**One Page-Reaction Paper**

1. **Describe students’ socioeconomic composition of the school(s) that you attended at each stage of education (e.g., about 70% of students from high SES families)**

**✓Elementary  
✓Junior high  
✓High school  
✓Shadow education (e.g., cram school/*juku*, *yobiko*, private tutoring)**

1. **Explain how characteristics of the high school(s) that you had attended helped you to receive an admission to Waseda University?**
2. **Try to explain relationships between students’ socioeconomic composition and characteristics of the high school(s) you attended**

1.

Grade school, elementary school and middle school: High SES 90%, average SES 10%

From the start of kindergarten through to the end of junior high, I was a student at an affluent, bourgeois international school. Everything from tuition to sports fees cost an extortionate amount, and the only families that could afford to send their children there were wealthy, successful families with a high socioeconomic status. The school used its wealth to the fullest and ensured an ideal material environment with no shortage of resources, and this paired with the immense purchasing power of the wealthy students meant that material deficiencies were never an issue. Occasionally there were students from a middle class or average economic background who could not afford the same extravagances as the upper-class majority. These students, unable to blend in to the upper-class students and keep up with their high rate of expenditure, usually stuck together and made groups, thus creating a visible class divide within the school. I belonged to the latter group, and though there were no tensions between the two groups, there was a prevalent feeling of resignation and hopelessness among those of us who were not as economically advantaged (that is not to say we were economically disadvantaged, for we were not in the slightest) as we witnessed the luxuries and opportunities that wealth made possible. There was a general understanding that we would never be like them, and we were conditioned to be content with what was available to us, even in the face of striking disparity and inequality of wealth and its concomitant opportunities.

High school: High SES 20%, average SES 50%, low SES 30%

For high school I attended a place antithetical to my previous school. My high school was low ranking with close to no academic success. It was a private school, but the tuition was cheap, causing the school to suffer with a perennial shortage of funds. The school was used as a safety net for kids who couldn’t get into public high schools or other higher-ranking private schools, and it also seemed to attract many students with light learning disabilities whose parents were reluctant to place them in specialized educational facilities. The student body consisted mainly of students from an average socioeconomic background, but there were also quite a few economically disadvantaged kids as well as wealthy kids. The one common thread behind the economically diverse selection of students was that all of them were academically underachieving. The feeling of resignation that I mentioned before with regards to the middle class of my old school lingered over the entire school.

2.

It did not. If anything, attending my high school hurt my chances at getting into Waseda or any other prestigious school and greatly limited my options for an academic life after high school. My high school was an environment where hopefulness in the future and aspirations for high educational attainment were suppressed and replaced with content for “realistic” goals that were set very low. No one expected students to succeed, either academically or in other forms. If anything, the faculty generally expected students to fail, and would plan lessons and adjust pedagogical approaches with this presupposition. In such a closed climate I also gradually came to second guess my abilities, making me skeptical of my capacity to finish a task correctly in anything I do. For a long time, I had an aversion towards reputable establishments of higher education because I was conditioned into thinking that entering such an establishment was an unattainable impossibility. This discouraged me from studying rigorously towards getting accepted into a “good” university and resulted in becoming an impediment to my educational activities. I would say that my admission to Waseda was not a product of my fruitful experience in high school but the outcome of a highly encouraging bourgeois elementary and middle school education curbed by the dismal authoritarianism of my high school’s working-class culture.

3.

The connection between the SES of my high school and its education was quite apparent. Despite the diversity in the economic background of the students, the educational style employed at the school was authoritarian and didactic, aiming at ensconcing a habit of submission and obedience in its students. There were many detailed rules restricting the behavior, attire and even attitudes of the students, and they were strictly enforced. People tended to not take class very seriously and there wasn’t a very engaging, proactive and eager attitude among students, so classes mainly consisted of teachers mechanically passing information along to students who passively accepted and fulfilled the minimum requirements (stipulated in a clear, unequivocal manner by the teachers) for class. This method of instruction is characteristic of schools with a working-class background and is compatible with the expected future vocation of the students of the school, which is simple laborer. The sort of dialectical methods for enhancing creativity and problem-solving skills seen in schools that deal with wealthier students were completely unseen in my high school. The students of my high school were not capable of such individual, critical thinking, and so such liberal forms of education would not have efficacy. It was easy to observe that the SES of the students strongly influenced the curriculum and climate of the school.