

# Selling successful futures: lived experiences and promotional material of the shingakujuku industry in Tokyo

Author: Lisa Sihvonen  
Supervisor: John Hennessey



## Abstract

This thesis analyzes lived experiences from former juku students as well as promotional material produced by three shingakujuku (Nichinōken, Yotsuya Ōtsuka, Sapix) aimed at the private junior high school entrance examinations in Japan. The research questions aims to investigate the framing of the future and outcome of attending juku as well as how former students reflect on their own experience and their thought process enrolling potential children in juku. In total, nine interviews were conducted with former juku students and then analyzed in order to find shared themes. The thesis uses discourse analysis as the method of analysis and contemplates Hofstede's Power Distance theory as adapted by Tu, et al. (2022) in relation to the material. The thesis finds that former students are mostly able to self-rationalize their experiences and see their attendance as something positive. When contemplating their future children, most expressed a desire to respect their children's wishes and to follow their lead. Seven out of nine interviewees had experience as a teacher at juku, signaling a life-long connection to the industry playing different roles (student, teacher, parent). Regarding the promotional material, the juku link their services with access to private school, skill acquisition, and future possibilities to attract customers.

Keywords: juku, cram school, shadow education, educational marketing, Japanese education, shingakujuku

## Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor John Hennessey for your invaluable feedback, guidance and kindness.

A large thank you to Waseda University and staff for your hospitality and support during my fieldwork. I want to especially thank my Waseda supervisor professor Sugimori for your knowledge, help and dedication. I could not have gathered my material without you.

I am also indebted to Hana and Maaike for helping me find interviewees, and for your support and company in Japan. Thank you Anchana for always inspiring and believing in me.

Thank you to my love and family for always being there and cheering me on. I love you all more than words can say.

Lastly, I want to thank all professors and staff at the center and library for cultivating an inspiring and supportive learning environment these past two years.

Thank you!

# Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
List of figures and tables .....	5
Conventions of language.....	5
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>6</b>
1.1 Aim and research questions .....	9
<b>2. Literature review</b> .....	<b>11</b>
2.1 Academic meritocracy and financial concerns .....	11
2.2 Students' experiences .....	12
2.3 Decision-making process .....	14
<b>3. Theoretical framework</b> .....	<b>15</b>
3.1. Power Distance Belief .....	15
3.2 Power distance belief and educational marketing .....	16
<b>4. Methodology</b> .....	<b>18</b>
4.1 Research design.....	18
4.2 Method .....	18
4.3 Interviews.....	19
4.4 Data collection .....	19
4.5 Limitations and positionality .....	20
4.6 Ethical considerations.....	21
<b>5. Interview data and analysis</b> .....	<b>22</b>
5.1 Interviews.....	22
5.1.1 Juku ranking.....	23
5.1.2 Public/private school divide.....	24
5.1.3 Juku as a positive or negative experience .....	25
5.1.4 Family's influence and choice of juku .....	25
5.1.5 Juku as a social space .....	25
5.1.6 Juku as a part-time job .....	26
5.1.7 Choosing juku again .....	27
5.1.8 Choosing juku for their own children .....	27
5.1.9 University enrollment & career .....	28

5.2 Discussion.....	29
<b>6. Juku sign-up packages.....</b>	<b>31</b>
6.1 Sapix .....	31
6.2 Nichinōken .....	35
6.3 Yotsuya Ōtsuka .....	38
6.4 Comparison .....	41
<b>7. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Appendix .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>60</b>

## List of figures and tables

<b>Figure 1:</b> Explanation of the school system in Japan reprinted from Overview in Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology Japan Retrived 2024-08-11 from <a href="https://www.mext.go.jp/en/policy/education/overview/index.htm">https://www.mext.go.jp/en/policy/education/overview/index.htm</a> .....	8
<b>Figure 2:</b> Image explaining the Sapix brand and mission Source: promotional company booklet by Sapix collected in Japan 2024.....	32
<b>Figure 3:</b> Sapix testimonials source: promotional Sapix company booklet collected in Japan 2024 ...	33
<b>Figure 4:</b> front of sheet featuring Sapix's 2023 Junior high school admission statistics source: sheet from Sapix collected in Japan 2024.....	34
<b>Figure 5:</b> Nichinōken fantasy timeline Source: promotional booklet from Nichinōken collected in Japan 2024.....	36
<b>Figure 6:</b> page discussing private school and advertisements Source: Nichinōken company booklet collected in Japan 2024 .....	37
<b>Figure 7:</b> Yotsuya Otsuka mission statment source: company booklet collected in Japan 2024 .....	39
<b>Figure 8:</b> Yotsuya Otsuka testimonials source: Yotsuya Otsuka promotional booklet collected in Japan 2024.....	40
<b>Table 1:</b> Interviewee Overview.....	23

## Conventions of language

Japanese terms of importance except for geographical locations are transliterated using the modified Hepburn system of romanization, stressing long vowels with a macron.

## 1.Introduction

In the summer of 2018, I stumbled across the *kanji* 塾 *juku* for the first time. I was on a summer study abroad in Chiba prefecture and saw the character on the signs of buildings all around the neighborhood where I was staying. Every day, groups of children, sometimes accompanied by a parent, would enter these buildings after school and in the evenings, you could sometimes see kids leave to go home. When I looked up the kanji to find out what these places were, the meaning “cram school” told me nothing. As a Swedish person the concept was foreign to me and thus a rabbit hole was opened.

*Juku* is the Japanese word for cram school – a form of private supplementary tutoring also called shadow education (Bray 1999). *Juku* had their initial boom in the 1960s and 70s and were initially criticized by the media and government for hampering mainstream education. However, as *juku* have continued to fill the gaps left by mainstream education, the official attitude against them has softened and become more accepting with more collaborative efforts made in the last decade (Yamato & Zhang 2017). Similarly, different educational reforms like the updated *yutori* educational reform in 1998 (aimed at reducing stress, curriculum and teaching hours for elementary school), left worried parents seeking out private educational services from *juku* to counteract the feared drop in knowledge and ability left by the reductions (Roesgaard 2006). The field within *juku* is very wide and many types of cram schools exist, catering to all possible educational needs and for all different ages or grades. The types of *juku* differ both in structure (such as one-on-one tutoring, correspondence or classroom style) and aim (remedial needs, honing skills, or exam preparation). Many different classifications of *juku* exist (Roesgaard 2006; Yamato & Zhang 2017) but the focus of this thesis is so called 進学塾 *shingakujuku* - *juku* for advancement to the next stage of education, and specifically *shingakujuku* for the junior high school entrance examinations. These *juku* teach children school subjects and exam strategies for entrance examinations at a level high enough (and at the junior high school entrance examination level, higher than regular school) to enter their private junior high school or high school of choice. The *shingakujuku* looked at in this thesis all have placement tests that students take before enrolling. Students may be sorted into different classes by results and by the junior high school they are aiming to attend (Roesgaard 2006).

*Juku*, and especially *shingakujuku* are not attended by all students in Japan. Data from a 2017 Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute (BERD 2017) survey found

that 43.1% of students in the final year of elementary school attended some type of juku, and that 28.3% of that 43.1% were children who attended a juku with a shingaku focus. This highlights the fact that these institutions are only accessed by a small portion of society and that students attending shingakujuku to prepare for their junior high school entrance examinations are not typical elementary school students. The aim of this chapter and thesis is not to give the impression that this educational route (shingakujuku – private school – top university) is the standard route in Japanese society. It is also worth noting that around 50% of all students who graduate high school go on to attend university (Sugimoto 2020:136), further narrowing this social group of interest. Although the shingaku student group is not representative of the typical Japanese student, they still constitute a group large enough to warrant this focused look into the shingakujuku industry.

Juku are classified and regulated as businesses without an accreditation process or educational criteria to fulfill (Dierkes 2010:27). Many juku can rely on word-of-mouth referrals to attract students but larger chains still have significant budgets for various promotional materials (Roesgaard 2006; Entrich 2015:200). According to numbers from the Statistics Bureau of Japan, in 2022 there were 5,949 registered juku in Japan, generating a sales revenue of a little over 1.1 trillion yen (Portal Site of Official Statistics of Japan website 2022). In other words, the juku industry is a huge industry profiting from the extra educational needs or ambitious goals of families that are not being met by mainstream education, and on parents' and students' fears of missing out on an advantage in the race to secure a spot at a top university.

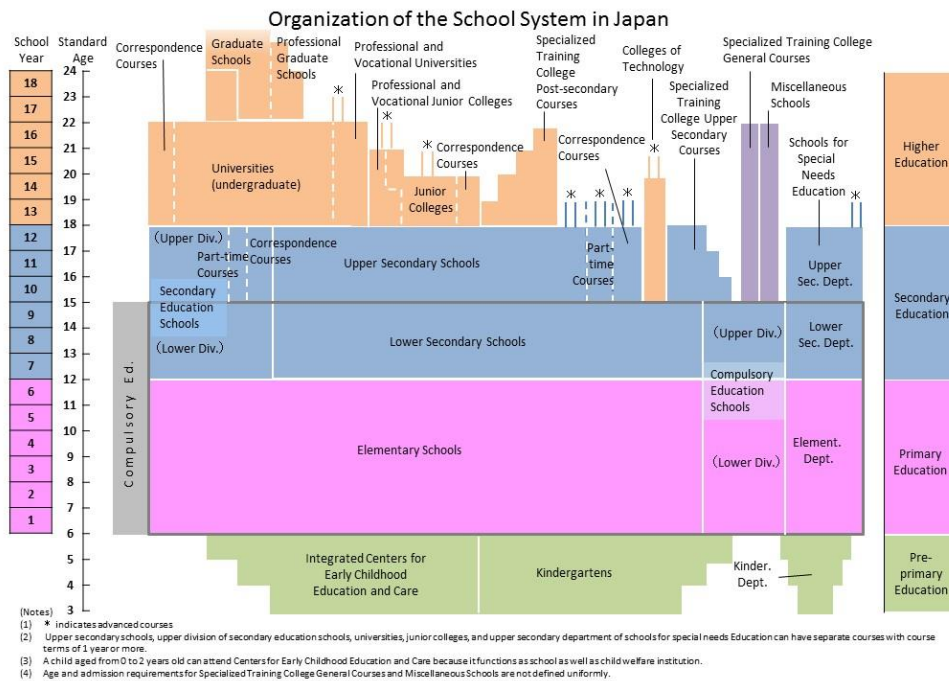


Figure 1: Explanation of the school system in Japan reprinted from Overview in Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology Japan Retrieved 2024-08-11 from <https://www.mext.go.jp/en/policy/education/overview/index.htm>

After elementary school, the Japanese educational system has several options for students, including private combined junior high schools and high schools, often called junior senior high schools, which are an attractive choice for parents as their child can usually take one less entrance examination (skipping the exam between middle school and high school). Shingakujuku are catered to students looking to get in to these combined schools or other prestigious schools. Through my fieldwork I also found that being able to attend one school for six years provides students with more opportunities for things like social interactions and club activities, rather than merely exam revision, which may be another selling point. There are also university affiliated schools, which can differ in design. Some range from elementary school to high school or junior senior high school, while some only include high school. Students attending these schools, with some exceptions and requirements, are able to attend the affiliated university without having to sit the general entrance examination. University affiliated schools as well as private combined junior senior high schools are called escalator schools (Yamato & Zhang 2017:338) since they allow students to advance into the next level or levels of education without having to take entrance examinations. According to a report released by the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education in 2023, the number of Tokyo public elementary school students enrolling in private junior high schools is steadily increasing. In some central wards of Tokyo, almost one in two students go on to a private junior high school



(Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education 2023). This fact makes this thesis' particular focus on shingakujuku primarily based in the greater Tokyo metropolitan area more relevant.

## 1.1 Aim and research questions

When looking at the juku and entrance examination ecosystem, there are several actors involved: students, parents, the government (and public), schools, and the juku themselves. English-language research focusing on students' experiences of and thoughts about juku is scarce. I therefore wanted to include interviews focusing on the lived experiences of past students as well as their own thought processes considering the choice to enroll in juku. The second English-language research gap that I identified was studies focusing on the operations of juku. Specifically, the promotional material of juku were seldom described or only briefly mentioned. This may be in part because of the traditional strategy of word-by-mouth-referrals, however, all commercial juku have websites, advertisements, and pamphlets targeted toward existing and prospective customers, which justifies a closer look at their contents. These two, slightly separate research interests addressing both students and their former experiences, as well as juku and their marketing resulted in the formation of the following research questions:

- How do former students reflect on their own juku experience and what do they themselves identify as positives and negatives with their attending?
- How do former attendees feel about juku as a student versus as a hypothetical parent. (Do former juku students want to send their own children to juku, and how do they reason when contemplating this scenario?)
- How do shingakujuku market their products to prospective customers in their promotional material? In particular, how is the future as well as the outcome of attending juku framed within this material?

By choosing to focus on the future and outcomes of attending shingakujuku when discussing their promotional material, I hope to target the goal that parents are looking to fulfill when sending their schools to these institutions – to gain access to a prestigious junior high school and gain an advantage in the race to secure a spot at one of Japan's top universities. By contrasting the findings from the interviews with the findings from the juku produced material, I also aim to compare the promoted selling points with what the students saw as positive aspects of their juku attendance.

The text is structured as follows: Chapter 2 reviews literature on juku, the credentialist aspects of Japanese society, the experiences of juku attendees, and finally the juku decision-making process. Chapter 3 explains the theoretical framework, focusing on the power distance aspect of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory and its application to educational marketing. Chapter 4 explains the research design, methodology (discourse analysis), limitations, positionality, and ethical considerations of the thesis. Chapter 5 presents the data collected from the interviews. Chapter 6 looks at three different shingakujuku for the junior high school entrance examination and their promotional materials. The thesis concludes with chapter 7, which summarizes and reflects over the findings of the thesis in relation to its research questions.

## 2. Literature review

In order to analyze the promotional material and lived experiences of former students, we must first contextualize the educational landscape, as well as the decision and reasoning to enroll in juku, by looking at previous research focusing on experiences as well as determinants of participation. Looking at the previous English language research, firsthand accounts from students are scarce and an in-depth look at the promotional material of shingakujuku is missing from the conversation. These are the two main research gaps I am trying to contribute to with this thesis.

### 2.1 Academic meritocracy and financial concerns

Japanese education becomes increasingly stratified as the grades progress. Schools are ranked according to results and number of students sent to top ranked universities while students are ranked against their grade according to their test results. This creates an environment where everyone knows where they are and what is needed to hopefully progress to top of the next stage. A clear hierarchy exists between Japanese universities and thus the name of one's university is seen as having a significant impact when it comes to job searching and social status (Stevenson & Baker 1992:1642; Sugimoto 2020). This connection was also confirmed during my field work, and perhaps best summarized in a quote from one of my interviewees (Woman C): "I thought that if I went to Tokyo University (widely viewed as Japan's top university), I could be anything" in reference to her decision-making process when selecting what university to aim for. Shadow education can be seen as an investment to enhance the student's chances of winning in the contest of allocation for higher education (Stevenson & Baker 1992:1655). University education in Japan is seen as "a private privilege rather than a public commodity" (Sugimoto 2020:142); thus, families are expected to and prepared to spend large sums of money on their children. By spending money on juku, private school, and university, parents and children hope to gain access to the highest strata of society or at least to better their chances of securing a good job.

Roesgaard (2006) visited, among others, the three shingakujuku chosen for analysis in this thesis: Sapix, Nichinōken, and Yotsuya Ōtsuka in the early 2000s. She found that the companies had large advertising budgets but relied mostly on word-of-mouth referrals. Their placing in the acceptance rates for top junior high schools was a very important factor as well. She states that the motivation for families' investments in these institutions is to gain an

advantage in the credentialism race for a spot at a top Japanese university, and that shingakujuku therefore owe their existence to the still, in some aspects, prevalent *gakureki shakai* [academic meritocracy] (Roesgaard 2006:98).

Attending juku and private schools is a costly investment for families and potential equality gaps are a major concern. Matsuoka (2015); Stevenson & Baker (1992) found that students with a higher socio-economic status (SES) were more likely to participate in shadow education compared to their peers with a lower SES. They also did so with the explicit intention of improving academic results in order to access higher levels of higher education. Entrich (2018) found that students from higher SES gained significant advantages in their advancement to university if they made long-term investments in private tutoring and enrolled in a shingakujuku (2018:262). Dierkes (2010) reported that “As a rule of thumb, most juku operators consider the bottom 20% of the Japanese income distribution to be unable to afford juku instruction.” (2010:27). Money and SES play a big role in the ability to invest in fee-heavy juku. Roesgaard (2006) also points out that it is not only the fees of the shingakujuku that are high but that the fees of the private schools that families are aiming for are also significant, thus requiring an investment over several years. This fact further narrows the accessibility of both shingakujuku and private school.

Since there are so many variables at play in this topic, school, juku, SES, personal goals, family, location, etc. it is difficult to draw clear conclusions or to really know what plays the biggest role in accessing top level higher education or even gaining entrance to private school. It is however fair to say that families with more money are, contrary to families without the extra money, able to purchase more educational possibilities for their children which may impact their chances to access top institutions throughout their educational careers. By investing in juku, families are looking to realize their educational goals. However, it is also difficult to know to what degree this investment is a precautionary measure, as to not miss out on what everyone else is doing, or if the students could have attained the same results by only attending their mainstream school.

## 2.2 Students' experiences

English language research focusing on students' experiences and views on juku is scarce. This is the main reason for including interviews in the methodology of this thesis: to add more context to the findings and add more stories to the research field. Fülöp & Gyori (2021)

conducted a survey about competition and juku participation aimed at high school and university students in a major prefectural city in Japan. They found that the students questioned rarely echoed the concerns raised by researchers about inequality and economic difficulties in accessing shadow education in Japan and instead were more positive about their juku participation (2021). However, as previously shown, the people participating in shadow education are more likely to belong to a higher SES and the participants of this study may therefore not pay as much attention to or point out the inequalities of the system. Only a small portion brought up negative effects on their mental health, or interpersonal relationships with other students as a result of competition at their juku. Of course, it is always hard to measure negative responses as people may be less inclined to share these stories or topics with others, but I found similar results in my own field work. Fülöp & Gyori also point out that the students are active actors within the shadow education scene and that the reason the cram school is still flourishing (despite the plummeting birthrate) is because students agree with and consider them to be important tools when aiming for higher education (2021:163).

Ozaki (2015) wrote her dissertation on children's experiences of juku and its potential effects on their well-being. She interviewed girls between the ages of 10 and 18 using qualitative semi-structured interviews. Ozaki found that the children gained agency with age and that many felt that attending juku was needed due to unfavorable teaching in regular school. The more individual climate of the juku compared to the more communal spirit of school was found to be a positive aspect of attending (2015:223). The main expense of younger students attending juku was the personal time lost to the extra workload. Ozaki also found that major theories about child-wellbeing were too Western to be successfully applied to the case of Japan (Ozaki 2015)

From these two research projects, it seems like students are generally more positive about juku than researchers, but extensive interviews with children or former students who have not attended juku, due to reasons such as poverty or contentment with regular school as well as students who have participated but failed to enter private school are missing from the debate. This makes the findings slightly one-sided as information is only coming from the "winners" of the system. This fact is also present in my own research. Since I wanted to focus on lived experiences, it was necessary to find people who had attended juku. I contemplated trying to find both sides, but it was much easier to find people who had succeeded through my personal connections rather than people who had failed to get in to a top junior high school or university. However, I did find that there was still a scale within the "winners", with people

who did not get into their top choice of school or university which provided some nuance to the material. If I could have gotten input from students outside of the system or students who did not succeed within the system, that would have further added an interesting depth to the conversation.

### 2.3 Decision-making process

Steve Entrich (2015) uses decision theory to analyze data from the 2011 Hyogo High School Students' Survey. By looking at several variables such as social origin, school ranking, parents' aspirations, academic performance, etc. while highlighting the previously overlooked agency of the student, Entrich identifies the choices and actors in the decision-making process for participation in shadow education. Students gain more say in the decision-making process with age and when it comes to parents, fathers had very little influence while mothers were much more involved and influential in the decision-making process (2015:212). Entrich also found that students aiming to take entrance examinations for a top university were 53% more likely to invest in shadow education (2015:212). Living in a metropolitan area, being a girl and participation in shadow education at previous stages of education, were other factors that made it more likely that students would participate in shadow education at the high school level. Participation in juku compared to other forms of shadow education was more guided by social origin, parents' aspirations, and school background. Entrich also found that correspondence courses can be seen as a cheaper, flexible and more accessible way of participating in Japanese shadow education (no difference in access between rural and metropolitan areas) (Entrich 2015:211).

Overall, students' personal aspirations were shown to have a strong impact on the decision, even when compared to influence of parents', social background or pressure from high-ranking high schools to continue on to a prestigious university. The gendered aspect to the decision-making process have shifted significantly over time, since Stevenson & Barker (1992:1647) found that the likelihood to participate was higher for boys, likely due to the historical fact that families traditionally have tended to invest more in the education of their sons due to their more favorable chances of employment.

### 3. Theoretical framework

This chapter briefly explains the power distance aspect of Hofstede's cultural dimension theory, its previous application to Japan, as well as to educational marketing.

#### 3.1. Power Distance Belief

Power distance is identified as one of six dimensions within Hofstede's cultural dimension theory originally created by analyzing corporate culture at IBM in the 1970s. The cultural dimension theory is frequently used in cross-cultural research and research focusing on cultural differences (Minkov & Hofstede 2011). Power distance focuses on the unequal distribution of power in a group or society and to which extent people accept or believe in this distribution. Societies with a high power distance belief (PDB) accept the unequal distribution to a higher extent and are more hierarchical while low-PDB societies tend to accept the inequality less and favor more flat and collective power structures. According to Hofstede et al. Japan scored 54/100 compared to South Korea (60/100) and Sweden (31) (2012:81-82). I am skeptical to how a survey of IBM employees can really tell us anything general about a country and their beliefs. However, I believe that when looking at the characteristics of high-PDB the criteria are in line with the reality that shingakujuku consumers subscribe to by purchasing the shingaku services.

Few studies have been conducted on power distance in the specific context of Japan. A 2007 study on power distance and the media of communication between students and professors in Japan and the US, aimed to question and find out if the widespread notion that Japan had a higher power distance than the US was true, but could ultimately not draw any conclusion regarding power distance due to the design of their study (Richardson & Smith 2007). A cross-cultural study by Taoka et al. (2021) on collaboration and the co-design process found that power distance and the presence of a designer within the co-design group hindered the participation of participants who were not designers from the Japanese group compared to the European group. This signals that power distance is something that has an impact in the Japanese context. However, I argue that shingakujuku customers are, whether they agree with the power distribution of society or not, a part of a higher power distance group by purchasing educational services catered to the academic meritocratic side of Japanese society. Similarly, the hierarchy of society as pertaining to education and employment was discussed in some of my interviews where most agreed that the traditional hierarchy (or power inequality) existed but that the situation was better than previous

generations (more career paths accepted, less important what university one comes from, etc.). Some participants accepted this power distance or saw that they had been able to benefit from the system while others saw their privileged position but were negative towards the system. There is also a generational factor at play as the decision for investing in shadow education at the elementary school level is rarely the children's own choice but rather the parents as seen in the previous chapter. Thus, it is the attitudes and beliefs of the interviewees parents which would play a more significant factor in this case.

In the context of education, Hofstede et al. claim that in countries with a higher power distance, inequalities between people are expected and desirable (Hofstede et al. 2012). There is also an increased emphasis on higher education which creates a polarizing division and an elite stratum (Hofstede et al. 2012:95). Although the scoring and results from Japan in Hofstede's original survey may be questioned, the existence of an elite stratum evident by the fierce competition and ambition to go to one of the top universities or schools, suggest that the power distance in the context of Japanese education is high.

### 3.2 Power distance belief and educational marketing

Tu et al. (2022) in their article: "Heart or Mind? The Impact of Power Distance Belief on the Persuasiveness of Cognitive Versus Affective Appeals in Education Marketing Messages", theorize that customers with a higher PDB are "more favorable to education marketing messages with a stronger cognitive appeal" (2022:174) versus customers with a low PDB who favor affective appeal. The cognitive versus affective favoring based on the consumers PDB was found across a broad range of educational products. However, when educational products were free, both ends of the PDB spectrum favored affective marketing (2022:177). Since the shingakujuku this thesis looks at are private fee-based educational institutions, the shingakujuku customer base (higher-PDB) should favor marketing with a more cognitive appeal over affective appeal based on the findings of Tu et al. (2022). Of course, not everyone in society will share the same PDB. Similarly, if an individual has a high PDB this also does not have to mean that affective marketing is totally ineffective. Furthermore, the authors link high-PDB with an outcome learning mindset and low-PDB with a process learning mindset (2022:176). By applying their findings to the Japanese juku industry and its marketing, I hope to further evaluate PDBs application to education and see how the findings of Tu et al. translate to Japan and a different level and context of education.



My intent with this theoretical application is not to prove their theory right or wrong, but to use the notion of different appeals in educational marketing as a lens for the analysis.

When discussing affective elements, I mean elements that evoke emotion over logic and vice versa when discussing cognitive elements. The following quote is a clear example of the difference from Tu et al. (2022) and their study using flyers for guitar lessons: “The cognitive version read, “Learn to play guitar like an expert and make professional music.” The affective version read, “Learn to play guitar like a star and create beautiful music”” (2022:178). As a part of my analysis of the shingakujuku promotional materials I want to keep the notion of different types of appeal in mind when looking at the language and images the companies use to attract their customers.

## 4. Methodology

This chapter explains how the work for this thesis was planned, structured, and carried out. It engages with and justifies the choice of method, discourse analysis. It also addresses positionality and limitations of the project as well as the ethical considerations.

### 4.1 Research design

When structuring the thesis, I decided that answering the research questions required a qualitative and inductive approach. By choosing this, I am able to focus on the material in depth and focus on finding similarities while still representing individual experiences and cases. Since I am working with two different sets of data, interviews and printed materials, I needed something flexible that could work for both sets. When contemplating the choice of method, I found discourse analysis to be the most flexible. By being able to combine image, text, and context in a qualitative way, I believe that I can achieve the analytical depth needed to investigate the research questions. The theory chosen, the role of power distance belief in educational marketing, could have been applied in a quantitative way in another research project but by focusing on the appeal element I believe it to add another lens to the method of choice, discourse analysis.

### 4.2 Method

Since this thesis has a qualitative approach, a method of analysis with flexibility and depth was needed. I therefore chose to work with discourse analysis which allows both text and images to be analyzed for their content as well as their context. Discourse analysis asks what meaning language and images have within the context they are being used. Advertising especially, relies on the receiver being able to fill in the context and decode what is both explicitly and implicitly conveyed in the advertisement (Pierce 1999). The promotional material I am looking at in this thesis combines images with text which is also called a multimodal text (Gee 2011:194). Pearce (1999) explains discourse analysis as piecing together elements to understand their collective meaning. A word or image in itself has no real meaning, but by piecing them together their sum and the context in which it is created creates meaning for the observer. Text in a picture needs to be looked at both as a part of the image and as a text. Discourse analysis looks at both what is depicted and what is missing in the material. Discourse analysis as a method has no exact structure or fixed way of execution. It

forces the user to ask different questions in relation to the discourse and material one is analyzing. Gee (2011:17-19) proposes seven different questions of which three were chosen as my focus: *significance* (how does the material make some things significant and others not), *connection* (how does the material connect and disconnect things and how does it affect relevance), and *politics* (how is the material distributing social goods, i.e. what is good, proper, high status etc.). Bryman (2016:531) labels discourse analysis as constructionist, meaning that the focus is on the many different realities created and interpreted by individuals within the investigated context.

### 4.3 Interviews

Interviewees were found through the help of two personal contacts and my supervisor at Waseda University in Tokyo. The participants were contacted through email and Instagram. Everyone got the option to have the interview either online or in person and in the end, all interviews were conducted over zoom. Before the interview, all participants got consent information in both English and Japanese, explaining the nature of the thesis project, that the finished thesis will be available online, that all identifying information will be removed, that the interview would be recorded, and that they were free to withdraw their part at any time by contacting me. Although our written correspondence was in English, I wanted to make sure that everyone fully understood and could consent knowingly and therefore provided the information in both languages. In the end, nine interviews were conducted. I had a list of questions available that I used if I felt like the conversation was not running smoothly and to make sure that I asked the same types of questions to all interviewees. Only one interviewee, Woman C, asked to see a list of questions beforehand so that she could prepare and think about her answers beforehand. All other interviews were conducted without the participants knowing any questions in advance. Afterwards, the interviews were all transcribed and then analyzed in order to identify commonalities and differences between them.

### 4.4 Data collection

Through the help of my supervisor in Japan, I was able to obtain juku sign-up packages from three major juku in the Tokyo area: Nichinōken (日能研), Sapix (サピックス), and Yotsuya Ōtsuka (四谷大塚). These sign-up packages are envelopes sent to prospective families

enquiring about the juku. They often contain pricing information, examples from their textbooks, pamphlets with company information and vision, as well as class schedules. The sign-up packages were ordered for a female 5<sup>th</sup> grade student aiming to take the junior high school entrance exam.

Nichinōken and Sapix were chosen because they are the two most prominent shingakujuku for the junior high school entrance examination mentioned and ranked in my interviews and in personal conversations during my fieldwork. Yotsuya Ōtsuka was chosen because it was featured in Roesgaard (2005) and because I saw their advertisements in the Tokyo subway multiple times. A personal contact also considered them “one of the big shingakujuku” when discussing the largest actors of the industry in Tokyo. I reached out to several juku chains (including the selected juku) to inquire about sending questions over email but received no reply.

#### 4.5 Limitations and positionality

A major limitation of this thesis is the fact that I am a nonnative speaker of Japanese. This is a limit for the analysis of language, translations, and interviews. The fact that the interviews were conducted mainly in English also mean that some things may have gotten lost in translation. The number of interviews limits the conclusions that can be drawn from my material. However, I am not out to give a representative sample of former juku students and am instead focused on the individual experiences rather than trying to generalize. Because I chose to interview past students of juku, I am also dealing with memories and recollections which may not always be the most reliable source. However, because of the ethical implications of interviewing children, I believe this to be the next best option. A distance between the time spent at juku and the interview can also mean that the interviewees had more time to reflect over their experience which may add another depth to their answers. The biggest limitation when it comes to implementing the theory is the fact that I do not have a study to truly investigate the appeal of the promotional material from the shingakujuku. However, my intention is to use the theory more as a lens to further evaluate the material and not to prove or disprove (which would have resulted in an entirely different thesis).

Regarding my positionality in this project, I am an outsider both in the context of Japan, and in the context of shadow education. I have not been through the Japanese education system, sat an entrance examination for a Japanese junior high school or university,

or been enrolled in juku. I was born and raised in Sweden, a country without a large shadow education industry (although there has been an increase in homework related tutoring services the last decade or so) which makes the concept foreign to me. Although it is my intent to look at the shingakujuku industry both objectively and through the lens of my material (the interviewees and the juku companies), there is no denying that my upbringing and origins color my critical view of the system. By being aware of this bias, I actively try to be objective throughout the thesis.

#### 4.6 Ethical considerations

This thesis is carried out and structured in accordance with the Swedish Research Council's ethical guidelines (2017). The main potential ethical issue in this thesis is the interviews. To ensure that they met ethical guidelines, several steps were taken. Firstly, I decided against interviewing people under the age of 18 to ensure that everyone could consent and understand the terms of their participation. The interviews were conducted and recorded with written and oral consent from the participants. Secondly, all participants were informed of how and why the data collected was being used for this thesis. Participants were also given the option to withdraw or ask further questions at any time before, during and after the interview. The promotional material which is analyzed in this thesis comes from large companies and is publicly available, so I see no ethical problems in its use.

## 5. Interview data and analysis

This chapter summarizes the shared themes identified from the interviews under each subsection and ends with a discussion that reflects over the shared aspects. Summaries of all the interviews to add more context and the background behind the opinions are included in the appendix.

### 5.1 Interviews

The table below provides a short overview of each interview. Although the focus of this thesis is shingakujuku for the junior high school entrance examination, not all students had experience attending one of the juku that are analyzed in chapter 7. Instead, there is a high variety of local and smaller juku represented, and although the findings do not directly correlate to the selected juku, they still say something about the experience and industry as a whole.

Alias	Occupation	Juku attended	University attended	Part-time at juku
Man A	PhD student	-Unnamed shingakujuku	Waseda	Yes
Man B	Kaishain	-Nichinōken -Local remedial juku -Local shingakujuku	Keio	No
Woman C	Kaishain	-Kumon -Waseda Academy (Shingakujuku) -Various juku for university	Ochanomizu	Yes
Woman D	PhD Student	-Kumon -ECC -Various local ones in middle school and for	Waseda	Yes

		university		
Man E	Student	-Kumon -Lasalle (Shingakujuku) -Kawai	Waseda	Yes
Woman F	Career change	-Nichinōken -Kobetsushidō	Rikkyo	No
Man G	Kaishain	-Nichinōken -Sundai	Keio	Yes
Man H	Kaishain	-Sapix -Local juku for university preparation	Keio	Yes
Woman J	Student	-Antore (Shingakujuku) -Tofl Seminar)	Meiji	Yes

*Table 1: Interviewee overview*

### 5.1.1 Juku ranking

When asked about the top shingakujuku for the junior high school entrance examination, most interviewees ranked them similarly. Man B saw Nichinōken as one of the most popular shingakujuku, but not the best, citing that they accept a wider level of students than some other top-level juku. He instead thought Sapix was the highest level shingakujuku. Woman C ranked Sapix at the top, then Waseda Academy, followed by Nichinōken. Woman F ranked Sapix and Waseda Academy as more competitive, higher level juku, and Nichinōken as a better fit for less competitive kids. Man G was the only one who thought that Nichinōken was the best juku for elementary school students citing their junior high school acceptance rates as the main reason for this. Man H was the only Sapix attendee but contrary to the majority of interviewees he was skeptical to the belief that Sapix was number one and instead thought that there was probably not that much of a difference between the most popular cram schools. Woman J thought that Waseda Academy, Sapix and Nichinōken were top-level and stricter and that Yotsuya Ōtsuka was on a similar level to her juku (Antore, which she described as good and teaching difficult contents) based on stories from friends. In particular, Woman J shared that Nichinōken seats their children based on test scores (higher scorers can sit closer to the teacher) and that she questioned whether this strict practice was helping students or just demotivating.

### 5.1.2 Public/private school divide

Entering a private junior senior high school or a university affiliated school was something most of the interviewees explicitly aimed for when deciding to enter juku. Being able to skip the high school or university entrance exam, rigorous study environment, organized education, advanced curricula, better facilities, and increased focus on preparation for university entrance examinations were seen as positive aspects of entering these schools. However, going to an affiliated school does not necessarily have to mean that there is no or reduced stress in practice. Both Man B and Woman F described similar physical symptoms of stress during their final year of high school despite Woman F going to an affiliated high school and Man B taking the regular university entrance examination. Woman F did not have to take the university entrance examination but the requirement of top grades in school (in order to enter the affiliated university and her faculty of choice) meant that the regular exam season in her final year turned into an unofficial entrance examination, leading to mental and physical stress symptoms. Similarly, Man B became increasingly stressed due to the pressure of getting into university as to not have to repeat the exam writing season again and by sitting exams for several universities which resulted in similar health issues as described by Woman F.

The uninterrupted six years of junior senior high school sometimes also mean that students can get behind (since they did not have to prepare for the high school entrance examinations) and later had to work hard to regain their grades, as seen in Man B who described that knowing that he would not have to sit any exams for high school made him slack off. Going to a combined school was described as both positive and negative by the participants, more free time meant that they could enjoy their school life more, participate in club activities, and be more social. However, on the other hand it also sometimes meant that their academic abilities suffered and did not match those of their classmates who were more actively studying or attending juku. More demanding classes at private schools, and difficult entrance examinations for dream universities were other reasons why participants who attended private schools still attended juku.

Another common theme was the lack of trust in the public schools. Some participants cited rowdy kids, lower level of curriculum and the fact that children from all kinds of families attend these schools as negative factors. However, participants like Woman J who attended private school, thought that public school was not worse than private school, citing university friends who went to public school and were satisfied with their experience.



### 5.1.3 Juku as a positive or negative experience

Although many of the interviewees did not initially want to join juku or found it difficult in the beginning, I would categorize Man B, Woman C, Woman F as having a primarily positive experience at juku. Juku helped them progress academically and was a space for personal growth and sometimes even fun for them. I would classify Woman D, Man E, and Woman J as having a moderately positive experience and Man G, Man H, and Man A as having a more negative juku experience. Man G described hating going to juku and being forced by parents to attend (even though he is grateful for this as an adult because of his success in university and employment). Man A hated going to juku as well, but found the experience slightly nostalgic now even though he considered his attendance useless due to not passing his dream junior high school entrance examination. He also cited not passing the exam as the reason for hating juku as a teenager and not attending juku in high school. Man H would rather have played sport or with friends than attending and had a violent juku teacher which created a fearful study environment but did enjoy interacting with his classmates at juku.

### 5.1.4 Family's influence and choice of juku

Among the people interviewed, Nichinōken (shingakujuku) and Kumon (worksheet based juku) were the two most common cram schools for students up until junior high school although there were quite a variety including local and single-branched juku represented. Some factors that played a part when choosing a cram school were acceptance rates, friends, costs, as well as physical proximity. For many, the choice of juku and public or private school was heavily guided by the experiences of family, especially parents and siblings. Woman C and Woman J thought juku attendance was a normal thing as children because their older sisters attended. Woman D seemed to be heavily influenced by her cousins' bad experiences which deterred her to aim for private junior high school and the more rigorous top track of her private high school. Woman D and Man H both had their younger sibling enter the same juku as them, while Woman F, Woman C, Woman J, and Man B, all entered the same juku as their older sibling.

### 5.1.5 Juku as a social space

For many of the interviewees, juku was not just a space for studying but also an important social space where they spent a significant amount of time each week. The relationship with

teachers and other students had the potential to either motivate or demotivate their studying and although most had a good experience with friends at juku (and explicitly stated this as a reason for enjoying their time there), Woman J experienced bullying from a classmate at her juku. She thought that juku needed to not only care about students' academic progress, but also pay attention to and care more about the social aspects as well. An example of a teacher negatively impacting the juku experience was shared by Man H who had an aggressive teacher (who frequently yelled and hit the furniture) which made him scared and not enjoy going.

Among the seven interviewees who worked part-time at a juku, Man A, Woman D, Man H, and Woman J stated that the social interactions with the children were among the highlights of their work tasks. Being able to use their own experiences to try and create a positive environment for their students was mentioned as a fulfilling aspect of the job. This mirrored their own experiences as students as Woman F, Woman D and Woman J stated that talking to their teachers between classes and getting advice from them was a fond memory for them. This highlights that juku are a potentially positive social space not only for students but also for teachers and that the social exchange between students and teachers can be equally socially rewarding for both parts. Although many found the social aspects of juku rewarding, not being able to play with friends was also reported as a major factor for not initially wanting to attend juku. Thus, signaling both a positive and negative impact on social well-being.

### 5.1.6 Juku as a part-time job

Seven out of nine interviewees had experience of working part-time at some sort of cram school. All interviewees except for Man A thought that the pay was above average and named it as a main motivator for keeping the job. Too little training on the job, the need for unpaid lesson-prep, long hours during school holidays (because of juku holding intensive courses over the breaks when children are free from school) dealing with difficult students and parents were stated as negative aspects of the job. As mentioned above, some tried to use their own bad juku experiences as motivation to make juku more fun for students and found the social interactions highly rewarding. Woman J thought that the job was good for students who want to become teachers as they can get experience and develop useful skills. Man E who had previously wanted to become a teacher also mentioned that he initially started working at juku to gain teaching experience as well.

The tie between juku and individual highlights the possibility of juku being a “life-long relationship” that people interact with through many different roles such as students, employees and parents throughout their life. Through the interviews and conversations during my field work, it also seems to be a common and well-paying part-time job for university students.

### 5.1.7 Choosing juku again

Some participants were asked if they would choose to go to juku again if they could re-live their life and did not have to think about their parents. Woman C thinks she would have done it again. Woman D would not want to go to juku for studying but would have wanted to attend juku for language or for learning something that they do not teach in school. Woman F does not personally regret her decision to attend juku, but she is not sure if it is good for especially younger children right now. She cites children not having their identity or being able to know what they want but having their path decided for them as some of her main concerns. Man G would still have gone to juku even though he hated it. If he had not attended juku, he does not think he would have studied at all and thus not have been able to attend his university and enter his career path. Man H would not have chosen to go to juku again but recognizes that he would not have been able to go to Keio (his dream university) without his private junior senior high school and shingakujuku. Man A attended juku for his junior high school entrance exam and did not get in to his school of choice which led him to have a negative opinion of juku, both as a teenager and now as an adult. Overall, regardless of their experience, most interviewees were able to self-rationalize and see the benefits of juku over their feelings about their own experience. A bad previous experience did not necessarily correlate to a bad current opinion of the system.

### 5.1.8 Choosing juku for their own children

Several participants said that attending shingakujuku was necessary in order for children to pass the junior high school entrance examination to get into private school. They cited special knowledge about exam questions, solution strategies, higher level of curriculum than regular school, and the difficult private school exam questions as reasons why juku was needed to pass the exam and get in to private school.

Fears of putting children through unnecessary stress, prioritizing other skills over academics (such as languages or sports), and not subscribing to the idea that children need to go to private junior high schools were commonly stated reasons as to not want to send their children to juku. Woman J stated that she would want her children to attend juku to prepare for the high school and university entrance examinations but that she was unsure and needed to respect her future children's wishes when contemplating the junior high school entrance examination. She knew that sending children to shingakujuku for this exam increased their possibility to pass the entrance examination but did not want to force her children to do anything against their own will. Woman D also stated that she wanted to listen to her children's wishes when deciding whether to send them to juku or not

Some participants who were reluctant to send their children to an academic juku stated that they would consider a shingakujuku only if their child wanted to go to private school since it would be difficult for them to go without attending. Man A and Man C both mentioned that a child with a dedicated mother who could teach their own children by buying textbooks and doing research might be able to do it as well (although they both stated that this was a rare case). Woman J also expressed that there might be other ways to pass the examinations but that she was unsure.

### 5.1.9 University enrollment & career

Man A and Woman D entered university through *suisen* [recommendation] where they had to have good grades, write a personal essay, and attend an interview to be accepted. Woman F, who entered through a university affiliated school, also had to go through a similar process to get accepted to the affiliated university. The other six interviewees entered university through the regular university entrance examination.

All of the interviewees who took the regular university entrance examination are now *kaishain* [office workers] or preparing to become one. Of the three participants who got into university through *suisen*, Man A and woman D are entering a PhD program, while Woman F, who got recommended through her university affiliated junior senior high school, is going through a career change and going back to school. Although the sample size is much too small to draw any real conclusions, this might indicate that students who get into university through the regular entrance examination are more likely to follow the traditional path towards employment than students who got into university through other means.

## 5.2 Discussion

Despite some having negative experiences, most interviewees could self-rationalize their experiences and see a positive outcome of attending juku rather than letting the negative color their opinions. This was apparent when participants could share painful memories from their own time at different types of juku, and still say that they would send their own child to juku. This was especially true if their child wanted to go to private school. Another similarity between interviews were the explicit desire to respect their future children's autonomy and to listen to their wishes surrounding education and extra-curricular activities. Of course, there is a difference between thinking about how you want to be as a parent, versus actually being a parent forced to make hard decisions about your children's future. Perhaps this wish came from having been forced to attend juku as a child, from having parents who respected their wishes, or it is just common sense for them; I can only theorize as it was never explicitly asked where this desire came from.

In general, the interviewees found the university entrance examination most important as they saw a direct correlation between which university one entered and what type of company one could work at. Woman J stated that although the issue of candidates from top universities having better chances at getting jobs at top companies is getting better (she thought that the number of companies accepting students from a wider variety of universities is increasing) the issue still remains. Man E who switched universities from Meiji to Waseda (because he wanted to go to a better university) said that he would be more insistent that his children work hard and get into a university like Tokyo University. Even though he already had a job lined up after graduation, he said that seeing Tokyo University students during his job hunting made him regret not getting into a higher-level university. When discussing the old model of success in Japanese society (going to a good school - getting into a good university – getting a good job) most agreed that this idea was still prevalent in society although they thought that it was slowly shifting away. Man B thought that the importance of university name over personal skills was slowly shifting, but that it probably would stay the same even in his children's generation. Woman F thought that the traditional path was suffocating for young people and that she could see that it was easier for her to get a job because of the university she attended compared to other applicants.

The importance of juku as a social space was also implicitly conveyed in my interviews. Many of the interviewees attended juku several times a week and over extended school holidays and it thus became a significant space for social interaction. This social

experience was very individual, for some it allowed them to make many friends, others had a more difficult time at juku compared to regular school, and for some there was no major difference. Nevertheless, the social aspect played a big part in how people felt about their past juku experience

## 6. Juku sign-up packages

In this section I analyze sign-up packages from three major shingakujuku juku in the Tokyo area preparing students for the junior high school entrance exam: Sapix (サピックス), Nichinōken (日能研), and Yotsuya Ōtsuka (四谷大塚). The envelopes contained slightly different materials but generally information about the company and the services and educational products they offer. As seen in the interview chapter, there is a belief that attending juku is necessary to pass the entrance examinations for private junior high schools. With this fact in mind, these juku are in a special position where people generally know and subscribe to their effectiveness. While juku generally rely on word-of-mouth referrals, companies still need to stand out to attract as many customers as possible in a competitive business. When taking the thoughts identified in the literature review chapter into account, there are two prevalent themes: (1) shingakujuku are institutions profiting off of the economic and social inequality as well as shortcomings within the Japanese education system and meritocracy; (2) shingakujuku are investments where parents, with their children's future success and wellbeing in mind can try and give their children the best opportunities and chances possible. With these themes in mind, in this chapter I want to look at how shingakujuku sell their services and target their customers.

By analyzing the material through discourse analysis, I am looking at both text, images and design to look at the smaller and bigger pictures and messages. Each section will begin with a description of the received material followed by the highlights of aspects from the material. All company booklets included in-depth explanations of curriculum and teaching which will not be looked at in this thesis. The chapter concludes with a comparison of the three juku.

### 6.1 Sapix

The sign-up package arrived in an envelope that had all of the different sister companies within the Sapix Yozemi Group (the company which owns the Sapix elementary school division) on the back. It contained a cover letter, privacy policy sheet, location specific information and schedules, pamphlets with information about some of their sister companies, a folder explaining the sign-up process and costs, a sheet with the 2023 junior high school entrance examination acceptance rates of Sapix students, an issue of their magazine Sapia with advice and stories about different junior high schools, and finally a booklet with their

company philosophy, curriculum, and success stories. Sapix offers their junior high school entrance examination track from the first year of elementary school, although it starts with only Japanese and math, adding social science and natural science to the curriculum at the third-grade stage. Since the sign-up package was ordered in February (during entrance examination season and right before spring break) their costs included their sign-up fee, two months of lessons, and their spring break course which totals to 178,750 yen. Sapix has 45 classrooms in the greater Tokyo metropolitan area (Sapix (n.d.)).



Figure 2: Image explaining the Sapix brand and mission Source: promotional company booklet by Sapix collected in Japan 2024

On the first spread of their company booklet (Figure 2), **いっぱい考え、う~んと感じて、たくさん表現する** [think a lot, feel a lot, express a lot] is written in large bold font. Under this motto, Sapix state that they hope the Sapix experience will become an asset in the individual’s future life. This indicates that their mission is not just to prepare students for the exams but to teach them for life. Across the page, the company name Sapix is explained (derived from the Latin words for wisdom and being able to think). They provide a summary of their mission statement which states that today’s society is filled with copy-paste culture and manual people, and that what this era really need is people who can think correctly, and that their educational philosophy is all about nurturing these people. The company name is



also an acronym for the possibilities of future of the children (Science, Art, Philosophy, Identity, X (symbolizing the unknown)).



Figure 3: Sapix testimonials source: promotional Sapix company booklet collected in Japan 2024

At the end of the company booklet (figure 3), four testimonials from Sapix alumni are included. Next to their names, the schools they have attended are stated. All four are graduates from top junior senior high schools as well as currently enrolled at prestigious universities. Above the individual reviews, a summary sentence is used as a headline. They read: “The Sapix study method helped me at my university entrance examination as well”, “At Sapix I learned the attitude of studying diligently”, “I learned the importance of making a plan for my goals and carrying it out every day”, “By imagining my school life after passing the entrance examination, I could enjoy studying for the entrance examination”. Through these summary sentences, Sapix is able to further position and back-up its curriculum so that it is beneficial for kids not only in elementary school but for life. This is similar to their mission statement at the front of the booklet, where they expressed their wish that the juku experience would become a future asset. These points are also similar to the benefits that the interviewees mentioned, such as keeping a schedule and learning good study habits. The testimonials are

all centered around their educational career but focused on Sapix and how the curriculum and teachers helped them succeed and overcome difficulties. At the end, each alumnus signs off with a tip or word of encouragement for current students. These testimonials are very motivational and positions Sapix in a good way. Two of the students describe how they had difficulties with their grades but that the teachers at Sapix motivated them to work hard and persevere.



Figure 4: front of sheet featuring Sapix's 2023 Junior high school admission statistics source: sheet from Sapix collected in Japan 2024

The double-sided sheet (Figure 4) with the acceptance rates of Sapix students in the 2023 entrance examinations has all-boys school on one side and all-girls and co-ed schools on the other. The most prominent schools are in a larger font and highlighted on the top of the page. This sheet is a clear cognitive element presenting facts and linking them to outcomes (these students went to Sapix – now they are attending a top school). By having it as a

separate sheet, Sapix is also highlighting that this is a main selling point for them - the fact that they help many students get into their private junior high school of choice. A similar graphic, although smaller, is also featured on the backside of the Sapix magazine, once again indicating that this is a main selling point.

The *Sapix* magazine (issue 1 2024) includes interviews from researchers, school headmasters, a report from the Sapix essay competition, old students, current students, activities for children to solve, and a myriad of other entrance examination and education related topics and stories. During my field studies, this magazine was also available for purchase at the entrance examination section of most major bookstores together with other Sapix produced educational materials. This means that the magazine is not only for Sapix customers but also serves as a source of promotion for the company to parents who may purchase odd copies in order to help prepare their family for the entrance examination and private school selection. The magazine contains not only feature stories from different private schools, showcasing the student experience and benefits, there are also several advertisements for private schools in the magazine. This highlights a financial connection between juku and private school that becomes more prominent due to the direct promotion. Naturally, if people see private school as the more attractive choice, this might lead to a growing customer base for shingakujuku who are able to prepare students to get into these schools (by having insights into the entrance examination of particular schools), leading to a win-win situation for both institutions.

## 6.2 Nichinōken

The package arrived in an envelope featuring the contact information and locations of all Nichinōken in the greater Tokyo area. In the left corner of the envelope, their company slogan is also printed, stating “応援します 輝く目を持つ子どもたち” [cheering on children with shining eyes]. The envelope contained a sheet explaining the free placement test for Nichinōken featuring playful illustrations, a pamphlet with the schedule and pricing for all curriculum and tests of the “third stage” of Nichinōken, a booklet explaining the structure and philosophy of Nichinōken, and finally a booklet explaining the digital infrastructure that parents and children can utilize when signing up. Nichinōken starts their entrance examination track in third grade but offer preparatory educational activities for younger grades through their Eureka kids program. According to their website, Nichinōken has 92 classrooms in the



greater Tokyo metropolitan area (Nichinōken (n.d.)). According to the pricing pamphlet, the initial cost for signing up (including sign-up fee, one month of lessons, six months of teaching materials, and six months of mock test fees) for taking all four subjects is 161,711 yen.



Figure 5: Nichinōken fantasy timeline Source: promotional booklet from Nichinōken collected in Japan 2024

Inside the company philosophy and structure booklet is a timeline showing the company fantasy for its students (Figure 5). At the end of the timeline “正解のない未来へ” [towards a future with no right answers/ a future where everything is possible] is written in blurry text which is barely readable (evoking the feeling that we cannot see the future or know exactly what it will contain). This is an example of a more affective element in their marketing. The timeline is labeled as fantasy at the bottom of the image and in the background different words and phrases like communication, leadership, finding your own answers, trying without fear of failure, are written. The arrow shows that after going through the Nichinōken stages and taking the entrance examination exam students will go towards private school. This is a clear example of an outcome (go to Nichinōken – go to private school). The labeling of fantasy under the timeline could be seen as a hedging action, making sure that they are not making any promises that they cannot keep. Their fifth step is labeled as “opening the door to private school”, and underneath they state that “passing your dream school entrance examination and going on to private school is our mission as a junior high school entrance

examination juku”. From this timeline it is clear that Nichinōken mission is both short term (getting children into their dream schools) and long term (equipping them with valuable skills to support their dreams as well as their future endeavors). In their mission statement, Nichinōken puts children’s learning at the center. They wish students to become independent learners who can apply their thoughts and evolve them together with their peers. They believe that this learning mindset can be useful throughout their students’ education and calls it “sustainable academic ability”. Their inclusion of a separate booklet explaining their internet portal and digital tools indicates that this is also a selling point for them.



Figure 6: page discussing private school and advertisements Source: Nichinōken company booklet collected in Japan 2024

On the following page (figure 6), the booklet paints private school as the obvious choice for parents. They state that private schools offer “human education” and that in comparison to public schools, private schools are not bound by curriculum guidelines and can therefore nurture the individual. Nichinōken also identify themselves as private school and entrance examination “sommeliers” since they are able to connect and match their knowledge about the schools and the system, with their students and their families. On this page another

of their slogans, used in their public transport advertisements, is shown “シカクいアタマを丸くする” [making square heads round] which could be interpreted in several ways. Firstly, it could be considered a critique of public education. Public education has made these heads square (or not been able to make them round themselves) and now Nichinōken can make them round. Secondly, it is dividing people (heads) into two categories, square and round, it is also implicitly saying that round is preferred and good while square is bad. Many different qualities could also be imagined to these two opposites such as rigid and flexible or stuck and free.

### 6.3 Yotsuya Ōtsuka

The sign-up package contained a cover letter, a flyer promoting their free trial lessons, class schedules and fees, a pamphlet explaining and showing their textbooks, a flyer promoting their English club, and finally a booklet with their company vision and curriculum. Yotsuya Ōtsuka’s entrance examination curriculum begins in the fourth grade of elementary school although they offer classes for children in younger grades through their “little school” program and Sesame Street English club program. The fees for the classic shingaku course covering all four subjects, tests and their online material cost 45,100 yen a month for a fifth grader with a 22,000 sign-up fee added the first month. Teaching materials are not included. Yotsuya Ōtsuka is owned by Nagase Brothers Inc. since 2006. Together with its sister companies they provide educational activities, services and products for all ages and needs. Yotsuya Ōtsuka has 35 classrooms in the greater Tokyo metropolitan area (Yotsuya Ōtsuka (n.d)).





Figure 7: Yotsuya Otsuka mission statement source: company booklet collected in Japan 2024

On the front of Yotsuya Ōtsuka’s company booklet, their slogan is printed “でてこい、未来のリーダーたち” [emerge, leaders of the future]. The first spread of their company booklet (figure 7) addresses societal concerns such as Japan’s stagnated GDP and declining birthrate and stating that the way to combat these issues is to revitalize Japan through educating the new generation of leaders followed by the resources they want children to become (with critical thinking skills, perseverance, imagination and creativity). At the end of the page, they state that “it is the children of today who create the Japan of the future. Yotsuya Ōtsuka raises those kids. Fathers, mothers, lets create the future of Japan together with Yotsuya Ōtsuka”. Creating a sense of urgency while linking their services with a positive outcome and the future. On the other side of the spread, they address changes happening to the entrance examination system. These include increased emphasis on critical and independent thinking rather than recalling facts, English tests for some private schools, as well as the implementation of the information subject (IT) for the university entrance examination slated for 2025. The background of the spread is a futuristic bright picture with a blue sky and major city in the bottom.

**合格の秘訣を直撃インタビュー!**

## 親子の合格体験記

### 開成中学校

**毎月くに4つの質問!**

高麗 優月くん、母・綾子さん (開成中学 開成高校)

【合格体験記】  
開成中学校  
開成高等学校  
開成高等学校附属中学校  
開成高等学校

**志望校を見に行き意欲が回復!**

小4のときに開成私立小学校に行き、中学受験を目指し始めた優月くん、新小4の3月に一番上のコースから一つのコースに成績が下がり、5月には部屋で一人泣いていたことがあったそうです。

「ずっとコースがたつたから、悔しい気持ちがないクラスで勉強するのは難しかったです。(優月くん)  
「この状況が続くとつらい」と言うので、みんなでつらいながらも勉強しなくらいはよかったです。この言葉は親子には好評です(笑)。志望校の近くまで行って、そこで志望校の風景を見たり、校舎を見たりしました(母・綾子さん)。  
「それと見た中学生はみんな笑顔で、のびのびしていました。受かったら嬉しいだろうなと思いました(優月くん)。  
自分のためにがんばる—そんな気持ちで勉強し始めた結果、すでに成績が伸びてコースが変えられ、志望校の合格を勝ち取りました。  
「とにかく早く教科書がはいります。得意で勉強が楽しくなった先生の話を聞いたので、早く教科書がはいります。得意で勉強が楽しくなっています。(優月くん)」

**毎月くに4つの質問!**

1. 志望校を見に行きたい理由とは? 開成は開成の学校の雰囲気やクラブ活動でたくさん遊べました。好きな科目は「国語」で、勉強することによってたくさん遊べたので、国語が得意になりました。
2. 過去問はどのくらい解いた? 過去問は学校の先生からもらって、家で練習して、塾で定例として20問〜40問を解いたり、わからないところは先生から教えてもらいました。
3. モチベーションの維持方法は? なるべく家で勉強したいのですが、家で勉強するのは一歩あるのですが、家で勉強する時間がないので、塾で勉強の習慣が身につきました。

**お母さんに4つの質問!**

1. 子どものモチベーションを上げるには? 子どものモチベーションを上げるには、親が勉強の楽しさを知ることが大事だと思います。勉強が楽しいから、子どもも勉強が楽しくなると思います。
2. 子どもの勉強のモチベーションを上げるには? 子どものモチベーションを上げるには、親が勉強の楽しさを知ることが大事だと思います。勉強が楽しいから、子どもも勉強が楽しくなると思います。
3. 勉強に疲れたらどうしたらいい? 勉強に疲れたら、まずは休んでください。勉強は継続が大事です。疲れたら休んで、また勉強してください。
4. 中学生になるのが子どもに? 中学生になるのは、勉強が楽しくなるからだと思います。中学生になると、勉強が楽しくなると思います。

### 麻布中学校

**毎月くに4つの質問!**

高麗 優月くん、母・綾子さん (麻布中学 麻布高校)

【合格体験記】  
麻布中学校  
麻布高等学校  
麻布高等学校附属中学校  
麻布高等学校

**過去問30年分を解き苦手を克服**

麻布中学校から中学受験に挑戦していたという高麗さん。麻布中学校の過去問30年分を解き、苦手を克服して合格しました。

「麻布のアルファベットで通っていて、小4の時から3年分を勉強し始めました。最初は苦しくて、30年分を解くのは大変でしたが、徐々に苦手が克服されていきました。(高麗さん)」

「麻布の自由な校風に惹かれて第一志望校に決めました。成績が伸びないときは、先生に相談して、自分のペースで勉強しました。先生は優しく、自分のペースで勉強させてくれました。(高麗さん)」

「麻布の先生は、勉強が大好きで、授業が面白いです。先生の話が面白くて、勉強が楽しくなりました。(高麗さん)」

「麻布の先生は、勉強が大好きで、授業が面白いです。先生の話が面白くて、勉強が楽しくなりました。(高麗さん)」

**お母さんに4つの質問!**

1. 過去問30年分を解くのは大変だった? 過去問30年分を解くのは大変でしたが、徐々に苦手が克服されていきました。
2. 麻布の自由な校風に惹かれた理由とは? 麻布の自由な校風に惹かれて、第一志望校に決めました。
3. 成績が伸びないときはどうしたらいい? 成績が伸びないときは、先生に相談して、自分のペースで勉強しました。
4. 麻布の先生は勉強が大好きで授業が面白い? 麻布の先生は、勉強が大好きで、授業が面白いです。

### 筑波大学附属駒場中学校

**毎月くに4つの質問!**

高麗 優月くん、母・綾子さん (筑波大附属駒場中学 筑波大附属駒場高校)

【合格体験記】  
筑波大学附属駒場中学校  
筑波大学附属駒場高等学校  
筑波大学附属駒場高等学校

**勉強は楽しいと思う気持ちが大切!**

新しいことを学ぶのが好きです。特に勉強、新しい知識をいかに解き方で解いたり、解き方の違いを見つけるのがとても面白いです。とニコニコしながら話す優月くん。小4から本格的に勉強を始めたものの、実は、勉強を始めたのは小6になってからです。

いろいろな勉強がある中で、一番面白かったのが数学でした。ある数学の授業で、 $1 \times 1 = 1$  という事実、結果証明するために3時間かける授業があるという、一つの事象が深く掘り下げられる内容がとても面白く感じました。

特に「算数」は、一度やり始めると、声を出してしゃべりながら進めようという、お母さんも苦笑してしまうほど、全家族一丸でサポートで応援してくれました。お母さんもお父さんもお母さん、日々の勉強のサポートをしてくれました。

「算数は1人で勉強で、毎日1時間勉強しています。」  
二の法則の法則は、当時の自分の成長の証として、思い出に残っています。今後は、中学生になって、人生においても、勉強が楽しくなることを目指したいと思います。

**毎月くに4つの質問!**

1. 勉強が楽しいと思う理由とは? 新しいことを学ぶのが好きです。特に勉強、新しい知識をいかに解き方で解いたり、解き方の違いを見つけるのがとても面白いです。
2. 過去問30年分を解くのは大変だった? 過去問30年分を解くのは大変でしたが、徐々に苦手が克服されていきました。
3. モチベーションの維持方法は? なるべく家で勉強したいのですが、家で勉強するのは一歩あるのですが、家で勉強する時間がないので、塾で勉強の習慣が身につきました。
4. 中学生になるのが子どもに? 中学生になるのは、勉強が楽しくなるからだと思います。

**お母さんに4つの質問!**

1. 子どものモチベーションを上げるには? 子どものモチベーションを上げるには、親が勉強の楽しさを知ることが大事だと思います。
2. 子どもの勉強のモチベーションを上げるには? 子どものモチベーションを上げるには、親が勉強の楽しさを知ることが大事だと思います。
3. 勉強に疲れたらどうしたらいい? 勉強に疲れたら、まずは休んでください。勉強は継続が大事です。
4. 中学生になるのが子どもに? 中学生になるのは、勉強が楽しくなるからだと思います。

### 聖光学院中学校

**毎月くに4つの質問!**

高麗 優月くん、母・綾子さん (聖光学院中学 聖光学院高校)

【合格体験記】  
聖光学院中学校  
聖光学院高等学校  
聖光学院高等学校

**苦手な「理社だけ3か月」の猛勉強で飛躍!**

小2の頃、聖光学院の文化祭で開成の校舎を見て、憧れを抱いていました。聖光学院の校舎は、開成の校舎と似ていて、とても好きになりました。

「聖光学院の校舎は、開成の校舎と似ていて、とても好きになりました。先生の話が面白くて、勉強が楽しくなりました。(高麗さん)」

「聖光学院の先生は、勉強が大好きで、授業が面白いです。先生の話が面白くて、勉強が楽しくなりました。(高麗さん)」

「聖光学院の先生は、勉強が大好きで、授業が面白いです。先生の話が面白くて、勉強が楽しくなりました。(高麗さん)」

**お母さんに4つの質問!**

1. 聖光学院の校舎が好きな理由とは? 聖光学院の校舎は、開成の校舎と似ていて、とても好きになりました。
2. 過去問30年分を解くのは大変だった? 過去問30年分を解くのは大変でしたが、徐々に苦手が克服されていきました。
3. モチベーションの維持方法は? なるべく家で勉強したいのですが、家で勉強するのは一歩あるのですが、家で勉強する時間がないので、塾で勉強の習慣が身につきました。
4. 中学生になるのが子どもに? 中学生になるのは、勉強が楽しくなるからだと思います。

**お母さんに4つの質問!**

1. 子どものモチベーションを上げるには? 子どものモチベーションを上げるには、親が勉強の楽しさを知ることが大事だと思います。
2. 子どもの勉強のモチベーションを上げるには? 子どものモチベーションを上げるには、親が勉強の楽しさを知ることが大事だと思います。
3. 勉強に疲れたらどうしたらいい? 勉強に疲れたら、まずは休んでください。勉強は継続が大事です。
4. 中学生になるのが子どもに? 中学生になるのは、勉強が楽しくなるからだと思います。

Figure 8: Yotsuya Otsuka testimonials source: Yotsuya Otsuka promotional booklet collected in Japan 2024

In the middle of the company booklet (figure 7), Yotsuya Ōtsuka feature 8 interviews with former students and their parents. Each interview includes their story, a summary sentence headline, a picture of the family, all of the schools they got accepted into, as well as four questions to the child and four questions to the parent(s). The eight summary sentences are: “He went to see his dream school and regained his motivation”, “It is important to feel like studying is fun”, “Solving exam questions from the past 30 years to overcome weak points”, “I only studied my weak subjects for three months and made a great leap forward”, “Victory by studying past exam questions from three schools together with my father” I worked hard together with everyone in the (specific school) course”, “In the end, everyone in the family, including my older brother, worked together to prepare me<sup>1</sup>”, “I changed my mind and passed in the second round”. These testimonials are addressing concerns that both students and parents may have such as motivation, fluctuating results, good ways of preparing, importance of support from family, and to not lose hope. In general, these testimonials seem more practical and useful for families who are currently in the entrance examination

<sup>1</sup> The word all-out war “総力戦” is used to describe the family struggle. Interestingly, I found several combat related terms to be used in the exam-preparation context.



preparation jungle or who are preparing to enter. It is interesting to note that several of these testimonials include children who had fluctuating grades and/or fluctuated between the ranked classes at Yotsuya Ōtsuka. Including students who have struggled can make the information more relatable for the reader. By seeing that other children also struggled but overcame their struggles, and that the path toward private school is not perfectly straight, parents and children may feel less stressed. By breaking the perfect image (but still showing that their students succeed), customers may feel more trust in Yotsuya Ōtsuka.

The separate inclusion of a flyer advertising a free week of lessons indicates that this is a selling point for them. By having children come and try it out without any obligations, families may be more inclined to choose Yotsuya Ōtsuka especially if their child is already familiar with the juku after the trial. Yotsuya Ōtsuka's placement test is also free, further incentivizing families to try it out. Their separate textbook pamphlet also makes it seem like their wide range of textbooks and educational publications are another main selling point for them (all three explain their curriculum and textbooks, but Yotsuya Ōtsuka has a whole separate booklet about the textbooks as well). Perhaps they have a market outside of their regular juku customers which purchase them as well (Woman J mentioned that her shingakujuku used some of Yotsuya Ōtsuka's textbooks in their teaching). Looking online it seems as if the actual textbooks are primarily available through Yotsuya Ōtsuka but that the other materials such as workbooks and their current events comprehension book are available at book retailers.

## 6.4 Comparison

Nichinōken uses its free placement test as an incentive to get people to sign-up, signaling that the fee barrier is lower (even though it raises significantly when signed up) which may make families who are not at the very top of earners more inclined to try it out (since it is free) and later decide if they want to invest in. Similarly, Yotsuya Ōtsuka has both a free placement test and a free week of trial lessons, increasing the incentive to try them out. Sapix also has a placement test, but it costs money (3,300 yen) which may make families less inclined to try it out unless they are entirely sure that Sapix is the juku for them. It may also signal that the reputation of Sapix is so good that people will sign up no matter what, and the company can therefore charge a fee in order to profit of the volume of people interested in their services (I have no data on the number of applicants so I cannot back this theory up, but the interviews

indicate that Sapix has a good reputation among consumers). These marketing practices mirrors those used in other businesses such as gyms, where a free work out is often used as an incentive to get people to sign up. Interestingly these free (and not free) offers mirror the juku ranking from the interviews, Sapix at the top offers no free trials, Nichinōken offers a free placement test, and Yotsuya Ōtsuka offers both a free placement test and a free trial period. Yotsuya Ōtsuka and Nichinōken also have the same sign-up fee (22,000) while Sapix costs 33,000, further marking it as the premium option. General fee comparisons are challenging since they all include different things in their pricing, but looking at their fee sheets, it looks like Nichinōken and Sapix are generally more expensive than Yotsuya Ōtsuka. All three companies also included different things in their packages, highlighting different aspects and signaling selling points (admission statistics, digital platform, textbooks). All three companies use pictures of happy and concentrated children throughout the material which can serve as a tool for projection as well as for reassurance. Parents and children can look and imagine how attending the juku could be and feel. The pictures convey contentment to education and the social situation, that the children are realizing their goals and thriving.

When comparing slogans, Yotsuya Ōtsuka 's “emerge, leaders of the future” is a call to action that paints a picture of the outcome of attending juku as well as the future. Yotsuya Ōtsuka is clearly painting the picture of what the outcome is, children attending this institution can become leaders. Nichinōken's “cheering on children with shining eyes” is descriptive of their own actions and plays more at the importance as well as the malleability of children and their innocence. Children with shining eyes could be interpreted as dreamers with ambitious goals that needs to be encouraged (cheered on). It also paints a picture of purity which needs to be protected and guided in order to not be tarnished. Both slogans spark the readers imagination, although in different ways, Yotsuya Ōtsuka focuses on the future and what children can achieve while Nichinōken focuses on the present and the ability as well as the innocence of children.

Contemplating the framing of the future within these promotional materials, Yotsuya Ōtsuka clearly connects children with the future and creates a sense of urgency by stressing that these children are the ones who are going to steer the country in the future. This coupled with the information about the “big changes” happening to the entrance examination, creates further urgency and uncertainty. Yotsuya Ōtsuka's assertive language in this section models trust and stability, creating a link between future (uncertain) and Yotsuya Ōtsuka (dependable). Sapix is similarly stating that children can become what society needs in the future through

their educational philosophy while showing the effectiveness of their curriculum through testimonials and acceptance rates. Their advertising creates a link between what they believe society need and what they can help the child become. Nichinōken creates a tight link between their services and private school which they market as the superior choice. Furthermore, they paint the future as a place where everything is possible for the children who go through their system and private school. They highlight their mission of creating independent learners as children learning skills they can take with them to private school and beyond in the future.

In the promotional material, shingakujuku frame the short-term investment of attending juku as a long-term investment to further incentivize customers. As apparent in the testimonials and interviews, not all students who attend a shingakujuku start attending at the first stage. All three juku clearly emphasize that they teach more than just how to pass entrance examination, that they will equip children with skills for the future and make them well-rounded academically. They clearly stress that students will gain skills for life, and that the juku will set them up on the path of greatness in the future. In general, these companies are able to market effectively based on their knowledge about the system. From their years of experience, shingakujuku have information about private schools, exam questions, preparation strategies and the level of material. The many different aspects and obstacles of the entrance exam system would surely be confusing and challenging for families to understand and navigate, which is something shingakujuku are able to benefit from. Their knowledge helps them model trust and reliability, by covering all aspects of the process.

The company language is to some extent othering. There are many oppositional phrases in the material such as: today's society is like X but we need Y, or a lot of people are X but your kid can become Y (something else, something more). This use of language creates a black and white environment where only two options exist. It is also shown in their language when describing the skills that they will gain from going to juku, i.e. Sapix's statement about society needing correct thinkers implies that there are a lot of people thinking incorrectly. The jukus' language also criticizes regular school and/or other educational institutions implicitly by painting themselves as the best source for learning these important skills. A clear example of this is Yotsuya Ōtsuka's statement about children being the leaders of the future and that they are the ones who can foster them. The larger societal othering is also apparent since most people do not attend these top juku, which means that if the correct

thinkers and children taught the right way are the ones attending juku, then the majority of society who did not go, are faulty thinkers or bad.

Sapix and Yotsuya Ōtsuka both include testimonials from former students but in two different formats. Sapix have stories from current university students while Yotsuya Ōtsuka have interviewed students and families who have recently passed their entrance examinations. The contents are quite similar to each other and the main topics address different concerns that parents may have such as children losing their motivation, effectiveness of curriculum, if the investment will lead to enrollment in private school, etc.. In the Sapix testimonials, the students touch upon why Sapix was chosen but the Yotsuya Ōtsuka testimonials mostly focus on the decision process for private school and only briefly speak about the juku curriculum. Furthermore, Sapix position the juku curriculum and teachers as the tool for success while Yotsuya Ōtsuka focus more on the hard work of the children paired with their extensive knowledge of the exams. Sapix's decision to include testimonials from university students show the long-term success of their business while also creating role models for current students. Yotsuya Ōtsuka's testimonials show the effectiveness of their curriculum (by showing all the schools the students got accepted to) while creating relatability through focusing on how students overcame their difficulties as well as including the parents in the testimonials.

Testimonials from former students can serve as an important way of attracting new customers, by showing that “we are not just saying this, your child can succeed – just look at these children”. However, companies may only select the testimonials of alumni who have succeeded or had a positive experience which make them unreliable yet effective. The two different types of testimonials found in the promotional material work in slightly different ways but are both not sugar-coating the exam process and are instead using hardships and how they were overcome as tools.

Returning to the three discourse analysis questions chosen to focus on in chapter 5 (significance, connection, politics) we can summarize some of the findings. Starting with significance, the material lifts private school, skills, traits and good habits as positive outcomes and important aspects of attending juku. Private school is portrayed as the good, safe and only choice for parents looking to give their children the best possibilities in life. Even though the entrance examination process places little to no importance on skills and traits such as leadership, creativity, and being well-rounded, the material places great emphasis on these qualities in their mission statements. Similarly, when it comes to

connection, the material clearly connects attendance with private school which is connected to future possibilities. They also connect the significant extra skills with their curricula, making it seem like this is the only place where they will learn these important things that are necessary for success at private school.

Looking at politics and the way the material is distributing social goods, there is the obvious private school (good) – public school (bad) division, as well as a dictation of what is desirable when it comes to attributes. Being too square is bad but being hard working and doing extra work is good. These divisions are not always explicit in the marketing but very apparent.

In summary, a lot of the shingakujuku system is built on the assumption that private school is better than public school and that the foundation built at private school will be crucial for future success at university and beyond. If we scale back the goals of shingakujuku, they are created to help students pass their entrance examinations (in this case for junior high school). However, their marketing also places emphasis on other skills and goals, perhaps to make the investment more attractive for families. When contemplating the power distance belief theory, I find both cognitive and affective elements in the material. However, in general I believe that the shingakujuku rely on cognitive facts sprinkled with affective elements to engage their customer base. The testimonials are affective but the main reasoning for including them are the facts and merits that these students have achieved which is a cognitive element. The numbers, methods and facts are the main selling point.

## 7. Conclusion

Returning to the three research questions formulated in chapter 1.1:

- How do former students reflect on their own juku experience and what do they themselves identify as positives and negatives with their attending?
- How do former attendees feel about juku as a student versus as a hypothetical parent. (Do former juku students want to send their own children to juku, and how do they reason when contemplating this scenario?)
- How do shingakujuku market their products to prospective customers in their promotional material? In particular, how is the future as well as the outcome of attending juku framed within this material?

Regarding the promotional material, the three shingakujuku examined in this thesis address the future in different but similar ways. Predictably, the companies all paint the outcomes of attending juku as something positive. Families will gain access to private school (hopefully their dream school) *and* their child will have gained valuable skills and abilities that they will find useful for the rest of their academic career and beyond. The future is painted as a place where everything is possible and as a place where children can make a difference.

Comparing the selling points in the shingakujuku's company statements to the interviews, we can see that although gaining access to a private school was considered the top gain, many valued the skills juku had taught them as well. Although no one mentioned critical thinking or other buzzwords that the juku use in their own marketing, planning, structuring their schedule, and learning good study habits were aspects that the past students valued. These perceived skill points were also mentioned in the testimonials from former students which were found in two of the company booklets. Of course, it is often difficult to measure and pinpoint (and especially retroactively) where one learned things such as critical thinking, perseverance, leadership etc. since I believe that these are intangible skills one picks up throughout their life from several sources. Besides the buzzwords, the main goal of shingakujuku, to prepare students for the junior high school entrance examination, was realized by practically all interviewees who had attended a shingakujuku (although not everyone entered their first choice of school). In this sense, the goal presented by the shingakujuku in their advertisement and the experiences of former students match up.

The nine interviews that were conducted show a spectrum of experiences at shingakujuku. However, most were able to self-rationalize and see the benefits of attending

juku over the negative aspects. Most interviewees thought that if children want to do the junior high school entrance examination, they need to attend juku to prepare. Some explicitly wanted their future children to attend, while some were more hesitant and placed more emphasis on other types of extra-curricular activities instead. Overall, the interviewees expressed a desire to respect the agency of the child when making the decision to enroll in a juku.

Stepping away from the research questions and returning to the different actors (students, juku, parents) in the industry, it is apparent that the identified roles are not static, especially when seen over time. Individuals can play the role of students, work part-time as teachers at a juku, to later become parents of a child attending juku. A politician deciding on school reforms can be a former juku student and parent of a juku student. The importance of the personal experience in shaping the motives and choices behind all actors involved must be remembered and perhaps be looked at further. Since the choice for enrolling in a shingakujuku at the elementary school level is mostly the parents' decision, interviews with parents or an analysis of parental forums would have added another interesting dimension to the discussion.

The question of what effects the declining birthrate and subsequent smaller cohorts of children entering schools and universities will have on the juku and entrance examination system still remain. When comparing today's juku system to the one in the early 2000s as described by Roesgaard (2006), it is apparent that her hypothesis of increased diversification of services and products offered have remained true. The Kansai branch of Nichinōken is offering one-on-one tutoring style services for students of all ages, even for those studying for the university entrance examination. As of 2014 Nichinōken also has a after school child-care service aimed at families with two working parents not wanting to leave their kids home alone. Similarly, the Sapix Yozemi Group offers child-care as well as educational services for most age groups (including two overseas branches) and have thus further diversified their services. Since Nagase Brothers' acquisition of Yotsuya Ōtsuka, the company covers several educational needs as well as the full shingaku route from elementary school all the way up to the university entrance exam. The broadening of services offered, together with the preference of enrolling in private schools, mean that these companies have continued to stay relevant. How their position looks in the future is uncertain but unless there is continued major school reforms or a complete redesign of the entrance examination system, it is hard to imagine that there will be any drastic changes. Parents will continue to invest in shadow education as long as there is a benefit to be gained from it. Even if people are aware of the inequalities of the

system, I think it would be rare to find a parent who had the ability to pay for their child to have better chances in life, and willingly opt out of doing so. Furthermore, it will be interesting to see if and how the proposed changes in entrance examination content, as mentioned in Yotsuya Ōtsuka's opening spread, will change the shingakujukus' business models and offered services. This is definitely a topic for further research.

An aspect of the entrance examination system that I had overlooked but have found myself increasingly intrigued by are the elementary school entrance exams and the industry surrounding them. I have heard from personal contacts that children are observed when playing by examiners who pick out the children they believe will best fit the school, which raises several concerns about fairness and reasonings behind selection criteria. This could be another potential area of further research within the juku/entrance examination system. In the same way that shingakujuku for the junior high school entrance examination has become increasingly normalized, I would not be surprised if the same will happen for elementary school entrance examinations in the future. Enrolling your child into a private elementary school might still be seen as 'over the top' but may become even more common in the future as a safe choice for parents not trusting public school or who do not want to risk anything, as brought up by Woman C in her interview.



## Appendix

For the sake of keeping the appendix short, summaries of the interviews are included instead of transcriptions. I wanted to make sure that it was possible for the reader to see the full picture behind the answers and the individual reasonings to provide transparency and understanding.

### Man A

Man A is currently finishing up graduate school. Attended juku for one year in junior high school to prepare for high school entrance exam, did not enter his high school of choice but attended another private high school. He did not enjoy going to juku at the time but can now look back with nostalgic feelings. Entering juku was his parents' choice, but the selection of juku was made based on results and the fact that man A had friends who attended the juku. In his own words, Man A failed his high school entrance exam which led him to dislike juku more and opt out of attending in preparation for university. He entered Waseda University through *suisen* (recommendation). In university, he worked part-time at a juku as a teacher. He found that his own experience, not enjoying juku, made him motivated to try and make juku fun for his own students. His main motivation for working part-time at a juku was the salary, which he found to be slightly higher than average. He identified the motivating study environment, gaining perspectives from other students and teachers, being able to study and learn more difficult things, and learning responsibility as positive aspects of attending juku. Having to force kids to study, going to juku even though you do not enjoy studying, having parents rely on juku to make their children study, and being taught by unqualified teachers (university students or people without teaching license) were identified as negative aspects. He would not want to send his children to juku, but if they wanted to attend, he would allow it. If they wanted to sit the junior high school entrance examination, he would also consider sending them to juku since he himself had no experience or ability to teach or help them through it. Man A does not think students need juku to get in to university but that there are many different ways and methods to enter university.

### Man B

Man B is currently an office worker. He attended juku for two years in primary school to prepare for the junior high school entrance examination, he also attended for two years in high

school to prepare for the university exam and to get his grades up. In primary school he attended Nichinōken. He made the decision to enter because he felt lonely when his other friends went to juku. He entered Nichinōken because his friends and older sister also attended. He attended lessons three times a week and took a test every Saturday. He found his time at Nichinōken to be fun and not too strict. His parents supported him especially mentally and did not push him to study. He sat the junior high school entrance examination for seven schools and entered a combined junior and senior high school that his mother picked out. She wanted him to enter a combined school so that he would not have to worry about the high school entrance exams. His private school also did “front-loaded studies” where they studied a year in advance so that the final year of high school could be used mainly for university exam preparation.

After enrolling in junior high school, man B stopped studying since he did not have to worry about the high school entrance exam. He saw his grades plummet and entered a small neighborhood juku that his friends attended after losing a bet with a friend. He described this juku as being an intense shingakujuku that was cult-like but very effective. The teacher was very passionate about his students and teaching but used methods such as humiliation to motivate students. Man B also attended a remedial juku in the beginning of his study journey to gain the basic skills needed for reaching higher again. After a period, he continued to be enrolled in the remedial juku without taking any classes just to use their self-study booths. With the help of his shingakujuku, Man B saw his grades rise and he decided to aim for Keio University which he also later entered. He sat 10 entrance examinations to play it safe and found the exam preparation period to be very stressful. He suffered through stomach issues, irritability, and nervousness which in turn motivated him to do his best since he did not think he could go through the process again. He also thought that the university entrance examination experience gave him a good opportunity to turn his life around and change his habits.

Man B thinks that he needed to go to juku in high school although he does not think that everyone needs to go to juku to enter a nice university. He believes that class sizes and the different needs and motivation levels of students in regular school makes it difficult for schoolteachers to help everyone and that this is why some people need to attend juku. For the junior high school entrance examination, he thinks that juku is very necessary because the contents of the exam is at a higher level than what they learn at any point in elementary

school. He believes that some students may be able to enter if they have a motivated mother who can get information from the internet or books, but that this is a rare case.

Citing his two personal entrance examination successes, he would want his own child to follow in his footsteps and go to juku, especially for the junior high school entrance exam. He does not think that the examination system is a bad custom but identified several dangers of the system such as kids facing academic pressure at increasingly younger ages and the fact that rich parents can make their kids “smarter” by accessing the best schools, juku and study environments. Man B thinks the name of the university you attend is very important in Japanese society but that it is slowly changing. He also thinks that the image of juku has changed since he was a child. He described that earlier, people saw juku as cramming and pushing children with crazy parents, but that sitting the junior high school entrance examination is now more common and so the image has improved as more paths in life and education have become accepted in society. He identified less free time, forcing kids to go, pressure on parents (calling the junior high school entrance examination the “parents’ war”), and the possibility of a bad spiral where kids rely too much on their juku and look down on their regular school as negative aspects of attending juku.

#### Woman C

Woman C is currently an office worker. She attended Kumon (worksheet-based drill juku) from around age 4 to 6, Eikyō seminar from first year of elementary school and then her mother decided that she should switch to Waseda Academy before sitting the junior high school entrance examination. In high school she only joined Kawai juku during longer school breaks because it was cheaper and closer to her home compared to other cram schools. Her parents wanted her to join juku early and to go to university since they themselves had not gone to university and believed that a degree is very important in Japanese society. Woman C saw juku attendance as something normal and accepted the situation even though she rather wanted to play with her friends as a child. Her older sister had also attended a shingakujuku and sat the entrance examination. She believes that the study environment was better at Waseda Academy due to the highly motivated students, strict teachers, and a well-organized and rigid curriculum. She thinks the biggest skill she learned from juku was cementing all of the basic skills needed to gear up to the more academically rigorous pace of her private junior senior high school. She chose what junior senior high school she wanted to attend herself and

got into her goal school. In high school she found her private school education to be well-organized and focused on university entrance examination preparation. Woman C wanted to attend Tokyo University because she thought that if she went there, she could be anything and because tuition fees at a national university are much lower compared to private universities. Since she wanted to aim for a top university, she still joined juku for school breaks although she does not think she really needed to, it was more to calm nerves. She did not get into Tokyo University but entered Ochanomizu University instead (another national university). In university she worked part-time teaching English at Waseda Academy. She decided to work at her old juku, citing a familiarity with the atmosphere and the above average salary as the main reasons for choosing to do so. Before and during her time as a teacher she continually received training and feedback from her colleagues. She enjoyed her time at Waseda Academy but found parent-teacher meetings to be the most demanding part of her work tasks.

She identified skill-improvement, making friends, and the benefit of enjoying six school years in a row without having to take an entrance examination (presumed that one can enter a junior senior private high school through the entrance exam) as positive parts of juku attendance. Having to study instead of playing with friends was pointed out as a negative aspect. Woman C believes that she could not have entered her private junior senior high school without attending juku. She cites unique exam questions, the fact that young children cannot control or organize their studying, and every school having their own unique exam question style and needing a lot of specialized training to master these methods as the reason for this. In her junior high school class, out of 45 students, only one student had studied at home by herself for the examination while the rest had attended some form of juku. She thinks that older students can choose themselves if they need to go to juku or not since they are able to control their own studying.

Woman C does not think juku is the most important thing for her own potential children, but she would want them to go to a private junior high school. She believes that the study environment at public schools is not always the best due to there being many kinds of people enrolled. If her children were to aim for private school, she thinks that attending juku is necessary. She would not necessarily want her children to go to private elementary school but thinks that if she was a mother who didn't want to take any risks (citing the uncertainty of quality of education in the public school) she could see the entrance exam for elementary school as a good option.

## Woman D

Woman D is currently finishing up graduate school and soon entering a PhD program. She started with attending Kumon between ages 5 – 10, then entered a chain-juku called easy-c for English classes and a local privately owned juku between ages 10-15. She attended public school for primary school and junior high school and then entered a private high school through entrance examinations. Growing up in a more rural prefecture, her family saw the private school as the best educational opportunity for their children. Her father also wanted his children to go to a good university. Woman D did not enjoy Kumon and its teaching style. She thought that the juku she switched to had a better studying system (more traditional classroom environment with a smaller class size) and enjoyed it more. Before entering high school, she switched juku again because of a prolonged period of sporadic school absence in part due to bullying. When reflecting over her juku attendance, she thought that going to juku was mostly influenced by her surroundings and parents but that she enjoyed the experience of communicating with the teachers and seeing how beneficial higher education could be for a person. She also felt like juku taught her to study effectively and that hanging out with her friends in juku was a good experience for her.

Her private high school had an upper and lower track. She applied and entered at the lower level (citing her older sister's advice, wanting to have an enjoyable high school experience, and her school absence as reasons) and then switched to the upper track in the second year of high school. When asked why she did not sit the junior high school entrance examination she explained that her older sister had tried and failed to get in. Her cousins had all succeeded and entered but they had to live in the school dormitory and seemed to have it hard studying all the time.

Woman D entered Waseda University through *suisen* and the guidance of her teacher. During her undergraduate she worked part time at a juku with a one-on-one teaching style. She liked her time there but felt like the level of teachers were not high enough and that they received too little training. She thought that juku was good for some of the children who had a hard time studying but felt guilty when she had students who were stressed or pushed by their parents to go. She would not send her kid to juku (only if they were to sit the junior high school entrance examination) and would instead send them to an English or another foreign language juku, sports or piano lessons. She wants to prioritize the children's decisions and opinions.

Woman D believes that people from higher level universities are more likely to have positive emotions towards sending their children to juku but that people with more complex education experiences are more likely to not send their children to juku. Woman D thinks that having a university degree is very useful when getting a job in Japan. At her current café part-time job, she feels like her colleagues expect more of her because of her degree.

#### Man E

Man E is currently an undergraduate student at Waseda University. He went to Kumon from kindergarten up to 3rd grade, followed by a local juku franchise called La salle for remedial purposes from 3rd grade which then switched to more of exam preparation when he entered junior high school until his high school entrance examinations. At the end of high school, he attended Kawai Juku to prepare for his university exams. He did not want to go to Kumon but was forced by his parents. He enjoyed going to La Salle because of passionate teachers, making lots of friends in class (which he also stated was a double-edged sword because he sometimes played instead of studying), and interesting lessons. When he was in high school, he was busy with his baseball club but realized the importance of sitting the university entrance examination and personally decided to attend juku again. Even though he did not enjoy attending juku at a young age, he thinks that his attendance had a good impact on him, made him smarter, taught him how to do homework, follow a schedule as well as giving him routines and allowing him to study subjects before they were introduced in regular school.

He sat entrance examinations for 10 universities and aimed for Waseda or Keio University. He got into Meiji University but retook his entrance examination after attending for a year and got into Waseda University. While a Meiji student he worked for one year at a juku. He thinks this experience was one of the great experiences of his life because by helping students who struggled with studying, he could widen his perspective and grow. He found the work demanding at times and felt like he did not receive enough training and ultimately quit when he got into Waseda, partly due to the salary not being that great.

He thinks that because of the Japanese *gakurekishakai* (educational credential society), the higher university one can enter, the better job prospects one can get. He links his Waseda enrollment with the fact that he has a full-time consulting job lined up after graduation but also stated that he wishes he had gone to an even higher ranked university after seeing Tokyo University students while job-hunting. Man E also thinks that the possibility to make

connections with other students that could be used in the future is a good advantage for attending a top-level university. Man E is not sure if he will live in Japan in the future, but if he does he definitely wants his children to attend juku and aim for Tokyo University. He would want them to aim for a top-ranking combined junior senior high school since they send many students to Tokyo University every year. Man E thinks that he himself could not have entered his private high school or Waseda, had he not gone to juku since his school lessons were not enough to prepare him. He identified the high costs of juku as an unfair part of the system and saw himself as fortunate to have been able to attend.

#### Woman F

Woman F is currently going through a career switch and working part-time while studying online. She started going to Nichinōken in 3rd grade aiming to enter a private all-girls junior high school because she had some difficulties with the boys in her primary school class. Her mother decided that she should go to juku since Woman F have two older brothers, one who went to public school and one who went to juku and private school. The oldest brother had some behavioral issues and so it seems like the mother thought private school would be better for the other children. Woman F stated that her mother thought she should go to a junior senior high school with a university affiliation so that she could avoid the stressful university entrance examinations. She remembers her time at Nichinōken as enjoyable with friends, doing well academically, good teachers, and getting in to the advanced math class. In the beginning she remembers being upset that she had to go to juku but other than that she does not feel like she had a negative experience at Nichinōken. Compared to her regular school which had many disruptive children, she found Nichinōken to have a better study environment. Nichinōken restructured the seating of the class based on test results which motivated her to study hard. Woman F sat three junior high school entrance examinations and got into her private university affiliated junior and senior girls' school of choice. She believes that juku was a key part of the exam preparation process because the level of the curriculum at regular school was too low to enter private school. She feels that going to juku helped her gain the skill to study hard, be conscientious, and to have a focused mindset.

Woman F did not have to sit the university entrance examination. Instead, half of her grade could get into Rikkyo University through the school affiliation based on their grade ranking. Because her grades were in the lower quarter of her year, she started going to juku

again at the end of junior high school in an effort to raise them before high school. She entered a one-on-one juku called Kobetsu Shidō Gakkō. Her teacher at Kobetsu was a university student which she enjoyed talking with and with her help Woman F raised her scores and grades in mathematics. Kobetsu also had private study booths that woman F utilized frequently since she found it easier to study there than at home. Woman F found the university exam season preparation to be really rough and stressful. She suffered stomach issues every day to the point where she got medication prescribed from her doctor. She shared that a friend had told her years afterwards that she had looked dead and absent-minded during that time in high school. In the end Woman F got into Rikkyo University and her preferred major.

Woman F thinks going to a good university gives you some advantages when job-hunting but that the traditional route in society can be suffocating for younger people. She thinks that it is easy for people to start living their life not based on their own values but according to society's values, feeling like she followed this path until she found that she did not know what she wanted and decided to make a life change even though she found it very difficult. She brings up having many friends who are also suffering at their first jobs, who thought that getting in to a big company would lead to happiness and success.

Woman F would want her own children to sit the junior high school entrance examination since she self-admittedly holds the stereotype that public schools are less than exemplary. She would not want her children to go to private elementary school though, since she fears they will get too narrow of a perspective on life being surrounded by only rich kids. She would not worry about her kids entering a good university and instead focus more on helping them find their strengths and passions. If they aim for the private junior high school, they will have to go to juku because Woman F thinks that the level of teaching in public primary school is too low to prepare students for the examinations.

## Man G

Man G is currently an office worker. He started attending Nichinōken in the sixth year of elementary school. His parents gave him the option to attend either private or public school and he chose to aim for private school, citing the schools' having nicer things as a possible reason for his choice. He thought that his juku experience was "hell" because he wanted to play sports, games, and with his friends instead of going to juku. He went to Nichinōken five



or six days a week. Even though he wanted to attend private school he did not want to attend juku or study and so his parents and juku teachers had to force him to study. He sat entrance examination for five or six junior senior high schools and got into his last choice of school, a private junior senior high school. He does not think he could have gotten in to his private school without attending juku. In high school he attended Sundai to prepare for university entrance exams. He found that Sundai had excellent teachers, but Man G still struggled to find the motivation to study. He wanted to enter Kyoto University (national university) but got accepted to Keio University (private university).

In university he worked part-time as a juku teacher. Because he hated studying himself, he wanted to make studying fun for children. The salary was higher than average, but the job required lots of unpaid preparation. He identified high fees of both juku and private schools as unfair aspects of the current educational landscape in Japan but saw himself as a lucky guy having been able to attend both. Man G would only send his child to juku if they could not study alone. He would want his child to make their own decisions, but he would like them to go to university. He thinks that the possibility to have a rival as well as being able to study because you have someone watching over you, are positive aspects of attending juku. The main negative thing with his own juku attendance was losing his free time.

#### Man H

Man H is currently an office worker. He entered Sapix in the 4th grade of primary school because his parents wanted him to. They chose Sapix based on his cousin's experience, their acceptance rates, as well as the close proximity to the family home. Man H attended Sapix 3-4 times a week and did not particularly enjoy it. He would rather have played sports and found the Sapix teacher to be scary and violent, slamming their fist into the students' desks, chairs, or the blackboard when they got frustrated or students performed poorly academically. He liked his classmates though. Although his own experience with his teacher was negative, he said that when his little sister started attending Sapix there were no such violence in the classroom anymore.

He applied for five private schools and got in to his fourth and fifth choice. Man H does not think that he could have entered his private junior senior high school without Sapix because the level of contents at the juku was much higher than in his public elementary school. Sapix taught him the tips and tricks needed to answer the questions on the entrance

examination and the students were divided into classes based on which school they were aiming for. For university, Man H aimed for Keio which was the university he later entered. He joined a smaller private juku to prepare for the university entrance exam and enjoyed his time with the teachers and classmates there.

Man H do not want send his children to juku too early, and thinks that junior high or high school would be a good age to start attending. He would want his children to play more sports in primary school rather than studying hard. He does not have a preference on whether his children attend private or public school and would support their decision. He wants his children to sit the university entrance examination, believing it to be a good experience for people.

#### Woman J

Woman J is currently a student at Meiji University. She started attending juku in 5th grade in preparation for the junior high school entrance examinations. She went to a local Tokyo juku called Antore. Woman J has an older sister who also went to Antore and sat the junior high school entrance examinations and so her parents thought it would be most convenient if Woman J also did the same. She found the teachers at Antore to be very kind and knowledgeable about the entrance examination. Woman J both enjoyed and disliked her time at juku. She found the class contents challenging and was very hard on herself when she did not get the scores she wanted. However, she found her family and juku teachers to be very supportive. At juku she could meet new friends, but she was also bullied by one of her classmates during her first year of juku. Despite the negative aspects of her attendance, she is still happy to have attended since the juku helped her pass her exams. She sat entrance examinations for three junior high schools and got in to a combined junior senior high school. Regarding skills gained from juku, she learned patience and time management from her attendance. Woman J also attended a juku called TOEFL Seminar in her final year of high school to prepare for the university entrance examinations. Because she wanted to aim for an international university, she wanted to go to a juku with a good English curriculum.

During her time at university Woman J has worked part-time at a juku. She cites a higher salary and enjoying working with children as the two main reasons for working at the juku. The main negative aspect of the job is having to work during the school holidays, often in 12-hour shifts. She thinks that the positive aspects of working at a juku are learning to

problem-solve while helping students figure out their schedules and situation. She believes that students preparing to sit entrance examinations or students who are highly motivated benefit from attending juku but that students in other grades do not have to attend. As a teacher she sees that some students are forced to attend juku by their parents which leads to a demotivating juku experience. Regarding the meritocratic aspects of Japanese society, Woman J believes that it is easier for students who attend top universities to get good jobs, and that studying hard as a student is important for future success. She does not think that the system is fair and thinks that it is slowly changing, companies are hiring from a more diverse university pool than before. Contemplating her choices as a parent, Woman J would encourage her children to attend juku for the university exam. She believes that it would be good if they took the junior high school entrance exam as well, but she wants to respect her children's wishes and not force them to do anything against their will. She thinks that public and private school are quite equal and do not have a preference on what she would want her children to attend.

## Bibliography

- Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute [BERD] (2017) 第3回 学校外教育活動に関する調査2017 [Third survey on out-of-school educational activities 2017], Available at: [https://benesse.jp/berd/shotouchutou/research/detail\\_5210.html](https://benesse.jp/berd/shotouchutou/research/detail_5210.html) (Accessed: August 14 2024)
- Bray, M. (1999) *The shadow education system: private tutoring and its implications for planners*. Paris: Unesco, International Institute for Educational Planning (Fundamentals of educational planning, 61).
- Bryman, A. (2016) *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 5th ed.
- Dierkes, J. (2010) 'Teaching in the shadow: operators of small shadow education institutions in Japan', *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 11(1), pp. 25–35. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-009-9059-3>.
- Entrich, S.R. (2015) 'The Decision for Shadow Education in Japan: Students' Choice or Parents' Pressure?', *Social Science Japan Journal*, 18(2), pp. 193–216.
- Entrich, S.R. (2018) *Shadow Education and Social Inequalities in Japan: Evolving Patterns and Conceptual Implications*. Cham: Springer International Publishing. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-69119-0>.
- Fülöp, M. and Gordon Györi, J. (2021) 'Japanese students' perceptions of the role that shadow education plays in competition in education', *Hungarian Educational Research Journal*, 11(2), pp. 143–165. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1556/063.2021.00059>.
- Gee, J. (2011) *An introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, New York: Routledge.
- Hofstede, G., Hofstede, J. G., Minkov, M. (2012) *Organisationer och kulturer*, translated by Nordfeldt, S., 3rd edition, Malmö: Studentlitteratur.
- Matsuoka, R. (2015) 'School socioeconomic compositional effect on shadow education participation: evidence from Japan', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 36(2), pp. 270–290.

- Minkov, M. and Hofstede, G. (2011) 'The evolution of Hofstede's doctrine', *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*. Edited by K. Chudzikowski, G. Fink, and W. Mayrhofer, 18(1), pp. 10–20. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/13527601111104269>.
- Nichinōken (n.d.) 日能研の教室案内 [Nichinōken classroom information] Available at: <https://www.nichinoken.co.jp/branch/listsearch/metropolitan.html> (Accessed: June 5 2024).
- Ozaki, M. (2015) *A Juku Childhood: Children's experiences in Juku attendance and its relation to their wellbeing in Japan*, (Doctoral dissertation, University of Bath) Available at: <https://researchportal.bath.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/a-juku-childhood-childrens-experiences-in-juku-attendance-and-its>
- Pearce, R. (1999) 'Advertising: critical analysis of images' in Parker, I. (ed) *Critical textwork: an introduction to varieties of discourse and discourse analysis*, Buckingham: Open University Press, pp. 78-91.
- Portal Site of Official Statistics of Japan website (2022) 2022 年経済構造実態調査 [2022 Economic Structure Survey] Available at: <https://www.e-stat.go.jp/stat-search/file-download?statInfId=000040027904&fileKind=0> (Accessed: August 13 2024).
- Richardson, R. M., & Smith, S. W. (2007) 'The influence of high/low-context culture and power distance on choice of communication media: Students' media choice to communicate with professors in Japan and America'. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 31(4), 479–501.
- Roesgaard, M. H. (2006) *Japanese education and the Cram School Business: functions, challenges and perspectives of the juku*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press
- Sapix (n.d.) 校舎のご案内 [Schoolhouse information] Available at: <https://www.sapientica.com/school/> (Accessed: June 5 2024)
- Stevenson, D.L. and Baker, D.P. (1992) 'Shadow Education and Allocation in Formal Schooling: Transition to University in Japan', *American Journal of Sociology*, 97(6), pp. 1639–1657.

Sugimoto, Y. (2020) *An Introduction to Japanese Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Swedish Research Council (2017) *Good Research Practice*, Stockholm: Swedish Research council.

Taoka, Y., Kagohashi, K. and Mougenot, C. (2021) ‘A cross-cultural study of co-design: the impact of power distance on group dynamics in Japan’, *CoDesign*. 17(1), pp. 22–49. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15710882.2018.1546321>.

Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education (2023) 令和5年度公立学校統計調査報告書 [2023 Statistical survey of public schools], Tokyo: Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education. Available at: [https://www.kyoiku.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/administration/statistics\\_and\\_research/](https://www.kyoiku.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/administration/statistics_and_research/) (Accessed: May 15 2024)

Tu, L.L., Kwon, J. and Gao, H. (2022) ‘Heart or Mind? The Impact of Power Distance Belief on the Persuasiveness of Cognitive Versus Affective Appeals in Education Marketing Messages’, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 59(1), pp. 173–190. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00222437211002196>

Yamato, Y. and Zhang, W. (2017) ‘Changing schooling, changing shadow: shapes and functions of *juku* in Japan’, *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 37(3), pp. 329–343. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2017.1345719>

Yotsuya Otsuka (n.d.) 四谷大塚 校舎のご案内 [Yotsuya Ōtsuka schoolhouse information] Available at: [https://www.yotsuyaotsuka.com/school\\_map/](https://www.yotsuyaotsuka.com/school_map/) (Accessed June 5 2024)