education and employment (Barshay 1997:332).

Meanwhile, we are currently witnessing changes in class awareness in the society. The fact that *Kakusa shakai ron* or "a model of divided society" has been widely accepted by ordinary Japanese since the late 1990s is an example of those changes (Chiavacci 2008). A subtle change in a Japanese model of learning, which I observed in chapter II, is another example. As middle school teachers gradually come to see learning as a function of habit rather than that of effort, they are actually insinuating that class shapes academic achievement, for the family is the primary and pivotal institution through which habit is formed.

All these changes may be the logical consequences of an all middle-class society which Japan seemed to reach by the 1980s. Just as people may be more sensitive to relative differentiations within their own generation in socioeconomic attainments when it is almost implausible for them to become better off than their parent generations as I mentioned in chapter I, so people come to see that cultural capital matters to educational achievement and attainment more than simply economic capital when quantitative expansion in educational opportunities reaches its maximum.

From now on, therefore, ordinary Japanese might come to make sense of their life chances and experiences in terms of their class position and to identify themselves in a language of class. However, it is too early to affirm implications of, for instance, a change in the cultural model of learning for class inequality and awareness in the society. I will leave the problem of transformations of class identity in contemporary Japanese society for a future project, and instead move on to another question of class identity: how can we explain a class identity or the seeming lack of it in a conceptual perspective? This theoretical exploration of the nature of class identity will help to answer the question of classlessness among Japanese, too.

2. Class Identity and the Anthropology of Emotion

"The death of class" is said on the basis of the dissolution of class consciousness, particularly the oppositional collectivity of the working class in contrast with the increase in the political significance of other social divisions such as gender and race (Pakulski 2005). Likewise, the lack of full-blown class consciousness among people is one of the reasons Japan and the United States have been often considered as a classless society. However, I doubt the logic of identifying the scarcity of class consciousness with "the death of class" because in everyday life class distinctions are implicitly felt rather than consciously recognized. While John Hartigan (2010:147) analyzes "the uncertainties of race" in the United States, he quotes from John Jackson's words, "race is not just about an intellectual idea that we can persuade people to disavow but about emotion, affect, and intuition." As with race, drawing on my findings as well as on the literature on the relation between class and emotion, I mention that class is not just about a consciousness of social distinctions but is about emotional experiences of the distinctions.

While race and gender identities have been examined in terms of their affective formations (Abu-Lughod 1986; Bourgois 1995), there is not much scholarship on the relation between class identity and emotion (Lutz and White 1986:421; Reay 2005:913). Nevertheless, there is some literature which focuses on the affective aspect of class identity. In their analysis of blue-collar workers' class identity in the United States, Sennett and Cobb (1972) capture "hidden injuries of class," which refers to "the feeling of vulnerability in contrasting oneself to others at a higher social level, the buried sense of inadequacy." Such hidden injuries of class have been often anecdotally and sometimes ethnographically examined, for instance, by reading class differences in consumption code (Ortner 2003), by analyzing particular consumption practices aimed at social respectability (Liechty 2003), and by describing emotions such as fear, shame or uneasiness followed by upward and downward social mobility (Hooks 2000: chapter 2 and 3; Lewin 2005; Newman 1999).

Meanwhile, there is no doubt that the affective aspect of class identity is best addressed empirically and theoretically by Pierre Bourdieu in his analysis of hierarchically differentiated tastes for arts, music, and consumption goods (Reed-Danahay 2005; Sayer 2005). According to Bourdieu, class differences are experienced via differences in tastes or, more precisely, disgust of the tastes of others. He writes, "[A]version to different life-styles is perhaps one of the strongest barriers between the classes" (Bourdieu 1984:56). Thus, what "forge the unconscious unity of a class" is not "declared opinions" but "an immediate adherence, at the deepest level of the habitus, to the tastes and distastes, sympathies and aversions, fantasies and phobia" (77). As such, Bourdieu suggests that class identity is

constituted not by having an articulated consciousness but by sharing unstated emotions with those in the same social location vis-à-vis others.

Furthermore, Bourdieu examines the ways in which the relation between the dominant and dominated class is legitimated through the latter's self-depreciation or their emotional complicity with the former (See also Freire 2000). He says, "The practical recognition through which the dominated, often unwittingly, contribute to their own domination by tacitly accepting, in advance, the limits imposed on them, often takes the form of *bodily emotion* (shame, timidity, anxiety, guilt), often associated with the impression of *regressing* toward archaic relationships, those of childhood and the family" (Bourdieu 2000:169, emphasis in original). Thus, Bourdieu shows that emotions inculcated into the body of the dominated not only reflect the unequal social relations between the two but also reproduce the social relations.

Along with the above-mentioned scholarship, in chapter III, I examined the affective formations of class identity in school and their effects on social stratification in Japan. Low-achieving students acquire their class identity through a series of objective evaluations and ability-based classifications in Japanese middle school, which produce the negative judgments of their self-worth. The negative emotions such as shame, self-blame, or self-resignation make unimaginable the anger against the social order which may be responsible for their poor performance in the school. In short, I showed the mechanisms through which a class identity is emotionally formulated, whereby class inequality is disguised. In this vein, it may be said that what matters to research on class identity is to "uncover the psycho-social dynamics of class" rather than "to identify the predominating psychic responses that characterize the various positions in the social class" (Reay 2005:914).

Mutual advantages of combining the scholarship on class identity and the anthropology of emotions seem clear. Above all, an analysis of the affective dynamics of class identity may add political implications to the emotional construction of self. It was noted more than twenty five years ago that "emotions are a primary idiom for defining and negotiating social relations of the self in a moral order" (Lutz and Whites 1986:417). However, as class, unlike race or gender, has been ignored in the anthropology of emotion, it failed to properly understand the political significance of emotional constructions of the self. As Bourdieu pointed out, class dominations may be achieved through emotionally embodied habitus of the dominated. Thus, an exploration of the ways in which class identity is emotionally created in a society would help to better understand the politics of self-identity formations.

An analytic focus on the affective dynamics of class identity may also allow us to rework the concept of class as an analytic tool for everyday practices instead of identifying the lack of class consciousness with the insignificance of the concept. At the same time, it may find a way to understand the paradox that in a society such as Japan and the United States, it is difficult to find an explicit class consciousness despite class differences in education, employment and other life chances. If class identity is redefined from an explicit class consciousness to an emotionally felt sense of one's place, it is no wonder that people can neither verbalize their class membership nor have an antagonistic consciousness against other classes because it is a kind of sub-consciousness embedded in their body. As Bourdieu (1984:466) wrote, "[A] sense of one's place" may "guide the occupants of a given place in social space towards the social positions adjusted to their properties, and towards

the practices or goods which befit the occupants of that position," even if it is implicit, their sense of where they stand in society may shape their everyday practices and their orientations for the future. By seeing a class identity as an emotionally constituted sense of one's place in relation to others, therefore, we can say that class is still a principle of everyday practices of social agents even if it might not be a driving force for revolutionary praxis.

Meanwhile, I am aware of the criticism that defining class identity as "a sense of relational social distance within a hierarchy" might extend the concept too far and that "individualized and implicit processes of positional inequality" could be "better described as social stratification or hierarchy" (Bottero 2004:990, 1000). However, given that the notion of class has evolved as a complex assemblage of group, formation, and rank in modern society (Williams 1983:69), I find that restricting class to a politicized collectivity undermines the historical complexity of the concept.

Nevertheless, if we understand the nature of class which is distinguished from other social divisions, we must inevitably compare the concept with that of race or caste. Along with this general comparison between class, race, and caste, I find it particularly interesting to explore how we define the social nature of the *Burakumin* in modern Japan, which I attempted to do in chapter V. Do problems the minority people have faced throughout Japan's modernization result from their origins as caste-like beings, from discriminations against them as race-like groups, or from their low social position as class-like formations? However, both a comparative research on class, race, and caste and an extensive examination of the *Burakumin*'s experiences in modern Japan are beyond the range of this dissertation. For the time being, I will leave these projects for my future research through which I will try to understand the distinctiveness of class as a mechanism of social stratification. Instead, in the last section of this conclusion, I will consider how we could equally develop educational aspirations across classes so that their differentiations may not bring about those of life chances.

3. To Raise Educational Aspirations Equally across Classes

As I mentioned in chapter I, discourses of the class division of aspirations in Japan have been popularized in recent ten years. Let alone disadvantaged young adults' low-status orientations (Miura 2005), class differentiations in educational aspirations itself seem surprising (Kariya 2001). By the 1980s, the country had become a full-blown "mass education society" in which regardless of class positions, everyone was supposed to compete for advancing from one level of education to another (Kariya 1995; Takeuchi 1995). The intensive nature of the competition for education at that time is reflected on a catch-phrase of "exam hell."

A series of education reforms from the 1990s to the mid 2000s, for instance, the reduction of curriculum and the cancellation of Saturday classes in public schools, intended to solve the inflation of educational fever (Nabeshima 2003a:11). However, since the 1990s when the reforms aiming to cool off the fever just began, the decrease in the number of school-age children and concomitantly in the ratio of competition for the advancement from one level of education to another made lower-class children more than their counterparts with a middle-class background lose their interest in learning and their aspiration for the next level of schooling (13-14). That is why Japanese scholars like Kariya and Nabeshima are worried that continuing class differentiations in educational

aspirations might lead to further those in academic achievement and attainment, and then in chances of full-time employment and in orientations toward life.

Raising educational aspirations cannot be a panacea for class inequality. To increase them too much could result in another problem like that of "exam hell" in the 1980s. However, as we can learn from the case of the *Burakumin*, we cannot bridge the gap in academic achievement and attainment by simply pouring more money into marginalized groups. Despite affirmative action for the *Burakumin* over thirty years, for instance, appointing additional teachers to *Buraku* schools and providing *Buraku* children with scholarships, they are still behind their national counterparts in the average of high school and university entrance rates (Nabeshima 2010; Neary 2009b). As I suggested in chapter V, we need to work on their cultural levels, thereby letting them see schooling as one of the plausible tools for social mobility. To extend this statement to lower-class children in general who are most likely to underestimate the instrumental value of education, we must be able to raise their educational aspirations to the extent that they are also as willing to use the system of school for social mobility as their middle-class counterparts do.

In fact, the discussion on "effective schools" started to identify how to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children. As one of such schools in Japan, Shōbun Middle School developed systematic programs through which teachers intended to not only improve disadvantaged students' school performance but also to foster their motivation for studying. As I documented in chapter III, however, the programs failed to build the educational aspiration of marginalized students: instead, they worked to inform these students of their proper station. Since low-status commercial high school students were helped out through a career-choice support program which encouraged them to pursue higher education (Sakai 2010), I thought that lower-class middle school students needed specific career guidance to motivate them to try for higher educational goals than they could do right now.

What are specific methods through which we could raise educational aspirations to some sound degree or stop their class differentiations? Throughout my fieldwork, particularly as I came close to the time for leaving Japan, this question kept occurring to me. It was because I had seen some students give up on progressing to high school. I wondered if, with earlier intervention by teachers others might have aspired to higher goals and thus been able to matriculate in high schools that would have provided them with a better chance for further education. I felt frustrated and dared to ask some teachers why they had not encouraged students to try hard earlier. They asked me in response if I wished to provoke more intensive competition among them, or they said to me that they had tried and yet failed to motivate them.

Just one week before I left Japan, I read a booklet in which teachers in Shōbun Middle School reflected on what they did during the 2008 academic year and what they would do for the next academic year. While reading through the booklet, I was surprised that teachers in 8th grade intended to focus their career guidance on promoting students' educational aspirations. For instance, they wrote, "We think that at the beginning of 9th grade, we have to develop polices through which we not only raise all our students' motivation but also encourage students who do not think about their near future or avoid doing so. … For the next academic year, we intend to make students reflect on their future and raise their aspirations." I had never seen or heard these kinds of statements while I followed the 2009 graduating classes for eighteen months.

I was able to set up an interview with Mr. Ishikawa, the head teacher in 8th grade, on March 23rd, 2009, just one day before the 2008 academic year was officially over and I left Shōbun Middle School. As I already quoted his words in chapter IV, during the interview, he lamented, "To be honest, I do not know how to deal with the cultural barrier at home. Some pupils have grown up in the family in which they cannot learn how to study. Today, high-income families educate their children better than their low-income counterparts do." As I pointed in chapter II, he sensed the growing cultural influence of the family on academic achievement.

However, Mr. Ishikawa also suggested some ways to encourage children to work hard for their own future. He pointed out the importance of timing of career education, which sounded interesting to me because as I mentioned in chapter IV, I felt that it had been conducted somewhat late among the 2009 graduate classes. He commented, "It is important to let students know how high school entrance exams operate. We had only one class for doing so during the last term. We used to have a few such classes, and yet in recent years we have spent much time letting students have four-day internships in workplaces. … Unless students know about the exams, they cannot set their goals. Thus, the timing of career education matters. We must have enough time to do that. We should have spent more time doing that during 8th and 9th grade, and yet we do not have time during the spring term of 9th grade [maybe because teachers and students have to prepare for a four-day school trip to Okinawa]."

Another important strategy of Mr. Ishikawa for encouraging students to try to achieve their goal was the *shūdan tsukuri*, which literally means "group making" through which classmates in a homeroom or in the same grade may develop a relationship of respect and cooperation with each other. He mentioned that paying closer attention to students who are most likely to give up on studying will begin with incorporating them into lessons. Also he wished to encourage active participations of all students in school events such as sports day and cultural festival in order to motivate them to help each other and study for their own goal. Even though he also worried about the negative impact of the school events on students' concentration on studying, he wanted to create a condition in which children realize they can open their future path by studying together just as they can hold successful school events through mutual cooperation. Finally, he concluded the interview by remarking to me, "I wish to let students acquire dispositions to learn from each other. A few years ago, I had a homeroom where students who had already passed private or first-round public high school exams actively participated in classes until they graduated. Then, students who waited for second-round public high school exams were motivated to study harder. It would not make sense that the latter did not study even though the former who did not need to study for the exams anymore did. Thus, I think that *shūdan tsukuri* should be a precondition for career guidance. To make students learn from each other plays a greater role than what we teachers can do for them."

After this interview, I noted that I had also observed the positive consequences of *shūdan tsukuri* on promoting educational aspirations in one homeroom of the 2009 graduating classes. It was the homeroom which a young teacher led. All teachers in 9th grade agreed that they taught in that homeroom better than the other two because students in the first homeroom all concentrated in their classes. The homeroom's average scores in mid-terms and finals were often six to eight points higher than those of the other two homerooms. Even after sports day and chorus competition in which the homeroom

ended up with the bottom place despite all the students' hard work, they studied harder for high school entrance exams all together. Even students who had already passed private or first-round public high school entrance exams refrained themselves from disrupting classes. In addition, I saw some low-achieving students who were from disadvantaged families begin to work hard, to ask me to help them to figure out English or math problems, and even to voluntarily remain after school to study for the exams. During the interview with the young homeroom teacher, I asked him about the secret of creating such a good homeroom. Smiling, he answered, "There is no secret. I think that both students and I worked hard. I was impressed reading a letter from one student. She wrote, 'Seeing you work hard, we also came to work hard.' I did not mean to hide my hard work. Rather I thought that I should show them I am working hard." There was good chemistry between the homeroom teacher and his students, and also among the students. The homeroom was a wholesome *shūdan*.

I do not mean to extend too far the significance of *shūdan tsukuri* in raising educational aspirations. To put too much emphasis on a group (i.e. a homeroom) over its individual members (i.e. its students) could restrain the latter under the pressure of mutual surveillance, thereby making them simply try not to act against the former. In such a situation the students in the homeroom could not learn from each other, much less develop a sound educational aspiration. However, neither do I believe that provoking intensive competition among individual students can motivate them to study diligently. It could end up leading to the "exam hell" again. Instead, I believe that by creating a classroom in which students respect and help each other, we may see them, particularly the disadvantaged ones, develop their aspirations to some sound extent.

By the early twenty-first century, many Japanese people seem to drift without knowing for what they should aim. The saddening phrase of "low-status orientation" captures the demoralizing spirit among them (Miura 2005). One teacher said to me, "Today Japan is not a society whose members are trying for a certain goal. From the mid 1950s to the bubble economy [in the early 1990s], we had a goal, which was economic growth. If we made an effort, we could buy a car, a washing machine, or a TV set. We could build a big my-home. Now we have already obtained them all. There is no goal for which we should try. Even if we work harder, we see that our salary is cut. Since Japan passed from the age of growth [industrial economy] to that of maturity [post-industrial economy], even parents have not believed in efforts." Disagreeing with my suggestion that middle school teachers should be engaged in career guidance earlier than they have been so far, he continued to say, "Should we teachers motivate students to study to enter a high school at the beginning of middle school? … Happiness for human beings or society is not about an issue like children trying for a high school but about what ways of life we will choose to lead or what we can present to the students."

As I did not at that time, I do not still have a definite answer to this teacher's question. However, I think that studying for a high school might be a "legitimate" goal for children at age 13 to 15 (Lave and Wenger 1991). I do not think that "what kind of ways of life children will choose to lead" is a "legitimate" problem at those young ages. Instead, by overcoming the huddle of high school entrance exams, I believe, they may acquire a capacity to go through difficulties they might face when they become adults and also an ability to reflect on themselves and others or even to consider what is a true happiness or a way of life which is worthwhile to aim for. There would be no bright future in a society

whose people do not aspire to and try for something sound and legitimate. We might find out an answer to this problem in reviving an "aspirational culture" which "[Japanese] schools no longer offer" by making groups through which individual children can develop human relationship to learn with and from each other (Okano 2009:107).

4. Suggestions for further research

In the above sections, I have already summarized suggestions for my own further research. In this last section, drawing upon limitations in my current research, I would make two suggestions more generally as research problems to be undertaken.

First, I believe that ethnography of schooling should document educational practices in a school in the context of the local community of which the school is a part. It is because school, particularly public school in Japanese society, operates differently according to where it is located. As I showed in chapter I, local politics could affect particular educational practices such as minority education in school. However, a better understanding of the relationship between educational practices in Shōbun Middle School and the local community forces would have benefited my research.

Even though I analyzed the effect of community on local children's career choice in chapter V, for several reasons, I could not access the local community of which Shōbun Middle School was a part to the extent I had wished. The middle school personnel prevented me from renting a house in the middle school district because in order to keep students' (and I suspect, teachers' own) privacy, Japanese teachers do not live in the same school district as they work. Furthermore, school disorder and tensions in the local community during my fieldwork made me reluctant to ask teachers to introduce me to parents and local leaders. Given that my research focused on children' career choice, which is, to some extent, shaped by their parents and neighbors, little access to the local community was a big limitation in this research.

There might be ways in which an anthropologist could better access and understand a locality in which he or she works. As long as conditions permit, the anthropologist can try to change residence to a location near the field research. When fieldwork is just beginning, it may be difficult to rent a house in a school district against the school personnel's will. However, it might be possible to move to the school district after establishing a close rapport with teachers during the research period. Or, if there is a local festival, which is often the case with many communities in Japan, the anthropologist may attempt to participate in preparing for the festival even though the festival itself might not be a subject of her research. Just observing the festival, which I did, did not help me very much. Either by moving into local communities or by actually participating in their festivals, I believe that this more active engagement with the communities would lead to better understanding of educational practices, which occur not only in a school but also its interaction with the communities.

Second, I think that gender as well as class should be seriously considered in further research on education, in particular, students' career choice in Japan. For instance, I often found that Japanese middle school girls expressed a wish to get married early rather than to pursue their own career when they were asked about their future dream. It might be said that this wish works to discourage these girls from pursuing further education and professional careers. Or such a wish might reflect these girls' idea that in the gender-differentiated job market in Japan, women would do better to get married with men who

were professionals rather than to try to achieve their own career goals. However, I could not figure out why middle school girls wish to get married early and what effect this wish may have on their educational achievement and attainment because I failed to "do girl talks" (Bettie 2003:28).

As a male ethnographer, when I began to do this dissertation research, I was well aware that I might have difficulty interacting with middle school girls. In order to avoid this possible problem as much as possible, I actively participated in the girls' softball tennis club from the beginning of my fieldwork in Shōbun Middle School. However, playing softball tennis together for more than two hours five days a week did not help me much in engaging in girl talks. I often had to leave the tennis courts while students in the girls' softball tennis club did girl talks after finishing tennis practice: if I stayed, they stopped talking. Until my field research was over, I never made sense of why hanging out with these girls did not work. However, when I read Julie Bettie's *Women without class,* ethnography of American high school girls, I realized that I had had a masculine bias in terms of methodology, i.e., the belief that hanging out with informants is the best way to do anthropological research. Bettie wrote, "Girl talk, the discourse of emotional injuries and insecurities, is often the basis for friendship and is what bonds girls" (29).

I still think that sharing experiences matters in establishing a close rapport with informants and conducting fieldwork. However, it is also certain that this typical and masculine way of doing anthropological research does not work with all human subjects in the same way. It is necessary to think about whether or not anthropological methodology is gender biased, thereby developing the ways in which we could better understand gender differences. This issue is especially important for a better understanding of how gender differences may affect children's educational aspirations and future career choices in contemporary Japan.

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