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ABSTRACT

The tracking system is a core aspect of the educational stratification in schooling. This document examined the applicability of the tracking system concept by utilizing an indepth case study of an informal educational institution, the yobiko, in Japan where high schools employ an institutionalized tracking system. Data collection methods included participant observations, unstructured interviews, self-administered questionnaires, and composition writings. Seventy-two students were interviewed. Findings indicate that there is a correspondence between the tracking system of high schools and the tracking system in the yobiko, and it is explained in terms of different "ideal-types" of high schools. The tracking system in the yobiko tends to affect students' perspective on their life and college education. Self-evaluation is affected by the tracking system of both high schools and the yobiko. The findings in this study offer some ambivalent evidence to the controversy between revisionist and meritocratic views of tracking: the study, however, did not utilize the very important variable of family background. (32 references) (SI)

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Tracking System and the Informal Education in Japan

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Introduction One way that individuals are stratified in society is by educational system. The educational system will shape their choice in career in the future and self-evaluation. The tracking system is a core aspect of the educational stratification in schooling.

The Japanese society is called a credential society, or "Gakureki Shakai" (Amano, 1984; Aso, 1983; and Ushiogi, 1978). It is a credential society not only in that educational credentials differentiate individuals in economic return but also in that the hierarchy of higher educational institutions makes an important difference in prestige and employment opportunities for their graduates. In addition, the social prestige of given credentials is an important aspect of self-identity for those who are involved in the entrance examination competitions (Iwata, 1979; Kajita, 1985; and Mimizuka, 1982). The credentials themselves are a status symbol for individuals in the Japanese society besides the economic values of the credentials (Amano, 1983).

This paper examines a process of the educational system by utilizing a case study of an informal educational institution, the yobiko. The Japanese educational system is described as the tracking system in a broad sense (Fujita,1980). Especailly, high schools are an institutionalized tracking system (Iwaki and Mimizuka,1983). A yobiko was investigated to examine the relationship between the tracking system of high schools and tracking in the yobiko, the effect of the tracking upon students there in their perspectives on the present and future careers, and the relationship between these two types of tracking system and self-evaluation.

Rosembaum (1976) defines tracking as "...any school selection system that attempts to homognize classroom placements in terms of students' personal qualities, performances, or aspiration. Thus, tracking is a general term that includes both ability grouping and curriculum grouping and emphasizes their social similarities."(1976:6)

Studies on tracking showed contradictory findings and competing interpretations. One group of researchers (Alexander, Cook, and McDill 1978; Heyns, 1974; Sharon and Haller 1981) suggested that the relationship between family background and tracking are largely, though perhaps not entirely, spurious. By contrast, the other group of researchers argue that tracking is an institutionalized discriminatory mechanism to effectively exclude children with lower socioeconomic background and thus tracking is a class-biased system for those with high socioeconomic background (Hout and Garnier 1979; Bowles and Gintis 1976;and Oakes 1986). Some emphasize the role of tracking independent of the effect of family background (Rosembaum 1976; and Breton 1970). Others (Nachmias 1980) point out the differences in two educational systems in different communities in terms of the effect of tracking in Israel.

Two competing views,the revisionist view and the meritocratic view, made different arguments concerning the role of choice in process, the role of guidance counselors, and the end result of these processes (Davis and Haller 1981). The revisionist view argues

that students' choice plays only a minor role in the process and the assignment of the students to tracks has class-related criteria. But the guidance counselors play an important role in assigning students into tracks and tend to "cool-out" lower-class students and lead them to choose the lower level of tracks. Due to this process, the results of tracking will be related to family background.

By contrast, the meritocratic view argues that students freely choose their track placement in a crude version of it or student's choice is a function of many factors, one of the most important of which is aspirations for further education. The guidance cousenlor plays an important role in providing students with accurate information about their educational and occupational opportunities and unbiased assessment of their academic ability. The final placement of students serves to tighten the link between ability and aspirations, and school curricula and to loosen the link between home background and school instruction.

The concept of tracking was applied to investigate high schools in Japan. Mimizuka (1986) argues that there are two types of tracking system in connection with high schools in Japan. One is the tracking system of high schools and the other is the tracking system in school.

It is argued that school organization and teachers' perspectives would affect students in a given high school controlling for the school's position in the tracking system of high schools (Matsubara et al 1980; and Mimizuka, Kariya, and Hida 1981). These differences in school organization and teachers'perspectives will affect students in career formation. The higher the "academic differentiation" in school organization, the larger the "polarization" of aspiration on the part of students. The "academic differentiation" in school organization is a kind of tracking system in the school which make students form their "self-concept of academic ability" so that students will either "warm-up" or "cool-out" their academic aspiration according to the self-concept of academic ability. But if the "academic differentiation " will not function well, then the "polarization" of aspiration on the part of students does not work effectively, either.

In combination with school organization, terachers' perspectives will affect the process of the "academic differentiation". If teachers are involved in encouraging the "academic differentiation" in teaching and guidance, then the "polarization" of aspiration on the part of students will prevail.

Yoshimoto (1984) argues that the tracking system of high schools is much more influential than the tracking in the schools in Japan. Differences in the self-concept of academic ability and "academic differentiation" are much larger between high schools of different level in a given region than those within the schools. Students would receive the treatment of "academic differentiation" in their respective high schools and they tend to be "labelled" as such according to the social prestige of the schools in the region outside the schools.

The literature on the high school tracking system

in Japan are all concerned with high schools and universities. They do not deal with an important linkage between high schools and universities, that is, the yobiko although substantive percentage of high school graduates who entered relatively prestigious universities did so by way of becoming ronin. Only one article in Kyoiku Shakaigaku Kenkyu dealt with the yobiko since the time the journal was established.

This study attempts to assess the applicability of the concept of tracking system by utilizing an in-depth case study of an informal educational institution in Japan.

Theoretical Orientation and Methodology. Studies on the tracking system have been conducted mainly by survey employing preconstructed questionnaires. The survey methods tend to fail to understand actors' view point or social reality simply because the questionnaire were contructed by the predetermined concepts or existing theories with a small pretest of sample. On the basis of the preconceptualized ideas, the construction of "student culture" may be misleading or biased. We should "sensitizing" our concepts to understand actors' views, especially when the subjects of study have not yet been well explored yet.

Blumer (1969) argues that we should employ two steps of investigation: exploration and inspection. In the "exploration" phase, the researcher attempts to obtain a close and comprehensive acquaintance with a sphere of social life which is unfamiliar and hence unknown to him. Second, in the "inspection" phase, he should develop, focus, and sharpen his investigation so that the research problem is formed and investigated intensively. Through these two modes of inquiry the research will be able to be "sensitizing" the concepts which the researcher encounters as emrged ideas in the process of doing his fieldwork.

The methods of participant observation and unstructured interviews are appropriate for unexplored research areas (Berstein 1983; Gray 1973; and Leibow 1967). The purpose of these methods is to gain an insiders' account of a social phenomenon instead of imposing a social scientist's predetermined categories of concepts upon the actors in understanding them (Schwarts and Jacobs 1979:4-33). For example, Rohlen (1974) conducted participant observation and unstructured interviews in a Japanese bank. His goal was "...to explore, illustrate, and interpret the vocabularies of daily, particular reality as found in the company's organization and as given in the explanations and actions of Uedagin people "(Rohlen, 1974:2-3). In this way ronin students and their views will be explored, illustrated, and interpreted best by participant observation and in-depth interviews with ronin themselves in natural settings since this topic has not yet been well explored.

Unstructured interviews with ronin students were mainly conducted at a coffee shop where we could have no interruption from the others there. In Japanese society, coffee shops are places where people are likely to stay long enough to do their business or to read over a cup of coffee.

The author revealed his identity as a researcher to his

subjects at the beginning of the interview although he was an instructor of English in the yobiko and taught several classes there. The role of being an instructor did not prevent ronin students from talking freely since the instructor in the yobiko does not have any power to offically evaluate his students. Instead, he is always being evaluated by his students and the staff of the yobiko. The researcher could engage in chatt-like unstructured interviews despite his role of being an instructor.

The primary data collection methods were participant observation and unstructured interviews athough other methods were employed to supplement the former methods. They include the self-administered questionnaires,personal statement of their life, and analysis of students' file in the yobiko. For this paper, data collected by participant observation, unstructured interviews, self-administered questionnaires and composition writings were utilized.

The fieldwork started August, 1985 and ended in August, 1986 with a pilot study of interviewing with tweleve ronin students late in Aprial and early in May, 1985. The total number of ronin students who were interviewed at least one time was 72. About 20 of them were contacted more than twice. In the first week of December, 1985 the self-administered questionnaires were conducted to all the ronin students attending classes with regard to the important research questions emerged in the process of the fieldwork since April, 1985. All the questions were reviewed by several staff of the yobiko and several key informants among ronin students. They confirmed that all the questions in the questionnaire were reasonable and important to them.

In summary, an idea of "triangulation" was employed to collect data in the fieldwork. For the qualitative data, participant observation. unstructured interviews, and composition writings were used to describe and interpret ronin students' social reality and views. For the quantative data, the self-administered questionnaire was conducted to all the ronin students to extend the generalizability of the findings in qualitative data collection.

Research Setting. The yobiko is an informal educational institution where those who failed to pass the college entrance examination stay to study for additional year as the preparation for the entrance examination. Those students in the yobiko are called, the yobiko students, ronin students, or ronin. In this paper they are referred to as ronin students. They are neither high school students nor college or university students. The are ronin students to prepare themselves for the college entrance examination for the next year.

The curricular in the yobiko are all organized for the purpose of the entrance examination. Students are assigned to different classes to attend according to their academic achievement scores of the yobiko's tests. In other words, the classes are organized as the tracking system. Ronin students study texts of different level on each subject depending upon the tracks to which they are assigned. The quality of teachers in

the yobiko is not different across the different classes. Teachers are more or less randomly assigned to classes to teach according to their preference for time and the level of the classes, and combination of texts.

The total number of ronin students was 222,929 throughout Japan (Ikeda and Yabana 1982). This yobiko is a Hiroshima branch whose main branch is located in a larger city in another area. The total number of ronin students of this yobiko is 1,999. This yobiko is one of the three largest yobiko in Japan. In this paper this yobiko is called "Hiroshima Seminar".

"Hiroshima Seminar" is located in Hiroshima city. Hiroshima city is particularly chosen to do research because a yobiko there may represent an average yobiko in Japan, not confining ones in metoropolitan areas. "Hiroshima Seminar" is appropriate one since it is a branch of the three largest yobiko in Japan, not a local one in Hiroshima city. Hiroshima city is the center of Shikoku and Chugoku areas. "Hiroshima Seminar" in Hiroshima city can recruit students from various places in these two areas, sourth-west part of Japan. (See Figure 1)

Tracking System of High Schools and Tracking System in the Yobiko The relationship between the tracking system of high schools and the tracking system in the yobiko will be discussed in this section. The tracking system of high schools are institutionalized in the contemporary Japanese society. It is due to the hierarchy of high schools according to the homogenious student body as a result of a unified entrance examination to high schools.

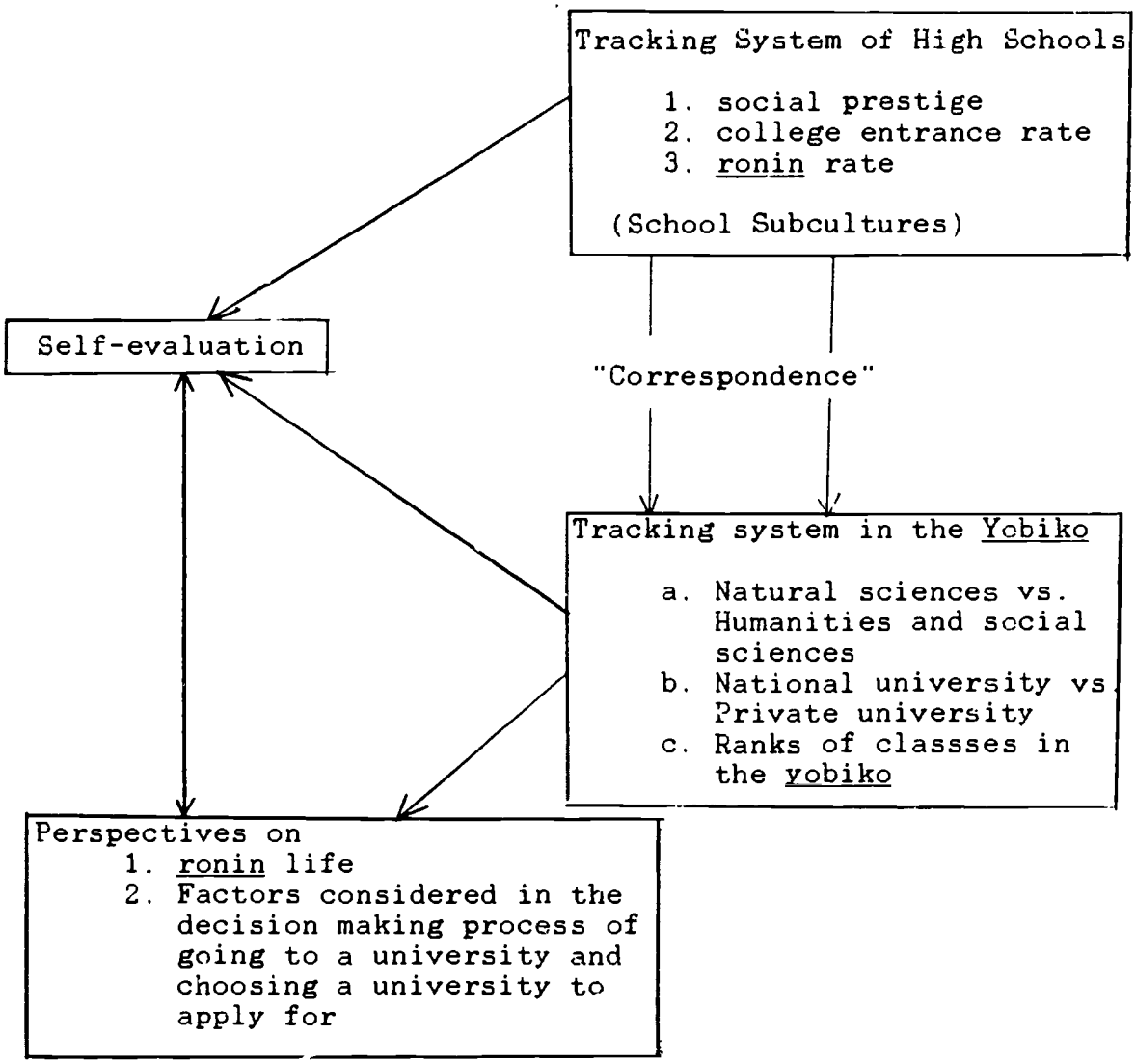
The tracking system in the yobiko is employed as a means of grouping ronin students according to their achievement scores. At the entrance to the yobiko they take a "screening" test and take another test to re-organize the classes in the summer time. On the basis of these two tests, students are placed into different classes. This tracking system in the yobiko is a clear-cut ranking of ronin students.

The research questions here are what is the relationship between these two tracking systems, and how the former tracking reflects in the latter one in the yobiko. These questions will be discussed as the "effects" of the tracking system of high schools upon that in the yobiko. Three aspects of the characteristics of high schools are used as variables to describe high schools in the tracking system. They include (1) social prestige of high schools, (2) college entrance rate, and (3) ronin rate of high schools. After discussing the relationship between these three variables of high schools and the tracking system in the yobiko, the subcultures of "ideal-types" of high schools will be explored to provide some illusrative data to account for why the relationship between two tracking systems correspond to each other by referring to ronin students' own descriptions of their former high schools.

Three tabular analyses of the relationship between the ranks of classes in the yobiko and the characteristics of high schools which ronin students graduated from indicate a "correspondence" between the tracking system of high schools and the tracking

Figure 1

An Analytic Framework



system in the yobiko (see Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3) The higher the social prestige of high schools they graduated from, the higer the ranks of classes they will be assigned to. Second, the higher the college entrance rate, the higher the ranks of classes. Third, the higher the ronin rate, the higher the ranks of classes. These findings can be interpreted as indicating that those who entered prestigious high schools by the entrance examination to senior high schools are likely to maintain or even improve their academic ability for the entrance examiantion more than those who entred less prestigous high schools. In this sense, the students of less prestigious high schools will not expect to exceed their fromer classmates in their junior high school who entered more prestigious high schools through high school education on the average even though the improvement of an individual's academic ability can vary depending upon his way of spending his three years of high school.

School Subcultures in the Tracking System of High Schools. Tabular analyses of the characteristics of high schools and the tracking system in the yobiko indicates that there is a "correspondence" between the tracking system of high schools and the tracking system in the yobiko. School subcultures of different high schools will be described illustratively and hypothetically to account for why the correspondence between two systems are likely to exist by referring to ronin students' accounts of their former high schools. It is hypothesized that the school subcultures perceived by students would promote particular social stituation in which students are socialized in a particular way in terms of the college entrance examination preparation during their schooling period. Here school subcultures are described as far as students pereceived and interpreted as their social reality despite their biases or mistakes in refelction. The objective school organization and teachers' perspectives are not discussed simply because all the illustrations came from ronin students.

Through an analysis of filed notes on the descriptions of high school which ronin students graduated from, five "ideal-types" of high schools can be described in respective characteristics in connection with the entrance examination. These five "ideal-type"of high schools include "private-super-elite" high school, "national-liberal" high school, "urban-public" high school, "local-elite" high school, and "marginal-average" high school.

"Private-super-elite" high school is basically boys' high school with an almost 100% college entrance's rate and more than 50% ronin rate. Because of its success in sending its graduates to Tokyo University and Kyoto University, which are the best universities in Japan, it wins a nation-wide reputation for it as described in a list of "famous high schools" in a special issue of weekly magazine which annually covers who entered the most prestigious universities by the names of high schools.

The school is organized for the college entrance examination. It used a faster curriula and will finish all high school materials by the end of the junior year of high school so that students in this type of high school will spend a whole year for the purpose of entrance examination. The dominant school

culture there implies that if they cannot enter a prestigious university, they will be looked down upon by their peers. The core of self-identify is academic ability so that students evaluate others in terms of academic ability. That is the most important thingin their lives. This perspective is shared by their teachers. A typical example of this type of high school is Nada described by Rohlen (1983).

"National-liberal-elite" high school is a national coeducational high school with an almost 100% college entrance rate and more than 50% ronin rate. The school is not necessarily organized for the entrance examination. But the dominant student culture is centered around the importance of academic ability so that students there aspire to enter as prestigious a university as possible. Though teachers do not teach students explicitly for the purpose of the entrance examination, students study hard individually because of their pride in themselves. It wins social prestige because it is affiliated with a national university in a given area.

"Public-urban" high school is a coeducational public high school in urban areas. Because of liberal reforms or emphasis on equality in education in this type of high school, the school is not organized for the entrance examination. Teachers there teach students what school texts say, not beyond it. Students may have applied for "private-super-elite" or "national-liberal-elite" high school but they failed to pass it. As their alternative choice they attend the high school. Students do not aspire to aim at the most prestigious universities but a national university or famous private universities. Academic ability is one aspect of their self-identify, but they enjoy their high school life with some preparation for the entrance examination. So that the school's college entrace rate and ronin rate are as high as those of "private-super-elite" or "national-liberal-elite' high school. Students ther regard being ronin their fourth year of high school as a natural thing.

"Public-local-elite" high school is a coeducational high school in a local city. It wins the highest prestige in the local area because of its history and number of sending its graduates to national universities in the local area. Though its college entrance rate is high and its ronin rate is substantively lower than the above three types of high schools. Due to "rigid" counselling as to which university students should apply for in order to avoid becoming ronin, they will apply for their "appropriate" universities and the majority of them will pass them. The school is organized for the entrance examination with supplementary classes during vacations to compete with elite high schools in urban areas. Teachers are especially conscious of the reputation of their high schools in terms of the number of their students who entered national universities in a given local area. Unlike "public-urban" high school, the academic ability is valued a great deal among students and teachers.

"Marginal-average" high school is an average high school in Japan. The college entrants' rate is about 40% and only a few of students become ronin. The school is not necessarily organized for the entrance examination. Teachers do not expect their students to enter prestigious universities but to enter local

national universities and private universities at best. The half of the students in this type of high school will seek for employment after graduation so that teachers cannot teach their students for the purpose of the entrance examination and students do not listen to their teachers with eargerness.

These five 'ideal-types" of high schools may explain why there is a corespondence between the tracking of high schools and the tracking in the yobiko. First, those graduates from "private-super-elite" and "national-liberal-elite" high schools were selected by highly competitive entrance examinations either at their entrance examination to junior high school or at the one to senior high school so that they were already bright students in terms of entrance examination ability from the beginning of high school.

Second, the fact that they were selected as elite high school students at very early stage in their life made them take pride in their academic ability which sometimes is the core of the value of their identity. Their pride in academic ability enabled them to keep up with others in a competitive entrance exam-oriented school subculture so that they made steady progress in academic achievement during their high school days.

Third, instructions in classes in these elite high schools are primarily organized for the entrance examination. Curricula in "private-super-elite" high school is especially faster than the other types of high schools. Teachers are explicit to teach technical and relevant knowledge for the entrance examination in the same way in which the yobiko teachers teach in the yobiko.

Fourth, the dominant subculture in elite high schools put emphasis upon competition in the entrance examination as means to evaluate students as "the whole person". In this subculture the academic ability is so internalized as the only criterion to evaluate others. There is also a mechanism by which students and teachers know who is better than who in terms of academic ability through practice of ordering their seats according to the ranking ofacademic ability or posting the ranks of the test scores on the board whenever the results of the test come out.

Up to here the relationship between the tracking system of high schools and the tracking system in the yobiko has been discussed. The next topic will be concerned with the effect of the tracking system in the yobiko upon ronin students in their perspectives on ronin life and decision making process of going to a university and choosing a university to apply for.

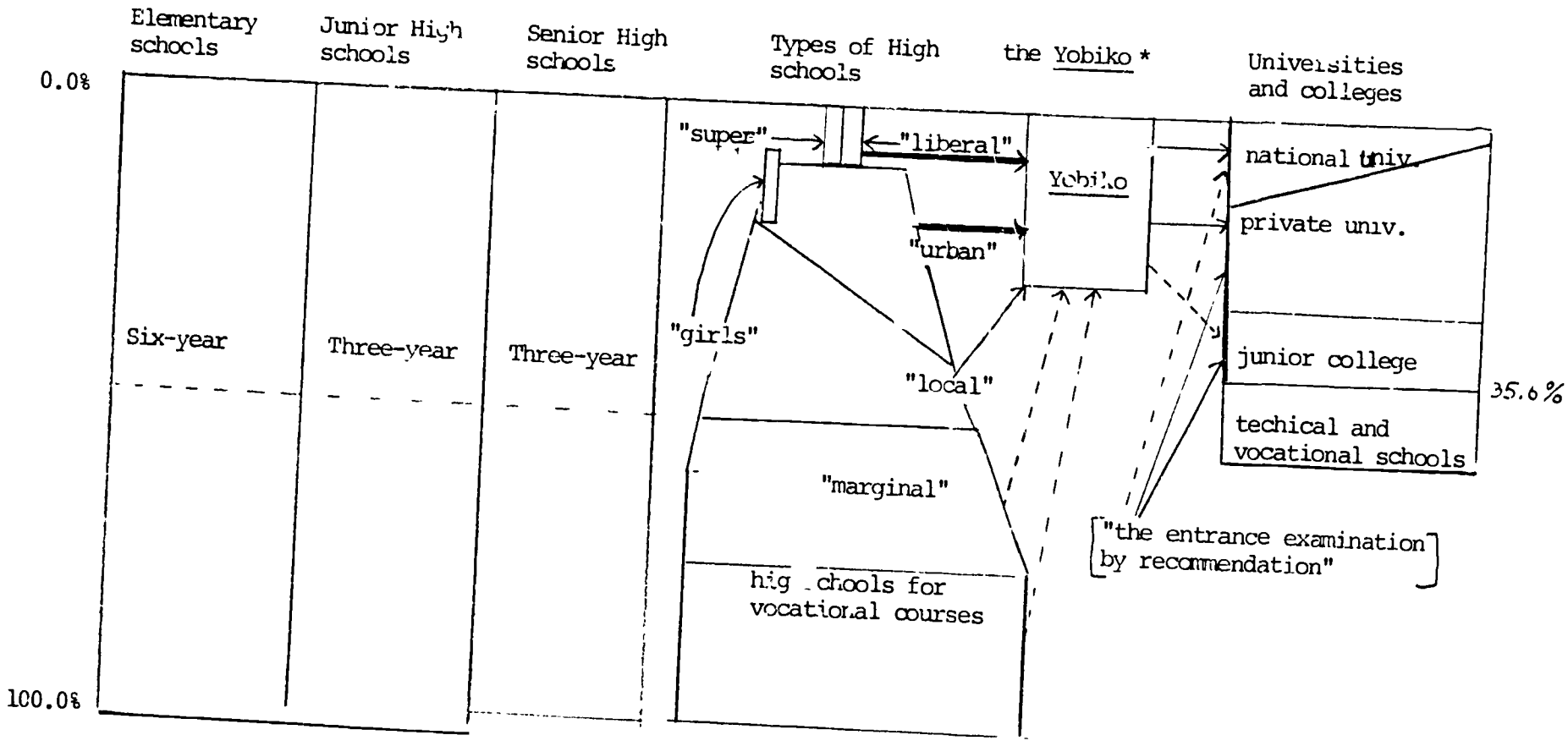
The Effect of "Tracking" in the Yobiko upon Ronin Students

In this section the effect of "tracking" upon ronin students in their perspectives will be explored. Through a statistical analysis of the responses in the questionnaire, we will investigate the effect of "tracking".

The effect of three types of "tracking" upon ronin students were examined to see which type of "tracking" affect them most and how they are affected. Three types of "tracking" are 1. "Tracking" by hope, 2."Tracking" by type, and 3."Tracking" by rank. Although these three types of "tracking" are interrelated with one another, they should be analyzed differently.

Figure 2.

SCHEMATIC UNDERSTADING: The Position of the Yobiko in the Japanese Educational System



*NOTE: A typical sex-composition of ronin students is that about 20% of them are females and about 80% are males so that this percentage will be bigger if it is confined to male ronin students.

Table 4

A Summary of five "Ideal-types" of high schools

	1."super"	2."liberal"	3."urban"	4 "local"	5."marginal"
social prestige	High	High	Middle	Middle	Low
college entrance rate	High	High	High	High	Low
ronin rate	High	High	High	Low	Low
Instruction	Exam-oriented faster-curriculum	Exam-oriented	Texts	Exam-oriented supple-mentary classes	Not-Exam-oriented
School climate	"dark" "wild"	"liberal" "indivi-listic"	"enjoyable" "relaxed"	"dark" "strict"	"fun" "play"
guidance	free	free	free	strict	free
university to aim at	top	top	national and private universities	local national univ.	any univ.
reasons for ronin	to enter a more prestigiou univ.	to enter a more prestigiou univ.	as natural thing the fourth year of high school	to enter a more presti-gious	no univ. to have passed

1. "Tracking" by hope means that ronin students are grouped into roughtly two course eitner for natural sciences or humanities and social sciences. This "tracking" is concerned with a horizontal classfication of ronin students without considering a vertical classification in terms of their academic achievement.

2. "Tracking" by type is that classes in the yobiko are organized either for national universities or for private universities. In this "tracking" a vertical classification them may be taken into account in terms of academic ability since national universities tend to be more difficult to enter than private universities in general in Japan. But this "tracking" does not depend soley upon the academic ability but rather upon the choice of ronin students some time in their early schooling considering the number of subjects required for the entrance examination or their family financial situation. In this paper, this "tracking" is dealt with controlling for achievement scores.

3. "Tracking" by rank is constructed according to the academic ability of ronin students in the yobiko. Each rank in this "tracking" by rank is purely based upon test scores. Thus, it is a vertical grouping of students by academic achievement.

Table 5 shows ronin students' perspective on ronin life Among three types of "tracking", "tracking" by rank distinguish them whereas the other types of "tracking" do not. In Table 5.a and Table 5.b, the rank order of the mean scores for each equestion items is idential between "Natural Sciences" and "Humanities and social sciences" and between "National university" and "Private university" However,"tracking" by rank detected a consistent tendency among different ranks. The higher the rank of classes, the higher the mean scores in positive views on ronin life and the higher the rank of classes, the lower the scores in negative views on ronin life (see Table 5.c)

Table 6 displays the mean scores for question items regarding reasons for going to a univerity by "tracking". Table 6.a indicates that those in "natural sciences" tended to emphasize the importance of "job-related reasons" whereas those in "humanities and social sciences" tend to indicate the value of "college-life related reasons". Table 6.b shows that those in "national university" are more conscious of "job-related reasons" than those in "private university". In terms of "tracking" by rank, Rank 1 and Rank 5, that is, the highest and the lowest in academic ability, have similar tendency by stressing the importance of 'college-life related reasons" although the former would say "to improve my self before working" and the latter would say "to enjoy youth before working". Those in the middle ranks are more concious of "job-related reasons" (see Table 6.c).

Table 7 shows the mean scores for each question item as to reason for applying for a more prestigious university. The rank order of mean scores in Table 7.a and Table 7.b are the same between those 'tracking" by hope and type. It can be said that ronin students tend to stress the importance of "credentialism" over "rivlary feeling" toward their former high school classmates regardless of "tracking" by hope and type.

"Tracking" by rank revealed some variation among ronin students. More of those in Rank 1 responded that they would

apply for a more prestigious university "to prove their real ability to others" than those in the other ranks. In other words, in those the highet rank regard entering a prestigious university as an end itself. In terms of "rivarly feeeling" the lower the ranks, the higher the score in this item. This is interpreted as indicating that those in a lower rank tend to apply for a more prestigious university by being conscious of their former classmates who entered their "appropriate" universities.

Table 8 displays the mean scores concerning factors considered in choosing a university to apply for as the first choice. In Table 8.a "tracking" by hope does not detect any variation between these in "natural sciences" and those in "humanities and social sciences". Table 8.b shows that those in "private university" tend to consider the reputation of the university and its location more than those in "national university". In Table 8.c ronin students across of different academic ranks are likely to indicate their "longing for a particular university" and "their interest" as the important factors considered in choosing a university to apply for. Those in the highest rank are least likely to consider "the entrance exam-related factors" such as "appropriate one for my academic ability," "required subjects" or "to terminate ronin life" than those in the other ranks. It is simply because those in the highest rank have achieved the highest academic ability so that they can apply for any university to suit their interest and to fulfil their hope without considering these "the entrance exam-related factors".

The findings in the nation-wide survey are consistent with our findings regarding factors considered in the decison making process of going to a university and choosing a university to apply for with slight differences due to the differences between two samples and research designs (see Table 9).

First, our sample does not include those in "private university and natural sciences" courses. But the findings both studies indicate that those in "natural sciences" tend to be job-oriented whereas those in "humanities and social sciences" are likely to be more college-life oriented

Second, the findings in both studies shows that those in "private university" are likely to consider " the prestige of the university" or "color of the university" or " its location" more than those in "national university". This is especially true of those in 'private university and humanities or social sciences".

In summary, it is argued that ronin students in the tracking system in the yobiko tend to different perspectives on their ronin life and factors considered in the decision making process of going to a university and choosing a university to apply for due to their respective position in the tracking system. "Tracking" by rank seems the most important predictor about their perspectives on ronin life. "Tracking" by hope and type show some variation as to reasons for going to a university. Those in "national university and natural sciences" are most concerned with jobs, though lesser degree among those in "national university and humanities or social sciences". Those in "private university and humanities or social sciences" tend to regard college life as " the enjoyment before working".

The tracking system may affect self-evaluation or self-esteem (Rosembaum, 1976). In the next section, the effect of the tracking system of high schools and the tracking system in the yobiko upon ronin students will be described by referring to the field notes on interviews and observation about them.

Self-Evaluation and "Tracking" Both the tracking system of high schools and the tracking system in yobiko contribute to shaping ronin students' self-evauation in general. At the early period of ronin life they tend to view others in terms of the high schools which they graduated from. If the high school is prestigious, then the ronin students from this particularly prestigious high school are viewed with respect by other classmates when they know one another. The name of the high school tend to function as a status symbol for them.

The stereotypes of students of "elite" high school were cosntructed by it social prestige because of its historical tradition and its social reputation of sending their graduates to prestigious universities. The results of each high school in the entrance examination are so visible to all involved such as high school students, teachers and parents the they can share the same "ranking" view of each high school.

This shared ranking of high schools are also strengthened by the entrance examination to high schools. In a given prefecture applicants take one unified entrance examination in order to enter public high schools. The test scores in the unified examination and academic record in junior high schools are considered for each high school to select the applicants. In the couselling guidance home teaches (not academic couselor like in the United States) tend to "slice " their students by their relative rankings in the combined scores to let them pass their appropriate senior high schools. Consequently students know the relative ranks of the high school they are applying for. By the time students enter their high school, they know the hierarchical rankings of high schools.

Each school facilitates particular modal subculture of its own due to the homogenity of its students in academic achivement. As discussed earlier, "elite" high schools are designed to prepare for the college entrance examination. The school as a whole is organized for the purpose of the entrance examination. With high value on academic achivement or identity, those students in "elite" high schools tend to foster a sense of superiority over those students in high schools which are ranked lower than their own. By contrast, those who entered high schools ranked lower tend to conceive a sense of inferiority toward them.

In addition of being conscious of the names of high schools they graduated from, ronin students are conscious of the ranks of classes in the yobiko as a status symbol. Those in the class of higher ranks will show their sense of superiority whereas those in the class of lower ranks tend to express their sense of inferiority. These feelings are confirmed every time they take a "mock examination' and see its result. In "Hiroshima Seminar" they are expected to take at least five "mock exams" to assess their progress in academic achievement and to think of a

university to apply for.("Hiroshima Seminar" 1985).

Every ronin student knows the relative rank of each class to which he is assigned because class assignment is done according to the test scores of one placement test at the entrance to "Hiroshima Seminar". When ronin students mention their class names, others look at them as such in terms of academic achievement since the rank of academic ability is the most important and the yobiko is organized around that value.

Those in " the private university" are likely to show a sense of inferiority toward those in " the national university". They would think that they gave up studying some subjects out of the seven required for the national common examination at some time in the process of schooling prior to ronin life. They did so because they became poor in some of subjects, usually mathematics. If they are poor in mathematics, they cannot expect to enter a prestigious national university. They may think that they would rather go to a prestigious private university instead of a local national university. But still they tend to feel a sense of inferiority toward those in "national university" course simply because they could not study all the seven subjects required for the national common examination.

Thus, both the tracking system of high schools and the tracking system in the yobiko affect ronin students in self-evaluation. In other words, which high school that they graduated from and which class that they are assigned to in the yobiko will shape how they are viewed by others as well as how they view others because the academic ability is so institutionalized as the only means to evaluate others in the yobiko. For ronin life is basically a special life in which everyone tries to improve their academic ability to pass the exam of the university of their choice.

Discussion and Conclusions Our findings showed that there is "correspondence" between the tracking system of high schools and the tracking system in the yobiko. This correspondence can be partially explained by different "ideal-types" of high schools Second, they indicated that the tracking system in the yobiko tends to affect their perspectives on their life and college education. Three types of "tracking" were examined for this purpose. "Tracking" by rank was the most important grouping of ronin students in "polarizing" them. Third, the tracking system of high schools and that in the yobiko may affect self-evaluation on the part of ronin students.

Ronin life analyzed can be called "the process of differentiation of individuals". Through the tracking system of high schools and the tracking system in yobiko, ronin students have been differentiated in terms of academic ability. They recognize their relative position in the academic ability by taking a series of "mock examinations" for the entrance examination during ronin life.

The relative position in academic ability is highly visible due to the way they receive their results of "mock exams". Each student's score is "standarized" to be comparable one another so that each one knows his relative academic position in each "mock exam" and estimates his possibility of passing into a particular

university by consulting with the information data on the rankings of all the universities and colleges in Japan. This kind of information data is collected by the yobiko or the other education industry by way of computerized caliculation of a large number of "mock exam" results.

In the yobiko test scores of each "mock exam" are so institutionalized as a means to evaluate ronin students that they are all concerned with them. As a routine practice, the names of those who did well in a given "mock exam" are announced in the yobiko's pamphlet and are posted on the board of the yobiko. Each ronin talks about his test score among friends so that they know who has better test scores. The test scores of each "mock exam" are criteria to evaluate others as "persons". They will provide ronin students with an indictor of whether or not they will pass the entrance examination of a prestigious university. In ronin life whether or not they pass a prestigious university is the most important concern to everyone.

With this high degree of visibility of relative position in academic hierarchy, those who have been doing poorly in "mock exam" will be "cooled-out" their ambition to enter a particular university whereas those who have been doing well in it will feel like achieving their goal of passing the exam of university of their first choice.

Goffman (1962) argues that when a person may be involuntarily deprived of his position or involvement and mad something that is considered a lesser thing to be, a person may be "cooled-out" with some arrangement. This is the process of how persons adapt to their process of failing or failures.

Applying Goffman's concept of "cooling-out" to the function of junior colleges in the United States, Clark (1960) articulates the process of "cooling-out" overambitious students in junior colleges. First, the junior college provide students with pre-entrance test by which they will be able to classify the students. The second step is a counselling interview in which the counselors encourage the students to choose the proper courses and classes. The next step is a major step in reorienting the students by utilizing impersonal means such as showing them previous grades and test scores and trying to make the students engage in self-assessment of their proper courses. The final step will be arranged in such a way that the students can also believe it is best for them to choose their proper course as advised by teachers and counselors (Clark, 1960:572-574).

This concept of "cooling-out" can be applied to ronin students of differentiation with the high visibility fo relative position in academic hierarchy. Except for the less important role played by the yobiko counseling staff for ronin students, they tend to be "cooled-out" their elevated hope in the beginning of ronin life and try to apply for the appropriate university to enter as their first choice one by way of recognizing thier "real" academic ability in a series of "mock exam" (impersonal means) and believe that it is better for them to enter their appropriate university than to repeat ronin life.

Not all of ronin students are "cooled-out" their ambition. Some cannot help repeating ronin life again because they do not take any safe university to enter and did not enter any university

at all. Others realize their ambition or goal successfully. For this successfull ronin students, ronin life is the process of achieving the goal. They succeed in it by making the most of the yobiko, especially the entrance exam-oriented instructions there which are likely to be more effective and efficient than those in high schools.

The ronin life can be also called "the process of legitimation of social stratification," or more specifically of the hierarchy of universities at individual's psychology. Self-evaluation is made according to the differentiation of academic ability since it tends to be the most important criterion to evaluate others in ronin life. Self-evaluation is justified in the process of either "cooling-out" or "achieving".

This process of ronin life is similar to that of high school which has "rigid school organization" and "exam-oriented teachers' perspectives" discussed in three pairs of case studies of high schools (Mimizuka, Hida, and Kariya, 1981). The more the differentiation, the more the polarization on the part of high school students. Consequently, those high schools with "high differentiation" produced a smaller number of ronin students out of their graduates. These two processes are true of ronin students in yobiko. The differentiation may function more effectively for ronin students in the yobiko than high schools. Ronin students tend to think that they do not have another chance to take. Second, they have realized how much or little they can study in one year. Third, they think that they have suffered enough from anxiety of uncertanity of the college entrance examintion by the end of ronin life.

The yobiko basically contributes to reproducing the tracking system of high schools. Those in high school students in higher tracks tend to enter the yobiko and attempt to realize goals of entering a prestigious university since the school subculures in which they were socialized in their high school encouraged them to aspire to enter more prestigous universities. By contrast, those high school graduates in lower tracks are discouraged from entering the yobiko in the first place and tended to be "cooled-out" their ambitious goal by the results of each "mock exam" since they did not receive effective exam-oriented training in their high school so that they are ranked lower in terms of academic ability.

On the other hand, the yobiko provides ronin students with exam-oriented instructions. Especially, those who have not exposed to such instruction will learn from it and improve their academic ability for the entrance examination substatially. Consequently they may realize their goal which seemed impossible for them in their high school. In this sense, the yobiko is functional and benefitial for those who are willing to study hard but did not know how to study for the entrance examination.

However, the yobiko is basicaly dysfunctional for certain people. First, it is dysfunctional for females since they tend to be given more "stigma" by being ronin. Second, it is also dysfunctinal for those who cannot afford the expensive tuition and other costs of the ronin life.

The yobiko is functional for the society as a whole in terms of stability and legitimation. It functions as a symbol of

opportunity. Those who failed to enter the university of their first choice at their graduation of high school could be given another chance to try. Through ronin life individuals try another chance and convince themselves of their relative position in the hierarchy of universities and thus social stratification to that extent. Thus, the yobiko and ronin experience would contribute to the stability and legitimacy of the social stratification of the Japanese society while stressing equal opportunity for everyone by offering a myth that everyone can make it if he makes efforts.

The findings in this study offer some ambivalent evidence to the controversy between revisionist and meritocratic views of tracking although it did not utilize the most important variable of family background.

In the tracking system of high schools in their past experience, they were "assigned" to their appropriate high schools on the basis of their meritocratic criterion, academic achivement and school academic record. Teachers in junior high schools seem to play an important role as to which senior high school they should apply for but the couseling are likely to be conducted on academic record bases. How about the results of the process of the tracking system of high schools? Two empirial studies on the relationship between family background and entry into prestigious universities indicated the class-biased findings (Kyoiku Kenkyusho 1981 and Amano 1986) Thus, the meritocratic model fits the role of choice and the role of guidance but does not fit the result of the tracking.

The meritocratic view can describe the tracking system in the yobiko better than the revisionist view. Class assigment is done purely based upon test scores. Though staff of the yobiko may have counselling with ronin students, they will not consider it seriously but they will decide on it by themselves consulting the information data on the rankings of universities. The meritocratic model fits the role of class-unbiased choice and the role of guidance in the yobiko. But our study does not have data on the result of the process of the tracking in the yobiko. The tracking process of the high schools and of the yobiko can be described by the meritocratic view but its consequences can be interpreted by the revisionist view.

In order to discuss the controversy of revisionist and meritocratic models, the family background of ronin students have to be investigated in connection with the tracking system whether or not there is any correspondence or correlation between them as further study.

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TABLE 1

Tracks in the Yobiko by the Social Prestige of High Schools (percentage)

High Schools / Tracks	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E	Group F	Group G	Total
Rank 1	45.0	42.4	19.4	1.7	0.7	0.0	3.2	
Rank 2	43.8	31.8	44.4	20.9	15.5	54.2	28.2	
Rank 3	4.5	13.7	23.2	23.7	20.4	20.8	24.8	
Rank 4	6.7	12.1	12.1	40.6	40.6	12.5	31.8	
Rank 5	0.0	0.0	0.9	13.1	22.8	12.5	12.0	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Cases=N	89	66	108	350	303	24	632	1572
%	5.6	4.2	6.9	22.3	19.3	1.5	40.2	100.0

NOTE: High schools from Group A to Group E are ranked according the social prestige. But Group F consists of girls' high schools and cannot be located in the ranking system. Group G consists of high schools outside Hiroshima city so that they cannot be ranked according to social prestige.

TABLE 2

Tracks in the Yobiko by College Entrants' Rate (Percentage)

College Entrants' Rate	Almost 100%	More than 90%	70%-90%	50%-70%	Less than 50%	Total
Tracks Rank 1	16.2	2.7	2.8	3.6	1.3	
Rank 2	36.4	24.7	18.7	18.5	23.7	
Rank 3	18.9	22.9	25.0	25.2	15.8	
Rank 4	21.5	38.8	34.5	34.7	34.2	
Rank 5	7.0	10.9	19.0	18.0	25.0	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Cases=n	525	515	252	167	76	1535
%	34.2	33.5	16.4	10.9	5.0	100.0

TABLE 3

Tracks in the Yobiko by Ronin Rate (Percentage)

Ronin Rate	50%	40%-50%	30%-40%	20%-30%	10%-20%	5%-10%	Little	
Tracks								
Rank 1	25.1	8.4	4.0	2.2	1.5	3.6	0.0	
Rank 2	33.3	31.7	27.1	27.3	24.5	16.1	30.8	
Rank 3	16.0	20.2	25.3	20.9	24.0	28.6	15.4	
Rank 4	18.3	28.6	35.0	34.0	34.1	33.9	28.2	
Rank 5	7.3	11.1	8.6	15.6	15.9	18.8	25.6	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Cases=n	219	262	277	282	208	112	39	1399

TABLE 5

Perspectives on Ronin Life by "Tracking" *

Table 5.a

"Tracking" by Hope	National Univ Natural Sciences (n=805)	National Univ. Humanities and Social Sciences (n=361)
(Positive Views)		
Meaningful to study harder than in high school	3.16	3.20
Enjoyable to make friends	2.91	3.19
Enjoyable to be free from High school	2.65	2.80
(Negative Views)		
Anxious about the entrance examination for the next year	3.71	3.71
Hard life by studying everyday	3.57	3.58
Severe life without any "social status"	3.35	3.34

* NOTE: The scores are calculated by the assigned numbers from "strongly disagree"=1 to "Strongly agree"=5.

TABLE 5

Perspective on Ronin Life by "Tracking"

Table 5.b

"Tracking" by Type	National Univ. (n=1166)	Private Univ. (n=315)
(Positive Views)		
Meaningful	3.17	3.35
Friends	3.03	2,85
Freedom	2.72	2.61
(Negative Views)		
Anxiety	3.69	3.72
Hard studying	3.56	3.63
No social status	3.33	3.23

TABLE 5

Perspectives on Ronin Life by "Tracking"

Table 5.c

"Tracking" by Rank	Rank 1 (n=166)	Rank 2 (n=427)	Rank 3 (n=347)	Rank 4 (n=504)	Rank 5 (n=203)
(Positive Views)					
Friends	3.42	3.09	3.00	2.92	2.74
Meaningful	3.23	3.27	3.22	3.13	3.22
Freedom	2.96	2.77	2.77	2.65	2.39
(Negative Views)					
Anxiety	3.44	3.65	3.71	3.71	3.69
Hard studying	3.35	3.55	3.55	3.62	3.57
No social status	3.16	3.33	3.27	3.39	3.31

TABLE 6

Reason for Going to A University by "Tracking"

Table 6.a

"Tracking" by Hope	National Univ. Natural Sciences	National Univ. Humanities and Social Sciences
To obtain a better job	3.63	3.48
To get a certificate or degree	3.50	3.52
To enjoy youth before working	3.37	3.59
To improve myself before working	3.34	3.48
Friends also go	1.99	1.98
Parents' Advice	1.76	1.71

TABLE 6

Reason for Going to A University by "Tracking"

Table 6.b

"Tracking" by Type	National Univ	Private Univ.
To obtain a better job	3.56	3.39
To get a certificate or degree	3.44	3.03
To enjoy youth before working	3.43	3.79
To improve myself before working	3.40	3.65
Friends also go	1.98	1.95
Parents' advice	1.73	1.70

TABLE 6

Reason for Going to A University by "Tracking"

Table 6.C

"Tracking" by Rank	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5
To improve myself before working	3.53	3.41	3.37	3.48	3.45
To enjoy youth before working	3.43	3.37	3.45	3.62	3.63
To obtain a better job	3.32	3.51	3.59	3.56	3.48
To get a certificate or degree	2.80	3.33	3.46	3.50	3.25
Friends also go	1.87	1.93	2.04	1.99	1.97
Parents' advice	1.63	1.65	1.81	1.72	1.81

TABLE 7

Reason for Applying for a More Prestigious University

Table 7a. by "Tracking"

"Tracking" by Hope	National Univ. Natural Sciences	National Univ. Humanities and Social Sciences
To obtain a better job because of credentialism in Japan	3.36	3.55
To prove my "real ability" to others	3.20	3.11
To show my "superiority" over others	2.75	2.67
To enter a more prestigious university than the one friends went at their graduation of high school	2.95	3.00

TABLE 7

Reason for Applying for a More Prestigious University

by "Tracking"

Table 7b.

"Tracking" by Type	National Univ.	Private Univ.
To obtain a better job because of credentialism in Japan	3.54	3.65
To prove my "real ability" to others	3.20	3.29
To show my "superiority" over others	2.93	3.23
To enter a more prestigious university than the one friends went at their graduation of high school	2.71	2.80

TABLE 7

Reason for Applying for a More Prestigious University

by "Tracking"

Table 7.C

"Tracking" by Rank	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5
To prove my"real ability" to others	3.47	3.32	3.13	3.16	3.13
To obtain a better job because of credentialism in Japan	3.42	3.58	3.53	3.59	3.60
To show my "superiority" over others	2.63	2.86	2.70	2.65	2.75
To enter a more prestigious university than the one friends went at their graduation of high school	2.60	3.00	3.01	2.98	3.18

TABLE 8

Factors considered in Choosing A University to Apply

by "Tracking"

Table 8.a

"Tracking" by Hope	National Univ. Natural Sciences	National Univ.. Humanities and Social Sciences
The university and department have what I want to do	4.05	4.00
Longing for the university	3.80	3.91
The required subjects	3.41	3.30
To get a better job	3.24	3.19
Appropriate one for my academic ability	3.22	3.14
Reputation of the university	2.89	3.00
The name of city the university is located	2.74	2.84
To terminate ronin life	2.55	2.48
The graduates of the university is socially active	2.51	2.56
Commuting from home	1.64	1.73
Parents'advice	1.64	1.66
Friends also go	1.32	1.28

TABLE 8

Factors considered in Choosing a University to Apply

by "Tracking"

Table 8b.

"Tracking" by Type	National Univ.	Private Univ.
The university and the department have what I want to do	4.06	3.87
Longing for the university	3.89	4.33
The required subjects	3.30	3.50
To get a better job	3.24	3.23
Appropriate one for my academic ability	3.19	3.18
Reputation of the university	2.96	3.64
The name of city the university is located in	2.84	3.74
The graduates of the university are socially active	2.58	3.05
To terminate ronin life	2.50	2.69
Parents' advice	1.65	1.50
Commuting from home	1.62	1.20
Friends also go	1.33	1.29

TABLE 8

Factors considered in Choosing A University to Apply

by "Tracking"

Table 8.C

"Tracking" by Rank	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5
Longing for the University	4.39	4.11	3.92	3.83	3.91
The university and the department have what I want to do	4.31	4.07	4.04	3.95	3.90
The name of city the university is located	3.58	3.13	2.63	2.94	3.34
To get a better job	3.39	3.35	3.25	3.15	3.10
Reputation of the university	3.36	3.26	2.96	2.99	3.09
The graduates of the University are socially active	3.17	2.89	2.51	2.54	2.53
Appropriate one for my academic ability	3.08	3.17	3.28	3.15	3.21
The required subjects	2.55	3.27	3.30	3.49	3.63
To terminate ronin life	2.22	2.54	2.42	2.63	2.68
Parents' advice	1.64	1.68	1.62	1.60	1.51
Friends also go	1.60	1.32	1.28	1.29	1.34
Commuting from home	1.14	1.42	1.76	1.64	1.37

TABLE 9

Factors considered in Decision Making Process of Application

by Course *

Course Rank order	National University Humanities and Social Sciences	Positive response (percentage)	National University Natural Sciences	positive response (percentage)
1	Interest and concern	91.6	Interest and concern	93.1
2.	the subjects of either "poor" or "good"	89.3	required subjects	86.8
3.	required subjects	88.5	the subjects of either "poor" or "good"	86.0
4.	rank of the university	85.9	rank of the university	85.6
5.	personality	80.0	personality	81.3
6.	career plan	73.5	professional knowledge	79.6
7.	learning "culture"	66.6	career plan	75.9
8.	professional knowledge	66.4	the content of education and research of the	64.1
9.	to find my life time career	65.2	the facility	61.8
10.	family economic conditions	61.4	to obtain a secure position	56.9
11.	to obtain a secure position	60.5	the employment opportunity	56.8
12.	the employment opportunity	60.1	family economic conditions	54.7
13.	freedom	59.2	to get certificate	54.4
14.	the content of education and research	58.1	learning "culture"	54.2
15.	to get certificate	55.8	reputation	52.5
16.	reputation	50.8	to find my life time career	50.0
17.	"color" of the univ.	48.0	location	49.2
18.	location	48.0	"color" of the univ.	48.9
19.	facility	47.0	freedom	45.4
20.	parents' advice	34.2	commuting from home	31.6
21.	commuting from home	29.5	parents' advice	30.2
22.	teachers' advice	27.8	teachers' advice	24.1
23.	friends' advice	25.2	friends' advice	21.8
24.	parents' occupation	9.7	parents' occupation	9.6
25.	friends also go	8.8	friends also go	7.2

* NOTE: The source of this table is table 4-(15) in Daigaku Shingaku Kenkyu page. 41

TABLE 9

Factors considered in Decision Making Process of Application

by Course

Course	Private University Humanities and Social Sciences		Private University Natural sciences	
Rank Order		Positive response (percentage)		Positive response (percentage)
1.	Interest and concern	85.0	Interest and concern	91.0
2.	rank of the university	83.8	rank of the university	90.2
3.	subjects of either "poor" or "good"	83.7	subjects of either "poor" or "good"	87.5
4.	required subjects	81.7	required subejcts	84.9
5.	"color" of the univ.	69.6	employment opportunity	79.4
6.	freedom	69.3	professional knowledge	77.7
7.	personality	69.0	personality	71.6
8.	reputation	66.1	to obtain a secure position	64.5
9.	career plan	66.0	the content of education and research	63.6
10.	learning "culture"	61.6	career plan	62.7
11.	to obtain a secure	59.9	reputation	60.4
12.	employment opportunity	59.8	"color" of the univ.	59.7
13.	location	58.4	the content of education and research	58.8
14.	to find my life time career	57.3	to find my life time career	57.6
15.	facility	56.2	to get certificate	55.4
16.	professional knowledge	54.6	location	55.0
17.	the content of education and research	53.2	freedom	55.0
18.	to get certificate	42.2	commuting from home	53.6
19.	family economic conditions	39.1	learnig "culture"	50.0
20.	commuting from home	33.6	family economic conditions	41.1
21.	teachers' advice	27.3	parents' advice	26.8
22.	parents' advice	24.9	teachers' advice	25.2
23.	friends' advice	24.7	friends' advice	24.9
24.	friends also go	12.7	parents' occupation	12.2
25.	parents' occupation	10.0	friends also go	11.9