

To Discipline or Accommodate? On the Rehabilitation of Japanese 'Problem Youth' 訓練するのか宥め稼ぐのか—日本の問題児の復帰問題

Aaron Miller, Tuukka Toivonen

To Discipline or Accommodate? On the Rehabilitation of Japanese 'Problem Youth'

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Abstract

While mainstream education has received ample attention from scholars of Japan, the diverse kinds of private institutions concerned with the rehabilitation of so-called 'problem youth' have not hitherto been subjected to systematic analysis. This article offers an in-depth study of two starkly contrasting organizations, the Totsuka Yacht School and K2 International. We focus on the rehabilitation philosophies of these groups and examine how they view 'problem youth'; the remedies they advocate; the critical incidents they have been implicated in; and how they have responded in their aftermath. These two organizations epitomize two important opposing paradigms of rehabilitation: one 'disciplinarian' and one 'accommodating', and therefore reflect different moral discourses regarding youth and the problems they face. Analysis of these groups illustrates how they are being challenged by current social and educational trends, but also how, as local actors, the charismatic leaders of these institutions also play a significant role in shaping the discourse. This study is among the first to map out the complex terrain of residential rehabilitative institutions in Japan. It also raises questions for educators regarding the meaning of 'non-formal' or 'alternative' education, helps youth

specialists better understand the diversity of approaches employed in dealing with 'problem youth', and will be of interest to non-Japan scholars seeking evidence of approaches to rehabilitation which do not solely attempt to 'medicalize' youth as being 'ill' or to 'activate' them in order to return them to the labor market.

1. Introduction

Public Japanese educational institutions have received ample attention from international scholars in recent decades. Research has mainly focused, however, on the mainstream, state-regulated school sector as the primary socializing engine of the Japanese citizenry. Meanwhile, private institutions that provide other services such as tutoring (e.g. *yobikō* and academic *juku*) have been conceptualized as a 'system of shadow education' (Baker and LeTendre 2005:55, see also Tsukada 1991a and 1991b). Slater (2010) has noted the significant differences between *juku* and public school education, especially as the former have become increasingly associated with the middle and upper classes and the latter have become associated with the working and lower classes. On a related theme, Yoneyama (2008) has asserted that the public school has failed to adequately deal with so-called 'problem youth', including those who bully and those being bullied. Indeed, many bullied children have turned to 'free schools' (Manabi Rinku 2007) as a result. Both within 'mainstream' education and without, there has been research regarding delinquent youth (Ambaras 2006; Yoder 2004), but the causes of delinquency (*hikō*) are more

heavily researched than the treatments (Shirai, et al 2005). It is within this context that ‘alternative education’ (*orutanatibu kyōiku*) institutions that explicitly challenge dominant state-regulated education have gradually strengthened their presence in Japan over the past decade or so.¹

Even as societal values undergo change, Kosugi (2006) highlights how education remains the key to social mobility in today’s Japan and how youth who have failed to succeed at school have often missed their chance to join the mainstream labor market. The sense that an increasing number of youth are failing to make smooth ‘school-to-work transitions’ is reflected in the widespread use of morally laden terms such as ‘freeter’ and ‘NEET’ (acronym denoting youth who are ‘not in employment, education or training’, called *nitō* in Japanese) since the early 2000s. These terms have been employed to highlight the fact that such youth do not fit into the typical ‘*sarariman*’ (‘white collar businessman’) (for males), ‘*sengyō shufu*’ (‘professional housewife’) or ‘*offisu reedi*’ (‘office lady’, a.k.a. ‘O.L.’) (for females) categories as many think they should. A discussion between Kaneko Masaru and Kaneko Masaomi translated and reprinted in *The Asia-Pacific Journal* (2003) ([link](#)) reveals that, as with the issue of homelessness, behind the question of why such young people are unable to find steady jobs lies a moral debate about whether it is the young person’s fault individually or whether social circumstances that could be ameliorated are to blame. Akagi Tomohiro, a 31 year-old freeter, believes the latter, and his provocative essay (2007) ([link](#)) and the responses to it show that while some such so-called ‘problem youth’ are reaching out for help, their cries are often met with cold or harsh responses from members of an older generation.

Building on the work of these authors, this article spells out the underlying philosophical perspectives of a distinct and hitherto

unexplored type of ‘alternative education’: the largely unregulated, diverse residential institutions for the ‘rehabilitation’ of so-called ‘problem youth’.² These elusive organizations have proliferated in recent years and they have received growing attention as a result of vigorous public debates on socially withdrawn youth, freeters and NEETs since the early 2000s. They can be said to share four distinguishing characteristics. First, they operate largely *outside formal regulation*, leaving them relatively free to establish and implement original pedagogies. Second – and indeed part of the reason they lie outside the mainstream to begin with – they are often critical of state-regulated education. Third, their clientele consists of *marginalized youth* – juvenile delinquents, non-school-goers, socially withdrawn and formally inactive young people – who have either failed to cope in the mainstream system or have rejected it.³ Fourth, they comprise *residential* institutions (*shukuhaku-gata shisetsu*) that provide training on a relatively short-term basis. These characteristics collectively constitute our definition of ‘rehabilitative institutions for problem youth’.⁴

Despite these broad commonalities, however, such rehabilitation groups exhibit wide-ranging diversity in terms of philosophy and practice: some are Buddhist, others Christian or non-religious; some endorse corporal punishment while others employ markedly ‘softer’ approaches; a few appear reclusive while others make great strides to integrate into local society and broad networks (Toivonen 2009). How, then, can we begin to make sense of this ‘sector’ that rather resembles something of a patchwork? Although it is arguably not necessary to consider all of these diverse institutions as one ‘sector’, we offer this conceptualization in order to better understand why such institutions exist in such diversity in the first place and offer a rich description of the context in which they individually operate.

We begin this inquiry by casting a spotlight on two private residential ‘rehabilitative institutions for problem youth’ - the Totsuka Yacht School (hereafter ‘TYS’) and K2 International (hereafter ‘K2’) - and situating them among other institutions of a similar kind.⁵ The questions guiding our inquiry are the following: What are YYS’s and K2’s views on ‘problem youth’? What remedies do they prescribe? What do the fatalities they experienced reveal about them? We show that these institutions represent polar opposites on a philosophical spectrum regarding methods for rehabilitation, the former espousing a ‘disciplinarian’ - a.k.a. ‘Spartan’ - approach, the latter adopting a decidedly more ‘accommodating’ style. We show how the views of the leaders of these institutions regarding *taibatsu* (‘corporal punishment’) are symbolic of the differences underlying their opposing philosophies. Though both organizations draw inspiration from yachting and have experienced fatalities in their histories, their perspectives on youth and society differ fundamentally, and perhaps somewhat ironically have been strengthened by the death crises they have dealt with. As such, our fieldwork findings, combined with our analysis of previous research in related fields of education and youth studies, suggest a fault line in current Japanese thought regarding the rehabilitation of ‘problem youth’. We argue that other actors in this field can be better understood through location on a four-quadrant philosophical grid which considers both their approach to rehabilitation and whether they provide systematic training towards employment and/or education. We conceptualize the field in this way (Figure 1).

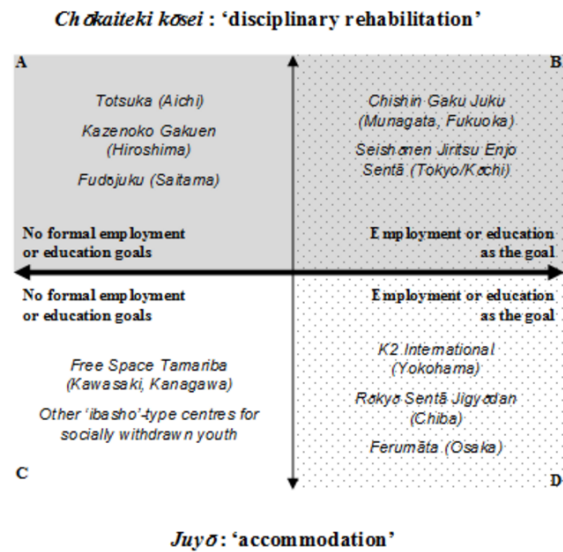


Figure 1. Rehabilitative approaches among institutions for ‘problem youth’

Section two of this article highlights the context within which the rehabilitative sector is embedded, showing how it relates to other educational institutions, civil society and government social policy. Qualitative accounts on the respective rehabilitative philosophies of YYS and K2 follow, replete with discussions of the critical incidents in which these institutions were involved and how these incidents affected their subsequent operations. The paper concludes with a discussion that both compares the two institutions and shows how accommodating approaches like the one offered by K2 are increasingly gaining governmental support while organizations like YYS are, like the ‘problem youth’ they cater to, increasingly feel marginalized.

We draw on interviews with leaders of YYS and K2 (Totsuka, Kanamori and Iwamoto), their publications and short-term participant observation visits. While we primarily focus on the two groups’ rehabilitation *philosophies*, we also briefly outline current operations at both institutions and how individual attendees have responded to such training. We also review materials produced by the organizations

themselves, and articles published in the *Asahi Shimbun (Asahi)* and *New Zealand Herald (NZH)* in order to understand the implications of the fatal incidents at TYS and K2.

2. The Rehabilitative Sector in Context

The institutions we describe are by no means unique to Japan. Across the developed world, religious and other organisations run youth camps of varying types, some in residential settings and some for rehabilitative purposes. Internationally, the OECD has promoted the ‘activation’ of youth to enter the labour market, and a discourse which ‘medicalizes’ such youth as being ‘ill’ or ‘crazy’ is also having an impact across the globe (see Watters 2010). In some European countries where youth unemployment has been a great problem for several decades, workshop-style schemes combine group learning with vocational skills training (e.g. Finnish Youth Workshops). The US Job Corp – a federally funded programme launched in the 1960s that at its peak trained 70,000 youth from poor backgrounds per year – is another example of residential youth training (Leviton and Johnston 1975), and ‘boot camps’ – named after military facilities aimed at training soldiers – for delinquent youth are also relevant. Despite similarities with institutions elsewhere, however, the groups described here have emerged in particular social and historical contexts, making certain aspects of them distinctive.

Where are ‘problem youth’ rehabilitated in contemporary Japanese society and how are these institutions regulated? This is not an altogether easy question to answer. There are schools/institutions like the ones in this article which are geared specifically for so-called ‘problem youth’, but it is difficult to accurately grasp how widespread and/or how influential these schools are. This is in part because they are unregulated and therefore quantitative data is hard to come by. A private research project by veteran *hikikomori* and *futōkō* supporters

found 79 residential support groups in the early 2000s (Purattofōmu Purojekuto 2003). According to a popular guidebook, there were at least 116 – mainly non-residential – ‘free schools’ and 105 ‘support schools’ for *futōkō* youth in 2007 (Manabi Rinku 2007). Even if these figures are reliable, the problem of scale remains: some institutions accommodate just a handful of youth while others accept hundreds.

The institutions covered in this article are neither funded nor regulated by any governmental ministry, although many rehabilitative institutions for ‘problem youth’ are influenced by the regulation of *civil society*. The regulatory environment for non-profit organizations in Japan until the 1990s remained strict: only specialized entities and those perceived to produce ‘clear, unambiguous, and direct public benefits’ were approved as public-interest corporations (Schwartz & Pharr 2003:11). Rehabilitative institutions for youth therefore mainly operated as unincorporated voluntary organizations (*nin’i dantai*) without the benefits of social recognition, tax breaks or tax-deductibility of donations. The new NPO Law of 1998, however, greatly altered the situation, making it possible for a broader range of organizations to acquire legal status. Consequently, many rehabilitative organizations are now registered as NPOs, although some operate as for-profit companies or as subsidiaries of private school corporations.

The two institutions discussed here do not complement Japan’s ‘mainstream’ schools in any obvious way, nor are they recognized as providers of ‘alternative education’ like some schools for ethnic minorities and international schools. Indeed, they are often seen as an option of last resort for parents finding difficulties raising their children or for the parents of troubled youth for whom ‘mainstream’ Japanese schools have failed. Figure 2 provides a basic conceptualization of how the ‘sector’ of rehabilitative institutions is

related to these more ‘mainstream’ forms of education. Although their relationship with government regulation and the ‘mainstream’ education system is not the only way to place these institutions in context – the experience of individual students at these ‘rehabilitative institutions being another⁶ – Figure 2 offers a brief sketch of where one can find these organizations.

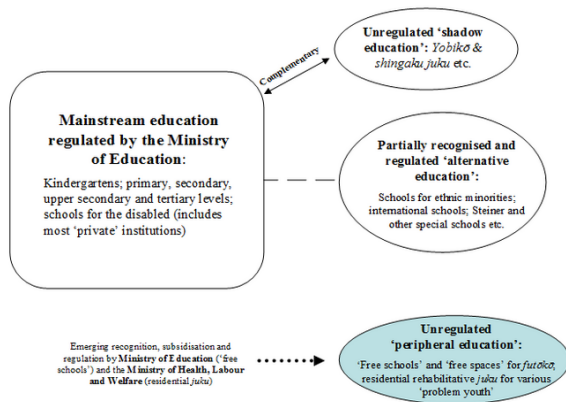


Figure 2. Positioning rehabilitative institutions for ‘problem youth’ vis-à-vis other regulated and unregulated educational sectors in Japan

However, in order that not to paint a picture of these diverse residential rehabilitation institutions as entities completely antithetical to a monolithic ‘mainstream’ education system, it should also be noted that there is much diversity of practice even within Japan’s public schools, acknowledging of course the general curriculum uniformity and national education policy which distinguishes Japanese education from other nations (such as the U.S., see e.g. Rohlen 1983; Okano & Tsuchiya 1999). This diversity is especially seen in Japanese disciplinary practices (Fukuzawa 2006) and the perspectives and perceptions of them (Miller 2009). Moreover, some mainstream schools, often located in disadvantaged areas, and lower ranked high schools, deal with significant numbers of ‘problem youth’ (*mondaiji*) and provide rehabilitative functions for them

(Shimizu and Tokuda 1991).

It is within this broader context that we describe the following two institutions, arguing that although they may appear to lie on the periphery of Japanese education, and while they may be seen by some as ‘non-formal education’, the connections they cultivate with important and influential political actors within mainstream society cast doubt on such a distinction.⁷

3. The Totsuka Yacht School (TYS): The Archetype of a Disciplinarian, ‘Ascetic’ Rehabilitative Institution?

TYS was opened by Totsuka Hiroshi in Mihama, Aichi Prefecture, in 1976. Totsuka had achieved fame by winning a single-manned yacht race across the Pacific in 1975, and soon after made the transition from yachtsmen to educator. Originally, YYS was dedicated to rehabilitating ‘emotionally disturbed’ (*jōchoshōgai*) youth. Over the course of its history, it has targeted various *mondaiji* (‘problem youth’), including *hikō* (youth delinquents), *tōkōkyōhi* (school refusers), *mukiryoku* (spiritless youth), violent children, and otherwise disruptive children. According to YYS website, the School’s mission is ‘work towards a day where each delinquent child’s power to live will bloom in the way a proper human’s should.’ This section briefly outlines the history and finances of YYS as well its diagnosis of the ‘problem’. It also outlines Totsuka’s educational theories, considers his reliance on history and tradition, and finally details the trial which made YYS widely known and brought Totsuka notoriety.

From world-class yachtsman to best-selling author and controversial ‘educator’

Since its birth in 1976, YYS reports having ‘rehabilitated’ over 600 ‘problem youth’ (Totsuka 2007). Ages and errant acts of the trainees vary, but it seems that most who have attended YYS have been males in their late teens to early twenties. YYS started as a private

organization, and its central training activities have consisted of windsurfing and yachting, but Totsuka also lauds the benefits of techniques such as solitary confinement (TYS Homepage). Table 1 traces the complicated and controversial history - punctuated and strongly shaped by several fatal incidents and a protracted trial - of the institution.

Table 1. Chronological history of YYS: incidents and trial

Year	Event
1976	TYS founded by Totsuka Hiroshi in Mihama, Aichi Prefecture.
2 November 1980	Yoshikawa Koji dies after suffering severe shock from being thrown in the ocean
12 December 1982	Ogawa Shinji dies after suffering 115 blows to the body from a variety of weapons, punches and kicks; court records state he was also set on fire.
March 1983	University student uses knife to take hostage at YYS
August 1983	On way back from <i>gashuku</i> (training camp) in Kagoshima, two college students go missing from ferry. It is thought that they jumped in the ocean to avoid wrath of YYS coaches
October 1983	Six YYS coaches indicted on charges of manslaughter for their role in these incidents.
October 1983 – 2002	In what becomes known as ‘ marathon ’ YYS trial, court meets over 100 times over nearly twenty years (including all appeals); almost 200 witnesses testify.
1986	Three years after being arrested, Totsuka and another coach pay ¥16 million to go out on bail; of the fifteen coaches charged in the case ten others are bailed out; soon thereafter, Totsuka restarts YYS while the ‘marathon trial’ continues.
1997	After several years of appeals, Nagoya High Court sentences Totsuka to six years (three in prison and three on parole). The ruling states that ‘the training methods neglected human rights and had nothing to do with education.’ ⁴
March 2002	Totsuka and other convicted coaches enter prison ; YYS activities continue.
2006	Totsuka released from prison.
October 2009	Eighteen year-old girl commits suicide by jumping off a Totsuka Yacht School building. Authorities do not file charges (<i>Japan Today Online</i> , 28 October 2009) and Totsuka questions media coverage which insinuated that coaches at YYS used <i>taibatsu</i> , causing the girl to commit suicide (TYS Homepage, Accessed May 24, 2010).

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Since the organization has been neither regulated nor subsidized by the government, it acquires most of its funding via participation fees and business and political ties (*Asahi*, 29 October 1991). Parents paid anywhere from ¥500,000 to ¥1 million for YYS services in the late 1970s and early 1980s (depending on the length of the child’s stay) and YYS had revenues of ¥200 million in 1982. Today’s YYS rates remain expensive: entry costs ¥3.15 million plus ¥110,000 per month for living expenses on a one year program, with no further payment due should an extra year be

necessary (TYS Website). Totsuka is a best-selling author. His latest, *Honnō no Chikara* (‘The Power of the Instinct’, 2007) sits next to other bestsellers on bookstore shelves. In 1987, current Tokyo Governor Ishihara Shintarō introduced *shienkai* (‘support group meetings’) for YYS, supported ideologically by powerful, conservative politicians and supported financially by large Tokyo companies, showing that Totsuka is sustained by an influential network of supporters (*Asahi*, 29 October 1991).

Totsuka’s diagnoses and remedies: A complex theory of taibatsu

Though certainly not its only advocate, Totsuka is the most vocal proponent of the disciplinary value of *taibatsu* (‘corporal punishment’). *Taibatsu* is a nebulous term which is often translated into English as ‘corporal punishment’. Here, for the sake of argument, we tentatively define it as an act where an educator uses physical force on a student as an intentional form of punishment or discipline (see Miller 2009 for a more thorough discussion). Though *taibatsu* has been banned in public schools since the Meiji Period, the debate over the value of its use in schools continues, and incidents involving the use of *taibatsu* continue to be covered by the media. Totsuka’s personal pedagogy is both influential in and influenced by this debate, and YYS’s private status meant he was not violating national education laws when he used *taibatsu* in the 1970s and 1980s. Moreover, parents who approve of his ‘educational philosophy’, including the use of *taibatsu*, continue to send their children there, showing clearly that not all Japanese believe that such disciplinary measures are ‘abusive’.



Totsuka believes he can cure any ‘problem child’

The term *shugyō* is useful in understanding Totsuka’s disciplinarian approach to the rehabilitation of ‘problem youth’ (Rohlen and LeTendre, 1996). *Shugyō* is often translated as ‘ascetic practice’ or ‘training’, and is associated with the mountain retreats of Buddhist monks. Monks who practice such *shugyō* aim to control their desires and believe that by doing so they will make the world a better place. *Shugyō* in Japan mimics other traditions of withdrawal in Asia, from Gautama Buddha’s years of penitence to Lao-tzu’s life in the mountains. The term has acquired meaning outside of this religious context, however, and institutions like TYS seek to take so-called ‘problem youth’ out of society, subject them to *shugyō*-like activities, and send them back into society ‘rehabilitated’.⁹ During interviews with Totsuka, the term *shugyō* was used many times

as a justification for his rehabilitation regime.

Over the years Totsuka has developed a complex educational philosophy for rehabilitating so-called ‘problem youth’ which is summarized in *Honnō no Chikara*. In this work, Totsuka claims that *taibatsu* is ‘good’ (*zen*) and should be used to help teachers combat the ‘collapse of the classroom’ (*gakkyū hōkai*). Totsuka insists that words would not work with emotionally disturbed children – that they ‘need’ *taibatsu* – emphasizing that such children must experience a ‘high quality of unpleasantness’ in order to learn and grow.

Finally, he claims that if *taibatsu* is done for the sake of the child, it is right to employ it. His is a consequentialist approach in which the end justifies the means.

Before publishing *Honnō no Chikara*, Totsuka had already become famous as a writer. He has attributed Japan’s ‘education ruin’ to a ‘feeble brain stem’, explaining how he started TYS for children with both emotional and ‘brain stem’ problems (Totsuka 1985, 1998, 2003). Totsuka argues that children whose instinct has not been adequately trained through the use of *taibatsu* will not be able to function properly in society. He adds that, as the brain stem governs the physical and mental spirit (*seishin*), and as the spirit is made up of reason and instinct, in order to train the instinct, the brain stem must be trained by ‘tricking’ it using a ‘high quality of unpleasantness’, and this in turn will create a ‘correct spirit’. *Taibatsu*, Totsuka explains, can accomplish such ‘brain stem training’ by training both the reason and the instinct. In other words, if an educator instills fear in the child by using physical force, the child will think rationally ‘I shouldn’t do what I just did, because if I do I will be punished physically.’ This also trains the instinct to *naturally* avoid doing such things. Towards that end, Totsuka counsels that *taibatsu* should be used from as early an age as possible (ideally, from age three), and for all children.¹⁰

Totsuka blames various parties for Japan's problems and suggests that he can 'save Japan' if given a chance. He blames universities for overlooking 'real life'; the media for 'bullying' him more than any other Japanese educator; prosecutors for an unfair trial (see below); the Ministry of Education for 'irresponsibility' and their misguided approaches to education; behavioral psychologists who 'overlook the instinct'; intelligentsia for blindly accepting 'American-esque' *seishin* theory and thereby ignoring indigenous Japanese ideas of *seishin*; and bad teachers and their unions for the dire state of Japanese education. Totsuka believes that public schools fail children precisely because they do not use enough *taibatsu*, and he views TYS as an appropriate remedy for such 'neglected' children. To Totsuka and others who agree with him, *taibatsu* is not 'abuse' but rather part of taking care of a child and doing what is his best interest (Miller 2009). He calls for liberalization and privatization of Japanese education, and ends one book (2003) with a chapter entitled 'Just Let Me Run One Elementary School!' While Totsuka's educational theories have only been applied to so-called 'problem youth', he clearly believes they should be put to wider use.



講義

Totsuka lectures at the school

These theories are based on various generalizations, however, one of which is the

use of an invented, monolithic and inherently flawed 'America' to construct an image of a 'perfect Japan'. Totsuka assumes that all non-Japanese educational ideas come from America and that American ideas about education are monolithic. He says that 'Uncle Sam Democracy' is 'stupid', and that in fact Japan in the post-war period has been more 'feudal' than 'democratic'. He blames Americans for introducing an 'elitist' constitution and a discourse of '*kenri*' (rights) to post-war Japan, complaining that children and adults are in fact not equals - as he assumes that all Americans believe - and should therefore not have equal rights. He says that schools which do not properly establish boundaries between students and teachers are asking for trouble, and he blames principals for not sufficiently having 'original principles' or 'methodology' (Personal Communication, 17 June 2007). Finally, Totsuka says that Eastern philosophy is superior to 'American philosophy' in every way, and that Buddhism's main tenets - the impermanence of all things, all things in nature are selfless, and everyone suffers - sufficiently cover all of life's bases (Totsuka 1998). Indeed, he firmly believes that one must suffer in order to progress, and believes that it is his role to stimulate such suffering through hard, ascetic training involving *taibatsu* (Totsuka 1998: 132). Taken together, these assertions reveal Totsuka's belief that his methods are the only intrinsically 'Japanese' approach to 'rehabilitating' 'problem youth'.

Underlying principles: Hierarchy and tradition

Totsuka therefore makes use of powerful symbols (such as the trust people have in science) as well as his links to money and power to construct a narrative of the value of *taibatsu* in education and discipline in rehabilitation. At the same time, his educational philosophy is based on an enduring advocacy of hierarchy and role separation, and in a sense this places him in the *mainstream* of Japanese education.

Totsuka argues that a father is and should be an ‘axe’, while a mother is and should play a support role. Following the work of Fujiwara Masahiko (2005), Totsuka argues that ‘Western rationalism’ is insufficient and undesirable in a comparatively ‘emotional’ Japan. This emphasis on emotionalism is another reason Totsuka continues to insist that *taibatsu* is a necessary and effective means for rehabilitating disaffected youth. Although Totsuka’s attempts to justify *taibatsu* ‘scientifically’ seem to be based on rationalism, along with Fujiwara’s writings and other similar tomes, Totsuka’s philosophy epitomizes the conservative and emotionally nostalgic longing for a ‘lost Japan’ in which children were polite, dutiful and deferential to adults. Such seniority-based hierarchy is seen as a fundamental premise of Japanese society *yesterday*, and Totsuka sees the media’s attack on *taibatsu* as an example of how Japan has become too liberal and lost its ‘tradition’.

The ‘Totsuka Yacht School Incidents’ and the ‘Marathon Trial’

Totsuka became famous in the early 1980s for a series of deaths which took place under his watch at TYS (see Table 1, above). These events – which came to be known as the ‘Totsuka Yacht School Incidents’ (*Totsuka Yotto Sukūru jiken*) – may not have significantly altered Totsuka’s theories regarding the rehabilitation of ‘problem youth’, but they have influenced both the wider discourse on *taibatsu* and the social image of the rehabilitation sector in general.

According to the investigation of the first of these incidents (1982), a 13-year old victim named Ogawa was killed after being punched and hit with sandals, yacht shafts, and bamboo sticks. He was also thrown into the ocean countless times, dunked while swimming there so he could barely breathe, and suffered internal bleeding from the stress of full-body shock and trauma.¹¹ In a later incident, on the

way back from a ‘training camp’ (*gasshuku*) in Kagoshima, two college students went missing from a ferry. It is thought that they jumped in the ocean to avoid the wrath of Totsuka and other TYS coaches. The prosecutor said of these incidents: “It is a terrible crime to make money off these children and then commit acts of violence against them, all the while professing to be a healer” (*Asahi* 30 October 1991). Meanwhile, Totsuka’s lawyers insisted that his client’s purpose in using *taibatsu* was to heal (*naosu*) children. They argued that Totsuka’s acts were acceptable because of the principle of *in loco parentis*; i.e. Totsuka held a *chōkaiken* (‘right to discipline’). They added that many parents consented to allow Totsuka to use *taibatsu* on their children. In addition, the defense claimed that it was Totsuka’s last resort: how else was he supposed to improve children in such a short period of time? The defense claimed that such ‘Totsuka-style training’ was socially necessary and justified. They further argued that though doctors claimed that the four students died because of *shigoki* (‘hard training’), their autopsies were surely mistaken. Finally, they pointed out that the boys who escaped the ferry were still alive.¹²

Totsuka was initially sentenced to two years of jail time and two years of probation for the death of Ogawa. This was the first conviction in the history of Japan for what the judge called *kibishii taibatsu* (‘severe’, or ‘extreme’, *taibatsu*). The court found that the other coaches were guilty of hitting Ogawa with a bamboo stick, throwing him in the water, and burning him in a bonfire, resulting in death.

In the end, however, an appeals court sentenced Totsuka to a three-year prison term, which he served between 2003 and 2006. When he was released, critics wondered whether the famous ‘rehabilitator’ had himself been rehabilitated by his experiences in jail. Totsuka’s first words to the media, however, echoed his pre-prison beliefs: *‘taibatsu wa*

kyōiku (Corporal punishment is education). In later lectures before his support group (*shienkai*), Totsuka complained that the media was using him as a ‘whipping boy’ when they repeatedly broadcast this statement ‘excessively’ and ‘unfairly’. In the midst of controversy, Totsuka returned to the helm of TYS shortly after leaving prison.



Totsuka has had problematic relations with the media

TYS Today

In the summer of 2008 TYS continued to operate even after Totsuka’s incarceration. During this time, I (Miller) made brief visits (14 and 15 July 2008) to observe the facilities and learn the daily schedule and interact with coaches, parents and students. One subordinate coach said candidly, “We would like to use *taibatsu* but we don’t because we know it will be called a crime. It’s a shame too - a child we used to reform in three months now takes one year.”

Though I was unable to observe *taibatsu* in practice, Totsuka’s ideas, authority and actions continued to reign over TYS. Though *taibatsu* may no be longer used (it is hard to say whether it was simply not used on the day that I visited), Totsuka’s strict control over the students and disciplinary approach to

rehabilitation have not changed. The coaching staff today manages schedules and activities, and solitary confinement is still used for children who step out of line. On a typical day at TYS today, students rise at 6am, do yoga and stretch, clean their rooms and eat breakfast from 7am, and study from 8am to 8:30am. Totsuka himself speaks from 8:30am to 9:50am about the day’s training before the students begin yacht exercises on the water from 10am to 12:30pm. After lunch, the students again head out to the water where they train for two hours before coming back to land to help prepare dinner and have some free time. After dinner they study for another hour, do yoga, and get to bed at 10pm. The eleven students (all male) at TYS during my visit ranged from age 11 to 35 but most were middle or high school students. Coaches introduced them as perpetrators of *katei bōryoku* (violence in the home), *tōkyōkyōhi* (school refusers), or *hikikomori* (socially withdrawn youth).¹³ Most of the students I was able to speak with were quiet and seemed uncomfortable talking to me. The coaches who work for Totsuka were open and happy to explain their philosophy. Overall, this philosophy was consistent with the philosophy Totsuka himself had explained to me during previous interviews. Though the parents of one of the victims of the ‘Totsuka Yacht School Incidents’ protest that Totsuka himself never apologized for the death of their son (*Asahi*, 19 May 2006), two other parents I spoke with said they ‘appreciated’ (*kansha shiteimasu*) the work that Totsuka and his coaches were doing for their son. These parents told me of their son, “He was hitting us before we sent him here...the boy needs some discipline (*shitsuke*). Sadly, we were not able to give it to him.” Indeed, many of the students at TYS today were reportedly forcefully delivered there by third parties (*Asahi*, 25 May 2006). Though TYS is also well-known for students who try to run away, one student I met at TYS, a fifteen year old who had been there for over a year and a half, said, “Before I came here I was always running away, but I am growing here

now.” On the other hand, one former student described his experiences at TYS ten years afterwards, saying that after he refused to go to public school, his parents sent him to TYS where he was beaten and stepped on many times (Asahi, 15 July 1992). He tried to write letters home but was forbidden, and he says he still has terrible dreams involving the school. Describing his experience at TYS as ‘miserable’, he still cannot speak freely about it.

It is clear that opinions are mixed regarding TYS’s approach to the rehabilitation of youth, especially among youth who attend his ‘school’ and among parents who send them there. The philosophy employed by Totsuka and his coaching staff does not seem to have changed significantly after his years in prison. Indeed, the media spotlight seems to have actually solidified the theories he holds of Japanese society, education, youth and rehabilitation.

In late 2009, three years after Totsuka was released from prison, another student under his care died, although authorities did not press charges and the media reported that the death was a suicide (*Japan Today Online*, 28 October 2009). This death – the fifth under Totsuka’s watch – once again raised questions about his ‘disciplinarian’ approach to rehabilitation, an approach which is very clearly rejected by the institution described in the following section, K2.

4. K2 International: An Accommodating Approach to Rehabilitating Futōkō, Hikikomori and Nīto?

K2 of Yokohama caters to ‘school-refusers’ (*futōkō*), ‘socially withdrawn youth’ (*hikikomori*) and ‘jobless young adults’ (*nīto*). Its center in Negishi, located in the ground floor of a large apartment building, consists of a main ‘living room’ for workshops and self-study, an adjacent staff office and a studio for sports and music. In between scheduled activities, students freely interact with one

another, staff and local community members in a relaxed setting. The number of youth at the center hovers at around 25 and they are supported by a predominantly female staff of ten or so. On average, students are in their mid-twenties, with ages range between 13 and 34. They reside in shared rooms at nearby private houses.



Entrance to K2

K2 is like TYS insofar as it strives to rehabilitate ‘problem youth’, but differs starkly in terms of its philosophy and methods. After a glance at the organization’s history, this section sheds light on K2’s views on ‘problem youth’ and rehabilitative responses. At the end, the fatal incident that took place in New Zealand (NZ) and the group’s position on *taibatsu* are reviewed.

From small sailing program to international support organization

K2, christened first as ‘International Columbus Academy’, was founded as the educational organ of the yacht company Pacific Marine Project Co. in 1989. Viewed as a major social problem at the time (Yamazaki 1994), teenage school refusers (*tōkōkyōhi*) were chosen as the primary target group and were to be taken for one to two-month-long sailing voyages so they could rejuvenate themselves while

experiencing ‘true nature’ (Kanamori 1999:9).

After several sailing trips in Micronesia in 1990, however, the cruise program ended, but Kanamori Katsuo, an employee who had overseen the program, decided to continue running it independently. Despite having had no formal background in education, witnessing first-hand how the youth changed during the voyages had left a strong impression on him, motivating him to keep the scheme afloat (interview, 14 December 2007).

The Academy was re-established in 1991 as a volunteer organization, which later grew into a complex grouping of small semi-independent units operating in Japan, NZ and Australia (Table 2). Like TYS, the establishment, program and philosophy of K2 initially depended on a single man: Kanamori, a *zainichi* Korean with a background in performing arts and business. Unlike TYS, K2 now has another enterprising leader in Iwamoto Mami, a Japanese female in her mid-thirties who originally worked for a securities firm. She oversees K2’s Youth Independence Camp program for *hikikomori* and *nīto*. It is clear that, along with their characters (the former a leader of the idealistic and ‘charismatic’ sort, the latter a ‘pragmatist’), their rehabilitation philosophies diverge somewhat. Iwamoto’s presence has become stronger in recent years (she is now K2’s public face) meaning that her thinking on youth support is also becoming more influential within K2 itself. This section focuses on highlighting K2’s core vision regarding the rehabilitation of ‘problem youth’ while at the same time distinguishing between its two leaders’ views.

Table 2. Chronological history of K2

Year	Event
1989	‘International Columbus Academy’ founded by Pacific Marine Project Co.
1990	Three sailing voyages carried out in Micronesia with 20 <i>tokkyōshi</i> children.
1991	The Academy re-launched by Kanamori Katsuo as voluntary organization supported by parents and prestigious Yokohama psychiatrists.
1992	The Academy opens restaurant to generate income. Communal living begun in nearby apartments to facilitate longer-term support.
1993	‘New Zealand Columbus Academy’ launched as communal living facility and home stay program.
1993-98	Organization conducts six yacht voyages and four expedition tours.
2003	Student with Asperger’s syndrome dies at NZ facility (2/26). Nine students charged with assault and kidnapping. Academy comes under criticism and is forced to discontinue activities in NZ.** Group is re-organized under ‘K2 International Japan Ltd.’*
2004	‘K2 International Australia Ltd.’ launched in Sydney, Australia.* Auckland High Court gives four male students prison sentences ranging from six months to 3 years for their involvement in the manslaughter. Five others charged with murder refuse to return to NZ from Japan and charges against them are dropped.**
2005	K2 entrusted with running ‘Youth Independence Camp’ as part of the government’s new ‘youth independence support’ policy. Iwamoto Mami appointed as the director.
2005-07	Low-profile activities resumed in NZ. Iwamoto Mami awarded ‘Woman of the Year’ award by <i>Nikkei Woman</i> for increasing employment opportunities, exemplary youth support, and management. K2’s website announces training of more than 700 students over its history; has annual turnover of roughly ¥200 million.

K2’s diagnosis: The problem with ‘problem youth’, their parents and society

‘It is not that the children [we are dealing with] are sick. While they may be very close to being sick, they are in any case *not* sick. Instead, they are in a state resembling that of an empty car battery. Hence, they must first be re-charged - not through disciplinary training or persuasion but through complete relaxation in nature’.

- Kanamori Katsuo (interview, 14 December 2007)

The above quote summarizes K2’s early diagnosis of school-refusing teenagers and one of its beliefs regarding rehabilitation. Indeed, rather than finding fault solely with ‘sick’ youth who appear lethargic and mentally feeble when approaching the institution, K2 thinks that their ill-being originates with parents and the surrounding society.

In addition to deploring the general ‘shallowness’ of human relationships in urban Japan, Kanamori believes it is problematic that many children are brought up *by their parents alone*; local communities that used to play a role in educating children have turned their attention elsewhere. Moreover, Japan’s custom of keeping problems strictly within the family

(*kakaekomu bunka*) forecloses the possibility of seeking outside help (e.g. when a child withdraws) and leads to vicious circles of hardship. Iwamoto likewise criticizes the societal custom that ultimately the family - not the school - is held responsible for youth problems, by contrasting Japan with Australia where 'support for truants is consistent and well-organized' (MHLW 2007:9). Kanamori disagrees passionately with Japan's public schooling system that both causes children to feel formidable stress and is designed to produce white collar workers. This has led to a near-extinction of technicians and skilled craftsmen, and is part of a 'majority society' where minorities - such as Korean residents like Kanamori himself and children who do not receive public education - are given short shrift.

Kanamori perceives that such underlying problems produce children who are unable to build trusting relationships and request help in times of difficulty. Iwamoto holds that, in the worst case, such children fall outside both formal and informal networks and thus experience complete isolation. Both agree that those who come to K2 suffer from a strong sense of inferiority and an extremely negative self-image, and generally feel unneeded by others (interview, 14 December 2007; MHLW 2007:9). Parents - especially white collar *fathers* - are partly to blame as they have neglected child-rearing, leading to an imbalance between 'maternal' (*bosei*) and 'paternal' (*fusei*) types of upbringing.¹⁴ The weakness of the 'paternal principle' (*fusei genri*) is said to have caused many youth to lack the skills to comprehend and act in the harsh world beyond the all-embracing 'maternal' home.

K2 is also cognizant of labor market issues: Kanamori deplores how the burst of the bubble economy has influenced youth's employment and led to the so-called '*furitā* ceiling' (where youth can find only part-time work) (Kanamori

2000:32-33). K2's website argues that the labor markets are particularly unforgiving to those not hired instantly upon graduation, and that those without technical skills and experience are doomed to manual jobs (K2 2008). Kanamori also points out that policy measures are lagging behind, and according to Iwamoto, despite the government's *Wakamono Jiritsu Chōsen Pūran* policy package (2003), current measures fail to integrate excluded youth and supply a real sense of belonging to a community and of 'connecting' with others. K2 thus strives to compensate for such inadequacies in the wider support system for youth.

Although the rehabilitation philosophy of K2 described here may not appear as coherent as that of TYS - after all it is led by two influential leaders rather than one - we will see in the following how this philosophy is relevant to the specific groups targeted for these 'rehabilitation' and support activities.

The actual target group: Who can be rehabilitated?

While K2's mission is to serve 'various youth who struggle in their lives', it does not accept all applicants. (TYS is similarly selective.) Kanamori emphasizes that 'rehabilitators' who believe they can 'heal' any child or youth, inevitably fail, and acknowledges that K2 can help only certain kinds of individuals who have sufficient motivation. In addition to the general 'emotional compatibility' of the applicant and K2's staff (*aishō*), and so as to ensure the former will find a suitable 'mentor' among the latter, parental cooperation and commitment is considered a key requirement. K2 asks parents to confirm whether their son or daughter has a background of risky behavior and whether a psychiatrist has agreed he or she can join the organization. If these items are cleared and a trust relationship is built between staff and the parents, children aged under 18 usually join the organization's program for non-school

going youth and those over between 18 and 35 (in Iwamoto's words, 'normal youth who for various reasons cannot find jobs') - can enter the 'Y-MAC' program. Since the latter is part of the government-subsidized Youth Independence Camp scheme (*Wakamono Jiritsu Juku*), additional enrolment conditions apply.¹⁵ However, admittance is to some extent determined on a case-by-case basis and considerable flexibility exists.



Group activities at K2

The ability to shoulder the attendant program fees is another decisive condition. Younger students must pay ¥630,000 for their initial three months and thereafter pay ¥105,000 per month, which is the same sum that Y-MAC participants must shoulder for their first three months.¹⁶ While this acts as a barrier to prospective students from low-income households (including those from single-parent families), Iwamoto stresses that the fees must be seen *in context* - many who enroll have previously attended other more expensive educational institutions but have failed to launch careers; parents do not typically perceive K2's fees as unreasonably high. On the other hand, the fees mean that parents usually hold decision-making power over their child's enrolment, making it difficult for the latter to enroll independently.

K2's remedies: Experiential learning, communal living and work training

The 'menu' of remedies K2 offers to those who qualify can be divided into *experiential learning* designed to build character and strengthen the K2 community; *communal living* away from parents that promotes initiative and mutual support; and systematic *work training* intended to guide students into jobs. Experiential learning and 'fun' activities are stressed for younger enrollees, while work training applies mostly to older students.

Yachting, the original inspiration for K2's activities, is still extolled by Kanamori: Combined with stays on uninhabited islands, it is 'the ultimate experiential learning method and an effective way to stimulate the unconscious mind' (interview, 14 December 2007). The fear, powerlessness and other emotions that participants feel on the sea replenish their internal energies, and, being directly dependent on each other for survival, they learn communication and teamwork. According to Kanamori, as life on uninhabited islands requires many skills (starting a fire, e.g.) it is an ideal way to prompt a 'paradigm shift' in the youth's way of thinking.

The main purpose of such a 'shift' is to induce a reversal of the assumption held by most participants that they are inferior and that there is something inherently wrong with them. While sailing is the most 'dynamic' way to achieve this, the same can be done on a 'smaller scale' via communal living on land. In order to counter the pressures of mainstream society and parents, the essential requirement is to live away from home, parents, school and one's regular environment for a significant period of time, a conception partially resonating with Totsuka's ideas of *shugyō* (see section 3.2).

After experimenting with communal living arrangements in Yokohama so as to extend support beyond the cruises, Kanamori found a

new way to enforce his principle of separation in 1993. He transported activities to NZ, famous for sailing and other outdoor activities,¹⁷ a move that expressed the organization's belief that 'life in Japan does not suit all' youth (MHLW 2007:9). K2 students attend language schools, high schools and universities in NZ (and Australia), although Kanamori emphasizes that K2's ultimate priority is restoring mental and physical health.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the fact that many former 'school-refusers' go on to graduate university is a source of pride for K2 and vindicates the view that it is indeed Japanese *society*, not the youth themselves, that leads young people to feel ill, refuse school and socially withdraw.

K2's work training consists of learning basic 'life skills' such as waking up early and doing housework; workshops on communication, CV writing and interview techniques; and practical training at K2's affiliated restaurants, companies and volunteering sites. This diversity is consistent with the organization's desire to 'expose youth to many opportunities' (*kikkakezukuri*) so that they can discover their aptitudes and interests. K2 also endeavors to create trainee positions of its own to facilitate gradual adjustment to work, and it carves a niche in the market by hiring former students.

Underlying principles: Accommodation of diversity, Christianity and open collaboration

At least three principles underpin K2's rehabilitation activities. First, Kanamori emphasizes that the organization does not force its way of doing things upon new enrollees or coerce them into changing. Rather, staff and students strive to adjust themselves to newcomers' personalities and interests. This stress on embracing diversity is related to Kanamori's ethnic minority background and Christian faith. Conscious of his Korean-Japanese heritage, Kanamori believes non-school going youth are also a kind of *minority*

in Japanese society. They are the 'salt of the earth' whom he expects to bring about changes in the world and live in a manner that shows 'originality' and agency. Therefore, the Christian view that each individual is invaluable and loved by God both helps enrollees re-gain hope and forms a second pillar of K2 philosophy. (K2 also emphasizes *sasaeai* ('mutual support') and *sodachiai* ('growing together'), ideas which have close affinities with Buddhist and Confucian ideas of living in harmony with others).

Thirdly, open collaboration with other welfare professionals and institutions also characterizes K2's activities. Mental health counseling at local clinics is available to students and connections with local welfare authorities are maintained. The organization refers youth to other services when necessary. Iwamoto also participates in research projects on youth welfare and policy with academics and city officials, and organizes exchange events with other rehabilitation institutions. K2 also plans events for local community members such as mothers with small children.

The incident, its long-term influence and K2's position on taibatsu

On 25 February 2003 a 22-year-old male student with Asperger's syndrome died after severe beating at Columbus International's communal living facility in NZ (NZH, 13 November 2004). The beating was allegedly part of an 'interrogation' by other students who were upset by the victim setting fires and stealing personal belongings. After the charging of nine students - of whom four were eventually jailed for six months to three years - for assault and kidnapping, the organization was forced to leave NZ. The incident caused a major uproar in NZ: Columbus International was criticized for a lack of compliance with safety regulations; labor standards violations; cramped conditions; and finally (by the education minister) for being 'sinister' (NZH, 4

July 2003). This reaction offered a vivid example of what can happen when Japanese youth problems and related support philosophies ‘travel’ elsewhere and interact with a dramatically different set of assumptions regarding the ‘appropriate’ treatment of so-called problem youth. By comparison, the reaction back in Japan was puzzling: unlike with the TYS deaths, the Japanese reporting on the Columbus ‘incident’ – though it was never explicitly termed as such – turned out remarkably lenient. The *Asahi Shimbun* wrote only six short articles on it in 2003 and 2004, hardly giving the ordeal a critical examination. The reporting was descriptive and sympathetic, ignored the uproar in NZ, and portrayed Columbus International in neutral terms. It appears that, since the parents of the deceased student did not sue the organization, and since the incident took place abroad, its coverage in the Japanese media was minimal and substantially more favorable than the Totsuka incidents.

The organization itself reacted to the incident in many ways: it expressed shock and grave concern over the death and stressed that this was the first time it had experienced such misfortune. It changed its name to ‘K2 International’ (presumably to disassociate itself from the incident) and revised safety and enrolment standards (see 3.2.1 above). K2 now cooperates with various welfare professionals and institutions and hires staff with welfare qualifications. It appears that the incident – Iwamoto occasionally touches upon it in interviews – propelled some changes in K2’s practices and thought. However, it is interesting to note that in response to this incident, K2 made its approach *more* clearly accommodating as a result, whereas TYS clearly clung on to its disciplinarian philosophy tooth and nail (despite much criticism). In short, the death crises that these organizations faced – though caused by and in very different circumstances – had the same effect of *strengthening* each organization’s respective

philosophy.

5. Discussion

‘Rehabilitation’ is increasingly perceived to be necessary to ‘activate’ ‘problem youth’ and return them to society and the labor market. Whereas groups similar to TYS (e.g. Kazenoko Gakuen and Fudōjuku) conduct disciplinarian training for the sake of its perceived intrinsic benefits (Yoneyama 1999:93-95), there is currently a growing emphasis on employment-oriented training (see Asano and Futagami 2006). So-called *ibasho* – lounges and small peer communities for youth with no other place to go – are also proliferating and earning recognition.

These developments are largely due to the ageing of many ‘problem youth’ (especially those identified as *hikikomori*) and increased youth unemployment, but change is also being directly promoted by the government through something called the Youth Independence Camp (*Wakamono Jiritsu Juku*) scheme. In 2005, the government launched a three-month-long program called the Youth Independence Camp that aims to guide jobless youth identified as *nīto* (NEET) to paid employment via training in basic ‘life’ and work skills (Toivonen 2008). As of February 2008 there were 30 private organizations across Japan that carried out this scheme (including K2), all of which were chosen by an official expert committee. Selected groups are required to report on their activities, produce receipts against which subsidies are paid and adopt achievement targets. Only groups viewed as sufficiently ‘safe’ are chosen and employment activation is often given as the end goal of rehabilitation. Although the Youth Independence Camp is still a small scheme, it clearly promotes change within the rehabilitative sector by emphasizing paid work, physical safety and accountability.¹⁹

Employment-centered programs may be either disciplinarian (quadrant B of Figure 1) or

accommodating (quadrant D), but where sponsored by the government, they are constrained by stringent safety requirements, leaving disciplinary institutions like TYS (quadrant A) to find funding elsewhere, either from sympathetic supporters or from the tuition fees mentioned above. The groups that fall into quadrants B and D of Figure 1 are potentially eligible for government support and are hence influenced by emerging regulation. This is not the case regarding groups in quadrants A and C since they lack an employment-focus (which could justify directing tax money toward them) and since the former are often seen as too ‘unsafe’ to deliver public support measures. While essentially subscribing to the disciplinarian paradigm, institutions in quadrant B (not discussed in this article) are forced to relinquish disciplinarian training methods if they desire to receive subsidies (though the emphasis they put on discipline is still readily discernible to observers). Since the introduction of the Youth Independence Camp in 2005, there is therefore a verifiable trend towards safer and ‘softer’ types of youth rehabilitation. However, due to a lack of data, it is difficult to gauge the exact number of groups within each of the quadrants in Figure 1. In any case, this four-quadrant diagram provides a first-stage portrait of this rather elusive sector.

The above case studies have explored two contrasting approaches to the ‘rehabilitation’ of ‘problem youth’ in Japan. There are many apparent similarities beyond the residential format of TYS and K2: both were founded by ‘charismatic’ leaders fond of yachting and critical of mainstream education; both have faced crises involving the loss of life which have actually strengthened their respective philosophies. Moreover, both groups offer original diagnoses of ‘problem youth’ and offer connected remedies. Both share the belief that ‘rehabilitation’ often requires separation from mainstream society.

From here, however, fundamental differences

come to the fore: for instance, drawing on essentialist notions of ‘Japaneseness’, Totsuka deplores the lack of discipline and taibatsu in mainstream schools and offers ‘compensation’ at TYS. Kanamori, on the other hand, decries the homogenizing and atomizing nature of society and strives to provide marginalized youth an alternative, accepting environment and a sense of community (either in Japan or abroad). In sum, Totsuka’s philosophy may be characterized as ‘disciplinarian’ and K2’s as ‘accommodating’ (Table 3).

Table 3. Similarities and differences between TYS and K2

	<i>Similarities</i>	<i>Differences</i>
TYS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both residential • Both employ yachting as a way to ‘educate’ or ‘rehabilitate’ • Both have charismatic leaders • Both believe that separation from mainstream Japanese society is necessary for rehabilitation • Both have experienced death crises which have questioned – and strengthened – their respective philosophies 	<p>DISCIPLINARIAN APPROACH TO ‘REHABILITATION’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relies on essentialist and homogeneous notions of Japaneseness • Believes that discipline and punishment are needed to compensate for deteriorating mainstream schools and to ‘cure’ ‘lazy’ and undisciplined Japanese youth – • Therefore fits into the ‘behavioral discourse’ (Yoneyama 2000: 82)
K2		<p>ACCOMMODATING APPROACH TO ‘REHABILITATION’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decries homogeneous notion of Japaneseness • Offers accommodating and accepting environment for youth to overcome problems which were not caused on their own account • Therefore fits into the ‘citizens’ or socio-medical discourse’ (Yoneyama 2000: 82)

Although residential ‘rehabilitative’ institutions for ‘problem youth’ certainly take diverse forms, we argue that they can be grasped in relation to this basic disciplinarian-accommodating distinction manifest in the concepts of TYS and K2. Essentially, disciplinarian approaches blame individual youth or at least view them as needing ‘corrective’ training, whereas accommodating measures attribute problems to wider social phenomena and the lack of support programs or institutions to respond to them. The relationship between such problems in the Japanese school and wider social phenomena has been discussed elsewhere, shedding further light on the context in which TYS and K2 make their claims. For example, Yamazaki (1994) and Yoneyama (1999, 2000) both discuss the ‘medicalization’ of the ‘problem’ of school refusal. Yoneyama (2000) places this medicalization discourse among four discourses

revolving around the problem of school refusal: the ‘psychiatric’, in which school refusers are considered to be mentally ill, the ‘behavioral’, in which school refusers are considered to be lazy, the ‘citizens’, in which school refusers are resisting against the school, and the ‘socio-medical’, in which school refusers are physically or psychologically burned out (Yoneyama 1999: 191).

Because these four key perspectives characterize not just school refusal but post-war Japanese youth problem debates in general (Toivonen 2009), they help us understand another important difference between the two rehabilitation institutions considered in this paper. In other words, while the TYS’s approach toward rehabilitating so-called ‘problem youth’ falls into the ‘behavioral discourse’, in which teachers and other educators consider lazy children in need or ‘proper discipline and punishment’ (Yoneyama 2000: 82), K2’s approach is much more resonant with the citizens’ or socio-medical discourse in that its leaders believe that such youth need sufficient rest and a support network to be able to recover sufficiently and return to the normal daily of life of mainstream society. Of course, not all groups fall clearly within one of the two approaches and we offer this conceptualization simply as a starting point for future research.

Moreover, as we have highlighted in these case studies, the dominant *means* of rehabilitation activities must also be considered in order to make sense of institutions catering to ‘problem youth’, including the use (or lack thereof) of *taibatsu* (‘corporal punishment’). Although means other than *taibatsu* could be used to disentangle the differences between these institutions, we have argued that the term, concept and practice of *taibatsu* is symbolic of larger divisions which separate these two institutions, and use it as a lens through which we can more clearly see them. While TYS for most of its existence has explicitly relied on

taibatsu, and while its founder has written extensively extolling its virtues, the leaders of K2 differ only in part about its use. Although the incident at K2 described above, while extremely violent, did not comprise *taibatsu* by a member of staff on a student, it is important to note the organization’s position on this issue as it helps distinguish K2’s rehabilitation philosophy from that of the TYS. First, Kanamori generally disputes that coercion or violence can lead to good educational results, and claims he never forces students to stay at the training facility if they do not wish to (he prefers taking them to settings and locations from where they cannot easily return home instead). Second, Kanamori takes a critical view towards *taibatsu* although he does not outright condemn it. He thinks it can potentially function as a way to build positive relationships between staff and students as *sukinshippu* (literally, ‘skinship’, or ‘friendly physical contact’). According to Kanamori, this type of intimacy is difficult to explain to Westerners and is simply part of ‘East Asian culture’. In contrast to this nuanced view, Iwamoto rejects corporeal punishment outright.

Finally, it should be noted that the division into disciplinarian and accommodating paradigms extends beyond the realm of youth ‘rehabilitation’ itself; i.e. both TYS and K2 have evolved in interaction with surrounding society. The former remains connected mainly through its shienkai comprised of powerful right-leaning politicians (including the present governor of Tokyo), whereas K2 cooperates closely with the local community, welfare services, voluntary organizations and well-known academics. Hence, insofar as the collaborators and supporters of the two organizations are sympathetic to their approaches, our case studies highlight a key division in social thought regarding ‘problem youth’ in Japanese society. This rift is far from novel: conservative perspectives have long stressed the morality of youth while leftist thought has been preoccupied with structural issues throughout

the post-war period (Rohlen 1983: 213). At any rate, it is clear that neither institution could continue to exist without support from wider societal organizations, especially after the aforementioned deaths which brought them into the public spotlight and challenged their very existence.

Although only a brief inquiry based on two case studies, this paper has highlighted and defined the sector of private ‘rehabilitative’ institutions for ‘problem youth’ in contemporary Japan. It has placed this sector in context and addressed the important recent changes occurring to and within it. Our account has also supplied a conceptual basis for further academic research of this elusive sector which, as we have highlighted, lies simultaneously in the periphery yet connected to the mainstream of Japanese society. Within this sector, it seems that the disciplinary approach offered by institutions like TYS is rather widely perceived to be the old and ‘traditional’ form of ‘strict’ Japanese education, whereas the accommodating approach offered by institutions like K2 seems to have emerged more in recent years and now appears to be increasingly sanctioned by the state. This suggests that such accommodating approaches, which emphasize human rights and condemn coercive forms of discipline, may be increasing. At the same time, organizations like TYS continue to persevere, exposing the on-going and contentious debate within Japan about how to best ‘rehabilitate’ so-called ‘problem youth’.

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Table 4. List of interviews

Interviewee	Date	Location
TOTSUKA Hiroshi	17/5/2007	TYS Support Meeting, Akasaka, Tokyo
-----	19/6/2007	Totsuka's Shinjuku Office, Tokyo
-----	21/6/2007	Totsuka's Shinjuku Office, Tokyo
IWAMOTO Mami, K2	11/5/2007	K2's Office, Negishi, Yokohama
-----	1/4/2008*	K2's Office, Negishi, Yokohama
KANAMORI Katsuo, K2	14/12/2007	K2's Office, Negishi, Yokohama

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Tuukka TOIVONEN, born in Finland, is currently a JSPS Postdoctoral Fellow at the Department of Sociology, Kyoto University. Upon graduating from Ritsumeikan Asia-Pacific University, he earned his DPhil in Social Policy at the University of Oxford in 2009, authoring a doctoral thesis that explains the emergence of a new kind of youth policy in 2000s Japan. In this thesis - now being edited for publication - Tuukka weaved together in-depth analyses of youth problem construction, policy-making and policy delivery in order to understand the changing logic of both youth exclusion and youth inclusion in contemporary Japanese society. He can be reached at tuukka.t@gmail.com.

Miller and Toivonen wrote this article for *The Asia-Pacific Journal*.

Recommended citation: Aaron L. Miller and Tuukka Toivonen, "To Discipline or

Accommodate? On the Rehabilitation of Japanese 'Problem Youth,'" *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 22-6-10, May 31, 2010.

Notes

¹ These include private 'elevator institutions', Steiner schools, international schools and schools for ethnic minorities.

² We have not found previous scholarly accounts of these institutions examined as a 'sector'. However, many books by 'rehabilitators' themselves describe 'home-grown' philosophies and methods (e.g. Futagami 2005; Kudo 2006; Totsuka 1985, 1998, 2003, 2007; Wada 1997).

³ The Japanese term for 'problem youth' or 'problem child', *mondaiji*, usually refers to children engaging in behaviour considered problematic by parents, teachers or other authorities. We employ the term in an extended sense, referring to those labelled by mainstream society as *hikō* (juvenile delinquent), *futōkō* (school non-attenders), *hikikomori* (socially withdrawn youth) and *nīto* (NEET, not in employment, education or training).

⁴ One word for 'rehabilitation' in Japanese is *kōsei* which also has the meaning 'rebirth' and 'remaking'. Although few institutions incorporate *kōsei* into their names, preferring customised titles coupled with the term 'youth support' (*wakamono shien* or *yūsu sapōto*) and although other terms might better encompass the goals of certain institutions such as Tamariba, which offers 'support' more than 'rehabilitation' and does not aim to 'change' the youth that go there, we use this latter term as a convenient way to denote the majority of the groups which comprise this sector. We recognize that our use of the term 'rehabilitation' only approximately indicates the purpose of the groups considered herein, but it is based on the still prevalent image of residential youth support stations being sites of

such ‘rehabilitation’. Moreover, though *kōsei* is the literal Japanese equivalent of ‘rehabilitation’, the English term ‘rehabilitation’ can also imply ‘social rehabilitation’, or ‘rehabilitation (back) into society’. The term for this phenomenon is *shakai fukki* in Japanese, a term commonly and casually used to refer to the presumed goal of helping so-called ‘problem youth’ re-establish themselves as ‘normal’ members of society.

⁵ With rare exceptions (Goodman 2003, Yamazaki 1994, Yoneyama 1999), few scholars have written about TYS although media coverage in both Japanese and English has been relatively extensive.

⁶ We have focused less on the individual experiences of such students due to the methodological difficulty in accessing such data, especially with respect to attendees of TYS, most of whom seemed worried to be talking to a foreign fieldworker. We also worried that by asking too much of these attendees, we could potentially make their experience at the TYS more difficult as a consequence.

⁷ Such doubt would seem to be corroborated by Yamazaki’s (1994) finding that even progressive ‘alternative education’ institutions paradoxically end up being pro-status quo when they funnel youth back into mainstream higher education and fail to change or challenge wider structures. This article highlights the ways in which we can better understand exactly what constitutes education on the margins. In the field of comparative education, Rogers defines the dominant definition of ‘non-formal education’ as a ‘set of educational activities distinguished from formal education by having different goals or purposes, or even separated from formal schooling by being socially purposeful, part of the radical social transformation movement’ (Rogers 2005: 91). The ‘educational’ rhetoric propounded by some of these institutions,

which from the outside looking in seem not to be ‘educational’ at all, raises questions regarding the boundary between the very definitions of ‘education’, ‘rehabilitation’, and ‘alternative education’. In future research we hope to explore these issues further.

⁸ This ruling overturned a lower court’s judgment, and according to Totsuka, the first sentence had been the correct one: “In court the controversy became whether corporal punishment was violence or education, and the Nagoya High Court judge found that ‘most of the corporal punishment used was for healing, correction or the sustainment of daily order at the camp’. He then sentenced me to three years of jail time and three years of probation” (Totsuka 2007:12).

⁹ Sogawa explains that for the samurai, who drew on Zen Buddhism, “*shugyō*, leading to the attainment of self-control, was regarded as being of higher value than the issue of competition” (Sogawa 1993:397).

¹⁰ Needless to say, such pseudo-scientific theories are dismissed by scientists. A leading neurosurgeon at the University of Tokyo Hospital says Totsuka’s theory that ‘training the brain stem’ by hitting a child - or any other activity - is scientifically flawed. He adds that while other parts of the brain such as the hypothalamus, cortex and hippocampus may adapt to such training, there is no scientific evidence that the brain stem can be ‘trained’ (personal communication, 28 January 2008 and 18 February 2008, neurosurgeon spoke on the condition that he would remain anonymous)

¹¹ Totsuka’s defence insisted the diagnosis of *taibatsu* as the cause of Ogawa’s death was a hospital error, but the hospital countered that Ogawa had been hit in over one hundred places. Totsuka’s defence counsel argued that the boy merely ‘got cold easily’ and that he died of hypothermia. The prosecution retorted that the autopsy showed a body temperature

too high for hypothermia.

¹² The two college students who jumped from the ferry were eventually confirmed dead. To assuage the parents of these boys, Totsuka agreed to and later paid ¥12 million, but without sufficient evidence, neither Totsuka nor the coaches were tried by the state for these deaths.

¹³ *Hikikomori* commonly refers to youth who withdraw into their rooms for extended periods of time and/or have no affiliations or relationships beyond their immediate families during this time. However, it should be acknowledged that the boundaries between the social categories mentioned in this paper are ambiguous.

¹⁴ To Kanamori, the former is linked to cultivating emotional breadth and the latter to intellectual study and experiencing the outside world while learning its rules. However, despite using gendered terms, he does not believe that ‘maternal’ upbringing can only be provided by the mother and vice versa.

¹⁵ The Youth Independence Camp was originally designed for those relatively close to entering the labour market. Indeed, the main objective attached to the policy is that 70 percent of the participants find paid employment within half a year of programme completion.

¹⁶ After this period government subsidies disappear and the monthly fee jumps to ¥136,500. A slightly smaller fee for households earning less than ¥4 million annually is applicable for the initial three months (Youth

Independence Camp ‘Y-MAC’ fee schedule, K2 International 2007). Toivonen (2008) explains that a significant participation fee was attached to the Youth Independence Camp programme despite it being a government-subsidised scheme, mainly due to two factors: the ‘undeserving’ status of the key target group (‘NEETs’) – viewed as enjoying economic security via parental support – and the fact that the government funds came from restricted general tax revenues (not the employment budget that the welfare ministry could have used somewhat more freely).

¹⁷ According to Kanamori, foreclosing the option of returning to the parental home in such a radical way requires and ensures a high level of determination (*kakugo*) on the part of parents and participants. The parents usually commit to K2’s programme since they view it as a ‘last resort’ after having been ‘let down’ by schools, counsellors, hospitals and other institutions.

¹⁸ K2’s homepage asks readers whether they have ever felt ‘stifled’ or ‘struggled’ when living in Japan’s ‘narrow-minded social system’ (K2 2008).

¹⁹ At the time of writing the Youth Independence Camp was undergoing significant restructuring as a result of the Democratic Party’s efforts to cut ‘wasteful’ public spending. However, the camp is not being abolished altogether and it may even be made available to a wider clientele than before as the outcome of these restructuring efforts.