

Cultural Capital in East Asian Educational Systems: The Case of Japan

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Abstract

Cultural capital has been an important but often elusive concept in the study of educational processes and social class reproduction. The authors suggest that this is partly because a country's educational system and ways of evaluating students at different educational transitions set the context for the mechanisms through which embodied and objectified cultural capital operate. Moreover, parents in some societies invest in children's "shadow education" (extracurricular classes or tutoring) at key educational transitions, and it is not clear whether this replaces cultural capital or supplements it. The authors use data from Japan, a country whose educational system depends heavily but not exclusively on standardized examinations, to examine how cultural capital affects students' progress at three points in the educational process that involve different relative emphasis on examinations and on teachers' subjective judgment. In this way, the authors clarify the ways that embodied and objectified cultural capital exert effects on educational outcomes.

Keywords

cultural capital, Japan, educational attainment, shadow education

INTRODUCTION

The reproduction of social class through educational attainment is a central theme in studies of inequality. Following Bourdieu, many sociologists have considered the role of cultural capital in translating an individual's social class background into educational attainment. Sociologists have used a plethora of empirical indicators to tap into the abstract concept of cultural capital. The positive association between socioeconomic background and exposure to literary and artistic products and activities—commonly used measures of cultural capital—appears to be a general phenomenon across countries. However, the subsequent effect of cultural capital on individuals' educational achievement and attainment does not appear to be universal (De Graaf et al. 2000; DiMaggio 1982; Dumais 2002; Katsillis and Rubinson 1990; Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell 1999). This has given rise to questions

about the societal conditions under which cultural capital impacts educational outcomes, especially since the concept was developed in the specific context of French culture.

In this article, we consider how the effect of cultural capital on educational performance and attainment in Japan may be conditioned by characteristics of educational systems that are particularly salient in East Asia: (1) a strong reliance on student assessment through standardized examinations and (2) widespread parental investment in academic tutoring and private exam

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preparation courses for their children. Under these circumstances, does cultural capital matter in educational processes? Taking advantage of data on several key transition points in students' educational careers, we aim to contribute to theoretical and empirical work on the mechanisms through which cultural capital operates.

The mechanisms or reasons that cultural capital matters in educational processes are often vaguely specified in empirical studies. If cultural capital is related to academic performance and/or to students' progression through educational transitions, is this due to teachers' and school authorities' positive recognition of students' habits, attitudes, and demeanor (Bourdieu's "embodied cultural capital"; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; DiMaggio 1982; Dumais 2006; Lamont and Lareau 1988; Lareau 2003; Lareau and Horvat 1999)? Or is it due to how children's acquisition of cultural capital through conscious or unconscious parental practices fosters general motivation, abilities, and skills that are vital in the learning process in schools (Buchmann 2002; De Graaf et al. 2000; Farkas 1996; Miyajima and Tanaka 1983)? In the latter case, cultural capital is mainly exerting an effect through the enhancement of children's human capital. While both of these conceptions of embodied cultural capital are consistent with Bourdieu's formulation of how cultural capital positively impacts students' academic success, the mechanisms through which they operate are quite different. Additionally, the mechanisms are not always clear with regard to how students' absorption of cultural knowledge through exposure to cultural objects in daily home life (Bourdieu's "objectified cultural capital") exerts an effect on their academic progress.

We examine Japan in this article as a strategic case where most educational transitions are governed by standardized examinations but the transition into high school also implicates the subjective judgment of teachers. This provides analytical leverage in considering the various mechanisms through which cultural capital may operate as students' educational careers unfold. Our data allow us to look at the effect of cultural capital on three outcomes: students' academic performance in ninth grade, the academic quality of the high school they subsequently enter (with extensive guidance from their middle school), and their final educational attainment.

Japan is also a rich theoretical case because many parents engage in forms of direct investment

in children's human capital, such as sending their children to "shadow education" that includes private extracurricular exam preparation schools and tutorial services (Bray 2006; Hirao 2001; Stevenson and Baker 1992). This reliance on shadow education provided in the private extracurricular educational marketplace is also common in other East Asian countries such as Taiwan and South Korea. We suggest that such environments where many parents directly invest in human capital-enhancing extracurricular activities further allow us to isolate the additional effect that cultural capital may have on educational achievement and attainment.

COMPARATIVE STUDIES OF CULTURAL CAPITAL

The theory of social reproduction through cultural capital emphasizes the importance of the early familial environment for students' development and accumulation of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1973). Bourdieu posited that cultural transmission within the home is rewarded by the educational system in French society (Bourdieu 1973; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Many scholars have examined the effect of what Bourdieu calls "high culture" by looking at the relationship between empirical measures of students' and parents' participation in activities related to classical music, art, and literature on students' academic outcomes in comparative national contexts. We seek to address three issues in this literature.

First, as Buchmann (2002) has argued, the types of parental investment that contribute effectively to children's academic success are likely to differ depending on the cultural conditions and educational system of a country. In her study of Kenya, Buchmann extended the concept of cultural capital to shadow education, including classes outside of school and parental reading habits, and found positive effects on students' school performance.¹ A number of additional studies in countries other than France also find that types of cultural capital above and beyond "high culture" appear to be related to students' educational advancement (Buchmann 2002; De Graaf et al. 2000; DiMaggio 1982; Dumais 2002; Kariya et al. 2002; Kataoka 1998, 2001; Kaufman and Gabler 2004). This suggests the importance of considering how the structure of the educational

system affects which types of cultural and extra-educational activities are important.

Second, many empirical studies measure cultural capital acquisition in high school and examine its effect on high school GPA or later educational attainment. This can be problematic. It may be that no empirical association is found between high school students' cultural capital acquisition and educational outcomes because cultural capital internalized during childhood has already been transformed into capabilities by the time students are in high school (e.g., DiMaggio 1982; Dumais 2002; Katsillis and Rubinson 1990). If that is the case, cultural capital acquired at an early age may essentially be exerting an *indirect* effect on later academic achievement or attainment via its positive impact on ability and motivation. In other words, cultural capital absorbed early on may be enhancing adolescents' human capital. In keeping with this interpretation, Lareau (2003) demonstrates that upper-middle-class parents in the United States provide abundant cultural opportunities for their elementary school-age children, thereby contributing to their children's educational advantages at an early stage. Her qualitative findings are supported by recent quantitative research showing that kindergarteners and first graders from high socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds are more likely to participate in cultural activities and cultural lessons (Dumais 2006). It is therefore important to measure how cultural capital acquired during childhood affects early academic performance as well as later educational attainment in order to tease out the direct and indirect effects of cultural capital. This can best be done by looking at several outcomes in students' educational careers, as we do in this article.

Third, Bourdieu (1983:243) made a clear distinction between embodied and objectified cultural capital. Embodied cultural capital refers to the "long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body," whereas objectified cultural capital consists of cultural goods such as books, dictionaries, fine art, and other objects that are critical in the "struggles in which the agents wield strengths and obtain profits proportionate to their mastery of this objectified capital, and therefore to the extent of their embodied capital" (Bourdieu 1983:247). It is important to theorize the mechanisms through which each type of cultural capital matters in a student's educational career, as well as to test (as Bourdieu implied) whether the effect

of objectified cultural capital rests on individuals having some requisite amount of embodied cultural capital.

In the next section, we describe the structure of the Japanese educational system and the features that make it a strategic research site for examining the contributions of cultural capital to student outcomes.

THE JAPANESE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: SCOPE FOR CULTURAL CAPITAL?

The design of the post-World War II Japanese educational system sought to reduce the educational inequality associated with family background and promote meritocracy (Cummings 1980; James and Benjamin 1988). The complex prewar system of post-elementary school tracking was replaced by compulsory middle school and noncompulsory general and vocational high schools, followed by the higher education options of junior college and four-year university (Rohlen 1983). Based on meritocratic and egalitarian ideals, Japan's educational system is similar to others in East Asia with regard to its strong emphasis on students' mastery of a standard national curriculum, demonstrated in their performance on standardized entrance examinations. Although the higher education system is undergoing reform in twenty-first-century Japan, standardized college entrance examinations presently continue to be the central determinant of Japanese students' university acceptance rather than teachers' recommendations or students' extracurricular activities such as participation in school clubs, community activities, or musical instrument lessons.

Given that standardized written exams based on a nationally determined curriculum are the main method of educational selection (Amano 1990), one might argue that the Japanese educational system gives little leeway for teachers' subjective judgments of students' cultural capital to make a difference. Moreover, because the standardized examinations center on basic skills in mathematics, language, and history, familiarity and experience with cultural activities and objects would seem to play little role in determining a student's educational success. However, we see two possible ways for cultural capital to affect Japanese educational outcomes.

First, we hypothesize a role for embodied cultural capital throughout the educational process. Studies by Japanese sociologists have consistently found that Japanese students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to be more exposed to and engaged in literary, art, and music activities at home than their lower-status counterparts (Fujita et al. 1987; Miyajima and Fujita 1991; Miyajima and Tanaka 1983) and that this is positively associated with their academic aspirations and achievement (Kariya et al. 2002; Kataoka 1998; Miyajima and Tanaka 1983). Some researchers have suggested that cultural activities help students understand abstract and ideological codes that facilitate educational mastery (Miyajima and Tanaka 1983; Omae 2002). This interpretation is supplemented by Kariya's (2004) study showing that elementary school students with culturally enriched home environments tend to be more motivated to learn.

We hypothesize that involvement in family activities related to cultural capital is a strategy that Japanese parents of higher socioeconomic status may use to enhance their children's human capital at an early age. There is a general belief among the Japanese public in academic meritocracy through examinations. Parents' involvement of children in cultural activities may be a way of teaching children *how* to learn rather than primarily focused on teaching them about cultural forms per se. In short, we suggest that embodied cultural capital may play a role throughout Japanese students' careers, not so much through its shaping of the symbolic manifestations of *habitus* but through its influence on students' incorporation and practice of dominant ways of learning and understanding cultural and scientific knowledge (Swartz 1997).

Given our supposition that embodied cultural capital in the Japanese context operates primarily by enhancing students' human capital rather than as a set of attitudes and demeanors that teachers judge, we expect embodied cultural capital to be correlated with students' academic achievement and to affect subsequent outcomes (high school quality and final educational attainment) indirectly, through educational achievement.

The second way we predict that cultural capital influences Japanese students' educational trajectories involves objectified cultural capital. We hypothesize that this type of cultural capital is important at the critical point of selection into high school because here more so than at other

points, the subjective judgment of Japanese teachers enters in. While more than 90 percent of Japanese youth proceed to high school, in most regions of Japan students can apply to only one public high school in their district. These local schools are highly stratified in terms of academic quality (Brinton 2005; Kariya and Rosenbaum 1987; Rohlen 1983; Shimizu and Tokuda 1991), and students who succeed in entering a highly competitive academic high school have a much greater chance of entering a high-ranked university than students who fail to do so (Kariya and Rosenbaum 1987; Nakanishi 2000; Rohlen 1983; Shimizu and Tokuda 1991). Private high school is an option for some students, and this also requires an application process.² Why would objectified cultural capital supplement embodied cultural capital at the stage of high school application? We suggest that it is important because of the role Japanese middle school teachers play in interpreting students' home environment and factoring this into the guidance they provide in students' high school choice and application process.

Previous studies have extensively documented Japanese middle school homeroom teachers' large role in counseling students in their selection of a high school (LeTendre 1994, 1996a, 1996b; Shimizu and Tokuda 1991). Teachers' recommendations are mainly based on academic performance, but ethnographic research in Japanese middle schools has shown that teachers also make subjective judgments about the "fit" of a student to a given high school based on socioeconomic and family background (LeTendre 1996a; Okano 1993; Shimizu and Tokuda 1991). Japanese middle schools typically have detailed information on parents' occupations and the home environment. Teacher visits (*katei hōmon*) to individual students' homes have traditionally been a routine practice (Fukuzawa 1996). In one of the middle schools studied by LeTendre (1996a:198-99), each student was required to assemble a portfolio in preparation for high school placement counseling. As LeTendre writes:

The items that students are asked to assemble for consideration are far more complex and emotionally involved than just grades or practice test scores. These initial placement-counseling exercises emphasize the link between students' performance on the entrance test and their families' happiness and welfare. Teachers assume that students

will be most satisfied and motivated if their aspirations are solidly based in a nexus of family expectations and aspirations. . . . Parental background is accepted as a valid (or perhaps crucial) part of the decision-making process.

Given the visibility of cultural objects in the home environment to teachers and the emphasis on how well a ninth grader's aspirations reflect his or her family environment, objectified cultural capital may well have an effect on how a student is tracked into high school. Since middle school teachers have relatively high occupational status in Japan, they are likely to be very capable in "reading" cultural capital.³ Like LeTendre (1996a), Fukuzawa (1996:300) found in her ethnographic study of Japanese middle schools that "performance on written, short-answer, multiple-choice or fill-in-the-blank type midterm and final examinations overwhelmingly determined final grades" but that teachers gathered detailed information on students' home environment in order to provide "lifestyle guidance" (*seikatsu shidō*). Teachers described to her what they learned in the mandatory visit to each student's home at the beginning of the academic year; one teacher provided a vivid description of how well she could judge a student's home environment as soon as she entered a house, simply by seeing the objects and neatness of the front hallway. Fukuzawa states, "Like the other life-style indices, home visits supplied outward signs or evidence of inner qualities which teachers believed they could read easily and accurately" (p. 309).⁴

In sum, we hypothesize an effect of embodied cultural capital on Japanese students' academic achievement in middle school, an indirect effect (through achievement) on high school quality, and an indirect effect (through achievement and high school quality) on final educational attainment. We expect to find an effect of objectified cultural capital on a specific educational outcome: the quality of the high school into which a student is guided. Given Bourdieu's suggestion that objectified cultural capital is only of value if an individual has a certain amount of embodied cultural capital, we also examine the interaction between the two to see if there is evidence of this.

Two final considerations in the Japanese context are important to consider: the prevalence of shadow education and the ways that Japanese

higher education remains gendered. Before turning to our data, we briefly discuss how each of these will affect our analyses.

Shadow education. Stevenson and Baker (1992:1640) define shadow education, which includes after-school lessons ("cram schools"), tutoring, and correspondence courses, as "a set of educational activities outside formal schooling that are designed to improve a student's chance of successfully moving through the allocation process." Shadow education is an important element of the educational environment in Japan. It assumes a variety of forms, from private tutoring and *juku* (private after-school classes) to year-long study (*rōnin* experience) between high school graduation and college application. A recent Japanese government survey reported that 15 percent of second graders, 28 percent of fifth graders, and about half of eighth graders nationwide who attend public schools also regularly go to *juku* (Ministry of Education 2003). These percentages are significantly higher in urban areas and among students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds (Rohlen 1983; Stevenson and Baker 1992).

We regard shadow education as an important experience in students' lives that we should statistically control for when we examine the effects of cultural capital. Because it provides exam-relevant academic knowledge and test-taking training to students, we expect shadow education that students received through middle school to have a positive effect on their academic performance in ninth grade and an indirect effect (via academic performance) on later educational outcomes. We expect our predictions for both embodied and objectified cultural capital to hold when shadow education is statistically controlled in our analyses since the mechanisms through which cultural capital influences academic achievement are different from that of shadow education.

Gendered education. Gender is not a central focus in this article, but we have reason to believe that objectified cultural capital may interact with gender at one educational transition in Japan: the transition into higher education. The percentage of Japanese women matriculating to higher education increased from 18 to 48 percent between 1970 and 2003, reaching equivalence with men. However, higher education remains strongly sex-segregated, with approximately one-third of female college students and only 4 percent of male students attending two-year

rather than four-year colleges (Ministry of Education 2004).

The meaning and purpose of educational attainment have traditionally differed for men and women in Japan (Fujiwara-Fanselow 1995). The connection between educational attainment and success in the labor market is strong for Japanese men, and educational attainment is a means to gain social status through access to “good” jobs (Brinton 1993). Women’s higher education has conventionally been seen primarily as a means to educate them to be “good wives and wise mothers” rather than as a means to open up career opportunities (Hirao 2001; Uno 1993). Although improving, married Japanese women’s career opportunities are still restricted and significant numbers of women continue to leave the labor force during the period of child rearing and then to reenter the workforce later on (Brinton 2001; Inoue and Ehara 1999; Tanaka 1995; Yu 2001). Some Japanese scholars argue that both cultural capital and educational attainment for women continue to be used primarily as a means of achieving a good marriage match rather than occupational status, similar to what DiMaggio (1982) suggested for American women in the 1960s (Fujimoto 2004; Kataoka 2001; Nakamura 2005).

Higher educational institutions for women, especially junior colleges, were originally established to serve wealthy families and increase young women’s cultural capital. Traditionally, significant numbers of women have majored in home economics, education, literature, and art (Fujiwara-Fanselow 1995; Inoue and Ehara 1999). Thus, we can expect that women who receive more exposure to cultural capital at home are likely to be those who go on for higher education. If this is the case, objectified cultural capital may be correlated with women’s attendance at junior college and university even if men’s is not. To test for this, we carry out the analysis for students’ matriculation to higher education separately by sex.

DATA AND MEASURES

Our data come from the 1995 Social Stratification and Mobility survey (SSM). The SSM survey has been conducted every 10 years since 1955 and is the major social survey used by Japanese and foreign sociologists in research on educational and occupational attainment. To the best of our

knowledge, it is the only national survey designed to measure socioeconomic background, cultural capital acquisition during the period of growing up, and educational outcomes in Japan. This being said, we do not claim that the data set is without its limitations. The SSM survey team designed the cultural capital questions with international comparability in mind, asking about respondents’ exposure to literary and arts activities in childhood as well as high-status cultural objects in the home. The questions do not ask how long respondents engaged in such activities, but instead ask the approximate frequency of each activity. The number of cultural capital questions included in the survey was necessarily limited; the core items of the SSM survey are repeated across survey years and concern respondents’ traditionally measured socioeconomic background as well as educational and occupational history, and additional survey items are decided through extensive discussions among members of the survey research team. This means that new modules in the survey are strictly limited in terms of the number of items that can be included.

The 1995 data were collected from a random sample of men and women age 20 to 69. The sample size is 2,653 (1,248 men and 1,405 women). Because of the post-World War II changes in the Japanese educational system, we restrict our sample to cohorts born from 1945 on so that all respondents were educated under the same system. This results in a final sample size of 1,578 (724 men and 854 women). The maximum age at the time of the survey was 50 years and the average age for both sexes was 37 years.

Educational outcome variables. Academic performance in ninth grade is based on respondents’ self-reported grades relative to their cohort during the final year of middle school; scores range from 1 (*lowest*) to 5 (*top*). High school quality measures the academic quality of the high school a respondent attended, based on respondents’ report of the proportion of classmates who proceeded on to junior college or university; scores range from 0 (*respondent did not attend high school*) to 4 (*attended a high school in which almost all students progressed to college*). While the academic performance and high school quality measures could be criticized for possible bias due to self-reporting, our confidence in them is high. Japanese ninth-grade students are highly aware of their class ranking, and the academic

performance question asks them only to put themselves into the appropriate quintile. Our informal queries of middle-aged Japanese reassure us that recall on this item is very accurate. Likewise, because of the finely graded hierarchy of high schools in each school district and the extensive counseling students receive in ninth grade, respondents are likely to have a highly accurate perception of the proportion of seniors from their school who progressed to college.

Educational attainment is measured as years of formal schooling, calculated from the respondents' completed level of education. Values range from 9 (*middle school*) to 18 (*graduate school*). For dropouts, we added one year to their final completed educational level to distinguish them from graduates of their prior school level.⁵ Average years of education in the sample is approximately 13, with 38 percent of men and 29 percent of women pursuing higher education (either junior college or four-year university).

Because it is uncommon for Japanese students to attend college and drop out, it may seem unusual for us to measure education as a continuous rather than as a categorical variable. We do so because of the complexity of post-high school educational institutions in Japan: junior college (principally for women), *senmon gakkō* (two-year training schools, attended by both men and women), and university. Rather than looking at each choice in a multinomial regression format, we simplify by looking at years of education for both sexes. As noted earlier, we also carry out separate analyses for men and women to test for the gendered relationship between objectified cultural capital and higher education and to take into account that higher education for women may mean junior college or university whereas for men it is overwhelmingly university.

Socioeconomic variables. We use three measures to control for respondents' socioeconomic background: father's occupation, parents' education, and family assets. Father's occupation was coded using the SSM occupational coding scheme (Naoi and Seiyama 1990). Since we are interested in socioeconomic background rather than occupational prestige per se, we constructed four dichotomous variables: professionals or managers, lower white-collar workers, blue-collar workers, and farmers. We used professionals/managers as the reference category in each regression analysis. Parents' education

is the average educational level of respondents' father and mother.⁶ Family assets is the total number of assets respondents reported their household to have had when they were 15 years old. Respondents were asked about each of the following: home ownership, separate bathroom, television, radio, refrigerator, bicycle, car, telephone, sofa and table set, stocks or bonds, and second house. Values range from 0 to 11, with an average score of 7.25.

Cultural capital. We created three cultural capital variables, two to represent embodied cultural capital and one to represent objectified cultural capital. The two measures for embodied cultural capital reflect family participation in cultural activities during the respondent's childhood. Respondents indicated on a 4-point scale how often they participated in each of three activities: (1) "When you were a child, how often did a family member read aloud to you?" (2) "When you were an elementary school student, how often did you listen to classical music at home or go to a classical music concert with your family?" and (3) "When you were an elementary school student, how often did your family take you to a museum or art gallery?" The range of possible responses to each question was *often*, *sometimes*, *seldom*, or *never*. The responses to the music and arts questions are highly correlated ($p < .01$) and we average them to reflect respondents' level of family participation in cultural activities. Objectified cultural capital is measured on a scale from 0 to 3, based on the sum of what can be considered "high-culture" possessions in the respondents' home when they were 15 years old: complete sets of literature or encyclopedias, art or antiques, and a piano. Possession of these three items is highly correlated (at $p < .01$ for each pair of items). The piano has been the most popular musical instrument among Japanese middle-class families since the 1960s, when it became a symbol of "high" culture (Takahashi 2001).

Control variables. In addition to sex, we included five control variables: shadow education, age, number of siblings, city size, and maternal employment. As explained earlier, we use shadow education as a control variable in order to examine the net effect of cultural capital. Shadow education is measured as a dummy variable reflecting whether the respondent reported participating in any type of after-school lessons including *juku* (cram school), tutoring, or correspondence courses

Table 1. Description of Variables

Variables	Range	Mean	SD
Ninth-grade academic performance	1-5	3.25	1.04
High school quality	0-4	2.15	1.21
Educational attainment	9-18	12.76	2.15
Age	20-50	37.11	8.56
Sex	0 = women, 1 = men	0.46	0.50
Number of siblings	1-11	3.07	1.45
City size	0,1	0.18	0.38
Maternal employment	0 or 1	0.40	0.49
Shadow education	0 or 1	0.40	0.49
Father's occupation			
Professional/managerial	0 or 1	0.20	0.40
Lower white-collar	0 or 1	0.22	0.42
Blue-collar	0 or 1	0.38	0.48
Farmer	0 or 1	0.20	0.40
Parents' education	1-3	1.61	0.64
Family assets	0-11	7.25	1.87
Embodied cultural capital			
Read to by parents	0-3	1.50	1.11
Fine arts activities with parents	0-3	0.61	0.76
Objectified cultural capital	0-3	0.82	0.89

for at least six months during the period covering elementary and middle school.

Age is the respondent's age at the time of the survey. Number of siblings (including the respondent) is measured when the respondent was 15 years old. This is likely to be an important factor influencing students' academic attainment, since family resources become diluted as the number of children increases (Knodel and Wongsith 1991; Kondo 1996), especially in the context of a society where many parents invest privately in children's shadow education. We also think it important to control for residential area because it influences a family's access to cultural activities such as concerts and museums. City size is a dummy variable for whether the respondent lived in a large city or a small city, town, or village at the time of graduation from middle school. Finally, we control for mothers' work status since working mothers may have limited time to provide for cultural activities to their young children. Maternal employment is a dummy variable measuring whether respondent's mother has worked continuously since marriage or not.⁷

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1 shows means and standard deviations for all variables. About 40 percent of respondents participated in some form of shadow education during elementary or middle school. The embodied cultural capital variables are ordinal, reflecting how often respondents experienced culture-related activities in childhood; as one would expect, being read to by parents was more commonly experienced than accompanying parents to museums or concerts. The average respondent grew up in a home that had only one "high-culture" possession. We tested for differences in embodied and objectified cultural capital by parents' educational level (not shown here); these differences were statistically significant for both sexes, as was shadow education. Women on average have more cultural capital (especially fine arts participation with parents) than men. Consistent with prior studies, there are no gender differences in propensity to attend shadow education in elementary or middle school.

Determinants of ninth-grade academic performance. We use multiple regression analysis to examine the determinants of academic performance

Table 2. Determinants of Academic Performance in Ninth Grade ($N = 1,215$)

Variables	Academic performance	
	B	SE
Controls		
Age	.027**	.004
Sex	-.035	.057
Number of siblings	-.055*	.023
City size	-.039	.075
Maternal employment	-.095	.060
Shadow education	.117 ^a	.064
Socioeconomic background		
Father's occupation		
Professional/managerial	—	—
Lower white-collar	-.074	.090
Blue-collar	-.292**	.094
Farmer	-.140	.111
Parents' education	.163**	.060
Family assets	.057**	.019
Embodied cultural capital		
Read to by parents	.049	.030
Fine arts activities with parents	.091*	.046
Objectified cultural capital		
Constant	1.798**	
Adjusted R^2	.114	

a. $p < .10$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

in ninth grade. Table 2 shows that students with more educated parents and more financial assets demonstrate higher academic performance when other variables are controlled, consistent with previous studies in Japan. Children of blue-collar workers report significantly lower academic performance than children of managerial/professional workers. These socioeconomic variables are the strongest predictors of ninth-grade academic performance. The relationship between shadow education and ninth-grade academic performance is marginal, perhaps because the SSM measure does not distinguish between remedial and supplementary shadow education.⁸

Fine arts participation is positively but weakly related to academic performance but parental reading is not. As we expected, objectified cultural capital is not related to academic performance. To test whether the effect of objectified cultural capital might depend on embodied

cultural capital, as Bourdieu postulated, we also tested for the interaction between the two (not shown here). This interaction term was not statistically significant. Throughout, we report the results of the interaction between embodied and objectified cultural capital but for the sake of saving space we do not show the additional equations.

Determinants of high school quality. Table 3 shows the results of ordered logistic regression analysis predicting the quality of the high school attended by each respondent. Model 1 shows that students who have fewer siblings, live in a large city, and have more educated and wealthier parents are more likely to advance to academically competitive high schools. While city size was not a significant predictor of ninth-grade academic performance, it makes sense that students living in urban areas are more likely to attend more highly competitive high schools due to the greater availability of such high schools in urban districts. Shadow education is also a strong and significant predictor.

Students with managerial/professional fathers have a distinct advantage in entering higher quality high schools, and students who experienced shadow education also do. In Model 2 we add our measures of embodied and objectified cultural capital. As anticipated, students' familial participation in fine arts activities as well as the number of high-culture possessions in the home are both positively related to high school quality.

Model 3 adds academic performance in ninth grade as a predictor. Its contribution to students' attending a high-quality high school is predictably large and statistically significant. We predicted that embodied cultural capital would have an indirect effect on high school quality through its effect on ninth-grade academic performance. The magnitude of the arts participation effect does not disappear when academic performance is included in the equation, but it does weaken ($p < .05$); this offers some support for our supposition. On the other hand, objectified cultural capital remains a significant predictor of high school quality even after prior academic performance is controlled. This supports our expectation that objectified cultural capital exerts a powerful effect at the transition from middle school to high school, probably through teachers' recommendations. Students' socioeconomic background, city size, number of siblings, and shadow education also remain significant in our final model. Here again we tested for the inter-

Table 3. Ordered Logistic Regression Predicting High School Quality

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE
Controls						
Age	.010	.007	.013	.007	-.009	.008
Sex	-.023	.105	.058	.107	.159	.111
Number of siblings	-.263**	.042	-.237**	.043	-.242**	.045
City size	.515**	.142	.452**	.143	.481**	.147
Maternal employment	-.093	.111	-.016	.112	.043	.116
Shadow education	.497**	.116	.401**	.119	.351**	.123
Socioeconomic background						
Father's occupation						
Professional/managerial	—		—		—	
Lower white-collar	-.335*	.166	-.205	.170	-.083	.176
Blue-collar	-.838**	.173	-.678**	.178	-.423*	.184
Farmer	-.972**	.201	-.741**	.207	-.574**	.214
Parents' education	.569**	.107	.427**	.112	.336**	.116
Family assets	.251**	.033	.200**	.037	.176**	.038
Embodied cultural capital						
Read to by parents			.093	.056	.027	.058
Fine arts activities with parents			.258**	.086	.219*	.089
Objectified cultural capital						
			.219**	.077	.252**	.079
Academic performance						
					.935**	.061
Nagelkerke R^2	.312		.324		.464	
N	1,235		1,212		1,183	

Note: For father's occupation, managerial/professional is used as the reference category.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

action between embodied and objectified cultural capital but did not find an effect.

Determinants of final educational attainment.

Table 4 examines the determinants of educational attainment, once again adding variables in stages to assess the net effects of cultural capital. Model 1 shows that respondents who have fewer siblings, shadow education, fathers who are managers or professionals, parents with higher educational attainment, and families with greater financial resources are likely to progress the farthest in school. Model 2 indicates that fine arts participation and objectified cultural capital are statistically significant as well even though the associations are relatively weak. Once ninth-grade academic performance is entered into the equation (Model 3), the effect of fine arts participation becomes nonsignificant; this is consistent with our supposition that embodied cultural capital has a human capital-enhancing effect. Finally, in Model 4 we add high school quality, which proves to be a highly important predictor of final educational attainment. As we expected, objectified cultural

capital appears to have an indirect effect on final educational attainment via its effect on high school quality. Likewise, the effect of shadow education becomes statistically insignificant once high school quality is taken into account. This may well be because our measure of shadow education reflects such training prior to high school; it appears to yield returns in terms of high school quality and affect final educational attainment via that route. The interaction between embodied and objectified cultural capital is not statistically significant.

Junior college has traditionally been a "female track" in Japan and almost no men attend it; 21 percent of female high school graduates pursued junior college education compared to only 2 percent of men in 1980, the year when the average respondent in our data set completed his or her education.⁹ In contrast, just 12 percent of women attended university compared to 39 percent of males (Ministry of Education 2004).¹⁰ To take into account these gender differences, we run separate analyses for men's and women's higher educational attainment with slightly

Table 4. Determinants of Final Educational Attainment (Years of Education; $N = 1,182$)

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Controls								
Age	.012	.007	.013	.007	-.006	.007	-.003	.006
Sex	.694**	.103	.752**	.104	.779**	.095	.724**	.084
Number of siblings	-.286**	.041	-.274**	.041	-.233**	.038	-.137**	.034
City size	.264	.136	.230	.136	.257*	.124	.057	.110
Maternal employment	-.150	.109	-.115	.109	-.043	.100	-.051	.088
Shadow education	.430**	.114	.367**	.115	.287**	.105	.141	.094
Socioeconomic background								
Father's occupation								
Professional/managerial	—		—		—		—	
Lower white-collar	-.477**	.162	-.392*	.163	-.337*	.149	-.300*	.132
Blue-collar	-1.168**	.168	-1.048**	.171	-.829**	.157	-.659**	.139
Farmer	-.846**	.196	-.695**	.199	-.601**	.183	-.347*	.162
Parents' education	.554**	.105	.457**	.108	.343**	.099	.212*	.088
Family assets	.235**	.033	.197**	.035	.160**	.032	.086**	.029
Embodied cultural capital								
Read to by parents			.024	.054	.012	.050	-.027	.044
Fine arts activities with parents			.150*	.082	.088	.075	.025	.067
Objectified cultural capital								
Academic performance					.716**	.047	.341**	.047
High school quality							.848**	.047
Constant	10.937**		10.874**		9.555**		9.402**	
Adjusted R^2	.317		.323		.433		.556	
R^2 change			.008**		.109**		.122**	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

different dependent variables. We code the dependent variable for women as 1 if they attended either a two- or four-year college and 0 if they attended neither. For men, the dependent variable is coded 1 if they attended a four-year college and 0 otherwise.

Table 5 shows that for both men and women, family background characteristics are statistically significant for higher education attendance, as are ninth-grade academic performance and high school quality. Interestingly, maternal employment is negatively correlated with men's attendance at a four-year university. Family wealth is especially important for women. As was true in the regression equation predicting final educational attainment for both sexes, the effect of shadow education is not substantial once high school quality is controlled. But in contrast to that analysis, objectified cultural capital is significantly associated with higher education for women. Objectified cultural capital is also significantly correlated with women's attendance only at four-year universities ($p < .05$, not shown in the

table). We did not find this pattern for men. We caution once more that we are not necessarily claiming a *causal* role for objectified cultural capital in facilitating women's advancement to higher education. Rather, based on the development of women's higher education in Japan we have predicted that women with greater exposure to objectified cultural capital are more likely to attend higher education, partly because this type of cultural capital as well as attendance at an institution of higher learning constitute status markers that are valuable in the Japanese marriage market. The interaction effect between embodied and objectified cultural capital is nonsignificant, as in prior analyses.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Researchers have generally found a robust association between parents' socioeconomic status

Table 5. Logistic Regression Predicting Women's Higher Education Attendance and Men's Four-Year University Attendance

Variables	Women		Men	
	B	SE	B	SE
Controls				
Age	-.003	.017	.006	.017
Number of siblings	-.484**	.119	-.277*	.106
City size	.155	.296	.438	.319
Maternal employment	.236	.254	-.638*	.270
Shadow education	-.193	.250	.323	.273
Socioeconomic background				
Father's occupation				
Professional/managerial	—	—	—	—
Lower white-collar	-.612	.323	-.895*	.389
Blue-collar	-1.453**	.349	-1.299**	.407
Farmer	-.490	.442	-.719	.467
Parents' education	.318	.235	.464	.243
Family assets	.231*	.090	.112	.095
Embodied cultural capital				
Read to by parents	-.029	.128	-.131	.131
Fine arts activities with parents	.147	.172	.060	.212
Objectified cultural capital				
Academic performance	.346*	.151	-.033	.183
High school quality	.535**	.149	.453**	.133
Constant	.847**	.145	1.204**	.157
Nagelkerke R^2	-5.427**		-5.030**	
N	.562		.592	
	642		541	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

and the transmission of cultural capital to their offspring. But studies examining the subsequent effects of cultural capital on educational performance and attainment have produced varying results depending on the measures used and the cultural context. This article has suggested that a fruitful avenue of research concerns how the structure of educational systems and, in particular, the balance of subjective and objective assessments of academic ability and performance affects the power of cultural capital. We suggest that educational systems affect whether embodied cultural capital functions primarily to enhance human capital or, alternatively, to provide signals to teachers through its effect on students' *habitus*. Similarly, objectified cultural capital may be relevant only at certain educational transitions such as those that rely on teachers' subjective judgment of the "fit" of a student and his or her family context for a given educational destination (i.e., application

to a particular high school, in the case of Japan). It is also important to note that at least in Japan, cultural capital's effect on academic achievement is not as large as the influence of parental socioeconomic status or students' academic performance.

We have used Japan as a prototypical case of the heavily examination-based educational systems common in East Asia. In such systems, educational performance and transitions across most schooling levels depend heavily on mastery of basic subjects in curricula such as math, science, and language. Many parents invest in shadow education (extracurricular classes) to boost their children's mastery and test-taking skills in these basic subjects. We suggested that only at rare points in Japanese students' educational careers, such as the transition to high school, is there a possibility for objectified cultural capital to exercise a signaling function to teachers and other educational decision makers. We posited that embodied

cultural capital, on the other hand, plays a role in contributing to students' academic performance through its enhancement of motivation and learning skills, both of which are important for human capital development. We suggested that in this way, embodied cultural capital exerts a consistent positive effect on educational outcomes. These effects were posited within the context of extensive use of shadow education in Japan and continuing gender differentiation in post-high school educational pathways.

Most of our empirical results supported our expectations. Embodied cultural capital has a positive effect on academic performance in ninth grade whereas objectified cultural capital does not. Both types of cultural capital affect students' probability of entering a highly ranked high school; embodied cultural capital subsequently affects final educational attainment via its effect on ninth-grade academic performance and objectified cultural capital exerts its effect via high school quality. Neither embodied nor objectified cultural capital are significantly related to men's university attendance once academic performance and high school quality are controlled, but objectified cultural capital is a statistically significant predictor of women's higher education.

We believe that our study has a number of implications, some of which relate to characteristics of the East Asian educational context and some of which are more broadly relevant to empirical studies of cultural capital.

First, in all of our analyses, only one of our two measures (music and arts participation with parents) of embodied cultural capital was a significant predictor of educational performance and attainment. Being read to by parents did not have any explanatory value. This is somewhat puzzling to us, given that parental reading behavior has been shown to have a positive effect on students' educational attainment in other studies such as DeGraaf et al.'s (2000) examination of the Dutch context. Originally we thought that the absence of an effect might be because the Japanese public is so highly literate. But as Table 1 showed, it is not at all the case that all respondents report having been read to by parents when they were young, and there is considerable variance in this behavior. One possibility is that reading and writing are so heavily emphasized in the standard Japanese elementary and middle school curriculum that there is not much scope for parental reading to matter. The number of educational hours spent on written

Japanese is of necessity very high, given that mastery of two syllabaries and thousands of Chinese characters are required for fluency. Further studies of the effect of reading in the home on children's educational achievement and attainment need to be carried out in countries that have similarly demanding written forms to see if it might be this feature of certain languages that means that parental reading simply does not matter very much. We also think that it is important to measure parents' own reading behaviors to capture how reading itself is valued in the family environment.

Second, objectified cultural capital is empirically related to the main educational transition in Japanese education that clearly elicits subjective input from teachers: selection and application to a specific high school. The mechanism we posited was teachers' evaluation of students' home environment, which is facilitated by the teacher's visit to each student's home and numerous required student assignments that generate information about parents' occupations, student aspirations, family recreational activities, and other familial and personal matters. This mechanism is somewhat different from the more standard interpretation that objectified cultural capital has an effect on educational outcomes through its enactment in students' *habitus*, or embodied cultural capital. We tested for this interaction effect in our analyses and found no evidence that the effect of objectified cultural capital is activated in this way. Future research might include finer measurements of *habitus* such as students' and parents' aspirations (Dumais 2002, 2006).

Third, like any educational context, the Japanese context is not static. Recent changes in the Japanese curriculum emphasize greater flexibility in instruction, and schools have also responded to increased social pressures for personal and family privacy. Some Japanese high school teachers interviewed in a separate project conducted by the second author mentioned that home visits and the collection of detailed family information from students are becoming less common. As the educational context and "rules of the game" undergo changes in Japan, it will be important to theorize how the impacts of embodied and objectified cultural capital may be affected. Similarly, just as researchers can profitably compare the standards of evaluation used at different educational transitions *within* an educational system, we would argue that more comparative research on cultural capital in different educational systems

can make these comparisons as well. Doing so will inform further theorizing about how the context of educational evaluation and decision making shapes the mechanisms through which cultural capital operates.

Finally, the broadest implications of our research are that studies employing only one conceptualization of cultural capital (either embodied or objectified) and analyzing only final educational attainment may obscure the mechanisms through which cultural capital affects educational processes. While retrospective data are clearly not ideal, the opportunity to evaluate the contribution of different forms of cultural capital as students move through their educational careers is an important one for researchers to seize.

NOTES

1. As Wong (2002) adds, it is also important to examine the joint effect of cultural capital and other forms of parental attention and investment such as shadow education on academic success.
2. About 25 percent of the respondents in the survey sample used in this article attended private high school. A very small percentage of Japanese students enter "escalator" schools at the kindergarten or elementary school stage that constitute a pathway into affiliated secondary and higher education schools. Given that fewer than 1 percent of elementary schools are private, the number of students attending this type of educational system is very small.
3. Middle school teachers' occupational prestige score is higher than that of nonuniversity researchers and scientists (Tominaga 1979).
4. Recent reforms have emphasized more flexibility in the curriculum as well as less involvement of teachers in students' home lives. Since the survey data we use in this article were collected prior to these reforms, our hypotheses and results are not affected.
5. For example, if the respondent reported having dropped out of high school, we coded his or her years of education as 10 (9 years of middle school plus 1 year of high school).
6. Since the type of education received by respondents' parents differed depending in part on whether they were educated in the pre- or post-World War II system, we coded parents' education into three educational levels to make it robust to the postwar educational reform: compulsory education (elementary school for parents who received education before World War II, middle school for parents who received education after World War II), secondary education (for parents educated before World War II, this includes education beyond elementary school but not high school or college),

and higher education (high school or college education for the prewar group and college or graduate school for the postwar group). For respondents who did not give information for both parents, we used the educational level of the father or the mother, whichever was provided.

7. We appreciate reviewers' suggestions to include this variable as a control in our analysis. Maternal employment includes both full-time and part-time employment.
8. Japanese *hoshū juku* consist of supplementary academic classes that focus on reinforcing the instruction provided in elementary and middle schools, and *shingaku juku* concentrate on increasing the academic skills and knowledge of students who are already high achieving (Roesgaard 2006; Rohlen 1980). Accordingly, the effect of shadow education on educational performance and attainment in Japan varies according to the type of supplementary education (Kariya et al. 2002; Rohlen 1983; Stevenson and Baker 1992).
9. These figures include students who had graduated the previous year (*rōnin*).
10. Since 1996, the number of women attending university has dramatically increased and has surpassed the number entering junior college. In 2007, 41 percent of female high school graduates were enrolled in four-year universities and 12 percent in junior colleges. Since we use Social Stratification and Mobility survey data collected in 1995, our analysis is not affected by this recent trend.

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