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(Citation)

Japan Forum, 36(4):412-434

(Issue Date)

2024-06-20

(Resource Type)

journal article

(Version)

Accepted Manuscript

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This is an Accepted Manuscript version of the following article, accepted for publication in Japan Forum. D. Smith, M. (2024). Shakaijin, shadow education, and the entrepreneurial self: fabricating personhood in neoliberal Japan. Japan Forum, 36(4), 412-434. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2024.2368863>. It is deposited under the...

(URL)

<https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14094/0100495935>



***Shakajin*, Shadow Education, & the Entrepreneurial Self: Fabricating Personhood in Neoliberal Japan**

Within the neoliberal model of free-market capitalism, discourses surrounding active citizenship and meritocratic competition produce *homo oeconomicus*, or narrowly self-interested social agents who rationally maximise their economic utility as producer-consumers. Against this background, *juku*, Japan's deregulated shadow education institutions, emerge as privately-funded biographical transition points for those enterprising citizens seeking advantage within the nation's highly-competitive educational and vocational sectors. However, as argued here, while outwardly rational investments in *juku* assist transitions throughout this neoliberal biographic journey (youth→adolescence→adulthood), they do so through panoptic systems of tension and accommodation, with a pivot to individualism occasioning politically docile *entrepreneurs of the self*. More damagingly, 'agentive' and 'rational' patterns of personhood realised through *juku* remain anchored to transmissible cultural patrimony, creating opportunities to blame those who, through no fault of their own, lack the financial means to self-commodify within Japan's enterprise society. The association between economic output and responsible citizenship thereby shapes notions of 'worth' in increasingly neoliberal terms. Thus, only by relating *juku* investment to its social genesis may we appreciate the corrosive impact of economic liberalisation on Japan's learning ecology.

Keywords: Neoliberal Personhood; Social Reproduction; Foucault; Bourdieu; Japan; Shadow Education

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INTRODUCTION

In his extended critique of neoliberal governmentality, Foucault (2008) incorporates a Beckerian stance to argue that free-market capitalism reproduces *homo æconomicus*, in which States condition social agents to self-commodify as *entrepreneurs of themselves*. In this economically-rationalist model, citizens are encouraged to maximise their utility through cost/benefit calculations (Becker, 1976), enacting a “Social Darwinist survival of the fittest corollary” (Smith, 2022, p. 3) whereby valuable human resources overcome their competition through patterns of autonomous, responsible, and enterprising behaviour. This strand of market-orientated personhood, rationalised as “individual biographical projects” (Kelly, 2006, p. 24), which are, themselves, enforced and reproduced within systems of education, serves as the basis for socialising the common-sense perception of neoliberal orthodoxy. Indeed, “one of the critical manoeuvres at work in the globalizing practices of neoliberalism involves convincing us of its inevitability” (McKenzie, 2012, p. 167). Nevertheless, while the logic and practice of human capital theory are frequently problematised within the contexts of compulsory and continued learning, non-formal education (NFE), too, emerges as a convergence point for market fundamentalism and socialisation, given the “growing trend for NFE programmes to instil notions of citizenship and personhood in young people” (Costas Batlle, 2019, p. 418).

In this regard, the scope of NFE, or organised pedagogy occurring outside of formal curricula (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974), including private tutoring, athletics clubs, and religious, community-based, non-credit, and lifelong learning, remains as extensive as it is diverse. Regardless of form, however, NFE is expected to provide structured, systematic, and programmatic activities (Romi & Schmida, 2009) that, in keeping with the broader mission of active citizenship, prepare learners for involvement in vocational and community-based

enterprises. As part of the global, knowledge-based economy, NFE is also expected to contribute to economic growth by mitigating the direct and opportunity costs of schooling, providing educational benefits that, in turn, improve career development and equity amongst disadvantaged groups. Indeed, prominent intergovernmental agencies, including the OECD (2010), UNESCO (2012), and World Bank (2003), state a preference for NFE on account of its capacity to allow human capital “to be used more productively” (OECD, 2010). Despite an outwardly humanitarian emphasis, however, the neoliberal reorganisation of citizens into *entrepreneurs of themselves* conditions social agents to ‘survive’ as dehistoricised and decontextualised individuals fixed in a state of ongoing competition during their struggles to accumulate economic capital.

This paradox is, perhaps, no more visible than in the context of Japan, where a series of deeply-embedded socio-historical antecedents converge to provide fertile ground for neoliberal personhood to take root. This includes a seemingly paradigmatic adherence to cultural nationalism, an emphasis on individual responsibility and accountability, a prolonged history of top-down governance, and, perhaps most prominently, a strong belief in the Confucian tradition of fostering “talent and virtue as the key argument for a hierarchical meritocracy” (Ying, 2020, p. 1017). Against this background, the ascendancy of marketisation locally—frequently subsumed under the pretence of globalisation—presupposes an informal social debt between actor and State, whereby the productive subject is one who, through their agentive and individual investment in learning, contributes to Japanese competitiveness internationally (Smith & Samuella, 2022). With this goal in view, the Japanese State seeks to incentivise NFE, including community-based ‘social education’ (*shakaikyôuiku*) locally, which, following 2001 revisions to the *Social Education Act*, charges prefectural governments with delivering “congenial environments” for NFE and providing “young people with opportunities for social service” (Arai & Tokiwa-Fuse, 2013, p. 174).

Notwithstanding State-level pushes for *shakaikyôuiku*, much of the responsibility for NFE delivery falls on unregulated *shadow education* entities; specifically, the private after-school academies termed *juku* that provide supplementary tuition for those learners willing and *capable* of paying their fees. Accordingly, the survival of the fittest logic supporting Japan's free-market paradigm (Smith, 2021) actively compromises The OECD's interpretation of egalitarian NFE amongst its member states. Thus, to further explore the growing impact of Japanese shadow education on institutionalised neoliberal biographic projects (i.e., youth→social adolescence→social adulthood), this study calls on a conceptual bricolage, encompassing Foucault's (2008) *homo œconomicus*, Kelly's (2006) *entrepreneurial self*, and Bourdieu's notions of *social reproduction* (2005) and *symbolic violence* (1990), the latter defined here as the pedagogic inculcation, imposition, and legitimisation of taken-for-granted ideologies and capitals. In doing so, this inquiry recognises that the dispositions prototypical to neoliberal personhood—rationality, autonomy, responsibility, active citizenship, *entrepreneurialism* (Kelly, 2006)—are not, in and of themselves, “corrosive” (Costas Batlle, 2019). Indeed, the potential social and economic advantages produced through these behaviours are, for some, substantial. As will be argued here, however, Japan's pursuit of human capital through a taken-for-granted, yet marginalising and, indeed, “malign” (Vickers, 2017, p. 138) profit-generating shadow education industry creates a cost to the public good that is, for many, far more extensive.

BACKGROUND

Problematising the Neoliberal State

Following the foundational definition by Springer et al. (2016), neoliberalism constitutes the dominant “arrangements within society that emphasize market relations, re-tasking the role of the

state, and individual responsibility” (p. 2). Interpreted here as both an economic and ideological paradigm, neoliberalism operates through hegemonic processes of tension and accommodation, “encompassing not only the financial but the social, political, and environmental domains” (Smith, 2022, p. 2). In this regard, the State understands social agents “as economically self-interested subjects” (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 314), or individual producer-consumers who are best placed to assess their respective interests and needs. A key argument for market fundamentalism, therefore, centres upon the theoretical value of economic liberalisation, including free-market capitalism, privatisation, deregulation, globalisation, austerity, and the elimination of price controls, for societal efficiency. Consequently, the State assumes a purely instrumental role (Fernández-Herrería & Martínez-Rodríguez, 2016), where, through a marketised laissez-faire ethos, its influence on the economy gradually diminishes. Yet, while this strategy *may* succeed in within the sphere of business, when applied to society, adjacent social institutions, including healthcare and education systems, remain at risk of market interference (Costas Batlle, 2019). Despite this potential threat, however, broad consensus over the benefits of global marketisation ensures that the “neoliberal utopia” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 96) persists. Indeed, throughout his life, Bourdieu was deeply resistant to the “tyranny” of free-market politics, including the submission of society to businessification and the widespread dismantlement of public welfare in the name of economic rationality.

This self-fulfilling *return to individualism* deepens social inequality while simultaneously eroding collective accountability, creating opportunities “to ‘blame the victim’, who is entirely responsible for his or her own misfortune” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 7). Here, individual ‘worth’ to the economy is framed through a Social Darwinist lens of ‘winners’ and ‘losers’, the ‘strong’ and ‘weak’, the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’, with the neoliberal State objectifying units of human

capital as the summation of their demonstrable and, more importantly, *commodifiable* skills and dispositions (Urciuoli, 2008). In essence, the market expedites social and economic benefits to those who, through effort in education, *choose* to conform to its prerogative. It follows, therefore, that those who do not submit to neoliberal authority do so “due to a combination of their flawed character and poor life choices” (Costas Batlle, 2019, pp. 418–419). The potential for this ideology to obfuscate the exclusionary and discriminatory social structures imbricated within education is manifest. More subtle, however, is the constriction of ‘agency’—itself a fundamental tenet of neoliberal dogma—in such a manner that refinement of the specific skills, dispositions, and identities requisite to the global knowledge economy is contingent rather than “free”. For, if ‘rational’ citizens chose an alternative biographic pathway—an alternative *adulthood*—they potentially impede not only *their* social advancement but, through tangible and symbolic cycles of inequality, that of their young. With this paradox in view, let us take time to unpack the notion of personhood within the context of Japan.

Ichininmae no Shakaijin: The Path Towards “Full” Japanese Personhood

From an anthropological perspective, *personhood* implies a focus on individual identification, particularly within one’s broader social context (Appell-Warren, 2014). Specific representations of the phenomenon are, by association, heterogeneous, incorporating the diverse psychological, physiological, and societal factors deemed necessary to a given culture. Whereas certain Western societies may, for example, extol selfhood and individualism, Confucian axioms regulate strict adherence to filial piety and group harmony (Wang, 2009). As noted by Fu (2016), however, traditional Japanese personhood falls somewhere between these seemingly diametric positions, incorporating “a complementary relationship between self and social roles, with precedence given to fulfilling a role without negating self” (p. 557). To emerge as a *shakaijin* (literal translation:

society person), one must not only contribute towards Japanese society through labour (Roberson, 1995) but be adept at *kejime* (distinction or differentiation)—for example, the fundamental capacity to follow societal rules, know right from wrong, and, in the case of the latter, accept clear responsibility for one’s errors. In this regard, differentiation necessitates a fluidity between an ‘authentic’ self and a dutiful ‘outer’ persona. Thus, *Kejime* predicates itself upon an intricate value structure stipulating “how one should allocate self and roles separately and properly in different contexts, dimensions and stages of life” (Fu, 2016, p. 557).

Indeed, culturally-relevant rites of passage occurring throughout the life of Japanese citizens mark distinct transition points (*shingaku*) in personhood based on societal participation, including *youth*, *adolescence*, and *adulthood*. Yet, there also emerges a notable distinction between physical and social adulthood, with the latter presenting the most critical transition in Japanese culture—for only then can a citizen identify as *ichininmae no shakaijin* or as a ‘full’ member of (or contributor to) society. Like *kejime*, *shakaijin* is a fluid concept that, while ostensibly homogenous, differs among social groups. For women, patriarchal Confucian tradition dictates “household belonging” and “motherhood”ⁱ (Cook, 2016; Fu, 2016); men from working-class backgrounds, meanwhile, typically enter the workforce earlier than their middle-class peers, “caught up in the national obsession with university education” (Roberson, 1995, p. 309). Accordingly, the transition to social adulthood reveals contact points for stratification through one’s capacity to conform to hegemonic societal obligations. One feature of Japanese personhood that remains consistent, however, is a resolute sense of duty. Okano (2009) describes the passage to social adulthood in terms of growth, independence, motivation, and responsibility; Cook (2016), meanwhile, notes the importance of “being capable, having common sense, following social rules, [and] working responsibly for the good of the nation” (p. 323). Accordingly, there emerges an

indisputable accord between the traditional and neoliberal Japanese self; a harmony that provides fertile ground for socially-inequitable educational options to take root.

Non-formal & Shadow Education in Japan

NFE occupies a significant yet complicated space within contemporary Japanese society. While the concept is often associated with *shakaikyôuiku*, and the public citizen's halls that provide community-based learning (Arai & Tokiwa-Fuse, 2013; Okano, 2016), there is an increasing reliance on shadow education to meet the learning requirements of Japanese youth. With this disjuncture in view, it is, perhaps, wise to readdress the standard definition of NFE, or “any organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups” (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974, p. 8). This interpretation, by association, encompasses a range of educational contexts and spaces; thus, while initially constructive, it has been criticised (e.g., Costas Batlle, 2019; Romi & Schmida, 2009) for its ambiguity. When related to Grodsky's (2010) reading of *shadow education* as “any non-compulsory practice that occurs outside of regularly scheduled classes” (p. 478), for instance, there is little to discern between the two. Yet, more clarity may be found in the work of Buchmann et al. (2010), who define shadow education as “educational activities, such as tutoring and extra classes, occurring outside of the formal channels of an educational system that are designed to improve a student's chance of successfully moving through the allocation process” (p. 484).

On initial viewing, it is apparent that both NFE and shadow education remain bracketed in terms of their relation to formal instruction (Romi & Schmida, 2009). Indeed, Hegedüs (2021) notes “shadow education is a cross-section of the formal and-non-formal education systems” (p. 67). Crucial here, however, is the terminology “selected types of learning to *particular subgroups*”ⁱⁱ and “designed to improve a student's chance of successfully moving through the allocation

process”. In this sense, shadow education—itself a for-profit sector of NFE—*supplements* formal education (Entrich, 2018), allowing learners with the requisite economic and social backgrounds to better transition between pathways, both in terms of level (e.g., primary, secondary, and tertiary) and, more crucially, the respective degree of prestige associated with each institution. Consequently, while specific non-formal contexts, such as *shakaikyôuiku* and youth sports charities (Costas Batlle, 2019), may manifest per the OECD’s (2010) egalitarian vision for NFE, shadow education, by contrast, operates through systems of social exclusion and reproduction (Smith, 2022). Despite the potential stratifying effects of private supplementary tuition, shadow education continues to expand at an alarming rate (Bray & Lykins, 2012). Within the Japanese context, the *juku* cram-school industry, which provides out-of-school tuition for a host of academic and non-academic subjects, from university exam preparation to calligraphy courses, emerges as a regular feature in the lives of learners. So much so that Entrich (2018) notes up to 50,000 *juku* institutions nationally, employing as many as 280,477 tutors—roughly equivalent to the number of teachers operating in Japanese middle and high schools, respectively.

More telling, however, is the total expenditure on shadow education locally. Following recent data published by the Yano Research Institute (2016), Japan’s supplementary education industry generated ¥2.5 trillion (approximately US\$20.3 billion) in 2015, with ¥957 billion (around US\$7.8 billion) alone spent on *juku* tuition. Given this evident ubiquity and priority, it is perhaps surprising that local NFE scholars appear reticent to confront its malign influence. Indeed, a recent volume detailing the societal impact of NFE locally (Okano, 2016) broadly omitted the *juku* industry from its analysis, perhaps due to its non-affiliation with the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)—although, as will be detailed here, this is not *always* the case—or possibly because the sector is somewhat taken-for-granted within

contemporary Japanese education (Vickers, 2017). Nevertheless, the relentless growth of *juku* necessitates further clarification, with specific reference to the alliance between human capital development and neoliberal autobiographical projects, where, as will be detailed throughout this analysis, *entrepreneurial* Japanese households draw on shadow education to aid transitions between childhood, social adolescence, and social adulthood. With these societal rites of passage in view, the present inquiry holds a particular focus on *shingaku juku*, or cram schools focused on transitioning youths between academic levels through test preparation (Shintani, 2013); *yobikō*, *juku* that train social adolescents, including high school seniors as well as *rōnin* graduates who fail to transition to tertiary education, ahead of university entrance examinations (Tsukada, 1988); and *shūkatsu juku*, or shadow schools that prepare college student transitions to social adulthood per Japan's rigorous graduate recruitment process (Entrich, 2018). Before delving further into the Japanese neoliberal biographical project, however, it is important that we take time to properly unpack the terminology and, indeed, theoretical perspectives driving this analysis.

CONCEPTUAL LENS

Neoliberal Subjectivity: The Entrepreneurial Self, Docility, & Social Reproduction

Following Kelly (2006), neoliberalism emerges not only as a model for organising the State, the economy, and society “but also as a means of governing in these domains via the *rational*ⁱⁱⁱ, *autonomous*, *responsible* behaviours and dispositions of a *free*, *prudent*, *active* Subject: a Subject we can identify as the entrepreneurial self” (p. 18). In this sense, maturation towards neoliberal personhood presents an ideal, and thus, *taken-for-granted* transition point between youth and adult, whereby dispositions associated with the former, such as immaturity and economic and emotional dependence on parents and siblings, are replaced by those associated with the latter, including maturity, emotional and financial autonomy, and the forging of direct ties with an adult partner

and one's children (Freeland, 1996). In the neoliberal view, only then may individuals emerge as competitive and enterprising *entrepreneurs* (Olssen & Peters, 2005). Regardless, this discursive terrain neglects complex, interrelated systems of inclusion and exclusion that serve to advance or impede transitions to social adulthood. If, as is suggested by neoliberalism, education presents a meritocratic instrument for the 'enterprising' to 'win' within the highly-competitive business of life (Kelly, 2006), it follows that those who 'lose' by failing to secure a correct and timely transition do so due to their failings—the disadvantaged are, therefore, "assumed to require 'fixing'" (Costas Batlle, 2019, p. 419).

In proposing the *entrepreneurial self*, Kelly (2006) draws upon a Foucauldian genealogy to argue that the human capacities associated with neoliberal subjectivity—"initiative, enterprise, responsibility, or activity" (p. 28)—are not without value. Rather, the narrow view of these dispositions in terms of "performance of exchange relations" (Kelly, 2006, p. 29) compels subjects to, irrespective of social background, assume and reproduce entrepreneurial personhoods—routinely to the immediate exclusion of alternative markers. For, if they fail to incorporate these capacities, they risk not only their future but, through stratified processes of social reproduction, that of their young (Bourdieu, 1986). This interpretation brings us to the critical difference between *homo œconomicus* and *the entrepreneurial self*: while the former refers to the normative economic logics embodied as personhood, the latter represents the internalisation of neoliberal behaviours, capacities, and dispositions to the point of *transformation*. Consequently, the hegemonic internalisation of State discipline ensures that social agents position themselves receptively for neoliberal rationality to be acted upon them. With this relation in view, Foucault (1995) employs the term *docility* to signify the process of utilisation, alteration, and enhancement to which social agents are subjected: "discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and

diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)” (p. 138). In short, docility is achieved through panoptic modes of State surveillance (including educational and economic markets), wherein discipline internalises to the point of submission; thus, *l’homo œconomicus est éminemment gouvernable* (Foucault, 2008).

In Becker’s (1976) radical neoliberal view, however, “units [of human capital] must accept reality” (p. 167) when *agentively choosing* their response to environmental manipulation. Becker’s attempts to universalise market orthodoxy have, since their inception, come under sustained attack, including Pierre Bourdieu’s (2005) description of the utility-maximising agent as “the most extreme personification of scholastic fallacy” (p. 209). Indeed, the concept of self-interested human capital, embedded within the assumption of perfect rationality, models itself upon sociologically insupportable conjecture, not least of which is the variance in academic performance based on cultural patrimony. To Bourdieu, “the maintenance and replication of hierarchical systems and structures based on certain preconditions” (Smith, 2022, p. 6) present as *social reproduction*. While neoliberalism depicts education as a meritocratic pathway to levelling the playing field, Bourdieu interprets it as legitimating structural inequality. Central to this process is the notion of cultural capital, that is, the credentials, skills, beliefs, outlooks, and knowledge, or “familiarity with the dominant culture in a society” (Sullivan, 2002, p. 145), which, in conjunction with economic capital (wealth and resources) and social capital (durable social networks), facilitates the inter-generational reproduction of inequality. In time, “mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation, and action” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 16), transmitted and reproduced through the various forms of capital, become *habitus*, or deeply-held ways of perceiving, conceptualising, and interacting with society. Relations between agency and structure are, therefore, not as clear-cut as neoliberalism would have us believe.

Consolidating the above highlights the ‘soft’ or non-physical forms of domination and legitimation termed *symbolic violence* by Bourdieu (2005). For instance, the prevailing logic surrounding neoliberal personhood, whereby utility-maximising agents execute cost/benefit calculations to survive the business of life (Kelly, 2006), creates an individualistic “enterprise society” (Foucault, 2008, p. 147). In doing so, *homo æconomicus* reorganise as entrepreneurs of the self, whereby the market rewards conformity with the ‘common sense’ capacities demanded by neoliberalism. In doing so, personhood, biographic projects, and, indeed, the nature of life are *transformed* “largely autonomously, into meanings that are structured by the market form” (Kelly, 2006, p. 24). Through these hegemonic processes of tension and accommodation, *docile bodies* emerge, wherein entrepreneurs “insert themselves into hierarchies where the state monitors, develops, and redefines” (Smith, 2022, p. 15) personhood. Here, the economy exists as a mode of surveillance wherein the State rewards docility while simultaneously punishing those who do or *cannot* conform to its authority; thus, coercion establishes a constricting link between aptitude and domination (Foucault, 1995). We may observe this process not only in the ‘rational choice’ to enrol into shadow education but, more generally, the consequences commonly associated with graduating or dropping out of university education, respectively. Yet, in exercising a survival of the fittest paradigm, the market not only *recontextualises* but *decontextualises* citizens, disregarding their positions within broader systems of inclusion and exclusion. By orientating the market toward the cultural and material assets possessed by the middle-class (Smith, 2022), the State reinforces cyclical social reproduction predicated on the sense of one’s ‘place’ in society. Through this act of symbolic violence, the disenfranchised take for granted “the legitimacy of that which dominates them” (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2017, p. 189).

DISCUSSION

Survival of the Fittest: The Reproductive Function of Shingaku Juku

The presumed requirement for *shingaku juku* highlights a precarious gap between public education and the realities of Japan's high-pressure examination system, commonly termed *juken jigoku* or 'exam hell' locally. As noted by Entrich (2018), this segment of the NFE market specialises in transitioning learners between grades and levels, with a particular focus on high school entrance examination preparation. Yet, within the scope of neoliberal biographic projects, *shingaku juku* present the first step for youths on their paths toward entrepreneurial personhood. The demand for *shingaku juku* remains steadfast; Bray and Lykins (2012) estimated 2007 attendance be as high as 65.2%. Benesse's (2017) survey on out-of-school educational activities, meanwhile, depicts a grade-on-grade increase in *shingaku juku* attendance, from 27.6% for first-year elementary students to 58% for middle school seniors, before declining and peaking at 31% for second-year high school students, who, at this stage, generally transition to *yobikō* (Entrich, 2018). Despite the evident importance of *shingaku juku* to Japan's learning ecology, however, the sector remains, on a pedagogical level, unregulated, with institutions holding "a legal role as a small (and sometimes very large) business" (Dierkes, 2010, p. 25). Consequently, the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry oversees the *juku* industry, with MEXT assuming a "monitor" role (Mori & Baker, 2010, p. 44). The natural outcome of this laissez-faire approach is an industry-wide free-for-all, with the respective quality of content, methodology, and provision varying from institution to institution. Indeed, one need not hold a license to open or even teach at a *juku*, merely *homo oeconomicus*' capacity for enterprise.

This blurring of public and private educational boundaries ensures that neoliberalism embeds itself within Japanese personhood at an alarmingly young age, with after-school *juku* as a correlate of academic progression pressuring successive generations to ascend the credential ladder.

Interpreted not necessarily as “a ‘what level’ credentialing society so much as a ‘what institution’ credentialing society” (Amano, 1997, p. 56), Japan places an overwhelming emphasis on brand-name prestige grading for its academic institutions. Enrollment opportunities at élite universities remain governed by study at top-end high schools, which are, in turn, monopolised by leading middle schools and so on. Thus, social and institutional cultural capital accrue gradually throughout the learning journey, with secure employment at a prominent—and, hence, *well-paying*—corporation representing the ultimate goal (Kawanishi, 2020). Functioning as a perceived gatekeeper not only between academic but, more importantly, *prestige* levels, *shingaku juku* emerge as a powerful intermediary between socialisation and the neoliberal imaginary of effort-based reward. That *juku* study occurs both pre-and-post formal education hours, on weekends, and during summer and winter vacations (Shintani, 2013) is, in and of itself, problematic. *Kejime* embeds the difference between ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, but also distinctions between work and playtime (Usui, 1996). In stripping youths of opportunities to enjoy their developmental periods in favour of credentialism and unrelenting study, they develop in neoliberal terms.

More detrimental to personhood, however, is the encouragement of narrow self-interest through systems of intense competition. Returning to Bourdieu (1998), this *pivot to individualism* ensures a self-fulfilling prophecy where “docile” Japanese youths submit to the market. In doing so, a survival of the fittest orthodoxy pressures successive generations to surrender their childhoods to meet the national fixation on status and social ascendancy (Amano, 1997). Bray and Lykins (2012), for instance, describe *juku* as “part of a social fabric that has stressed diligence in learning, and in turn has been a major ingredient in the country’s economic success” (p. 38). Yet, in stressing the importance of self-discipline, boundless rationality, and rigid individualism, *juku* amplify (if not outright *warp*) Japanese ways of being. Within this context, peers present as rival

entrepreneurs—as individual units of competing human capital that *must* be overcome. The normative assumptions organising *homo æconomicus* thereby substitute caring, kinship-based reciprocity for self-interested utility. Considering that successful *homo æconomicus* re-shape their personhoods to align with dominant neoliberal logic, one must also question the role of “agency” in this process. Becker’s (1976) utility-maximising agent, bound to the concept of consummate rationality, succeeds through stable, complex deductions over economic forecasting and external market factors. Evidently, this remains beyond the capacities of most youths (and, indeed, adults); yet, Japanese families *do* make the ‘rational choice’ to invest in shadow education.

In Bourdieu’s (1998, 2003) reading of subjectivity, *economic habitus* presents an internalised schema of external objective structures, whereby supposedly axiomatic patterns of rational economic behaviour remain bound to societal conditioning. In this sense, the habitus manifests as a socialised subjectivity, with an individual’s ongoing schemes of perception governed by their collective and individual history, contingent on their accrued social, economic, and cultural capitals relative to their peers. Consequently, “the interplay between capital, habitus, and the specific orthodoxy, or ‘rules of the game’, labelled by Bourdieu as *doxa*, determines one’s position and interactions” (Smith, 2022, p. 7). Consistent with Kelly’s (2006) *entrepreneurial self*, the internalisation of rational, autonomous, and responsible economic dispositions within Japanese personhood necessitates *conversion*, “which transforms not only the meaning of work but temporal habits and social strategies of reproduction” (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 79). Nevertheless, the habitus of individual economic agents may be hard to discern, given their frequent harmonisation with the prerogatives of the market (Bourdieu, 1998). Notable differences emerge under specific conditions, however, including the economic habitus failing to accommodate the financial circumstances under which they exist—for example, low-income households entering (or wishing to enter) their

children into high-cost *juku*. Again, we may interpret this process as acts of both docility and symbolic violence, with the orthodoxy of shadow education emerging as a societal imposition simultaneously benefiting private enterprise and dominant classes able to afford to compete while further disenfranchising the socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Indeed, while ostensibly voluntary, persistent societal pressures compel individual decisions to enroll children in *shingaku juku*. A MEXT (2008) survey of 40,883 parents notes insecurities “over only sending their children to State schools” (66.5%) and “over a society that places great emphasis on academic credentials” (59.9%) as the primary factors driving attendance. These findings indicate an apparent disconnect between Japan’s *laissez-faire* approach to its learning ecology and the financial and ideological realities of its society. Returning to Benesse’s (2017) survey on out-of-school educational activities, for instance, we can see that, of 16,170 surveyed households, those with an annual income of ¥6 million and over (approximately US\$52,000) account for 43.5% of preparatory *juku* attendance, while those with a yearly income of ¥4 million and under (US\$34,000) account for 16.7%. More tellingly, those earning less than ¥2 million (US\$17,000) comprise 1.7% of the latter figure (Benesse, 2017, p. 3). Thus, the economic logic of the *entrepreneurial self*, contingent on an ideology of rational, autonomous, and responsible performativity facilitating opportunity commensurate to one’s investment in education (Kelly, 2006), functions to constrain social advancement. One must thereby question the orthodoxy of the ‘free’ market and the perceived connection between merit and economic success. Rather, it is argued here that the Japanese *juku* economy is better understood as a hierarchical and hegemonic system of *social reproduction* sustained through transmissible capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Following ‘rational’ neoliberal logics, *juku* allow parents to exert a certain measure of ‘choice’ in the educational paths of their children. Nevertheless, successful patterns of economic

personhood commonly acknowledged as rational and agentive emerge from hereditary economic conditions. In opposition to the market's decontextualised and dehistoricised reading of competitive enterprise, only by relating *juku* attendance to its societal and personal genesis may we fully appreciate the "corrosive power of neoliberalism" (Costas Batlle, 2019, p. 417). The axiomatic *return to individualism* brought about by Japan's submission to the economy disciplines learners as "docile bodies" (Foucault, 1995) ready for insertion into future labour markets while simultaneously eroding State-level accountability for those producer-consumers who, through no fault of their own, are unable to succeed within highly-competitive economic conditions. Despite being subjected to a hegemonic social debt outside of their control, this, in turn, makes it possible to condemn the socioeconomically disadvantaged as responsible for their misfortune. Accordingly, *juku* as a means of enacting neoliberal biographic transitions, itself aligned with the reading of humans as rational and self-interested *homo æconomicus*, presents as a deficit model, wherein a perceived lack of academic achievement may be attributed to deficiencies in the individual, as opposed to broader sociological circumstances (Wallace, 2015). The humanitarian implications for Japan's economically-utilitarian reading of responsibility, agency, and meritocratic reward are manifest; yet, what of the transition between youth and adolescence?

Social Adolescence, Yobikō, and the Journey Towards Free-Market Adulthood

The passage from adolescence (*seinen*) to social adulthood (*shakaijin*) is, without question, the most decisive transition point in Japanese personhood, with this importance reflected in the various interpretations of the term. Most literally, *shakaijin* may be translated as 'society person'; yet, more practically, it denotes "a fully-fledged working member of society" (Kawanishi, 2020) or "*responsible*^{iv} adult" (Okura Gagné, 2014, p. 149). As noted by Roberson (1995), familial, educational, and sociocultural conditions work in unison to facilitate or constrain respective

pathways towards *shakaijin* status. Following Bourdieusian-Foucauldian critiques of *homo oeconomicus*' utility function, however, these factors also influence personhood through "individual choice and action" in the construction of the life-course transition" (Roberson, 1995, p. 294). Indeed, societal fractures between academic tracking, transmissible cultural patrimony, individual and collective identification, and ongoing patterns of economic behaviour lie at the heart of Bourdieu's (1986, 1998) resistance to neoliberal "tyranny". Given university graduation represents the penultimate and, perhaps, most critical step towards securing adulthood, for example, *yobikō*, or high-cost varieties of *shingaku juku* that prepare current and remedial *rōnin* high-school learners for Japan's rigorous university selection process (Entrich, 2018, p. 222), emerge as shadowed intermediaries between present *seinen* and future *shakaijin* identification and, in turn, between the preliminary and concluding phases of Japan's neoliberal biographic project.

Contrary to standard *shingaku juku*, *yobikō* operate under the indirect supervision of municipal boards of education. Nonetheless, while holding legal and preferential tax status as schools, this jurisdiction extends to safeguarding physical conditions, not curricula, teaching practices, price controls, or labour relations (Beauchamp, 1999/2014). In this respect, *yobikō* retain an enigmatic yet somewhat privileged position within Japanese shadow education: schools in the legal sense but possessing enough autonomy for MEXT to exclude them as part of its official learning ecology. On a functional level, *yobikō* present a means of navigating the nation's highly-competitive exam culture of *juken jigoku*, in which a learner's future vocational success is contingent on their acceptance to one of Japan's elite universities—for reference, up to 60% of high school graduates fail to secure placement at their first-choice institution (Entrich, 2018). Against this background, the social and personal costs of rigid competition structures mediated through academic credentialism are often overwhelming: the strain of *juken jigoku* is frequently cited as

driving teen suicide, with Ito (2021) reporting 107 cases amongst Japanese high school seniors in 2020 alone. The rational choice to attend *yobikō*, therefore, appears to be driven by intense societal pressure to succeed rather than one's intrinsic motivation to learn. Nevertheless, while *yobikō* generally serve current high school students—a study by Benesse (2015) indicates this number to be 27.2% nationally—more telling is the status of *rōnin*, or those learners who continue private education after failing to enrol at the university of their choice (Ono, 2007).

A widely-used colloquialism, one need only look towards the etymological basis of *rōnin* to understand its deep connection to Japanese personhood. Literally translated as ‘wave man’, *rōnin* were wandering samurai who, rather than follow the *Bushido* code of *seppuku* upon the death of their master, persevered as honourless vagrants. Consequently, *rōnin* status carried with it a great degree of shame and social ostracisation within feudal Japan. Likewise, *rōnin* in contemporary society hold no affiliation (in the academic sense) and, given the importance of duty, hard work, and responsibility to Japanese social adulthood (Cook, 2016), seek to correct their respective life courses having failed to take an expected step. It should be stressed that the majority of *rōnin* do, in fact, graduate high school; yet, such is the strength of credentialism in Japanese society that, every year, 200-300,000 failed applicants prefer to delay their transition to tertiary education rather than secure placement at the wrong (read: non-brand-name) institution (Ogawa, as cited in Ishikida, 2005). Accordingly, “the proportion of students entering college with *rōnin* experience averages about 30%, and may even exceed 60% among the top colleges” (Ono, 2007, p. 271). Returning to the issue of hereditary cultural patrimony, *rōnin* typically belong to households possessing the requisite economic resources to support *yobikō* tuition and living expenses. Entrich (2018), for example, estimates that learners from “from advantaged family

backgrounds (at least one of both parents holds a university degree) are significantly more likely to enter *yobikō* (+19%)” (p. 235).

The assumption that Japanese adolescents fix their supposed mistakes through discipline, accountability, and enterprise is thereby not only fallacious but disingenuous. Social Darwinist structures of competition favouring learners privileged in social, economic, and cultural capital reduce this capacity from universality “to a ‘reward’ that can be enjoyed *by those who deserve it*”^{vi} (Costas Batlle, 2019, p. 428). Consistent with Kelly (2006), discourses surrounding preferred or ideal forms of credentialism mobilise common sense understandings of personhood and citizenship, whereby neoliberal biographic pathways present as ongoing projects within Japan’s enterprise society—with ‘responsible’ *shakaijin* status representing the culmination of their efforts. If, when traversing this path, an individual breaks from their inherited social contract, there is an accompanying cultural expectation that they correct course to make “a contribution for the sake of society” (Roberson, 1995, p. 307). Considering *kejime* indexes appropriate behaviour patterns and personal characteristics, however, *yobikō* narrow the capacity to accept responsibility for one’s supposed errors—to enact right from wrong—in economic terms. In this context, the second (and more if required) opportunity provided by shadow education remains not only class-distinguished but strengthens dehistoricised neoliberal conceptualisations of duty and responsibility. Indeed, Fu (2016) notes the subtle reconstruction of Japanese personhood to one “with a new emphasis on self-activated qualities and free-market principles” (p. 559).

Additionally, the influence of global interests on local personhood, educational paths, and skills has faced recent criticism, including Fritz and Murao (2020) and Smith and Samuell (2022), who problematise State and university-level drives for “trustworthy global citizens” and “global leaders”. In truth, the Japanese State is open in its goals for the internationalisation of its education

system, with former MEXT head, Hakubun Shimomura (2013), drawing on a survival-of-the-fittest rhetoric to state “Japan has no other course than to enhance the capabilities of each and every citizen through education if it wants to continue to grow as an affluent nation and keep its position within the world” (p. B1). Cited 86 times in Shimomura’s (2013) six-page report, one skill reveals itself as paradigmatic to “strengthening Japan’s economic competitiveness” (p. B1): *English*. The supposed requirement for English proficiency has driven MEXT policy for decades. For instance, in the overtly neoliberal Reinventing Japan, Go Global Japan, and Global 30 and Top Global University Projects (TGUP), the latter of which seeks to increase the linguistic and human-capital-outputs of 37 “world-class and innovative universities” (MEXT, 2014). TGUP institutions include the highly-ranked Kyoto and Osaka Universities and the University of Tokyo, the country’s premier educational institution. Given their prestige and subsequent recognition by the vocational sector (Kawanishi, 2020), enrolment at one such college constitutes the goal for *yobikō* attendance. This path is both well-trodden and well-founded; Ono (2007), for instance, found a quantifiable relationship between *rōnin* investment, college quality, and increased future earnings (p. 282).

Mediated through international networks of free-market capitalism, the naturalisation of English as the “language of global competitiveness” (Piller & Cho, 2013, p. 24) has had a noticeable impact on Japanese testing culture. In 2014, the first year of TGUP, approximately 98% of all applicants took the English language component of the *sentā shiken*, the former standardised test for filtering university admissions—for reference, 94.6% took the Japanese-language equivalent (Entrich, 2018, p. 38). It has become standard practice for TGUP institutions to use language assessment, including privately-taken standardised test scores (i.e., IELTS, TOEIC), and the English components of the *sentā shiken* and its successor, the *daigaku nyūgaku kyōtsū tesuto* (common test for university admissions) as a means of filtering prospective students (Smith, 2022).

Naturally, this exerts a trickle-down effect throughout the shadow education industry, not only in *yobikō* but also in standard *shingaku juku*, which initiate the Englishification process as early as kindergarten. Returning to Benesse's (2017) survey on out-of-school educational activities, for instance, we can see that 48.8% of all first-grade elementary school students attending *juku* did so to learn English. In this sense, the 'rational choice' to enrol children in shadowed foreign language classes is as much to do with future assessment as linguistic utility. Indeed, while commonly interpreted as requisite to transcultural business, Kubota (2013) describes Japanese and Mandarin Chinese as standardised regional *lingua franca*.

Given this overemphasis on English communication skills, *yobikō* enrolment to increase language test scores and, thus, secure TGUP placement is reactionary to State-level pushes for the *homo oeconomicus* intended to contribute to "the further development of Japan as a nation" (MEXT, 2003). The Ministry's strategic plan to cultivate *Japanese with English abilities*, which forms much of the basis for current internationalisation policy in education (Smith, 2022), explicitly references "globalization in the economy and in society" and "communication skills in English" as "essential" to this endeavour (MEXT, 2003). Again, Social Darwinist rhetoric detailing State power and aggressiveness for survival underpin Japan's push for global human resources. Against this backdrop, *juku* in both their *shingaku* and *yobikō* forms serve to colour Japanese developmental periods in neoliberal terms, in this instance, embedding the required commodifiable linguistic skills for learners to secure placement at one of the nation's highly-ranked universities, and, thus, advance towards the 'correct' *shakaijin* identity, both in terms of educational credentials and the proficiencies and dispositions deemed emblematic to the global market order. The societal imagineering of Japanese personhood as an extension of the economy thereby mobilises probabilistic interpretations of ideal adult futures (Kelly, 2006). Thus, it is argued here that, taken

together, discourses and ideologies surrounding shadow education as a means of securing neoliberal biographic progression renders the Japanese populace both politically docile and economically utilitarian, per dominant global interests (Foucault, 1995).

Responsible or fully-fledged *shakaijin* and “trustworthy global citizens” (Fritz & Murao, 2020, p. 520) are, in this sense, one and the same, with favourable manifestations of Japanese social adulthood conditional on adolescents “re-shaping their personhood to align with neoliberal understandings of citizenship” (Costas Batlle, 2019, p. 425). From this perspective, *yobikō* gatekeep a critical biographic transition point between adolescence and adulthood as youths struggle to accommodate and, through intense academic preparation, *obey* the prerogatives of Japan’s global enterprise society (Foucault, 2008). Through rational or common sense credentialism, panoptic means of economic surveillance both reward docility and punish defiance, constricting agency in such a manner that the choice (more accurately: duty) to contribute to the *development of Japan as a nation* (MEXT, 2003) remains contingent, as opposed to free. In emphasising values consistent with *homo œconomicus* and the entrepreneurial self—*rationality, autonomy, responsibility*—this practice establishes a link between neoliberal subjectivity and those worthy of future economic success. This constriction of educational pathways ensures that transitions to social adulthood remain bracketed in terms of their relations to cultural patrimony, embodying a legitimisation process of socioeconomic stratification. Accordingly, while Japan’s particular strand of neoliberal personhood remains ‘open’ to all, the capacity to succeed within its boundaries—to emerge as the ‘correct’ kind of *shakaijin*—is not.

Shūkatsu Juku or: How we Learned to Self-Commodify and Integrate into Corporate Japan

While a relatively new phenomenon, job-seeking, or *shūkatsu juku*, are similar to *yobikō* insofar as they both symbolise ‘shadowed’ biographic transition points that evolve the standard cram-

school format. Whereas *shingaku juku* focus on transitioning youths from one school level to the next and *yobikō* the explicit passage of social adolescents from secondary to tertiary education, *shūkatsu juku* prepare ‘enterprising’ university students for their final step toward ‘full’ *shakaijin* status: *shūshoku katsudō*, Japan’s prolonged and rigorous system of graduate recruitment. A year-long process beginning in April, this “critical rite of passage for college youth in Japan” (Kawanishi, 2020) is somewhat distinct to the local context. Here, companies both large and small approach learners through seminars, sometimes located at universities, but often at external career centres that provide applicants with information and guidance regarding vocational opportunities. Through this system, most Japanese college students secure life-long employment *before* graduation. Consequently, there is a broad consensus between the Japanese educational and vocational sectors regarding the systematic nature of the school-to-work transition. Echoing this inquiry’s reading of neoliberal *entrepreneurialism* as a biographic project and, more broadly, Freeland’s (1996) description of labour market adulthood, Uehara (2016) notes the responsibility of universities “to achieve a rapid *transformation*^{vii} of their students from ‘children’ who lack essential social know-how into functional ‘grown-ups’”. Indeed, given the Japanese fixation with “brand image” (Amano, 1997; Kawanishi, 2020), it is in the university’s best interest to provide *shūshoku katsudō* activities, given job placement results—and the subsequent production of ‘responsible’ *shakaijin*—enhance prestige amongst Japanese industry and college applicants alike.

Nonetheless, given the ¥497 billion (approximately US\$4.1 billion) expenditure by the Japanese public on *shūkatsu juku* in 2015 alone (Entrich, 2018, p. 50), there appears to be a broad societal consensus on the value of private learning opportunities to student-to-workplace transitions. Consistent with the *entrepreneurial self*, *shūkatsu juku* prepare learners “to extol themselves as being a valuable addition to a company” (Entrich, 2018, p. 192), including

appropriate ways of conducting oneself, speaking, and dressing within Japanese professional settings. With this goal in view, *shūkatsu juku* provide additional prospects for learners to self-commodify “via the vast ensemble of experiences, practices and relations that characterise the processes of governmental self formation” (Kelly, 2006, p. 18). For instance, through the soft skills valued by state and industry, including communication, leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving (Uehara, 2016). Thus, in aiding the final step of neoliberalism’s intended youth→adolescence→adulthood biographic pathway, *shūkatsu juku* present the most clear-cut link between shadow education and intended labour market outcomes. In terms of ideology and practice, *shūkatsu juku* exhibit value to the high-achieving graduates whose social statuses elevate through employment in one of the nation’s leading multinational corporations (Shibata, 2019). It should also be highlighted that, due to the strain placed on *shūshoku katsudō* by Japan’s declining population, the enterprising, self-assured entrepreneurs produced by *shūkatsu juku* are able and, certainly, *willing* to single-out prospective employers. For, as noted by Uehara (2016), “companies choose among students, so it’s only natural for students to choose among companies”.

This degree of certitude is a natural consequence of ‘common-sense’ rationalities demanding free, competitive, and economically judicious *homo æconomicus*. As noted by Kelly (2001), pivots towards *responsibilisation* remain grounded in *standardisation* and *individualisation*—in this regard, the socialisation, self-actualisation, and self-commodification of subjects as producer-consumers, as units of human capital, as *entrepreneurs*. Nevertheless, as has been argued here, the rational logic to conceive oneself as a commercial enterprise remains problematic insofar as it represents an internalisation of neoliberal systems of robust competition; for instance, a warped, survival-of-the-fittest understanding of selfhood that may, in turn, transfer to less antagonistic social interactions. Given this Social Darwinist reading of humanity, what of

those budding producer-consumers who, having failed to secure employment at one of Japan's premier companies, inevitably fail to meet the terms of their social contract? It is, perhaps, unsurprising to discover that *rōnin* status extends beyond failed college applicants, incorporating those graduates who delay their final step towards 'responsible' adult status for an additional year ahead of repeating Japan's intense recruitment process. As with *yobikō*, *shūkatsu juku* present additional, privately-funded (and, as affirmed here, class-distinguished) opportunities for *shūshoku rōnin* to enhance their enterprise capital during their quest to ascend Japan's social ladder; for "we must all assume an entrepreneurial disposition to this life form. We fail to do so at our own risk" (Kelly, 2006, p. 29).

The oppressive nature of *shūshoku katsudō* is well-noted locally, for instance, by Kawanishi (2020), who criticises the system as a fundamentally inflexible, decontextualised endeavour that fails to consider the affective demands placed on graduates. Indeed, in recounting the experiences of one failed applicant, she observes that "what he learned through job-hunting was that he was a weak person, and not needed by society" (Kawanishi, 2020). Here, the connection between vocational and societal worth is manifest; so common is the distress triggered by Japan's recruitment process that the Japanese language has a specific expression for the disorder: *shūkatsu utsu* (literally: job-hunting depression). *Shūkatsu juku* as a pathway towards neoliberal societal contribution thereby reveals itself to be, once again, anything but a rational choice. Nevertheless, there is also an argument that *rōnin* experience is increasingly advantageous to job applications. Uehara (2016), for instance, notes an emerging trend for recruiters to focus on the previous failures of candidates and, more importantly, their actions to rectify or overcome negative experiences, which serve as the "basis for assessing whether students have the problem-solving ability they will need in their future work". In essence, *shūkatsu juku* present as a

microcosm of Japan's enterprise society, demonstrating not only the significance of *kejime* to responsible citizenship but, given the accompanying focus on diligence, rationality, and narrow individualism, the societal imagineering of Japanese personhood as *homo æconomicus*.

CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

It bears repeating that the traits commonly associated with 'enterprising' producer-consumers—*rationality, autonomy, responsibility*—are neither unwelcome nor, for that matter, intrinsically destructive. Nevertheless, in drawing on Foucauldian-Bourdieuian genealogies of the neoliberal self, this inquiry attests that the conceptualisation of these human capacities in terms of "performance of exchange relations" (Kelly, 2006, p. 29), social adulthood, and, perhaps most pertinently, individual 'worth' within Japan's enterprise society presents as a panoptic mechanism of discipline, coercion, and control. Indeed, through an intense system of credentialism and unyielding competition, culturally-relevant transition points occurring throughout the lives of Japanese citizens serve to colour biographical journeys towards social adulthood in *entrepreneurial* terms. In this regard, Japan's *juku* industry emerges as a prominent and, in light of its annual participation figures, *taken-for-granted* gatekeeper of educational progression. Whereas *shingaku juku* enhance a youth's likelihood of attending secondary schools high in institutional capital, *yobikō* provide additional opportunity for high school and *rōnin* social adolescents to secure placement at one of Japan's prestigious tertiary institutions. This, in turn, dictates future vocational prospects, which may be further enhanced by the *shūkatsu juku* that solidify adulthood and 'responsible' *shakaijin* status as outcomes of standardisation and individualisation (Kelly, 2001). Nevertheless, this *return to individualism* remains damaging insofar as it erodes State and collective accountability for the socioeconomically disadvantaged

who, through no fault of their own, fail to meet the terms of a transmissible and, indeed, *unsolicited* contractual implication.

Against this background, Japan's preference for individual biographic projects centred upon social development through unbound rationality, utility, and narrow self-interest assumes a deficit model, wherein 'failed' *shakaijin* who neglect to contribute to "the further development of Japan as a nation" (MEXT, 2003) do so due to their inherent shortcomings (Costas, Battle, 2019). Yet, veiled condemnation of the casualties on Japan's enterprise society also highlights processes of docility that internalise through market surveillance (Foucault, 1995). From this perspective, discipline represents a central driver for Japanese transformations into entrepreneurial agents. Indeed, citizens fail to incorporate neoliberal dispositions, credentials, and skills at their own risk (Kelly, 2006)—doing so would impede their social advancement and, through tangible and symbolic processes of social reproduction, that of their descendants. With this understanding in view, the 'rational choice' to secure biographic pathways through shadow education (youth/*shingaku juku*→social adolescence/*yobikō*→social adulthood/*shūkatsu juku*) presents as a hegemonic system of tension and accommodation grounded in symbolic violence. Considering the above, the duplicity inherent to Japan's *homo oeconomicus* model of economic growth, itself modelled on the assumptions of agency and meritocratic competition, is evident. In dismissing *juku* as an unregulated service industry, however, MEXT not only neglects an informal—yet increasingly influential—element of Japan's learning ecology but strengthens underlying forces driving exclusion.

Given the evident implications of the *juku* industry for social justice, MEXT would be wise to heed the words of Sir Michael Sadler (1900/1964), who noted: "things outside the schools matter even more than the things inside the schools, and govern and interpret the things inside" (p. 310).

This is not to imply, however, that supplementary learning is irredeemable; such fatalistic reasoning willfully neglects the insecurities of many households over the shortcomings of Japan's formal education system. In this sense, *juku* participation in its *shingaku* and *yobikō* iterations, but perhaps, too, its *shūkatsu* one fills a notable gap in Japan's enterprise society. Moreover, having legitimised itself as a normative feature of Japanese academic and social progression, the *juku* industry has undoubtedly emerged from the 'shadows'. On a practical level, abolition would leave hundreds of thousands of instructors unemployed and necessitate fundamental cultural shifts in competition and credentialism. Structures that are, lest we forget, characteristic of the millennia-old Confucian societal model (Ying, 2020). Regardless, banning *juku* would undoubtedly drive wealthy families to seek competitive educational advantages within *formal* private education, further deepening socioeconomic inequality (Entrich, 2018). Additionally, the strength of global free-market capitalism is such that any shift towards alternative paradigms may prove disastrous to an economy that, while currently ranked third globally in terms of nominal GDP, struggles to reconcile the 1991 collapse of its domestic markets.

Yet, suppose the Japanese State *is* to effect meaningful changes in its shadow education system. In that case, it may do so by gradually diminishing the influence of a competition-generating examination system that continues to engender economic and, indeed, psychological strain amongst its citizens. Further, while economic liberalisation operates through State nonintervention and open marketisation, it is suggested here that MEXT formally regulate the *juku* industry as part of its learning ecology. In doing so, the Ministry may enact meaningful price controls for households struggling to reconcile the terms of an implicit social debt beyond their economic means. Indeed, considering Japan's tax-generating supplementary education industry earned approximately US\$20.3 billion in 2015 alone (Yano Research Institute, 2016), it is 'rational'

that the State reinvests a portion of those taxes in the human capital expected to contribute to the future development of the nation (MEXT, 2003). Of course, MEXT would also be wise to enhance its curricula with specific regards to content provided by shadow education—notably test preparation, English communication skills, and courses aimed at easing school-to-work transitions. By incorporating that which is deemed necessary to its neoliberal economy, Japan would encourage a more open and candid national curriculum but, perhaps more importantly, increase public confidence in its public education system, thereby negating the supposed requirement for *juku* investment in the first place.

Word count: 9,994 (excluding abstract and keywords)

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ⁱ However, given the noted decline in birth per capita and long-term recession brought on by the collapse of Japan's bubble economy, this is changing.

ⁱⁱ Emphasis added.

ⁱⁱⁱ Original emphasis.

^{iv} Emphasis added.

^v Emphasis added.

^{vi} Original emphasis.

^{vii} Emphasis added.