

A Sociology of Japanese Youth

From returnees to NEETs

Edited by Roger Goodman,
Yuki Imoto and Tuukka Toivonen

NISSAN INSTITUTE/ROUTLEDGE JAPANESE STUDIES SERIES



A SOCIOLOGY OF JAPANESE YOUTH

Over the past thirty years, at the same time as Japan has produced a diverse set of youth cultures – such as *anime* and *manga* – which have had a major impact on popular culture across the globe, it has also developed a succession of youth problems which have led to major concerns within the country itself. This volume looks at some of the best-known of these problems, from the concern over the so-called returnee children (*kikokushijo*) in the 1970s, to the debates over physical punishment (*taibatsu*) in the 1980s, to the panic over young girls selling themselves for sex (*enjo kōsai*) in the 1990s, to growing fears of child abuse (*jidō gyakutai*) in the 1990s, to the most recent issues of young people shutting themselves away in their room (*hikikomori*) or appearing to withdraw completely from both the education and the labour market (NEETs). Drawing on detailed empirical fieldwork, the authors set these issues in a clearly articulated ‘social constructionist’ framework that explains why particular youth problems appeared when they did and what lessons they can provide for the study of youth problems in other societies.

This book will be of huge interest to students and scholars of Japanese society and culture, the sociology of Japan, Japanese anthropology and the comparative sociology of youth studies.

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PREFACE

The Japanese have an extraordinarily rich vocabulary to describe the problems of young people. Terms such as ‘parasite singles’, ‘school refusers’, ‘compensated dating’, *otaku* (roughly translatable as ‘nerds’), ‘herbivorous men’, ‘freeters’ (‘free arbeiterers’, that is, those who drift from dead-end job to dead-end job), ‘returnee children’, *hikikomori* (a Japanese word now in the latest edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, denoting young people who hide themselves away and decline to work or socialise), *taibatsu*, meaning corporal punishment as an ideologically sanctioned form of discipline, *ijime* (bullying), *boshi shinjū* (mother and child suicide) and *jidō gyakutai* (child abuse) – sadly more familiar to us – are the stuff of social commentary in a myriad of Japanese newspapers, journals, books and TV discussions. One further category, that of NEETs (those not in employment, education or training) is central to the discourse in Japan, but actually derives from British government reports of the early 2000s.

The question posed by this fascinating volume is how far such terminological inventiveness corresponds to reality on the ground concerning the issues being discussed. The authors adopt a constructionist approach, focusing on the nature of the discussion of each of these putative categories, the pressures affecting the debate, and the frequent distortions (sometimes to the point of gross statistical inaccuracy) that tend to infect the ways in which the issues are handled. They show that, for the most part, those young people whose allegedly errant behaviour is being highlighted are not part of the debate that rages around them.

The authors do not deny that social pathologies on the part of young people – or endangering them – are prevalent, and Roger Goodman is particularly emphatic about this in respect of child abuse. But they demonstrate with a wealth of remarkable examples how the discussion of these matters is subject to sudden changes of fashion or media crazes, so that an alleged phenomenon that hardly anyone had noticed one day is raging out of control the next. This results in the

publication of some fanciful exaggeration about the incidence of, for instance, 'compensated dating' by schoolgirls, discussed by Sharon Kinsella in her chapter. The discussion is placed in the context of economic trends that provide fewer work opportunities to the youth of Japan than in times gone by, and a widening gap between the relatively affluent and the seriously deprived.

While this volume was in production, a terrible series of disasters was visited upon Japan, in the shape of a destructive and disruptive earthquake, a murderous tsunami and a nuclear reactor emergency potentially threatening the health of many people. Since the launch of the Nissan Institute/Routledge Japanese Studies in 1986, our authors have sought to portray and to analyse many aspects of Japan, with particular emphasis on social, political and economic issues, not refraining from criticism but also giving praise for Japan's remarkable achievements. It seems likely that the disasters triggered by the events of 11th March 2011 will mark a stage – perhaps a turning point – in the modern history of Japan. An ironic effect of the tragedy has been to put Japan back into the international media spotlight, which had been dimmed or even switched right off because of the intense concentration of interest on a resurgent China. The series will continue to present objective analysis into how Japan tackles its problems in the years to come, and meanwhile we give our sympathy to the Japanese people in the current tragic circumstances.

J. A. A. Stockwin

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The origins of this book lie in a meeting which Roger Goodman had with the late Professor John Kitsuse (1923–2003) in Tokyo in the spring of 1984 as the former was about to start his fieldwork on the topic of Japan's returnee schoolchildren (*kikokushijo*). In a bagel shop (which was as exotic to an Englishman as it was to Tokyoites at that time) Kitsuse asked why there was so much interest in the topic of *kikokushijo* at that time and where had that interest come from? Social issues, he pointed out, did not appear out of a vacuum; somebody, somewhere must have done something to bring them to public recognition. These are the puzzles which inform the questions asked by all of the contributors to this volume who have been working together – largely at the Nissan Institute of Japanese Studies at the University of Oxford – over the past 15 years. We are very grateful to the Nissan Institute/Routledge Japanese Studies Series to have the opportunity to present some of the collected thoughts from this research and we would like to pay particular thanks to Ed Needle, Stephanie Rogers and Tessa Carroll at Routledge for their help in bringing this project to fruition and Tomohiro Morisawa who prepared the index. We would also like to thank the three anonymous referees who wrote long and extensive reports encouraging us to make the volume as integrated as possible; there is not a paragraph of the final version which has not been influenced by the comments of at least one, and in several cases all three, of these referees. A special debt of gratitude is owed to Howard Mulvey, who read all the chapters from start to finish as a 'sense-checker', ensuring that the argument made as much sense to a first-time reader as it did to those of us who have lived with these accounts, in some cases for more than 20 years.

As with any edited volume, sections of some of the chapters have appeared elsewhere in other forms, in English or in Japanese. We have attempted to identify these other sources either in the notes on contributors or in the bibliographies of each

chapter. In our other works, we also express our thanks to all those who have supported our individual projects.

Finally we would like to thank our co-contributors for their patience and good humour and our families for their tolerance as we have completed this project. We dedicate this book to the young people of Japan who have taught us so much about the resilience of youth cultures in the face of an often disapproving society.

Roger Goodman, Yuki Imoto and Tuukka Toivonen,
Oxford, March 2011

A NOTE TO THE READER

All Japanese names that feature in this volume are given with the family name first, corresponding with actual usage in the Japanese context.

This volume has not followed the standard romanization for words in the Japanese language which have been imported from western languages, e.g., *Rosuto Jenerōshon* (for Lost Generation). This is to avoid unnecessarily confusing people who do not know Japanese and who might be interested in the number of such western loanwords which have made their way into Japanese policy debates, although their meaning in the Japanese context may not always be exactly the same as it is in the English one. As a result, such western loanwords are romanized (i.e. written in the roman alphabet) in their original form, but italicized, e.g. *Lost Generation*.

Macrons are used throughout to mark long vowels in Japanese, with the exception of well-known places (such as Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe and Kyoto) and certain cases where the individual in question prefers a different way to romanize his or her name. Please see the glossary regarding the names of important governmental bodies and how we have chosen to abbreviate them.

Monetary values are given in yen when discussing financial issues in Japan, since conversions into pounds or dollars are rendered almost meaningless by highly volatile exchange rates. For the purposes of comparison, however, in mid-2011, one pound equalled around 130 yen; one dollar was around 80 yen; and one euro around 110 yen.

1

MAKING SENSE OF YOUTH PROBLEMS

Tuukka Toivonen and Yuki Imoto

Introduction

In the early 2000s, American teenage girls found themselves in the eye of a substantial media storm, with media commentary portraying them as perpetrators of violent acts of aggression. This storm was triggered in large part by best-selling books such as the *Odd Girl Out* (Simmons 2002) and *Queen Bees and Wannabees* (Wiseman 2002), and the movie *Mean Girls*, as well as a flood of related newspaper articles, but it was paralleled by a flurry of academic psychological research on ‘relational’ or ‘covert’ aggression (Chesney-Lind, Morash and Irwin, 2007: 330). Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, British society was in the midst of its own moral panic over ‘hoodies, knife attacks, gansta rap culture, ASBOs [anti-social behaviour orders], chavs and bling and the rest of it’ (Pearson 2006). Finland, an exemplar of Nordic stability and well-being, was thrown into a youth crisis by the Jokela school shooting incident in 2007 and a second shoot-out in 2008 (Oksanen *et al.* 2010). These tragedies fuelled a period of intense national soul-searching and debate. Not much later, reports claimed that up to ten million Chinese youngsters were now suffering from ‘web addiction’ (BBC News, 6 August 2009).

There can be no dispute that high-profile youth problems are a shared phenomenon across advanced societies with different histories, socio-economic characteristics, cultures and traditions. They are problems that tend to appear, often abruptly, in a multiplicity of guises and through disparate events. Though debated widely and supported by a never-ending stream of ‘facts’ – figures showing increases in schoolgirls’ aggressive behaviour or hoodie-related incidents – youth problems often remain, as a form of collective behaviour, difficult to get a handle on. How can we uncover crucial assumptions and patterns *behind* the ‘facts’? How can we study social problems involving young people in a way that is, in a substantive sense, sociological?

This book sets out a sociology of Japanese youth that responds precisely to these questions. It does so in the main through providing eight detailed case studies – two of which appear in this introductory chapter – on the well-known concerns in Japan about the ‘nerdy’ *otaku*, bullying (*ijime*), returnee children (*kikokushijo*), compensated dating (*enjo kōsai*), corporal punishment (*taibatsu*), child abuse (*jidō gyakutai*), social withdrawal (*hikikomori*) and NEET (*niito*; ‘Not in Education, Employment or Training’). This introductory chapter explains the main theoretical assumptions that inform our empirical inquiries. It holds that, though rarely obvious to those directly involved in particular youth debates, campaigns or policies, *seemingly dissimilar social problems surrounding youth are, in an empirically demonstrable sense, systematically related through highly similar and predictable processes*. It is because of the difficulty of seeing these patterns through the isolated examination of any *single* youth issue that the book brings together a diverse set of cases.

A sociology of Japanese youth

While this book puts forth a particular sociology of Japanese youth and youth problems, it is our conviction that its findings will be relevant to the study of young people in any comparably advanced society. First, Japan is no less replete with social problems involving young people and no less capable of generating hysteria over the fate of its youth than affluent western societies such as the US or UK. Very much echoing American popular sociological literature that divides teenage girls into ‘queen bees’ and ‘wanna bees’ (Wiseman 2002), and reminiscent of ‘classic’, media-nominated youth types such as the Mods and the Rockers in the UK, the Japanese media draw on an equally, if not more, perplexing ‘pedigree’ of social categories when they discuss youth. If the 1970s saw concerns rise over returnees and what was known in Japanese as *student apathy*, and if the 1980s saw attention turn to the affluent and imprudent ‘single nobility’ (*dokushin kizoku*) and ‘school-refusers’ (*tōkō kyōhi*), the 1990s was the era of the nerdy *otaku*, ‘compensated dating’ (*enjo kōsai*), *parasite singles* and *freeters*, the latter denoting young workers said to have rejected the hegemonic *salaryman* lifestyle. The 2000s, on the other hand, came to be defined by the socially withdrawn *hikikomori*, work-shy *NEETs* and the *working poor*. From the late 2000s onwards, the media has been replete with images of metrosexual but lacklustre ‘herbivorous men’ (*sōshokukei-danshi*) and young women engaged in increasingly aggressive ‘marriage-seeking activities’ (*konkatsu*), reflecting, in part, current anxieties over gender relations. In each era, many of these youth labels have come to be taken well beyond their original context to symbolize not just particular groups but the entire *nation*: in the early 2010s, it was not uncommon to hear commentators complain that Japan itself had become pitifully ‘herbivorous’ in contrast to a rising China and a nimble, innovative Korea.

Even if strict laws have kept gun crime in Japan extremely low by international standards, the Japanese media have suffered from no shortage of shocking

youth-related incidents to report, from the gruesome murder and mutilation of an elementary school student by a junior high school student in Kobe in 1997 to the Akihabara knife rampage that shook Japan in June 2008. Such incidents are, almost as a rule, ‘explained’ by reference to the current youth problem of the day, such as, in the above cases, ‘school non-attendance’ (*futōkō*) and ‘irregular workers’ (*hiseiki shain*). Japan provides as fertile a testing ground as any country for a comprehensive – and essentially comparative – approach to youth problems.

At the same time, it is important to understand why particular youth problems appear in Japan when they do and what some of the socio-economic issues which impinge on Japanese youth today are. Key socio-economic issues include the following:

- 1) **Japan is still a seniority-based, but increasingly aged society.** It faces the formidable challenge of supporting a ballooning population of elderly citizens while its younger cohorts shrink both in absolute and relative size. Figure 1.1 charts trends in the relative sizes of key cohorts. Already far less influential in politics than their elders, young voters’ political relevance, as conventionally measured, is likely to decrease further in the coming decades. The entrenched seniority-based hierarchies across major social institutions suggest that, as Japan ages further, it may become even less focused on the demands and needs of its young people. This is likely to reinforce, not alleviate, the tendency to ‘problematize’ various groups of young people.

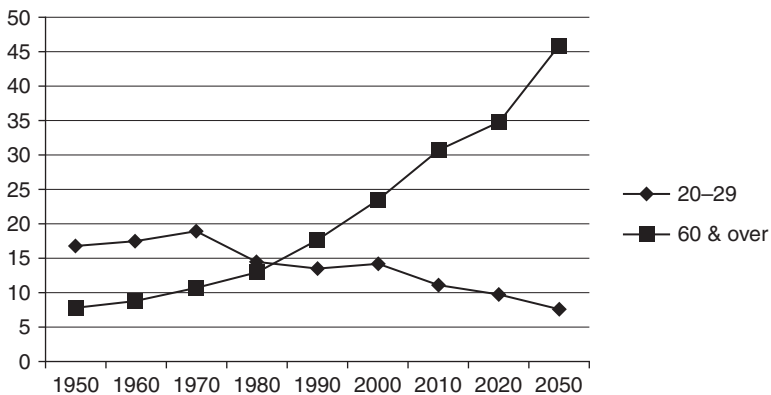


FIGURE 1.1 Trends in the percentage shares of 20- to 29-year-olds and those aged 60 and over relative to Japan’s total population (1950–2010, with projections for 2020 and 2050).

(Sources: Statistics Bureau (<http://www.stat.go.jp/data/jinsui/2.htm>) and Japan Aging Research Center (http://www.jarc.net/aging/jp/06feb/060203JARC_Population.pdf). Accessed on 20 January 2011.

2) Japan's labour markets have changed considerably since the 1990s.

Japan now has a 'post-industrial' economy with high youth unemployment and a high proportion of insecure non-standard labourers. In the absence of effective protective legislation for 'irregulars' (*hiseiki*), employers treat standard and non-standard workers very differently. Moreover, Japan's formerly praised school-to-work transition system has weakened considerably (Brinton 2011), and prior effective mechanisms for 'inclusion' – including the practice of making informal job contracts with fresh graduates months before their graduation – have increasingly become systems for 'exclusion' instead (Toivonen, forthcoming). Figure 1.2 illustrates unemployment trends, while Figure 1.3 reveals the general increase of insecure 'irregular' workers. It should be added to what is shown in Figure 1.3 that labour market changes in Japan have been far from gender-neutral: in the age group 25 to 34, for instance, 41 per cent of women compared to just 14 per cent of men were irregulars as of 2009 (see Fu forthcoming).

Having provided the reader with a broad picture of the aspirations and contents of this volume, we will next set out the deeper sociological groundings of our approach to the study of youth problems. This theoretical section will be followed by the cases of the *otaku* and bullying, after which we summarize our approach to the study of youth problems by setting out six central propositions. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of methodology and concise chapter overviews.

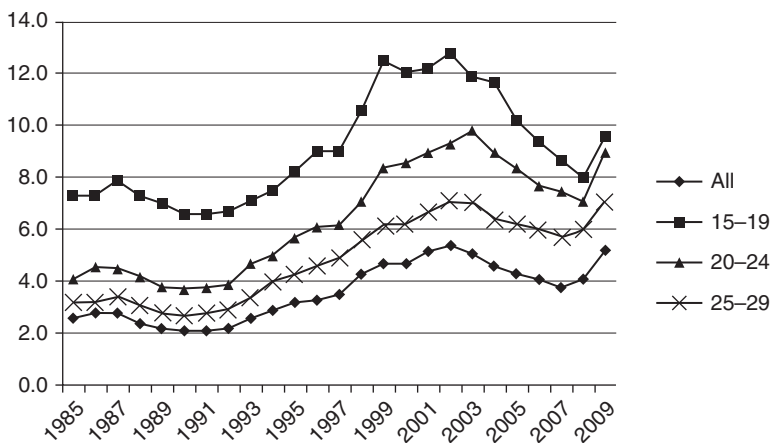


FIGURE 1.2 Youth unemployment trends (1985–2009).

(Source: Statistics Bureau (http://www.stat.go.jp/data/roudou/longtime/03roudou.htm#hyo_2). Long-term time series data, table 3.4. Accessed on 22 January 2011.)

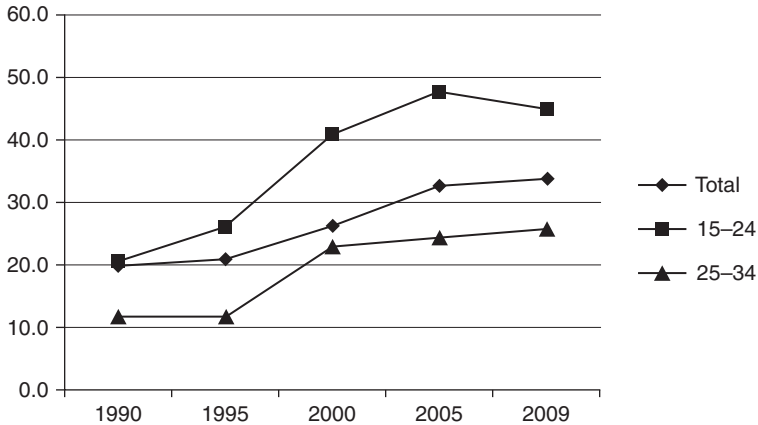


FIGURE 1.3 Trends in ‘irregular employment’ as a share of total employment.
(Source: Statistics Bureau (http://www.stat.go.jp/data/roudou/longtime/03roudou.htm#hyo_2). Long-term time series data, table 10. Accessed on 22 January 2011.)

Sociological lenses

Concepts and theories are the frameworks that act as lenses through which sociologists can scrutinize, describe and explain their empirical data. The frameworks we choose to employ will determine what dimensions of society are foregrounded, thus affecting the sociologist’s method of inquiry as well as the analysis of data. By being reflexively aware of, and making explicit, the theoretical assumptions on which we base our work, we can aim for a more ‘objective’ positioning of ourselves as social scientists. We proceed, therefore, with a brief overview of the basic frameworks for viewing society and social categories, and a clarification of some of the common theoretical assumptions that underlie each of the chapters that follow.

1. *Consensus or conflict? Two models for viewing the nature of society*

Is society ‘naturally’ harmonious and based on consensual equilibrium, or is it inherently conflictual and based on the unequal distribution of power and knowledge?

The ‘consensus model’ and the ‘conflict model’ provide two contrasting sociological perspectives on the fundamental nature of society. The ‘consensus model’ is based on functionalist theories, frequently traced back to the works of Emile Durkheim. From this perspective, society is seen as inherently stable with a

tendency towards equilibrium. The parts of a society, like a biological organism, are considered to come together to make a coherent, functioning whole; social phenomena are explored in terms of what functions they serve for the integration and cohesion of society. When aspects of society are problematic or detrimental in some way, they are typically described as ‘dysfunctional’ or ‘deviant’, hampering the smooth working of the social machine. Social problems in this context can be considered symbols of ‘risk’ or ‘danger’ that function both to delineate social boundaries and maintain cohesion within those boundaries (Douglas 1994).

One criticism of the functionalist model is that it cannot account for change. Its model of society is very static and its social institutions are described as if they have always been as they are now. In contrast, the conflict model, deeply influenced by Marxist theories, sees society as inherently unstable. The state of harmony and consensus assumed in the functionalist model is instead regarded as *an ideology* – a certain worldview that is imposed on society as the legitimate view of reality by the dominant class. Ralf Dahrendorf (1958) combined Marxist ideas with the Weberian-influenced notion of *interest groups* (or ‘imperatively coordinated groups’) to define social conflict as a ‘conflict among groups which emerge from the authority structure of social organizations’. In this view, society is assumed to be made up of self-interested groups competing for their share of scarce resources, and social reality is seen as a contested process of definition by these various interest groups.

Marxist/Weberian theories that critique functionalism call attention to notions of power and inequality. In this view, ideologies are disseminated and controlled through institutions such as schools, universities, companies, mental hospitals and rehabilitative centres that are occupied by professionals with authoritative knowledge, as well as through the government and media (Foucault 1977, 1991; Illich 1987). Whilst such ideologies may be experienced as ‘primordial’ and ‘essential’ aspects of society in the functionalist sense, the conflict model assumes that changes in the power structure will lead to changes in the view of social reality. The consensus model and the conflict model, then, are not necessarily mutually exclusive; rather, they should be seen as emphasizing different levels of social reality or epistemologies. Accounts that focus on consensus might be describing how people experience the world around them, whereas accounts that focus on conflict might help explain why they see it in such a way.

2. Structure and agency: two ways of viewing the relationship between society and the individual

Is it society that constrains people, or people who create society?

Another fundamental dichotomy that has existed in sociological theory concerns the relationship between (social) structure and (human) agency. The Durkheimian functionalist perspective focuses on how people are constrained by the rules, norms

and categories of a society. Deviance is not due to individual psychology but to the malaise of the larger social structure; by identifying and measuring deviance and by discovering causal laws, social problems can be ameliorated (see Merton 1938). Marxist materialistic and economic explanations of social change also assume that human behaviour can be explained through the identification of structural laws.

By contrast, interpretivist theories influenced by Max Weber place the human agent, rather than the social structure, at the centre of sociological inquiry. Within this paradigm, the 1960s and 1970s saw the rise of the symbolic interactionists, such as Erving Goffman and Howard Becker, who challenged the constraint perspective by focusing on individuals' interactions and how they shape our understanding of everyday reality and social organization. Becker (1963) argued that 'the deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label' (1963: 9). This became known as 'labeling theory'.

Although the dichotomy of structure and agency is useful for grasping the core frameworks of sociological analysis, these two dimensions are not incompatible; rather, as Giddens (1986) and Bourdieu (1977) point out, structure and agency determine and constitute each other in a dialectic process. We therefore need to pay attention both to the historical and structural features of society, and to how agents play a part in creating meanings and cultural categories which both affect and are affected by the social structure. Moreover, while certain agents may create new categories and new social meanings, over time, these categories become embedded and institutionalized within society, so that as Durkheimian 'social facts' they may reflect back to affect and even constrain the agents who initially created those categories.

3. A constructionist approach to social problems

Do social problems exist as objective realities outside of human language, representation and action, or are social problems the subjective interpretations of individuals?

We now turn to the key theoretical framework upon which the chapters of this volume are based: the constructionist approach to social problems. The debates that underlie the sociological study of social problems concern the ontological question of objective versus subjective realities. The constructionist approach adheres to the latter. In a nutshell, it views social problems as being constructed by interested human actors, and argues that 'problems' cannot exist independently of their claims-making actions.

'Constructionism' as a theoretical approach is a term that collects together studies of various historical origins (some that emphasize consensus, others that emphasize conflict or ideology, and still others that focus on micro-level meanings) with 'eclectic surface affinities' (Lynch 1998). It was the book *The Social Construction*

of Reality: *A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge* (1966) by Berger and Luckmann that widely disseminated the term 'social constructionism' within sociological discourse, attempting to bring together the various traditions into one approach. Most notably, the authors drew on the social phenomenology of Schutz, who was himself influenced by Weber, and took the position that there are no objective realities other than those that come to be experienced as such as a result of subjective activities and interaction.

Following on from Berger and Luckmann, the application of social constructionism as an approach to the study of social problems was established by Spector and Kitsuse (1973, 1977), who argued that social problems are subjectively created through linguistic acts and human interaction. Spector and Kitsuse's work critiqued prior works on deviance and social problems. They argued that, while Becker and others, in seeking answers to why deviant behaviour occurred, assumed that such deviancy actually existed, their own approach was more firmly subjective, in that they denied the existence of objective conditions of social problems. It was not within their scope to consider whether, for example, an act of child abuse existed; rather, they argued that the sociologist's task was to investigate the 'claims-making' process of how child abuse came to be raised as a social problem. Thus they defined social problems as 'the activities of individuals or groups making assertions of grievances and claims with respect to some putative conditions' (1977: 75). They pointed out that sociologists themselves could also become participants in the process of social problem construction, and that sociologists must therefore acknowledge, suspend and analyse their own subjective judgments about which claims and definitions concerning the putative conditions were 'true'.

This 'idealist' subjective framework presented by Spector and Kitsuse was, however, difficult to fully adhere to in practice. As their theory of social problems reverberated and expanded to produce a mass of empirical studies on social problems, it also came under increasing attack. The most significant critique came from researchers in the sociology of science – a burgeoning arena of constructionist research. In a 1985 article in the journal *Social Problems*, Woolgar and Pawluch accused Spector and Kitsuse of 'ontological gerrymandering' or 'selective relativism', pointing out that Spector and Kitsuse were implicitly assuming an objective fact or reality – that certain conditions or the nature of a perceived problem remained constant – in order to effectively describe and explain the 'changes' which they had selected for their analysis.

Whilst strict constructionists such as John Kitsuse continued their study of the rhetoric of claims-makers (Sarbin and Kitsuse 1994), Joel Best, who became the leading advocate of the contextual approach to social problems, argued that ontological gerrymandering should be regarded as 'a necessary vice', and that a study of social problems cannot be separated from the social context (Best 1989; Loseke and Best 2003). The contributors to this volume take the latter contextual approach, which adds a consideration of social context. As cross-cultural researchers, we are not only concerned with subjective interpretations, but are also interested in why and how some situations come to be perceived as social problems

while others do not, and in how social factors such as class and gender play a part in the process. We are thus interested in the relationship of discourses of social problems to wider cultural debates and structural changes in society.

Two cases

In order to illuminate our sociological assumptions, we present two brief case studies of youth problems from Japan. The case study of *ijime* (bullying) demonstrates how social problems surrounding youth are constructed by agents such as the media, the government and various related industries. Our concern is to explore why and how *ijime* might be perceived as a social problem at some points in time more than others, and how its meaning keeps shifting. The case study of *otaku* demonstrates more precisely the role that individual agency can play in defining the meaning of terms by identifying some of the key actors that produced and consumed this contested category.

Ijime: the case of bullying

Ijime has tended to be discussed in Japan as a unique ‘cultural’ phenomenon. A ‘cultural’ explanation sees *ijime* as due to the supposedly homogeneous, conformist group-oriented nature of Japanese society.¹ It was only from the mid-1980s, however, that the word in its noun form came into common circulation. The phenomenon – which had previously been seen as a natural element of the socialization process – became recognized as a ‘social problem’ that needed to be defined, measured and ‘treated’. Figure 1.4 shows the number of newspaper reports on incidents related to bullying between 1980 and 2009, revealing that there were three ‘peaks’ of intensified reporting in this roughly 30-year period. By locating each peak within wider contemporaneous trends in education, psychiatry and politics, this case study will show how the discourse on *ijime* has been linked to powerful actors in educational reform agendas as well as to a new ‘industry’ of experts and professionals, and how its measurement has undergone changes in the wake of new ideas about children’s rights. More broadly, it will demonstrate how a long-term examination of a social problem discourse enables us to see the relationship between political interests, historical events, and the representation of reality.

It was the story of the suicide of 13-year-old Shikagawa Hirofumi in February 1986 (see Yoneyama 1999: 158) that first heightened awareness of *ijime* in relation to schools and teachers, with the Ministry of Education calling for the first time an emergency meeting to examine the issue in March 1986. The mid-1980s, when *ijime* first began to be discussed as a problem, was a period of growing domestic anxieties about the ‘ills’ of Japan’s education system, including the perceived negative effect on children of its examination-centred, intensely competitive orientation, which had developed in the climate of post-war Japan’s rapid industrial growth. It was also during this period that discussions on reforming the education

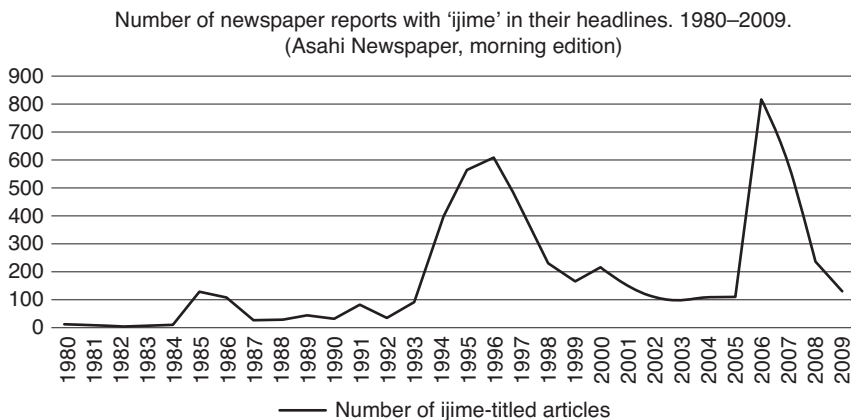


FIGURE 1.4 Tracing *ijime* reporting in the mainstream media.

system and introducing a more relaxed method that nurtured the individuality (*kosei*) of each child, took form under the Reform Council on Education (Rinkyōshin) set up by the then Prime Minister Nakasone. While most of the reforms first outlined in the mid-1980s were not implemented until 2002 owing at least partly to the ‘immobility’ of Japanese politics (Schoppa 1991), throughout the subsequent 20 years (though more pertinently in some years than others), *ijime* was raised to the level of political discourse, particularly by Liberal Democratic Party neoconservatives, as a ‘problem’ symbolizing the malaise of the Japanese post-war school system as well as the deterioration of family values and community.

The second wave of *ijime* reporting came in the mid-1990s, triggered by the suicide of 13-year-old Ōkochi Kiyoteru in 1994. Measures to tackle the *ijime* problem were again taken by the Ministry of Education in its second emergency meeting (March 1995), and statistical benchmarks were set in order to try to lower the number of *ijime* cases. School counselling as a new profession was established and licensed training programmes as well as 24-hour hotlines were formed, amounting to what could be seen in retrospect as the beginning of an *ijime* ‘industry’ (see Proposition 3 below). In 1995, the Ministry of Education began dispatching school counsellors to public schools. In the first year, counsellors were dispatched to 154 schools around the country and a budget of 300 million yen was allocated. Five years later, there were 1,643 schools to which school counsellors had been dispatched and the budget had increased to 3.6 billion yen. In 2001, the system was handed over to the prefectural authorities and by 2005, 9,547 schools had school counsellors with a budget allocation of 4.6 billion yen in total.²

The mid-1990s also saw the proliferation of medical and psychiatric research as well as literature on *ijime*, hand in hand with the development of the new field of clinical educational studies (*rinshō kyōikugaku*).³ Ishido (2007) describes this as a period of the medicalization of educational problems, when children’s mental

health was debated vigorously. *Ijime* was also frequently discussed in connection with the ‘ills’ of the nuclear family and the consequences of individualization in a ‘risk society’. In all such research, there lay the assumption that ‘*ijime*’ existed as a serious educational problem, and that the experts needed to find ways of dealing with the problem, at the level of both the individual and the society.

The third wave of *ijime* reporting hit Japan in 2006, instigated by the suicide of a 12-year-old girl in Hokkaido. This coincided with the period when educational reforms proposed by the neoconservative Prime Minister Abe Shinzō were being debated. Yoneyama (2008: 15), indeed, argues that the moral outrage around bullying in the autumn of 2006 was exploited successfully by Abe in his drive to revise the Fundamental Law on Education. Following this third wave of reporting, parents and bullying victims themselves actively mobilized in directing the locus of blame onto the schools and the Ministry of Education. As a result, though the ministry had previously identified no link between bullying in schools and student suicides between 1995 and 2005, it was pressured in 2006 to launch a reconsideration of its statistics, and 14 additional cases of suicide where bullying had been involved were subsequently ‘discovered’.

As illustrated in Figure 1.5, the number of *ijime* incidents recorded in official statistics increased dramatically from 20,143 in 2005 to 124,898 cases in 2006. There are several explanations for this sudden peak. First, new statistical guidelines called for surveys of bullying to be carried out at private and special schools in addition to public ones. Also, the definition of the meaning of *ijime* was expanded, so that whether or not acts were reported as bullying now depended ‘on the perspective of the student who was being bullied’ and not on ‘formalistic judgments’.

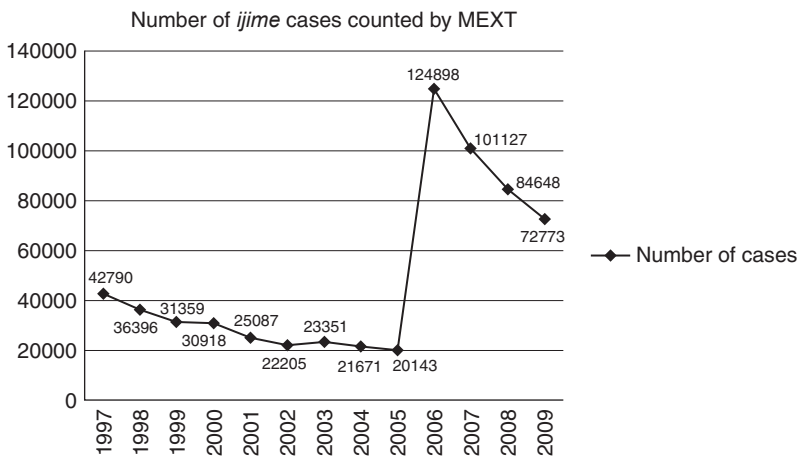


FIGURE 1.5 MEXT statistics and changes in the definition and counting of *ijime* in 2006.

(Source: MEXT White Papers http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/hakusho/html/hpab200701/002/002/003.htm. (Accessed on 20 January 2011.)

The importance of giving the victims a voice was henceforth increasingly highlighted, chiming with the debates then current in Japanese educational and welfare arenas on children's rights.⁴ Behind the sudden statistical increase in the number of *ijime* incidents lay a changing context regarding the meaning of the 'child' and 'individual rights' which shifted the power of different agents involved in defining and measuring the 'problem'.

Although there has been a general levelling off in the attention afforded to *ijime* since the 2006 crisis wave, awareness of one emergent sub-categorical type of *ijime* – *netto ijime* (cyber-bullying), which exploits the use of mobile text messages and internet sites (*ura saito* – unofficial sites, and *purofu* – profiles) as well as blogs – has grown rapidly since 2007 (Okada 2008). In reaction to several reported suicides which were attributed to cases of bullying via mobile internet sites, there were calls from parents and from government officials to ban the use of mobile phones in schools and new forms of internet surveillance were developed by security companies.

The cases of *ijime* moral panic recounted above show a process of social problem construction by the media and key pundits, which led to the implementation of policies or disciplinary measures to deal with the 'problem'. Although the phenomenon of bullying may well have existed at other periods (in *some* form), we propose that it was the conditions prevailing at particular points in time that led to certain cases being interpreted as indicators of serious social problems. Each episode of 'panic', therefore, came to be interpreted in terms of the larger debates and trends of the day, so that the salient solutions that were proposed addressed much broader concerns than bullying *per se* (for example, reforming the post-war education system). Though far too brief an account to grapple with all the complexities of the bullying debate, this section has illustrated how an ostensibly static, 'cultural', everyday problem, can – when adopting the constructionist lens – simultaneously be viewed as a dynamic interaction of media panics, claims-making and changing contexts.

The case of *Otaku*

Otaku generally translated as 'nerds' – are an example of how a youth problem category is both constructed and contested. In 1989, *otaku* were first portrayed in the media as a section of youth society that lacked communication and social skills, and throughout the 1990s they were represented as symbols of a fragmented Japanese society. However, by June 2008, the popular newspaper magazine *AERA* was pronouncing that the *otaku* had gained their 'civil rights' (Noguchi 2008), while a 2007 *Japan Times* article pondered 'perhaps we are all *otaku* now?' (McNicol 2007). In 2007, the *otaku* market in Japan was estimated to be worth 186.7 billion yen (about 1.7 billion dollars) a year (Azuma 2009: xv), and *otaku* were being discussed as symbols of Japan's cultural power and as key components of the government's 'Cool Japan' branding strategy. How did this change of perception come about?

It was in the 1980s that the term *otaku* – originally a formal way of saying ‘you’ – came to refer to a category of people: amateur fans of anime and manga. In a 1983 article titled ‘*Otaku no Kenkyū*’ for the magazine *Manga Burikko*, journalist and manga artist Nakamori wrote about the nature and appearance of youth who gathered around the comic market, describing them as unkempt, obsessive fans who addressed each other using the overly formal term *otaku* (Kinsella 2000: 128). The term *otaku* – and by 1985 the term *otaku-zoku* (*otaku* tribe) – was used among manga artists and fans as a witty reference to themselves, but remained unknown beyond this small community. In 1989, however, the word *otaku* entered the public consciousness through the media reporting of the Miyazaki Tsutomu murder case, in which Miyazaki was convicted of killing four girls aged between four and seven, mutilating their bodies and then sexually molesting their corpses. Miyazaki’s room was found to be stacked with collections of pornographic anime films and the media gave him the label *otaku*, thereby exposing the public at large to the term for the first time. In one of the earliest and most influential sociological depictions of the *otaku* phenomenon, Kinsella (2000) identified the ‘*otaku* moral panic’ that ensued from the Miyazaki case. The ‘*otaku* tribe’ quickly assumed the image of isolated deviant (male) youth who shut themselves up in their rooms, engrossed in manga and anime. As Kinsella (1998: 311) explained, ‘the sense that this unsociable *otaku* generation was multiplying and threatening to take over the whole of society was strong’.

Japanese sociologists quickly joined the media in commenting on the *otaku*. Based on empirical research on university students which he conducted in 1985 and published in 1991, Miyadai Shinji defined *otaku* as ‘unbalanced specialists’ with low interpersonal skills, who tended to be avoided by others because of their unkempt and unclean appearance (Miyadai 1994). Fiction writer and critic Nakajima Azusa published a book entitled *Communication fuzen shōkōgun* (Dysfunctional Communication Syndrome), in which she defined *otaku* as having personality problems which led them to find more meaning in relationships with objects, media and other creations than with people (Nakajima 1991). By the late 1990s, there was a burgeoning industry of *otaku-ron* (*otaku* studies) (see Lamarre 2004). The meaning of *otaku* ramified and the term became increasingly appropriated and manipulated by academics, politicians, artists, commercial and educational industries. Although a detailed examination of the web of competing voices cannot be made here, we will briefly introduce some of the key actors involved in the construction of the *otaku* discourse to emphasize the importance of individual agency in this process.

A key figure who changed the perception of *otaku* was Okada Toshio, the anime producer and founder of the company Gainax, which produced the influential TV anime series *Neon Genesis Evangelion* in the mid-1990s. As a result of his success in background to the anime media industry, Okada began to lecture at the Faculty of Liberal Arts of the University of Tokyo in 1994. He began to write prolifically on *otaku* from around this time, later gaining lectureships at several prestigious universities, thus establishing himself as an expert of *otaku bunka-ron*

(*otaku* cultural theory). He referred to himself as the *otaking* (King of *otaku*), whose mission was to ‘eradicate discrimination against *otaku*’.

One of Okada’s strategies to elevate the meaning of *otaku* was to re-import an ‘internationalized’ concept of *otaku* in order to frame it at the level of ‘Japanese’ national identity. From the 1990s, internationally distributed Japanese anime such as *Power Rangers*, *Dragon Ball* and *Sailor Moon* were steadily establishing a presence abroad, being consumed in a context where there was no historical association of manga and anime fans with the negative connotations of *otaku*. Okada (e.g. Okada 1995) reported on this situation where *otaku* culture was being consumed and identified as ‘cool’ abroad, and thus contributed to the elevation of *otaku* culture as a form of ‘Japanese’ culture.

The mission of Okada and other individuals, such as Taku Hachiro, who identified themselves as representatives of *otaku* was to challenge the negative image of *otaku*. There was also a group of theorists whose interests lay more in explaining Japanese society through an intellectual discussion of *otaku* culture. Psychiatrist Saitō Tamaki published a book in 2000 in which he provided an explanation of *otaku* from the perspective of psychoanalysis. Major sociologists such as Miyadai Shinji and Osawa Masaji and the philosopher Azuma Hiroki – who argued that the *otaku* phenomenon has become ‘a focal point for understanding both Japanese society and the postmodern world’ (Azuma 2009: xv) – all produced books and articles on *otaku*, which helped establish and legitimize the topic within subculture studies. These individuals all belong to the generation of scholars born around 1960, which from the late 1990s has come to lead academic-public discourse in Japan. Uno (2006: 19) suggests that these ‘new generation social scientists’, who specialize in cultural studies and theories of capitalism and youth, have changed the landscape of Japanese social sciences, by increasingly taking an active role in discussions of Japanese society as media ‘critics’ (*hyōronka*). The very same generation of social scientists belonged to ‘the first generation of *otaku*’ (Azuma 2003) who had grown up being exposed to TV anime and manga. Perhaps partly for this reason, *otaku* has proved a concept of personal – as well as professional – interest for many male scholars of this cohort.

Another key actor involved in the production and consumption of the *otaku* concept was the contemporary artist Murakami Takashi. Born in 1962, Murakami attended the Tokyo University of the Arts, where he was the first person to obtain a doctorate in Japanese art. Later, during his residency in New York, Murakami began to investigate the nature of ‘Japaneseness’ in his art, and began to use anime and manga as a medium for this expression. He began to represent *otaku* culture as ‘Japanese art’ abroad and re-imported this revamped view of *otaku* into Japan.

Whilst Murakami Takashi appropriated *otaku* culture for his own artistic and commercial interests – his life-size sculpture ‘Miss Ko²’ was sold for 500,000 dollars at a Christies’ auction – his art was in turn used by academics such as Azuma as a means of constructing their postmodern theories about *otaku*, which in turn

influenced and reinforced Murakami's own ideas about Japaneseness. A detailed examination of the complicated connection between *otaku*, Murakami's artistic concept of 'superflat', and debates about nationalism and globalization would take us a long way from the remit of this chapter (refer to Steinberg 2004, Sharp 2007); what has been illustrated, however, is the transformation and subtle shifts of a group previously perceived as deviant to one that is perceived to be at the heart of Japanese cultural capital and identity.

Changes in category meanings are often instigated in reaction to 'outside' forces, and it was indeed the popularity of Japanese anime and manga in the US and Europe – where the concept of *otaku* was detached from its original stigmatized meanings – that provided an opportunity for individuals to recast the meanings of *otaku* within Japan. Okada, as we have seen, was a major activist in this movement, but equally significant were the political and economic interests that marketed *otaku* culture under the rhetoric of 'Cool Japan'. 'Cool Japan' became a hot topic among politicians after the translation and circulation of McGray's influential article 'Japan's Gross National Cool' (2002), which noted the potential 'soft power' of Japanese popular culture. *Otaku* quickly came to be perceived as not only consumers but also creators of Japanese popular culture, and Akihabara, Tokyo's downtown area that had catered for *otaku* subculture since the 1990s, was redeveloped by political leaders and businesses into a 'popular culture showcase' and a 'Japanese Silicon Valley' (Galbraith 2009). Changes in popular perceptions in Japan could clearly be seen in 2005, when the TV drama *Densha-Otoko* (Trainman) featured an *otaku* as its hero; an international '*otaku* boom' ensued and Akihabara became a tourist spot for foreign anime fans flocking to the 'Otaku Mecca'. By 2006, Foreign Minister (and later Prime Minister) Asō Tarō was calling himself an *otaku* (Fukada 2008, Fujimoto and Kono 2009) indicating how *otaku* had become a national cultural symbol and hence a political and diplomatic tool.

Has, then, the negative image of *otaku* disappeared? A longitudinal study on the perception of the term (Kikuchi 2008) suggested that negative connotations have significantly decreased. The pathological view of the *otaku* no longer exists, in part because of the emergence since the turn of the century of a new category – *hikikomori* – to which, some argue, the socially pathological discourses of youth have shifted (Eng 2001).⁵ On the other hand, the Akihabara Incident in June 2008, where the convicted serial killer was labelled an *otaku* by much of the press, as well as increased global anxieties over the link between anime and child pornography, have reconveyed the image of *otaku* as a sexually promiscuous and potentially criminal group. In December 2010, the strength of resurgent conservative political feeling against normalizing *otaku* tastes was demonstrated in Tokyo through the passing of a legal prohibition to control the production and market for 'indecent' images drawn from manga and anime. The *otaku* case thus shows how the status of social group categories is fluid and in flux, and how meanings of categories can be interpreted, manipulated, exploited and protected by interested agents.

The study of youth problems: six propositions

In this section we set out six propositions that lie at the heart of our approach to the study of youth problems. Not all these propositions are equally important to each of the youth problems we examine, but they are always present in some form. We intentionally focus here more on relatively brief episodes surrounding the production of youth problems – what might be called ‘the synchronic dimension’ – while acknowledging historical continuities. The final chapter of this volume considers in more depth the importance of studying youth issues in a diachronic fashion. While it is Japanese society that has provided the primary context in which the propositions below have been developed and tested, we believe that they are highly relevant to understanding the nature of youth problems in virtually any advanced society.

1. Mainstream youth problems, rather than simply ‘caused’ by young people themselves, are always the outcome of broader social activities that define certain issues as ‘problems’

Instead of simply taking for granted the assumption that certain groups of youth are ‘deviant’, ‘vulnerable’ or ‘deficient’, the sociological approach advanced in this volume turns our attention to the *societies* that produce youth problems. Or rather – the concept of ‘society’ being too amorphous to operationalize in a helpful way – attention needs to be paid to the concrete and *researchable* activities of various key actors. These include the media, specific ‘claims-makers’, private institutions dealing with youth, other interest groups such as parents’ organizations, policy-makers and the government. At the same time, important socio-economic and political trends are examined insofar as they impinge upon, and act as a crucial backdrop to, youth issues. By scrutinizing youth problems, we are in effect also studying wider anxieties, cultural controversies and social conflicts.

In line with the above stance, we define (following Hilgartner and Bosk 1988) a ‘youth problem’ as *a putative condition or a situation surrounding ‘youth’ – however defined – that is labelled a problem in mainstream arenas of public discourse and action*. The word ‘putative’ denotes our belief that youth problems are not reducible objective conditions, politically neutral ‘facts’ or static ‘truths’, but are products of open-ended social interaction. While one might quite legitimately wish to focus on youth issues that are considered problematic in certain local communities or subcultures, the above definition is consistent with our interest in *mainstream* debates that cross the national (and often the international) news threshold, attracting the attention of the middle classes as well as dominant social institutions, including the central government and metropolitan administrations. It is important, in any general formulation of youth problems, to avoid prescribing a ‘one-size-fits-all’ definition or age-range for ‘youth’, however convenient this may seem, since ‘youth’ is itself an ambiguous and changeable social category that is conceptualized differently according to context, period and situation (see our chapters on child abuse and NEETs

for relevant examples). We therefore need to remain sensitive to the particular (and often implicit) definitions of 'youth', 'children' and 'adults' in each particular case, appreciating the fact that biological age rarely corresponds to social status.

Crucially, anyone pursuing this type of sociological approach quickly discovers that, in the majority of high-profile youth-related discussions, young people themselves are relegated to the status of a *muted group* (Ardener 1975). This is to say that, although not entirely absent, their own voices are assigned to the periphery, from where they can rarely influence the terms of the debates about them. Instead, groups of adult 'experts', 'commentators' and 'authorities' – whom we analytically treat as 'claims-makers' in this volume – are free to represent youth as they wish. Of course, none of this means that youth lack agency in a fundamental sense – our own research provides ample evidence of young people who not only manipulate unfavourable labels and situations but also voice explicit criticisms of mainstream youth problem definitions. The key point is that empirical research suggests their voices are very rarely able to challenge dominant 'adult-imposed' categories and beliefs.

There is one further reason why youth problems frequently attract considerable attention in mainstream debates: young people are what anthropologists call a *liminal group*. No longer 'children', but not yet 'adults' or 'full members of society' (*shakaijin* in Japanese), youth are frequently viewed as a threat to the established order, as unstable agents, and as insufficiently socialized 'semi-citizens' who need further training and moulding in order to play adult roles. It is partly for this reason that, as Griffin observes in her examination of UK and US youth research in the 1980s, mainstream scholarly accounts frequently portray young subjects as deviant or deficient (Griffin 1993: 199). This so-called 'deficit model' has certainly been dominant in post-war Japan, where the liminality of youth may arouse even more alarm than in societies where there is less ideological emphasis on conformity. The implicit normative expectation in mainstream media and scholarship has been that young people should smoothly 'transition' into further education and jobs, and play their part in maintaining the established social order. As the subsequent chapters will demonstrate, nearly all youth problems in Japan are, in one way or another, concerned with incomplete or delayed transitions into what are viewed as culturally appropriate social roles.

2. Individual youth problems proceed as 'waves' of collective attention, characterized by relatively short episodes of moral panic, followed by longer two- to three-year policy cycles, after which some issues wane and others re-emerge

The British sociologist Stanley Cohen argued in his 1972 book that modern societies appear to be periodically subject to 'moral panics', where:

[a] condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to social values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and

stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible.

(Cohen 1972:1)

Cohen's formulation sensitizes us to the idea that youth problems, in Japan as elsewhere, typically appear as sudden outbursts of social concern, triggered by particular incidents followed by claims-makers' assertions regarding risks posed by a certain group or a phenomenon. The brief episodes of moral panic offer opportunities for well-placed claims-makers and interest groups (see Proposition 4) to define the problem and propose countermeasures. A common occurrence during moral panics is the creation of associations between a given incident and pre-existing social categories: it is reported in the media that the perpetrator was a 'returnee', a 'school-refuser' or a *NEET*, and this is typically given as a partial *explanation* for the incident that has taken place.

Short-term waves of moral panic often lead to the development of *policy*. Several graphs in this volume show how newspaper reporting on a given youth problem – a useful proxy for tracing societal attention – frequently has a two-year peak period, during which policy may be made and implemented. As Goodman (2000: 172) has previously noted, most social problems in Japan undergo a predictable sequence consisting of: 'discovery' and definition; the collection of statistics that seem to show a sharp increase in incidence; the implementation of measures; and the gradual control and disappearance of the problem. Each of our chapters reveals a close connection between public debate and policy reforms, including the revision of relevant laws and the introduction of new training programmes. It is therefore useful to consider youth problems as powerful 'agenda-setting' processes. The case study on *NEETs* in this volume may offer the most pertinent and straightforward example of this dimension, highlighting how influential pundits in academia frequently worked together with interested bureaucrats to manufacture the necessary momentum for youth policy changes that they deemed desirable.

Perhaps less recognized are the longer-term, historical trajectories of socially constructed youth problems. Whereas policy-related youth problem cycles tend to last no longer than two or three years, it is not uncommon to witness a particular problem resurfacing at, say, ten-year intervals, as the case of bullying amply demonstrated. The longevity of certain youth issues is dependent on the continued presence of interested actors who are able to renew public interest in such problems, for example, through the successful mobilization of a fresh 'story' or a new political agenda.

3. Lending a tangible form to youth debates and giving expression to interests, recognizable 'industries' emerge around high-profile youth problems

In-depth qualitative research into Japanese youth problems suggests that, whenever a new issue gains prominence, whole 'industries' of interested actors also appear. In the case of returnee children (*kikokushijo*), the 'industry' included commercial advice centres, research institutes, 'adaptation' schools and publishing houses, as well as university researchers and non-profit associations (Goodman 1990). The formation of such 'industries' is further documented in the case studies included in this volume. One thing that a comparison of cases shows is the relationship between the different youth problem industries. For example, well-known private youth support institutions, such as Kudō Sadatsugu's Youth Independence Support Centre (Tokyo) and K2 International (Yokohama), have evolved from support institutions for 'school-refusers' (1980s) to those for 'withdrawn youth' (1990s), to 'NEET support experts' in the mid-2000s (Toivonen 2009). Individual researchers such as Miyadai Shinji, Saitō Tamaki and Kosugi Reiko as well as the providers of consultation services have also rushed to define, 'colonize' or contest newly emerging 'problems'. In this sense, there is much ground for viewing the emergence of youth problem 'industries' not as entirely new entities, but as *re-groupings* of existing organizations, actors and interests, both public and private. Once we appreciate this phenomenon, we may reinterpret the amount of resources poured into a single, seemingly isolated new project, as this may often consist of funds being reallocated from previous projects.

The dynamism of the youth problem 'industries' may well be linked to the relatively low level of institutionalization of Japan's youth welfare services. Lack of institutionalization combined with unstable access to resources propel the more dynamic representatives of this sector to find innovative ways to attract societal attention in the hope of thereby attracting more funding. Goodman's discussion of the socio-economic context of Japanese youth problems (Chapter 8) shows how the private ownership of the majority of youth-related institutions, combined with demographic changes, has reinforced this historical tendency.

4. Youth problem discourses tend to fall within predictable boundaries, with 'translators' synthesizing specific knowledges into general media discourses. However, discursive spheres that are initially discrete can also converge around shared symbols

For someone approaching the study of youth problems for the first time, it may be difficult to deal with the seeming cacophony of voices discoursing on any given issue. To be sure, *discourses* – the contested languages and terminologies in which

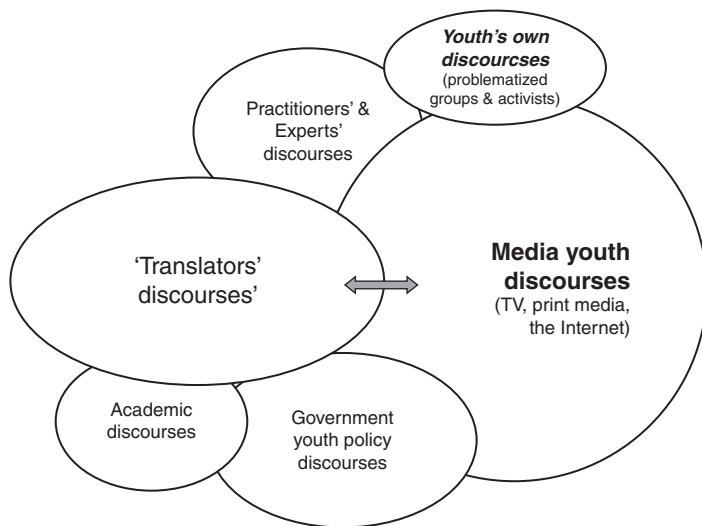


FIGURE 1.6 How youth discourses can be broken down into analysable sub-units.

an issue or field is debated and made sense of – are not entirely coherent, but they do exist within identifiable boundaries and broad structures. As [Figure 1.6](#) illustrates, the mainstream media are not the sole locus of youth problem discourses. Academics operate in their own conceptual and semantic communities; practitioners and ‘experts’ (such as youth supporters and psychiatrists) produce discourses rooted in their own experiences; the government has its own, necessarily politicized, way of discussing essentially the same issue. What we might call the ‘translators’ discourse’ – the discourse of the most powerful claims-makers – is located at the centre of [Figure 1.6](#) for the reason that it acts as the critical channel through which some youth issues enter the mainstream media. From here, youth problem discourses can spread to numerous other fields (popular culture, art, other commercial fields) as well as foreign countries. We can see an excellent example of this in the case of ‘compensated dating’ ([Chapter 3](#)). The process of translation is creative and synthetic, and its aim is to establish a particular interpretation of a youth issue as the dominant one in society.

The discursive sub-units shown in [Figure 1.6](#) broadly correspond to the above-mentioned ‘industries’ that form around given problems. It is common for conferences and seminars sponsored by these ‘industries’ to bring together different types of youth discourses and prompt the development of new models that are in turn channelled into the mainstream media. As a result, as demonstrated in each of our chapters, different discourses tend to *converge* on shared symbolic assumptions dominant in each era.

5. Different youth categories are linked in their underlying moral vocabulary and form a distinctive 'youth problem pedigree'. All of these categories, however, should be seen as symbolic and open to manipulation and change

As Horiguchi points out in [Chapter 6](#), before the advent of the category of *hikikomori*, other labels such as 'school-refusers' or 'moratorium beings' were applied to youth who stayed at home for prolonged periods of time. In her discussion on the *otaku*, Kinsella echoes this observation in positing that 'key themes of previous debates about youth resurfaced in new forms' in the 1990s in the public debate regarding the characteristics of young people involved with *manga* (Kinsella 1998: 292). We can therefore begin to observe 'pedigrees' of youth issues, where the meanings of successive categories have become closely intertwined, and where seemingly disparate youth types can be mapped onto the same canvas which has a consistent underlying 'moral vocabulary'. [Table 1.1](#) offers a chronological list of key categories in the post-war period to help illustrate this point.

Within this chronology it is possible to see the resemblances between: the school-refusers of the 1960s and *NEETs* – the 'work-refusers' of the 2000s; 'moratorium humans' and the socially withdrawn *hikikomori*; and the 'single nobility' and *parasite singles*. Certain newer categories seem to be, to a large extent, 'remixes' of two or more older ones, with *hikikomori*, for instance, revisiting many of the features of 'moratorium humans' (1970s), the *otaku* (1980s) and *adult children* (1990s). In the same vein, *NEET* can be viewed as an amalgamation of the characteristics of *parasite singles*, the *hikikomori* and *freeters*. In part, this phenomenon follows from the fact that fresh categories are always made sense of by reference to pre-existing labels. Whenever new categories are constructed, they assume a place in a subtle hierarchical structure: in the early 2000s, commentators on youth issues perceived a clear pecking order, with the *hikikomori* at the bottom, followed by *NEETs* only slightly above them; above the *NEETs* came *freeters*, who, in turn, were eclipsed in terms of status by the full-time-working *seishain* (Toivonen 2009: 122).

In reality of course, social categories are vastly more complex than our brief examples are able to illustrate. They are indeed best seen as *symbols*, defined by the qualities of 'multivocality, complexity of association, ambiguity, open-mindedness, primacy of feeling and willing over thinking in their semantics, and their propensity to ramify into further semantic subsystems' (Turner 1975: 155). The 'multivocality' – the property that allows them to be defined and employed differently by different social groups – of symbols partly explains their tremendous power, dynamism and fluidity. On many levels, symbols such as problem youth categories act as 'triggers of social action' (Turner 1975), as they make it possible to act on issues that could not be articulated before, and because they are open to manipulation by actors who spearhead the kind of 'industries' we described above.

TABLE 1.1. Notable Japanese problem youth categories, 1970s to 2000s (dominant meanings at key points in the ‘career’ of these problems).

<i>Time period</i>	<i>Social category (label)</i>	<i>Initial meaning</i>
1970s	<i>Tōkō kyōhi</i>	Children who refuse to attend school and are therefore deviant (surfaced already in the 1950s, but became prominent in the 1970s); also, the phenomenon of school refusal
	<i>Kikokushijo</i>	Returnee children said to suffer from various cultural and educational deficiencies upon returning to Japan
	<i>Moratorium ningen</i>	‘Moratorium humans’ who postpone important transitions, especially into university and jobs
1980s	<i>Dokushin kizoku</i>	‘Single nobility’: wealthy single young adults who live alone in a <i>manshon</i> (apartment) while postponing marriage
	<i>Otaku</i>	Obsessive subculture consumers and creators; originally perceived as mentally ill
1990s	<i>Adult children</i>	Immature young adults who continue to live with their dysfunctional parental families
	<i>Freeters</i>	Originally perceived to be freelancing youth who avoid company drudgery to pursue their dreams; in the 2000s, involuntary young part-time workers (the term was invented in the 1980s)
	<i>Parasite singles</i>	Affluent (mainly female) youth to whom work is a ‘hobby’ and who consume luxury items while living at home with their parents
2000s	<i>Hikikomori</i>	Socially withdrawn and isolated youth who are not only immature but also mentally ill (the term first appeared in the 1990s)
	<i>NEETs (niito)</i>	Lazy and immature jobless youth who intentionally avoid work and live off their parents
	<i>Sōshokukei-danshi</i>	‘Herbivorous’ men who are more interested in style and their hobbies than in meeting women and achieving career success

In contesting and manipulating youth categories, various ‘micro-strategies’ can be utilized. Many of these strategies consist of the manipulation of statistical information. Definitions are revised to generate high total numbers of ‘problem youths’ in category X. Absolute figures, not relative percentage shares, are emphasized for maximum impact. Arbitrary time-scales are chosen to show that a particular problem has ‘grown’ in magnitude to an alarming degree (see especially [Chapters 3](#) and [5](#) for concrete examples). New sub-categories may be formulated, in order to distinguish supposedly more ‘deserving’ sub-categories within broadly ‘undeserving’ youth types: a sub-category of ‘NEETs who wish to work’ despite

not actually looking for employment at a particular point in time was highlighted within the main *NEET* category – viewed generally as comprising lazy, work-shy youth – in order to support the enactment of certain policy measures (Genda 2005: 143).

6. Youth problems have, in the Japanese context, been strongly defined by middle-class values and interests

From the mid-1960s onwards, up to 90 per cent of Japanese people have regarded themselves as belonging to a monolithic middle-class. As Chiavacci (2008) argues, such a self-image has never been fully consistent with social scientific data, but it did come with a powerful ideology that affected large swathes of the population. In the case of youth, this ideology stipulates that a ‘successful’ life involves graduating from the best schools and universities and entering a prestigious company. Though education has been held to be important for both genders, women have been expected to focus their efforts on home-making upon either marriage or the birth of their first child.

This middle-class ideology may be weakening, but it still sets the expected parameters for most young people’s life-courses. At their most basic, youth problems involve presumed deviations from these middle-class norms. However, there is another sense in which youth problems should be understood as middle-class issues, since they are frequently the ‘creation’ of affluent and well-connected middle-class parents (or their representatives) who wish to bring societal attention to, and further resources for, issues they deem important. The process that led to the special university entrance system for the *kikokushijo* is a classic case in point (see [Chapter 2](#)). Similarly, the measures established to support the presumably ‘excluded’ group of *NEETs* (see [Chapter 7](#)) also served a relatively well-off section of the population. Ironically, therefore, those who occupy the most marginal positions in society, such as ethnic minorities or single-parent households, tend to remain poorly served by the policies established to deal with youth problems.

From ‘returnees’ to *NEETs*

Having laid out a broad framework for our book, in this final section we touch upon our general research methods and provide a brief outline of our chapters. First, the propositions we have just set out are derived from intensive empirical research. All the case studies that follow are based on detailed interviews and participant observation. Each author has conducted a minimum of one year of fieldwork in Japan, immersing themselves in the networks and communities that embody their chosen topics. Our approach to data collection and explanation has, accordingly, been inductive rather than deductive. In other words, instead of setting out to test preconceived hypotheses or theories, our individual projects have been strongly guided by central puzzles about the substantive topics at hand. This has allowed us to uncover relationships and mechanisms that would almost

certainly have been obscured had we adopted narrowly preset, hypothesis-driven research designs. We have therefore applied and constructed an adaptable, sufficiently flexible approach that can be used across different contexts and eras. We have also refrained from making normative judgments about what we have discovered.

Each case-study chapter in this volume presents a self-contained account of how a given word or a concept has come to stand for a youth problem that has engaged the entire society in moral debate. Roger Goodman's historical study of the so-called *kikokushijo*, a term that appeared as early as the 1960s to refer to children of expatriate families who had received part of their education outside of Japan, draws on his study initially conducted in the 1980s. He analyses in [Chapter 2](#) how the *kikokushijo* were constructed as a problem; were initially ascribed negative meanings as culturally incomplete subjects in need of special treatment; and eventually came to be viewed as exemplars of Japan's internationalization. In unravelling the puzzle of how the view of 'returnees' was transformed from a pitiful to a privileged group, Goodman provides us a glimpse into how a prominent youth problem changes over the very long term.

In her colourful account that traces the moral panic over (and the fetishization of) Japanese schoolgirls in 1993–2000, Sharon Kinsella illustrates how the logic that underlies the striking discourse of *enjo kōsai*, or 'compensated dating', differs in no essential sense from that behind the change in perception of 'returnees'. In investigating 'how compensated dating was sold', Kinsella uncovers an exhaustive battery of youth problem dynamics: not only do we learn about the gender panic surrounding 'insubordinate' girls and the translation as well as transfer of *enjo kōsai* from seedy weekly men's magazines to more respected types of media, but we also discover how the panic over schoolgirls led to legal debates that embodied a conservative-liberal conflict over whether youth themselves should be framed as deviant and punishable (referred to as the 'deficit model' in UK youth studies) or as innocent victims of adult perpetrators. In a breathtaking run through a youth problem that illustrates *all* of the propositions set out in this introductory chapter, Kinsella observes how, in a surprising though not uncommon turn of events, the discourses of academics and different forms of mass media 'converge into a sexualized commentary on school girls' relying on symbolic and ideological elements rather than empirically grounded data.

Aaron Miller's analysis in [Chapter 4](#) of another powerful multivocal symbol, *taibatsu* (corporal punishment), adds a further important layer to our general account of youth problems. How can a practice with a long history and a previous reputation as an educational solution suddenly turn into a social *problem*? And how is it that such a central symbol can subsequently fade into irrelevance through what can be termed a process of 'de-problematization'? Miller examines the shifting relationship between *taibatsu* and wider educational debates around 'school violence' and 'managed education', before discussing the sidelining, from government statistics and media reports, of corporal punishment by the newer concept of 'child abuse'.

Chapter 5 examines the rise of the issue of *child abuse*, one of Japan's most prominent social problems since the early 1990s. Goodman's account focuses on why the 'problem' of child abuse emerged precisely when it did and why it has come back onto the agenda more recently. Going beyond a simple discussion of whether it is actual child abuse or awareness of child abuse which has increased since the early 1990s, the chapter attempts to locate the emergence of child abuse debates historically and link them to changing perceptions of the rights and roles of children.

Where both corporal punishment and child abuse imply aggression that is directed outwards onto others, Chapter 6 discusses a conspicuously *inwardly* directed form of social response – the case of the socially withdrawn *hikikomori*. Sachiko Horiguchi walks us through the perplexing – and often contradictory – story of how a very private form of suffering turned into a highly public concern which has become globally probably the best known of all Japanese youth problems in recent times. Behind ostensibly authoritative statistical estimates that the *hikikomori* number in the millions, we find considerable conflict between competing definitions, rehabilitation approaches and cultural interpretations.

By contrast, the category of 'Not in Education, Employment or Training', as discussed by Toivonen in Chapter 7, is an imported term from the UK that Japanese policy actors have strived to apply since 2003. This process of adaptation has been far from simple: Toivonen demonstrates how there was not only intra-government disagreement over the 'correct' definition of *NEET*, but also how the media-related manoeuvrings of key actors backfired and produced an image of 'lazy' male youth supposedly lacking the motivation to find work.

Chapter 8 delivers an overview of socio-economic changes that have shaped the development of Japanese youth problems as well as the lives of real young people since the 1970s. These include demographic trends (that reveal a radical process of ageing), labour market changes (that underlie the casualization of youth labour) and educational reforms (that have done little to alleviate the increasingly conspicuous relationship between social class and educational success). Goodman also tackles the difficult issue of 'culture' and its role in the production of youth problems, arguing that commentators who draw on the concept of culture do as much to *construct* youth problems as they do to explain them.

It is in light of these chapters, organized in chronological order, that we hope the reader will be able to critically assess our key argument – that seemingly diverse youth problems are systematically related through similar and broadly predictable processes. We hope that students and scholars, through their original investigations of historical and yet-unnamed youth issues, find our general approach useful while subjecting its finer points to further empirical and comparative scrutiny.

Notes

- 1 Research on bullying emerged in the mid-1980s with Morita's sociological work that posited typologies of *ijime* and analysed its mechanisms in terms of social group structure,

and psychological work that discussed the personality traits of children prone to be victims of bullying (Kanda 1994). In 1996, a large-scale international symposium on bullying was organized in Tokyo by the National Institute of Educational Research and the Ministry of Education, with specialists on bullying reporting from five countries. This became a turning point in the perceptions of Japanese *ijime* researchers, after which longitudinal statistical studies were developed. Whilst most current *ijime* studies are educational or clinical and assume the existence of an *ijime* social problem for which measures need to be devised, there is also substantial research which is influenced by labelling and social constructionist theories which focus more on the process of how *ijime* comes to be problematized (e.g. Morita and Kiyonaga 1994, Ito 1996, Kitazawa 1999, 2002).

- 2 For details, see: http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/hyouka/kekka/08100105/030.htm
- 3 The Jungian psychiatrist Kawai Hayao, who is one of the major experts on *ijime*, published the book *Rinshō Kyōikugaku Nyūmon (Introduction to Clinical Educational Studies)* in 1996. In the same year, the first symposium on Clinical Educational Studies was held within the national conference on Educational Studies. This rise in the discussion of clinical educational studies from the mid-1990s falls in line with the beginning of the 'rinshō (clinical) boom' (Ishido 2007).
- 4 See Goodman (1996) for the context of the debates surrounding children's 'rights' and 'interests' that emerged with the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Japan in 1994.
- 5 However, the image of *otaku* as sexually unattractive and incompetent still persists. According to Freedman (2009), the popular national appeal of the *Densha-Otoko* (Trainman) novel, television series and film in fact highlighted and strengthened the notion that young men must relinquish their *otaku* identity in order to succeed in romance with women.

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2

FROM PITIFUL TO PRIVILEGED?

The fifty-year story of the changing perception and status of Japan's returnee children (*kikokushijo*)

Roger Goodman

When, in December 1982, a 19-year-old boy murdered his uncle and aunt with a baseball bat, most of the Japanese media which reported the story concentrated on the fact that he had returned to Japan after 11 years in the United States and was a so-called '*kikokushijo*' (*Asahi Shinbun*, 12 December 1982). When a 20-year-old high school student leapt to his death from a high-rise flat in December 1983, the press referred to the fact that he had been in a school in Los Angeles until only five years earlier (*Daily Yomiuri*, 13 December 1983). When, in March 1985, another 19-year-old boy declared that his mother was the devil and threw her from the window of their second-floor apartment, considerable emphasis was again placed on the fact that he had spent four years in a Japanese School in Brazil (*Sunday Mainichi*, 31 March 1985). Underlying all of these stories was the assumption that after their experiences overseas, each of these individuals had been unable to adapt to life in Japan and this had led them to either hit out at others or else turn their frustrations in on themselves.

Others who had had similar overseas experiences were described as being bullied and ostracized because of their actual or presumed behavioural differences from children who had never left Japan. An hour-long documentary called *Boku wa Nanijin Desu Ka?* ('What Country Am I From?'), screened on 1 June 1986 on the commercial channel TBS, depicted the experience of one *kikokushijo* girl who was unable to make friends after she returned to Japan, continually got into trouble with her teachers and ended up suffering from what at the time was known as *tōkō kyōhi* (school withdrawal syndrome), which led to her giving up her education altogether (Dōmoto, 1987). Similarly negative images of the experience and behaviour of *kikokushijo* could even be found in Japanese school textbooks (see Wakabayashi *et al.* (n.d.): 296–98).

The negative perception of the experiences of *kikokushijo* in the mid-1980s was also widely disseminated outside Japan. The following widely syndicated Kyōdō Press Agency report offered a good example: ‘On returning to Japan, the children undergo what can only be called “reverse culture shock”. Although not unusual for anyone returning home after a long absence, in Japan, the effects can be particularly severe, resulting in outright alienation, murder and suicide’ (Robbins, *Daily Yomiuri*, 18 March 1984). The British journalist Robert Whyment wrote that ‘Children of Japanese who have worked overseas are frequently singled out for bullying’ (*Guardian*, 30 September 1985). Similar stories could be found in major organs of print all over the world – the *New York Times* (19 October 1980), *Newsweek* (Reiss, 27 February 1984), *Wall Street Journal* (Browning, 9 May 1986), *Le Nouvel Observateur* (Muller, July 1986), *Times Educational Supplement* (Greenlees, 20 May 1988) – as well as in most of the bestsellers of the era about Japan published in English (Ozaki, 1980: 210; Christopher, 1983: 165–66; Reischauer, 1983: 421; Vogel, 1983: 243; Woronoff, 1983: 332–33; Taylor, 1985: 237–40).

This chapter sets out to explain why such a relatively small group of children excited so much media interest inside and outside Japan and why the media image of their experiences was so negative in the mid-1980s. In doing so, it will demonstrate many of the key propositions laid out by Imoto and Toivonen in the first chapter of this book and foreshadow the other case studies which are to follow. It demonstrates how a changing social, political and economic climate led to a changing perception of a group of children whose own voice was conspicuously absent from the debates about them. It highlights the role of important ‘claims-makers’ in constructing both the category of ‘*kikokushijo*’ and the debates about them. It shows how quickly a major industry can develop to ‘deal with’ the problems of these children once they have been ‘identified’ and defined. It provides insights into exactly how and why dominant discourses about a group of ‘problem youth’ change over time and how a particular ‘youth problem’ is connected to other youth problems. It demonstrates the importance of class – which has often been ignored in the study of Japan – as a key variable for understanding the mechanisms of social change.

Who are the *kikokushijo*?

The history of how *kikokushijo* came to be defined as a group of children with ‘special needs’ is relatively well documented in a society where, as Nakagawa (1995) points out, it has, at least until recently, been difficult to document the development of any social policy because of the tendency of Japanese bureaucrats not to shed light on their internal debates. One account is provided by the comparative educationalist, Kobayashi Tetsuya (see Kobayashi 1978), who was a key player in the development of the policy, as we shall see later. Probably the best account, though, is given by three sociologists (Kitsuse, Murase and Yamamura, 1984). One of these three was John Kitsuse, whom we met in the first chapter of this book, who saw the case of the *kikokushijo* as a fine example of the thesis that he

had developed with Malcolm Spector (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977) a few years earlier about the 'natural history' of social problems.

The term *kikokushijo* itself first appeared in the late 1960s and by the mid-1970s was readily recognizable to all Japanese, though it is significant that there is no equivalent word in either English or any other major western language (see Kidder, 1992). In the 1960s, large numbers of Japanese began for the first time to go and work overseas to support Japan's growing overseas export economy. At first, many men went abroad alone, leaving their wives and families back at home. Increasingly, however, as overseas contracts became longer, more and more employees took their families with them. In 1968, there were 53,000 so-called 'prolonged' Japanese expatriates (*kaigai chōki taizaisha*); by 1976, there were 150,000 and by 1999, 500,000. The number of children overseas grew in tandem: 6,662 in 1971; 16,000 in 1975; 30,200 in 1981; and 60,000 by 2008 (Nukaga and Tsuneyoshi, 2011: 214). The number of children who had been overseas and then returned to Japan also increased rapidly: a mere 1,599 in 1971; 5,799 in 1977; 10,200 by 1985; 13,200 by 1993, after which numbers declined to around 10,000, at which level they have remained until the present day.¹ It is this last category of children (sometimes known as 'returnees' in English) who came to be called '*kikokushijo*' in Japanese. From the 1960s to the present day, a large amount of social scientific research – sociological, linguistic, psychological, educational and anthropological – has been conducted on the experiences of *kikokushijo* as they have re-entered Japanese society.

It is important to define carefully exactly who has been included in the category of *kikokushijo*, since there is a major difference between the image and the reality of such children. It has been widely believed in Japan that *kikokushijo* are Japanese children who have lived overseas (normally thought of as the 'west') for such a long period of time that they have lost many of their Japanese cultural traits; have certainly forgotten many of their Japanese language skills; and have become imbued with non-Japanese ways of behaving, most notably with western ideas of individualism. There is no doubt that some *kikokushijo* fit this model; but there are many who do not, since the definition of *kikokushijo* is in fact much wider than this general perception suggests. In practice, *kikokushijo* are defined by the following features: (a) both parents are Japanese; (b) they went overseas before they reached the age of 20; (c) they went abroad, generally, because their father was posted temporarily overseas (note that the children of returning emigrants, especially from Latin America, or the children of 'permanent' expatriates (*eijūsha*), such as blue-collar workers who went overseas to work in *sushi* bars, have never been considered *kikokushijo* on their return to Japan); (d) they have been overseas for three months or more so that they are registered when abroad as children of *chūzaiin* (businessmen) or *kaigai chōki taizaisha* ('prolonged overseas Japanese residents') rather than tourists; (e) on their return to Japan, they have entered schools which are part of the mainstream education system and not international schools.²

According to Namiki Midori (*Daily Yomiuri*, 1993), chief counsellor at ISEK, the International Students Education Centre of Kawai Juku, public perception of

kikokushijo went through three main shifts in the twenty years from the early 1970s to the early 1990s. (i) Initially there was public sympathy for such students, who were forced to have a foreign education because their parents were transferred abroad; there were demands that such children be ‘rescued’ and, as a result, some schools and universities in Japan started making special allowances for them. (ii) Later a feeling grew that those children who had lived in a foreign country should upon their return try to become fully Japanese again. (iii) By the early 1990s, there was a belief among some people that *kikokushijo* were a ‘privileged class’ protected by special educational advantages. This account by Namiki, who was closely involved with *kikokushijo* for three decades, provides a useful starting point for analysing research and perceptions of *kikokushijo*. Below I proceed to illustrate the dynamic process of how the mainstream perception and social status of the group of children known in Japan as *kikokushijo* have changed over the last forty years, from a marginal, pitiful group of children who experienced educational problems to an elite and privileged group of ‘international’ youth.

Following Namiki, I divide the chronology of the period up to the early 1990s into three phases, while emphasizing that there was a lot of overlap between each phase and that the existence of a dominant discourse at any period did not mean that other discourses could not also be voiced.

Stage I: The creation of the *kikokushijo* ‘problem’ and the development of an ‘industry’

According to the accounts mentioned above, by Kobayashi (1978) and Kitsuse, Murase and Yamamura (1984), it was a set of pressure groups enforced by the parents of the *kikokushijo* which was initially responsible for creating public awareness of the situation of these children. To put it simply, these parents felt that while they were loyally serving their country by working overseas, their children were made to suffer the effects of missing out on part of their Japanese education. They, therefore, persuaded the Ministry of Education (Monbushō), as it was then called, to examine the issue and to explore just how problematic the experience of going overseas and then returning to Japan was for the individual children involved.

The Ministry accepted that there were problems associated with leaving Japan and, in order to alleviate these problems, it introduced a number of innovative and important programmes. Overseas schools were set up to provide education in a Japanese style for children while they were abroad. In 1971, there were a mere 22 full-time Japanese schools overseas (*Nihonjin gakkō*) and a further 22 supplementary schools (*hoshūkō*). By 1987, there were 82 full-time and 120 supplementary schools. Official policy (see Monbushō, 1985) was that *Nihonjin gakkō* should be set up in developing countries, *hoshūkō* in the developed world. A substantial proportion of the costs (particularly the costs of seconding teachers from Japan) of this overseas education would be met by the Japanese government, since the children were accepted to be still part of the country’s compulsory education system.

Not only in supposedly developing countries, but also in many developed countries, however, parents were so anxious about the education of their children that they also arranged for the establishment of *Nihonjin gakkō*. Hence, by the early 1980s, while in Asia close to 95 per cent of Japanese children attended full-time Japanese schools, in Europe, around 40 per cent did likewise. The anxieties of the parents were easy to understand in the context of the Japanese education system, where social status relates closely to educational success, and where such success is measured through the results of tests based on memorizing facts from a set curriculum.

Japan is not the only country to have the type of overseas education offered by the *Nihonjīngakkō* and the *hoshūkō*. Probably no other country, however, has instituted the special programmes that were set up for Japanese children when they returned from abroad. A large number of schools – sometimes known as *ukeirekō* (reception schools) – received money in return for receiving, and showing special consideration (*tokubetsu hairyo*) towards, *kikokushijo*. At the widest measure, by the early 1980s, some 600 schools could be included in this category. These overseas and domestic educational programmes were not cheap. By 1980, it was estimated that central government money spent on the special programmes for overseas and returnee children was between 60–70 per cent more per child than that spent on children who had never left Japan (Shibanuma, 1982). While these figures may seem strange in the context of a school system which put so much store by equality of opportunity, it is important to remember, as Tsuneyoshi (2011: 132) points out, that *kikokushijo* were the first significant group of behaviourally and linguistically different children that teachers of Japan's post-war generation would have come into contact with.

Perhaps most importantly of all, however, universities started to set up special quotas (*tokubetsu waku*) specifically for *kikokushijo*. The number of universities and colleges offering such special entrance quotas rose rapidly from just 35 in 1983 to 308 in 1992, and the number of students entering by such a system rose from 346 to 1,539 over the same period. The significance of this system can be illustrated by the fact that no other group – including disabled people, mature students, members of Japan's minority groups – has ever been provided with such 'positive discrimination' in the Japanese university entrance system.³

From the start of the debate about *kikokushijo* in the late 1960s, a whole industry of interested organizations and individuals emerged. Most spectacular was the growth in the number of researchers who became interested in the *kikokushijo* issue. By the mid-1980s, the Ibunkakan Kyōiku Gakkai (Cross-Cultural Education Study Association) for example, had some 170 members, a third giving *kikokushijo* as their main research interest, in the fields of sociology, anthropology, education, psychology, psychiatry and linguistics, and over half of the articles in the early issues of its journal concerned the experiences of either overseas or returnee children (Mabuchi, 2001: 6). Journalists and parents also began to write increasingly on the topic of *kikokushijo*, and together they, the academic researchers

and those working for official organizations produced so much literature that by the early 1980s the Yaesu bookshop in Tokyo had a whole section in the education department marked ‘*Kikokushijo Mondai*’ (the returnee children issue).⁴

At the time, the development of the special programmes for *kikokushijo* was seen as a response to the image of them as being children in need of public support. *Kawaisō* (‘how pitiful!’) was perhaps the most common response to the situation of such children, and the expression *kyūsai kyōiku* (relief education) was often used to explain the purpose of the special institutions set up for them. It is important to highlight, however, the role of the parents of the *kikokushijo* in creating the perception of their children’s situation as being so problematic. Much of the important research on *kikokushijo* in the 1970s and early 1980s was carried out by individuals who had either been *kikokushijo* themselves or were the teachers or the parents of *kikokushijo*.

The parents of the *kikokushijo* acted as a particularly powerful interest group on behalf of their children. They were able to do this because of their considerable economic and political power within Japanese society. The majority of children clearly originated from high-status families: in a survey in the early 1980s, very nearly 90 per cent of fathers had received a university education; over 60 per cent of mothers had received tertiary education, 35 per cent at university. These figures were far above the average for the age group and were an indication of the access these parents had to individuals and institutions that could act on behalf of their children. Many parents had important positions in government, business, the mass media and the academic world, and they were able to use their status and contacts to campaign on behalf of their children. The middle-class parents of the *kikokushijo*, therefore, must take a large amount of the credit for having created the image of their children as in need of help, and for thereby enabling the establishment of the institutions and programmes (what in [Chapter 1](#) we saw called ‘the industry’) to provide special help for them.⁵

Stage II: the ‘reintegration period’ and the development of *kikokushijo* research

There were many streams of thought that emerged from the literature on the *kikokushijo* of the 1970s onwards. At the root of most of it, though, was an emerging linkage between the experience and treatment of *kikokushijo* with debates in Japan about what it meant to be Japanese, debates which were often dubbed with the term ‘*Nihonjinron*’ (theories of Japaneseness). As we saw in [Chapter 1](#), the linkage between ‘problem groups’, such as *otaku*, and problem issues, such as bullying (*ijime*), is a common theme in the emergence of these social concerns and explains in part why they received so much public attention. The general tenor of the work of the era was perhaps best illustrated in the tone of the Q and A volumes that were produced by the main organization that represented the interests of those involved in the education of Japanese children overseas, Kaigai Shijo Kyōiku Shinkō Zaidan. During the 1980s, these volumes stressed the potential *problems* of

overseas experience for those returning to Japan and some of the actions that parents should take in order to alleviate these problems (see Nakanishi, 1986). Essentially, the experience of going overseas was seen to be problematic in two ways – educationally and culturally – and the best method for dealing with these problems was that children should be helped to become as fully Japanese again as possible on their return to Japan.⁶

(i) Educational and linguistic problems

In terms of education, there is little doubt that many *kikokushijo* did, from the beginning, have problems catching up with their peers in Japan, particularly in subjects such as Japanese language, social studies and mathematics. Monbushō's (1982) own surveys, however, suggested that the extent of these problems was not as severe as many believed, and indeed that often students expected – and were expected – to face bigger educational problems when they returned to Japan than actually proved to be the case. Part of the explanation for this lay in the fact that by the early 1980s over 40 per cent of *kikokushijo* had attended full-time Japanese schools (*Nihonjin gakkō*) while they were overseas; and a further 40 per cent had attended supplementary Japanese schools (*hoshūkū*) or taken correspondence courses (*tsūshin kyōiku*). Moreover, language was rarely the problem that it was publicly perceived to be. Because most of the students overseas knew that they would be returning to Japan, they tended to pick up the local language somewhat more slowly than other foreign children, and, depending on their age, it could take four or five years before the foreign language became their main language (see Iwasaki, 1982; Kono, 1982). Therefore, while it was, of course, true that some children had problems with the Japanese language when they returned to Japan, it was a mistake to generalize, as much of the popular media did, from these children to the experience of all *kikokushijo*.⁷

(ii) Cultural problems

The most interesting aspect of the debates about the *kikokushijo* concerned the cultural and psychological problems that they were expected to face on their return to Japan. It was generally assumed that *kikokushijo* would have problems because of the nature of Japanese society. At the same time, the problems that *kikokushijo* faced were often used as a means of explaining the way that Japanese society operated. The effect, as shown in Figure 2.1, was that the two arguments quickly became mutually reinforcing.

At its simplest, the 'culturalist' argument drew on the following points to explain what were seen as the inevitable problems of *kikokushijo*: (a) Japanese society was a homogeneous society with a strong sense of the distinction between inside and outside (*uchi* and *soto*), which led to the exclusion of anything – such as *kikokushijo* – coming from outside unless it could be properly incorporated into the inside; (b) this sense of homogeneity was engrained in the Japanese people because

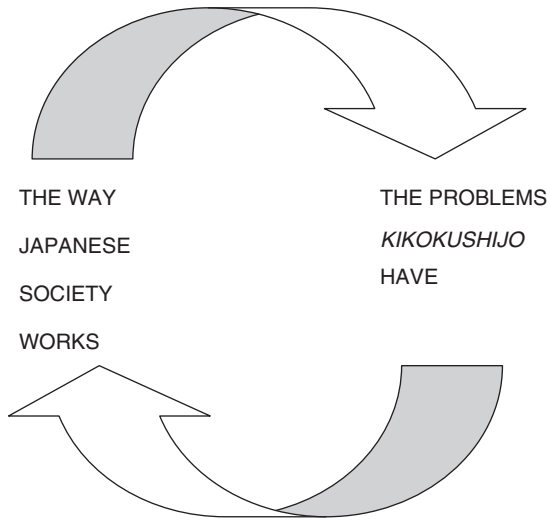


FIGURE 2.1 Culturalist assumptions underlying examinations of the problems faced by the *kikokushijo*.

of (i) an island country mentality (*shimaguni konjō*) and (ii) the two centuries of seclusion (*sakoku jidai*) that Japan had had from the outside world between roughly the 1640s and the 1850s.

Some argued that, due to these geographical and historical facts, Japan had developed a unique language and set of cultural values which required constant attention from birth in order to be mastered. These values included such ideas as groupishness; loyalty; conformity; perseverance; sense of hierarchy and belief in the importance of harmony in social relations – values that were challenged by the behaviour of those who grow up in the west. The expression *deru kugi wa utareru* (the nail that sticks up gets hammered down) was often cited in this context. (For examples from this period of work which took this approach, see Inamura, 1982; Kondō, 1984; Minoura, 1984.)

The assumptions that were inherent, therefore, in the culturalist explanation of returnee ‘problems’ were, first that Japanese culture consisted of an identifiable cluster of values – what Minoura (1984) called a cultural ‘grammar’ – and, second, that by living outside Japan, even for a short period of time, individuals either lost, or never fully learnt, the skills they needed to adhere to these values. As a result of either not learning or fully expressing these cultural skills, returnees were considered to be ‘incomplete’ Japanese. This could be seen in some of the terms used to describe *kikokushijo* in the 1970s and early 1980s, which included ‘*han-Japa*’ (half-Japanese), ‘*henna Nihonjin*’ (strange Japanese) and ‘*chūtohanpana Nihonjin*’ (half-baked Japanese) (see Horoiwa, 1983). As one foreign observer of the *kikokushijo* debate in the early 1980s summarized the general perception of returnee cultural status: to whatever extent a second non-Japanese culture was

learnt, there was an equivalent loss of Japaneseness in the eyes of stay-at-home Japanese (La Brack, 1983).

It was in this context of overseas-experience-as-problematic that much of the research on *kikokushijo* was carried out in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It is important, as was pointed out in [Chapter 1](#), to identify several key actors in this process.

Kobayashi Tetsuya and his research team in the Department of Educational Studies at Kyoto University were principally responsible for setting up a large number of projects – both quantitative and qualitative – which set out to ‘measure’ the problems of the *kikokushijo* and to suggest ways in which these might be alleviated.⁸ Kobayashi (1981: flyleaf) said that he first became interested in the issue of *kikokushijo* because of having spent ten years overseas and his daughter having thereby received much of her education in America and Germany. While it was Kobayashi who first coined the term *futekiō shōjō* (non-adaptation symptoms) and who constructed a number of models of *kikokushijo* adaptation (see Kobayashi, 1981), it was the well-known psychiatrist, Inamura Hiroshi in, for example, his best-selling book, *Nihonjin no Kaigai Futekiō* (The Non-Adaptation of Japanese Overseas; Inamura, 1982) who did most to popularize the term.⁹ This idea of a ‘medical model’ for understanding the problems of *kikokushijo* lay behind the advice that was given to *kikokushijo* when they visited the special advice centres that had been set up for them by the Kaigai Shijo Kyōiku Shinkō Zaidan in Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya. Here, children were given what was sometimes known as a diagnosis (*shindan*) on the basis of which an educational institution was suggested that would best help them readapt into Japanese society. At the same time, the process of education that the *kikokushijo* received in such institutions was described by some as ‘Japanization’ (*Nihonka*), ‘re-dyeing’ (*somenaoshi*) and ‘stripping off the children’s foreignness’ (*gaikoku hagashi*), and the programmes in the schools that they went to as ‘adaptation education’ (*tekiō kyōiku*) (Inui and Sono, 1977; Befu, 1983). Most people in Japan accepted that something had to be done in order to alleviate the problems that *kikokushijo* faced and accepted the special budgets and institutions which were set up to support them.

While it is possible to see the role played by key actors in the development of the key research paradigms through which *kikokushijo* became viewed from the 1970s onwards, it is also interesting to see how these paradigms chimed with larger debates which were taking place in Japan at the time about the nature of Japaneseness and how quickly it was taken for granted that children who had lived overseas should expect to have problems readapting to Japanese society because of the special nature of that society.

Stage III: *Kikokushijo* as an emerging privileged elite

By the late 1980s, however, it was becoming increasingly clear that the image of the *kikokushijo* as a group to be pitied (the ‘*kawaisō*’ viewpoint) or in need of re-japanization in order to survive in Japanese society, was no longer tenable.

By a whole series of measurements, *kikokushijo* were clearly doing as well, if not better, than their non-*kikokushijo* peers almost as soon as they returned to Japan. The proportion of *kikokushijo* who were gaining entry to the schools attached to the national universities (*fuzoku gakkō*), amongst the most prestigious schools in Japan, were up to thirty-five times the national average (Hasebe, 1985). At university entrance, the *tokubetsu waku* system made entry for *kikokushijo* much easier than for children who had never been overseas. About 90 per cent of *kikokushijo* made use of this system (Monbushō, 1988), and at some top universities, such as Waseda University, *kikokushijo* who applied through the system were three times as likely to be successful in gaining entry as students who applied through the normal entrance system. Overall, 48 per cent of *kikokushijo* were going on to four-year universities were successful, whereas in the rest of the population only 37 per cent continued to higher education, including those who went to the much lower status two-year junior colleges (Nakanishi, 1986).

In terms of success after graduation, it began to appear that *kikokushijo* were also not doing as badly as earlier believed. A large number of companies had begun to set up special systems to recruit *kikokushijo* and, in a survey in April 1987 of 163 *kikokushijo* in the Tokyo area, 65 per cent felt that their overseas experience had helped rather than hindered them in finding employment (*Japan Times Weekly*, 9 May 1987). A 1989 manual for employees prepared for the Bank of Tokyo personnel department by the head of its educational advice section confirmed that it could be a positive advantage to be a *kikokushijo* when looking for employment (Sōgabe, 1989). Mori (2004: 160–61) lists just some of the headlines from 1987 and 1988 highlighting the targeting of *kikokushijo* as preferred employees by many of Japan's major corporations – Mitsui, Daiwa, NEC, Matsushita, NTT, Motorola-Japan and Shimizu Construction among them. The *kikokushijo* were thus positively brought into the limelight as a new type of 'international elite'.

Perhaps the clearest manifestation in the change of status of *kikokushijo* could be seen in the growing competition among parents of children who had never been overseas to get their children into the special schools which had been specifically set up to take *kikokushijo*. By the late 1980s, it was normally between three and six times more difficult for non-*kikokushijo* to gain places in such schools as ICU Senior High School, Dōshisha International Senior High School and Gyōsei International Senior High School than it was for the *kikokushijo*, who had a quota – in these three schools, 66 per cent of places – reserved for them. Indeed, there began to be open discussion of abuse of the system set up to help *kikokushijo*, in that some Japanese children were going overseas – or were being sent overseas by their parents – specifically so that they could be classified as *kikokushijo* when they returned to Japan (see Ichi, 1983; Kinoshita *et al.*, 1985).

As for the *ukeirekō* which had been given money for looking after the *kikokushijo*, many of these were clearly no longer thinking in terms of the re-japanization and readaptation of 'problem' children. Instead, in several of the schools I researched in the mid-1980s (see Goodman, 1990), the policy was much more oriented towards grooming these internationally experienced children for

membership of a future, international elite. Sometimes, the principals of these schools explicitly used famous British private schools, such as Eton College, as models for their own institutions. It was the hope of the parents of the non-*kikokushijo* in such schools that their children might pick up something of this international nature (*kokusaisei*) from the *kikokushijo* with whom they studied.

Perhaps the most symptomatic example of the changed status of the *kikokushijo* could be found in the final report of the three-year government-sponsored Education Reform Committee (Rinkyōshin) in 1987. This report contained a whole section devoted to *kikokushijo* and stressed the need to expand opportunities for them at all levels of the Japanese educational system. Most significantly, however, *kikokushijo* were discussed under the heading of internationalization (*kokusaika*) and the idea that came through was very clearly not so much that something needed to be done *for* the *kikokushijo*, but that something should be done *with* them; they were assets to be treasured rather than victims to be rescued (see Hood, 2001: 63–66; Roesgaard, 1998: 213). In my accounts (Goodman, 1990, 1992) of the *kikokushijo* based on research undertaken in the mid-1980s, I described them as a new ‘elite’ in Japanese society who would lead the country into the twenty-first century. Furuiye Atsushi, the moderator of the most popular website used by *kikokushijo* to exchange views, *Shijo Tsūshin*, called this period the ‘Black is Beautiful’ era (Karino, 2003).

The why and the how of the changing status of the *kikokushijo*

The status and perception of *kikokushijo* changed very rapidly during the 1980s from what many saw as a minority group of schoolchildren that suffered educational and cultural problems, to becoming a new elite group. In some ways, the new elite status of *kikokushijo* could be best captured in the fact that both the Crown Prince and his younger brother, Prince Aya, married *kikokushijo* during the early 1990s (Singer, 1999).

The new elite status of the *kikokushijo* served to undermine the culturalist or essentialist explanations that appeared during the 1970s and early 1980s, which had suggested that it was inevitable that *kikokushijo* would suffer on their return to Japan because of the nature of Japanese society. A number of converging factors that occurred during the 1980s in Japanese society need to be considered in seeking an explanation of how and why the status of *kikokushijo* changed so rapidly during that period.

One major factor was the concern of some employers that the Japanese education system was no longer producing the type of worker needed for the next century. Put simply, as by people such as the former head of the Sony Corporation, Morita Akio (Morita *et al.*, 1987), Japan needed a more creative workforce to invent new ideas for its manufacturing industry to produce and export. In the minds of some employers, the *kikokushijo* were seen as the potential vanguard of

such a workforce. As the personnel manager of a major bank told Mori Shunta (2004: 161): ‘We want to invest in returnees who have a challenging spirit ... (W)e think they have potential abilities and strengths to overcome future difficulties.’ The supporters (often parents) of the *kikokushijo* vigorously promoted the idea that these children were more individualistic, logical and creative than children who had never left Japan. Such perceptions were, of course, largely symbolic since, with such a wide range of children included in the definition of the word *kikokushijo*, many of them – for example those who had been overseas only for a relatively brief period of time and had been educated in overseas full-time Japanese schools – were little different from their peers who had never left Japan at all. Nevertheless, in particular female *kikokushijo* – and, because parents were prepared to take greater risks with the education of their daughters than their sons, there were always more female than male *kikokushijo* – began to be favourably treated in the employment market, perhaps because they could be employed as *kikokushijo* rather than as women and hence did not upset traditional concepts of the gender division of labour in Japan which were still strong in the Japanese employment market in the early 1980s.¹⁰ The greater opportunities afforded to all *kikokushijo* clearly related more to their social background than their personal qualities.

A further important element related to the threat posed to schools, especially the private senior high schools and universities, by the very rapid decline in the number of students entering high school during the late 1980s. Many of these schools, faced with a 25 per cent drop in enrolments over a five-year period, were threatened with bankruptcy and hence were looking around for innovative educational programmes which they hoped would encourage parents to send children to their schools. One of the most popular programmes selected by such schools (and also many private universities) was that of ‘international education’. This included encouraging *kikokushijo* to apply and then advertising their presence as an attraction to parents of non-*kikokushijo* children to enrol their children. In part, this explains why schools would count children who had hardly spent any time at all overseas as part of their *kikokushijo* enrolment.

The most important backdrop to the changing status of the *kikokushijo* during the late 1980s, however, was probably the change in national rhetoric during the decade away from talk about ‘modernization’ (*kindaika*) to the language of ‘internationalization’ (*kokusaika*). The rhetoric of ‘modernization’ could no longer be sustained as more and more Japanese travelling abroad became aware that, by global standards, Japan was clearly already a very modern, if not international, society. If the language of *kindaika* had been one of conformity, homogeneity and loyalty – in the context of which *kikokushijo* were perceived as potentially socially disruptive – the language of the era of *kokusaika* was much more about heterogeneity, creativity and individuality – in the context of which *kikokushijo* could be held up as exemplars. Indeed, the very fact that the exact meaning of such popular terms as *kokusaika* (internationalization), *kokusaijin* (international person), *kokusaisei* (internationalness), *kokusai jidai* (international era) remained very unclear meant

that the supporters and parents of the *kikokushijo* were able to manipulate such terms in favour of their own children, suggesting that *kikokushijo* should be seen, for example, as *chiisana kokusaijin* (mini-internationalists) and *bunka taishi* (cultural ambassadors). The important point to stress, of course, is that the *kikokushijo* and their actual skills and personalities were largely peripheral to debates and discussions about them; to a large degree they were merely *symbols* in internal cultural debates about what it meant to be Japanese. Pang (2000: 287) suggests that *kikokushijo*'s self-identity went in less than 20 years through the process of being *non-han-shin Nihonjin* (first not-, then half-, and finally new Japanese), reflecting the way they were perceived as a group by the wider society rather than any changes in either their experiences or behaviour.

The idea that *kikokushijo* were symbols in wider cultural debates to some extent explains how the perception of them changed so quickly during the 1980s. It may also help explain, to a large degree, many of the weaknesses of earlier research projects that were carried out on *kikokushijo*. Earlier researchers not only took it for granted that *kikokushijo* inevitably faced serious 'problems' which needed to be 'measured', but also generalized these 'problems' to all *kikokushijo*. There is, of course, no doubt that many *kikokushijo* in the 1970s and 1980s suffered serious cultural, linguistic and educational problems on returning to Japan. There is no doubt also that many of these problems may have been directly related to the fact that they were *kikokushijo*. Many other *kikokushijo*, however, clearly benefited from their overseas experiences, and research that set out to examine *kikokushijo* 'problems' may, indeed, have actually created problems for such children rather than explored or explained them.

Competing and contrasting views of *kikokushijo*

Four main strands emerged in the debates about *kikokushijo* in the 1990s:

(1) There was still a strong view expressed by some that, unless *kikokushijo* were re-japanized, they would be treated like a new minority group on their return to Japan (what I have called the Stage II paradigm). Some teachers still likened the situation of *kikokushijo* to that of disabled children (see Fujimoto, 1991). Others argued that when they returned to Japan they would still find themselves ostracized or become the object of bullying (*Nihon Keizai Shinbun*, 1992; Inamura, 1995). Their inability to use polite Japanese (*keigo*) was particularly picked on (see Uechi, 2008). This negative view of *kikokushijo* experience has always been popular outside Japan especially in the mass media where it is regularly used as an example of Japanese nationalism (see Jackson, 1991; French, 2000). Kanno (2000) argued that despite the prevalent view that little discrimination remained against *kikokushijo*, schools still tended to fault them for what they did not know while giving little recognition to their bilingual and bicultural abilities. It is important to point out that many of those who wrote in this vein in Japan were those whose own children had problems on return to Japan and felt that these problematic experiences were

denied in the light of the new, more positive, perception of *kikokushijo*. Osawa Chikako (1993), Inui Susumu (1993) and Satō Gunei (1993), for example, in reviewing my own work when it was published in Japanese in 1992 (Goodman, 1992), complained that the school on which I based my fieldwork could not be considered as representative of the type of educational environment that most *kikokushijo* entered when they returned to Japan. Osawa (1993) indeed sarcastically called it 'Kōfuku Gakuen' (Happiness College). The potential influence of my own work on subsequent discourses on *kikokushijo* is a topic I will pick up again in the conclusion of this chapter.

(2) On the other hand, there was considerable evidence to suggest that the situation of *kikokushijo* continued to improve from the late 1980s. There was a rapid growth in the number of institutions – schools, colleges, universities and companies – offering special advantages to *kikokushijo* and of *kikokushijo* taking up these opportunities. Employers were attracted by the enhanced horizons and strong personalities of *kikokushijo* (*Asahi Shinbun*, 23 November 1990) and some companies even went to the United States in order to seek out possible recruits, which in turn led to an increasing number of children going overseas in order to become *kikokushijo*. In particular, the Kikokushijo Association International (KAI) was set up in early 1991, specifically to share personal and professional experiences and exchange information about employment opportunities (see Kealing, 1991). The group expressed extreme optimism about the new status and public perception of *kikokushijo* in Japan and sought to take full advantage of this situation. The position of female *kikokushijo*, in particular, continued to improve in the 1990s, and there were many successful women (especially in the media world, such as Yoshino Mika, and the pop culture world, such as Nishida Hikaru) who put their success down to their overseas experience (*Japan Times Weekly*, 1995; Singer, 1999). Even the idea that those who had been overseas should be seen as part of the 'elite' became acceptable; Nakajima Akio, an educator working closely with *kikokushijo*, termed them 'neo-elites' who possessed the ability to understand different cultures and to express their opinions clearly. As one *kikokushijo* (see Macdonald, 1995) put it: 'Some Japanese live with the myth that returnees are some kind of chosen Japanese with special abilities.' Certainly, most *kikokushijo* saw themselves as members of a new elite rather than as of a new marginal class (see Pang, 2000: 280).

(3) Partly in support of this idea that the *kikokushijo* comprised an elite, there was some evidence of a backlash against the new advantages gained by the *kikokushijo* during the 1990s, something that was first acknowledged in the mid-1980s (see Ichi, 1983; Kinoshita *et al.*, 1985). An article in *Shūkan Asahi* (Nagashima, 1992), appropriately subtitled 'Returnees versus Regular Students' (*kikokushijo vs. ippansei*), described the anti-*kikokushijo* feelings at Sophia University engendered by the fact that *kikokushijo* students had been admitted without going through the normal highly competitive examination process. An article two months later in the *Shūkan Yomiuri* (Takasuka, 1992) reiterated the unfairness of the special university entrance examination that existed for *kikokushijo*. As the employment

market in the 1990s became increasingly competitive, there was in some quarters increasing irritation at the special advantages afforded to any one group such as the *kikokushijo*. Significantly, though, the recession of the 1990s had the effect of stabilizing, and in some years even reducing, the number of children going overseas and then returning to Japan each year, which had been rising exponentially during the previous two decades, and this did something to mute the rising criticism of the advantages *kikokushijo* enjoyed in education and employment.

(4) Perhaps most interesting was the suggestion that the paradigm for understanding *kikokushijo* had now moved on to a new, fourth stage. Merry White (1992), for example, whose work *The Japanese Overseas* (published in 1988, but based on research undertaken in the mid to late 1970s) was clearly in the Stage II paradigm, argued that in the 1990s those leaving Japan came from much more diverse and heterogeneous backgrounds than had been the case in the mid-1980s. She believed that in future there might be two tiers of *kikokushijo*: those from high-class families who would be able to attend schools specially set up for *kikokushijo* and who would form part of a future elite; and those whose return to Japan would be much more problematic.

The de-problematization of the *kikokushijo* in the twenty-first century

After almost 50 years of being in the public eye, *kikokushijo* have become more widely accepted in Japanese society. One indication of this is that in daily conversation today, such people more generally refer to themselves as simply '*kikoku*' (literally, 'return country') written with *katakana* syllables rather than with Chinese characters so as to distinguish it from the original word *kikokushijo*, and dropping the suffix '*shijo*', which means 'children' and implies that they were somehow weaker members of society.

Moreover, some clearer distinctions (both perceived and self-perceived) have developed among *kikokushijo*, largely determined by where they have lived overseas. Some suggest that this is not only a hierarchy between continents (North America, Europe, the rest) but also within continents (UK, France, Germany, the rest) and even, according to some, within countries (Washington, New York, LA, San Francisco). Employers no longer lump all those who have been overseas as somehow sharing 'international values' simply by virtue of having lived overseas, but discriminate more clearly between how long, where and why individual *kikokushijo* lived overseas and what exactly the effect of the experience on them has been. As Grigg-Saito (2008) puts it, 'When asked where they are from, almost every (*kikokushijo*) says, "I'm Japanese, but I lived in ...".' Essentialized images of *kikokushijo* are beginning to collapse and they no longer are viewed, nor indeed view themselves, as all the same. Their study of returnees in a school in Kawasaki City led Nukaga and Tsuneyoshi (2011: 238–39) to conclude that the current phase of the returnee phenomenon 'breaks away from a dichotomous and fixed image of the returnee as understood against the "mainstream Japanese"'. The

reality of the returnee population is more diverse and complex, and bound to the context.' Indeed, parents who were once so active in trying to construct the category of *kikokushijo* now seem to be part of the move to deconstruct it, as can be seen in Satō Machiko's (1999; 2001) books, which concentrate on the unique experiences of a hundred returnee children.

In the twenty-first century, few *kikokushijo* look or indeed feel 'alien' or 'out-of-place' in Japan in the context of the behavioural patterns of the current younger generation, though it is interesting, as Imoto and Horiguchi (2010) point out, that the way they behave is very contextual and often dependent on how many other *kikokushijo* are around them. Indeed, many *kikokushijo*, particularly those who have been to overseas Japanese full-time schools, appear and feel very conservative and rather 'old-fashioned' when they return and are confronted with the variety of modern youth lifestyles and educational experiences Japan. If, in the past, *kikokushijo* were criticized for looking and acting too westernized, this could hardly be a problem any longer. Nothing expresses this more clearly than the current Japanese fashion for youth idols who are '*haafu*', meaning they have one Japanese and one non-Japanese parent. As one *kikoku* informant put it: 'any *kikoku*-allergy on the basis of a westernized look or behaviour simply doesn't make sense any more'. If in the past, *kikokushijo* might have been seen as in opposition to non-*kikokushijo* students at school and university, Mori (2004) suggests that, following the collapse of the bubble at the beginning of the 1990s, both groups found themselves sharing dissatisfaction with the Japanese social system and in opposition to an older generation of Japanese which has been responsible for the boom-and-bust economy. This view, of course, is a largely urban one, but the *kikokushijo* phenomenon has always been such, with over 80 per cent of children returning to live in the Tokyo or Osaka metropolises. As Mabuchi (2001: 3) points out, the number of papers about *kikokushijo* delivered at conferences has dropped considerably.¹¹ The fact that schools which have quotas for taking *kikokushijo* no longer receive governmental funding for doing so demonstrates perhaps even more clearly how the issue has dropped down the political agenda. The demographic imperative which was in part behind schools seeing *kikokushijo* as a good way to increase their intake in the 1980s moved on to universities in the 1990s and 2000s as many of those faced huge drops in potential student numbers due to the end of the second post-war baby boom. The special quotas (*tokubetsu waku*) for *kikokushijo*, however, far from being the only such special quotas are now just one among a myriad of quotas, as universities try everything they can to attract new students (see Goodman, 2010).

At the same time, the rapid expansion in foreign worker numbers in the 1980s, and the growing recognition of those workers in the 1990s, have also impacted significantly on the (self)-image of the *kikokushijo*. The boundaries of what it means to be Japanese have stretched to include *kikokushijo* at the same time as they have been set up to exclude some of these migrant workers such as *nikkeijin*. As Pang (2000: 281–82) shows, *kikokushijo* clearly perceive themselves as Japanese and they perceive *nikkeijin* as non-Japanese. Lie (2001: 143) implies also that Japanese who

have not been overseas see *kikokushijo* as Japanese, even if they cannot speak Japanese, while they deny the Japaneseness of ethnic Japanese from Latin America who can speak Japanese. As Nukaga and Tsuneyoshi (2011: 213) put it: 'As new, more "alien" children enter the classroom, the borderline between the returnees and the Japanese brought up in Japan becomes unclear; compared with Brazilian children, the *kikokushijo* might seem pretty "Japanese".' As a result, *kikokushijo* have become both less diffident but also less visible in the society.¹²

While there may be developing a new rhetoric of *tabunkashugi* (multi-culturalism) in Japan – and while it might have become government policy that the research and educational models which were developed for the *kikokushijo* should serve as a model for the education of the 'newcomer' children (Tsuneyoshi, 2011: 143) – this has not been appropriated by the new migrant groups as effectively as the rhetoric of *kokusaika* was appropriated in the 1980s by the families and supporters of the *kikokushijo*. Given the relative economic and political positions in Japanese society of these groups, this is hardly surprising.¹³

The position of *kikokushijo* in Japanese society has been far from static over the past half century. What this primarily demonstrates is the weakness of any argument that has tried to explain the 'problems' and the status (either low or high) of *kikokushijo* at any particular point in time in terms of essentialist cultural values such as homogeneity, inside/outside distinctions or a 'sense of isolationism' which is historically or geographically determined. Any account in terms of such 'cultural values' does as much to construct social status and reify social problems as it does to explore them. The concept of 'culture' is simply a shorthand expression for a confluence of economic, political and historical forces in an ever-changing process within which interest groups struggle to have their view of the world, and their interpretation of important symbols and rituals, accepted as the mainstream interpretation. The example of the *kikokushijo* is unusual (given the high status of their family background and their parents' ability to control the debate about them and to create a new position for them in society so quickly), but it demonstrates important underlying issues concerning the process of social problem construction, showing how a historical convergence of actors' interests in society can bring about change in the perception of a social problem, and consequently a change in the status of a previously problematized group (see Ishitobi, 1994 for the best account in Japanese of this process).

The case study of the *kikokushijo* touches upon all of the propositions outlined by Imoto and Toivonen for the understanding of youth problems in contemporary Japanese society. It displays some particularly interesting overlaps with the experience described in their chapter of the so-called '*otaku*' (nerds), who have moved from being a despised and feared group in Japan to being associated with an image of 'Cool Japan'. It is also a good example of how social scientific research is always undertaken within a certain paradigm. As Thomas Kuhn (1962) long ago pointed out, all research is affected by researchers' preconceptions and assumptions about the object of their study. These assumptions are so embedded in everyday thinking that they are generally taken for granted and rarely held up for examination.

When one paradigm is replaced by a new one through what Kuhn describes as a 'scientific revolution,' this new paradigm is thought to express the 'truth' just as had been the case with its predecessor, so that those undertaking research within this new paradigm still do not explore its implicit assumptions.

My original research (Goodman, 1990) on the *kikokushijo* debate was strongly influenced by Kuhn as well as by the work of Spector and Kitsuse. It focused on how individual actors drew on their political and social capital to create and sponsor paradigms at any particular point in time. Social constructionists are at least as interested in the research that is done on social problems as they are about those problems themselves. Indeed at times they can appear to be uncaring about those who might genuinely be suffering from whatever social problem the social constructionist theorist has been attempting to deconstruct. I have certainly been accused of this. Kanno (2000: 372), herself a former *kikokushijo*, has suggested that my work on the returnees has helped create a new hegemonic paradigm within which they are seen as members of a new elite whose educational and psychological problems had been exaggerated, and she worries that the discourse that resulted from this new paradigm could be problematic for those *kikokushijo* who really are suffering from identity and other problems when they return to Japan.

Thanks to the power of the internet and other means of global communication, hegemonic paradigms are even more powerful today than they were when the first research was undertaken on the *kikokushijo*. Nowhere is this truer than in the case of the Wikipedia website and so it seems appropriate to conclude this chapter with the current Wikipedia entry for *kikokushijo* as offering the most up-to-date paradigm for understanding the received historical view and the current perception of returnees in Japan:

Kikokushijo (lit. 'repatriate children') and **kaigaishijo** (lit. 'overseas children') are Japanese-language terms referring to the children of Japanese expatriates who take part of their education outside of Japan. They are referred to in English variously as 'sojourn children' or 'returnees'. The Ministry of Education recognised as early as 1966 that Japan's school system faced challenges in the education and re-integration of children who had returned from overseas. Under the idea of *nihonjinron*, which stressed the alleged uniqueness of Japanese society, *kikokushijo* began to be characterized in the 1970s as problem children who needed assistance in readjusting to Japanese society; they were thought to be too Westernized and individualistic. Ironically, much of the image of *kikokushijo* as 'educational orphans' in need of 'rescue' came from the parents of such children themselves. During the 1980s, however, *kikokushijo* came to be seen as a new elite rather than as problems; their language and cultural skills gained respect as valuable tools for the internationalisation of Japan. As of 1997, over 300 universities offered relaxed admissions criteria for *kikokushijo*, a system which had been attacked as preferential treatment and reverse discrimination. They are often

misperceived as fluent speakers of English, though many in fact resided in non-Anglophone countries.

The entry says it was last modified on 16 July 2010. It will be interesting to see how it continues to be modified in future years, but given the anonymity of contributors to Wikipedia it may be hard to reconstruct the type of social constructionist account which this paper has set out to do.

Notes

- 1 As Tsuneyoshi (2004: 67) points out, the Ministry of Education tightened its definition of *kikokushijo* in 2001, which makes the figures before and after that date difficult to compare.
- 2 For more on the definition of *kikokushijo* in English, see Goodman, 1990: [chapter 2](#). For a more recent attempt to define the word *kikokushijo* in Japanese, see Shibuya, 2001: 3–5.
- 3 Similarly, as Mabuchi (2001: 64) points out, when discussing the establishment of the Center for the Education of Overseas Children at Tokyo Gakugei University, no state-funded centre for any other group of minority students has ever been set up at a national university in Japan.
- 4 Podolsky (1990: 198) found more than 40 books written just by mothers of *kikokushijo* about their overseas and returnee experience which were published between 1981 and 1985.
- 5 For a detailed statistical analysis of the social class background of the parents of *kikokushijo* during the 1970s and 1980s in terms of occupation and residence, see Smith, 1995: 237–38.
- 6 It is interesting that there was very little research about the problems Japanese children had adjusting to foreign schools while overseas; the emphasis of the debate was almost completely on the problems that Japanese children would have when they returned home. Omori (2001: 230–31), for example, simply states that ‘it is uncommon for *kikokushijo* to experience *ijime* (bullying) abroad, but on their return to Japan, they are much more likely to become victims of bullying’. For an account of some of the linguistic and educational problems faced by Japanese children who have attended British schools, see Yamada-Yamamoto and Richards (1999).
- 7 The educational and linguistic problems faced by *kikokushijo* on their return to the Japanese education system were nothing like the problems faced by the children of Japan’s new immigrant groups who began to enter the education system in the 1990s (see Sellek, 2001: [chapter 8](#); Tsuneyoshi, 2011; Noiri, 2010). It is significant for the argument of this chapter that, as Burgess (2007: 16) points out, ‘newcomer children scattered around the non-metropolitan areas attract neither research nor government funding’ and remain ‘invisible’.
- 8 It is interesting to note that research (e.g. Takahagi *et al.*, 1982; Murase, 1983) which clearly suggested that the problems of returnees were not as great as generally perceived when looked at in the context of other groups of young people in Japanese society was conspicuously ignored during this period.
- 9 Inamura Hiroshi was the Japanese clinical psychiatrist who probably did the most to medicalize the social problems of young people in Japan in the 1970s and the 1980s through a string of influential books such as *Kodomo no Jisatsu* (Child Suicide), 1978; *Kateinai Bōryoku* (Parent Abuse), 1980; *Wakamono, Apathy no Jidai* (Young People in the Era of Apathy), 1989; *Futōkō no Kenkyū* (Research on School Refusers), 1994. The influence of his work can still be seen today carried on by many of his former students, including Saitō Tamaki, whom we will meet in the chapter on *hikikomori*.

- 10 Female *kikokushijo* in the 1990s were often categorized as ‘*bilin-gals*’ (a pun on the words ‘bilinguals’ and ‘girls’) and were frequently seen appearing on television and to some extent idolized for their fluent English and American image.
- 11 It is interesting that while more than half of the papers in the journal of the Ibunkakan Kyōiku Gakkai (Intercultural Education Society of Japan) were about *kikokushijo* in its first four issues, no articles on this topic appeared after 2000. At the Association’s annual conference in 2010, only 2 out of 55 individual presentations were on the topic of *kikokushijo*. The most popular topics of presentations were the education of foreign children and of minority groups in Japan and the teaching of Japanese as a second language (JSL).
- 12 Omori’s research (2001: 247) suggests that both non-*kikokushijo* and *kikokushijo* are finding it easier to get on with each other in schools: the latter are learning how to ‘melt into their peer group’, while the former seem to be accepting the different experiences that the *kikokushijo* have had and are increasingly curious to learn from, rather than ignore, those experiences.
- 13 It is important to point out that, while ‘newcomer’ groups may have little economic and political power in Japan, they often come from higher social classes in their countries of birth, especially in the case of the Japanese communities in Brazil and Peru. A new research literature is just appearing on the returnee experiences of these communities (see, for example, Yamasaki, 2010).

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3

NARRATIVES AND STATISTICS

How compensated dating (*enjo kōsai*) was sold

Sharon Kinsella

Introduction: a scandal

During the seven or eight years falling between 1993 and 2000, the image of a schoolgirl selling herself for extra pocket money to buy brand-name clothes filled men's magazines, television documentaries, serialized dramas, comics, novels, and horror and art house films. It became the subject of political theory, sociological research and student dissertations and it stimulated local government and police reports and research. It became the catalyst to introduce new legislation to protect young women from exploitation and the pivot for broader political conflicts over gender equality and female empowerment.

Schoolgirls were typically filmed from a ground-level perspective, with the camera focused mainly on their legs, crumpled *ruusu sokkusu* (loose socks, easily conflated with 'loose sex'). The obscure term 'compensated dating' (*enjo kōsai*) was unearthed to describe the amateur companion service ostensibly provided by schoolgirls. They were sometimes posed displaying a wad of bank notes clasped in their hands: it was the *compensation* – the money or goods – as much as the *dating* which titillated editors and presumably their readers. Their faces and voices were often disguised with screen pixelation and voice synthesizers; girls appeared as blurred and shifting impressions of flesh and uniform with computer-distorted voices and apparently autonomous naked legs. Described as 'just ordinary schoolgirls' (*marude futsū no ko*), they were pictured using mobile phones and public phone boxes to dial into telephone club (*terekura*) chat-lines. [See an illuminated sign for a drop-in telephone club call centre in Photograph 3.1.] After 1999, girls were described tapping the keypads of *i-mode* mobile phones to access internet introduction sites (*deaikei saito*), where they might make contact with older male customers for paid dates.



PHOTOGRAPH 3.1 Illuminated sign for a drop-in telephone club (*terekura*).

In order to search for high school girls to interview, television camera crews wandered the main streets of Shibuya like bands of nomadic traders. In 1997 and 1998, up to four or five different camera crews could be found on the Centre Gai shopping street in Shibuya or outside Tokyu's '109' department store on a weekend shopping day.¹ In 2003 and 2004, film crews were still arriving daily at about 4 p.m. to meet with schoolgirls and get new footage. [See a daily encounter in Photograph 3.2.] Between 1996 and around 2000, compensated dating and linked street subcultures referred to as *kogyaru* and *ganguro* became a central feature of media, academic and eventually art content. [See the bulge in news media reportage of these key terms in the graph in Figure 3.1.]

There was a large secondary global market for copy about materialist and 'loose' Japanese schoolgirls in the press of the English-speaking world. In the UK, *The Guardian* published 'Teenage kicks: Sex with schoolgirls is a booming industry in Japan' (30th October 1996) and later revisited the scene with 'Schoolgirls trade sex for designer goods' (9th June 1997); in the US the *New York Times* discussed 'Japanese men's obsession: Sex with schoolgirls' (3rd April 1997).



PHOTOGRAPH 3.2 Television news crews meet schoolgirls on Center Gai pedestrian street in Shibuya, 2003.

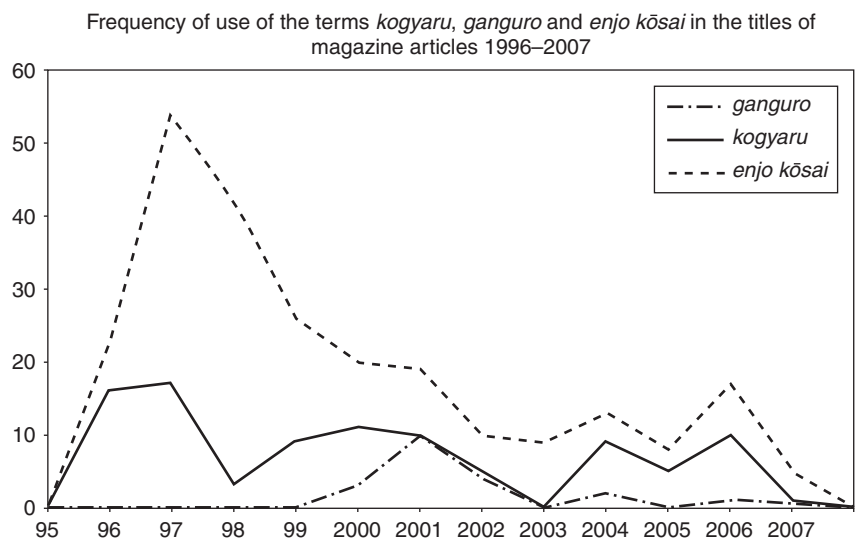


FIGURE 3.1 The volume of titles in broadsheet news reportage containing the terms *kogyaru*, *ganguro*, and *enjo kōsai* in their titles between 1996 and 2007.

Meanwhile *The Weekend Australian* picked up on the 'Japanese crack down on schoolgirl sex rings' (22nd June 1996), and France's *Le Monde* published similar copy in 'Schoolgirls pander to the Lolita fantasy' (8th December 1996). Sensitivity to international appetites for Japanese impropriety influenced Tokyo Metropolitan Police strategy, which was targeted largely at quashing media escalation of the topic.

This chapter concerns a moral panic, with intense local significance, about girls living independently and having private incomes and the lengths it is feared they might go to secure one. The first section on the media will attempt to give an overview of some dominant aspects of this highly fluid narrative, noting the role played by certain key actors. The extensive size of the sexual services sector (*fūzoku*) and the range of employment openings it offers combined with the bifurcation of the labour market, within which the majority of young women are channelled into repetitive and poorly remunerated 'part-time' employment, play a large part in prompting women to enter the sector. Nevertheless – and despite enormous media coverage of the idea of amateur schoolgirl prostitution – there has been very little hard evidence to prove either that compensated dating is widespread or that it is on the increase.

In a broader historical context, the narrative of compensated dating was the most recent eruption into public cultural space of the enduring topic of female independence – sexual and financial. It was a narrative that in the second half of the 1990s locked perfectly into cultural anxieties about shifts in the balance of power between men and women. It expressed the increasing perception that many women in Japan were disenchanted. This feeling of female detachment and abandonment of duties expressed in various ways in art, literature and media discussions in the 1990s and 2000s, was also linked with contemporary discussions about the historical legacy of the sexual labour of women of the lower classes in Japan and the sexual bondage of Asian 'comfort women' (*ianfu*) under the Japanese empire. This broader context will be explored in the final section of this chapter.

Media

The movement of a narrative through the media

Speculations about 'girl prostitution' (*shōjo baishun*) began to appear in men's weekly magazines in the last years of the 1980s. For example, a staff reporter at the *Weekly Post* recorded that, while making his first journalistic investigation of a telephone call club, 'Suddenly a fourteen-year-old junior high school girl said "Gimme some pocket money Mr?"' (*Shūkan Post*, 4th August 1989: 217), while another reporter considered the possibility that 'Telephone clubs are lairs of girl prostitution' (*Shūkan Shinchō*, 2nd March 1989: 24). 'Readers' stories' cut from low-circulation 'lifestyle information' (*seikatsu jōhō*) magazines – including the titles *Egg*, *Popteen*, *Elleteen*

and *Pastelteen* – provided a significant source of sex industry news and salacious tittle-tattle for the pages of high-circulation weekly magazines. The impact of men's weekly magazines on public debate was considerable. From the beginning of 1995 to the middle of 1997, *Shūkan Bunshun* sold an average of 654,000 copies per week; *Shūkan Post* sold an average of 855,000 copies; and *Shūkan Gendai* sold another 728,000 copies. This sector had a combined primary weekly readership, excluding magazine sharing, of approximately five million, according to the *Shuppan Nenpō* (Annual report on the publishing industry) (Shuppan Kagaku Kenkyūjo, 1998: 364).

The issue of veracity was of little relevance to the editors of low-circulation quasi-pornographic 'lifestyle' magazines like *Popteen* and *Elleteen*. However, once reprinted in the columns of weekly magazines – such as the 'Sex Underground Frontline Report' (*Fūzoku saientan rupo*), a double page column in *Shūkan Hōseki*; or in 'Excerpts from The Dames' Press' (*Shukujo no zasshi kara*) in *Shūkan Bunshun*, 'confessional' stories about schoolgirls involved in sexual rendezvous were presented not as pornographic fiction but as social fact. One senior researcher in the Publishing Industry Research Center (Shuppan Kagaku Kenkyūjo) suspected that most of the readers' letters from teenage girls which had become the source of so much intrigue in weekly magazines were initially invented: 'Readers couldn't tell what was real and when it had gone beyond that; the editing was too good' (Sasaki interview, December 2002). Building on the interest provoked by its reprinted letters, and the recent emergence of compensated dating in the news sector, *Shūkan Bunshun* magazine ran a six-part series titled 'The Horrifying Performance of School Girls' (*Joshi chūkōsei no susamajii seinō*) in May to June 1996. The journalist, Kuronuma Katsushi, became a key author on the subject of schoolgirl deviancy over the following years. While Kuronuma's headline series assumed the position of concerned opposition to schoolgirl prostitution, 'sizzling' letters reprinted elsewhere in the same magazine illustrated the editorial schizophrenia that was characteristic of men's magazines on the subject.

The second stage in the expansion of the compensated dating narrative into public debate hinged on its transfer from weekly magazines produced for a broadly male readership (sometimes known as the 'male press' or *oyaji zasshi*) to respectable broadsheet daily newspapers, such as the *Asahi Shinbun*, and weekly magazines with mixed-gender readerships, *Weekly Spa!* and *AERA*. From 1993, public consciousness was raised about the phenomenon of schoolgirls selling parts of their 'sailor suit uniforms' (*sērāfuku*) and school sports pants to specialist 'bloomer sailor shops' (*burusera mise*), seedy and semi-legal establishments hidden in down-at-heel apartment blocks which catered to a male clientele of school uniform fetishists. Youth culture sociologist Miyadai Shinji produced the first broadsheet article on 'bloomer sailor shops', published in the *Asahi* newspaper in September 1993. Hayami Yukiko was another of the pioneers who brought the term 'compensated dating' into the more respected, liberal weekly news magazines. Her first article on the topic was

titled: 'The Tiger Girls' Terrible Compensated Dating: A Report on High School Girls from the Frontline' (Hayami, 1996: 62–65).² This was followed by another article by a veteran female reporter Kikuchi Yoko, 'Discussion with High School Girls: Compensated Dating is Heaven – the Only Fear is Being Discovered by Parents' (Kikuchi, 1996: 26–29).

Authoritative investigative journalists, including a limited number of veteran female names, working alongside well-known academics, became the representatives of schoolgirl consciousness and provided the topic with legitimacy as an item worthy of national 'news'. The inner coterie included journalists Kuronuma Katsushi, Fujii Yoshiki and Hayami Yukiko, and academic writers Miyadai Shinji and Ueno Chizuko. They were later joined by well-known writers including psychoanalyst Kawai Hayao, and novelist and film scriptwriter Murakami Ryu, both of whom were important opinion leaders in the Japanese-speaking world. Miyadai Shinji became dubbed the 'bloomer sailor professor' (*burusera gakusha*) after his exposure as an academic with research knowledge of uniform fetish shops. Miyadai argued that his 'telephone club ethnography' (Miyadai, 1997a) indicated the presence as early as 1986 and 1987 of a covert network of schoolgirls earning money by using telephone chat-lines not to search for romance or erotic encounters so much as to prostitute themselves. He became the foremost authority on the technical and behavioural details of the deviant sexual behaviour of schoolgirls, and his commentary was welcomed in men's weekly magazines (*shūkanshi*) as well as on television and in radio broadcasts. Miyadai was a regular contributor at 4 p.m. on Fridays on TBS radio between 1995 and 1999. By the spring of 1996, compensated dating was regarded as a serious social problem brought to light through the activity of a new rank of schoolgirl experts. As the next section shows, however, the meaning of the expression and the story behind it remained ambiguous.

Compensated dating and collective ambiguity

While compensated dating became more recognized as a phenomenon, what it actually referred to remained uncertain for the duration of the 1990s. According to Iwama Natsuki (interview November 1997), whose company conducted the Tokyo Metropolitan Government 1996 Youth Survey – which we will look at shortly – compensated dating was a 'subtle slang word with an indirect meaning being used amongst schoolchildren to mean earning money by meeting people and any type of sexual service that did not include full sexual intercourse'. According to media research carried out by sociologist Maruta Kōji, the first trace of the term in post-war Japan can be found in the *Naigai Times* in 1953 when it was used in an article about the new popularity of 'free mistresses' who could be paid by the date rather than retained as kept women (Maruta, 2000: 212). The word 'compensation' (*enjo*) was a key term with subtle undercurrents, used in the Meiji Period to describe self-interested injections of Japanese finance in colonial regions, and used in the

post-war period up to 1952 to refer to the raft of US and UN financial aid or 'development assistance' (*kaihatsu enjo*) intended to boost Japanese economic recovery. The term *enjo kōsai* in its earliest usage almost certainly incorporated a play on words, reflecting the elements of muffled irony with which American development assistance was viewed in the 1950s. The term resurfaced in print again briefly in 1973, while the first magazine article to mention 'compensated dating by wives' in the text was published in the *Shūkan Post* on 23rd December 1994 (Maruta, 2000: 212).

According to Miyadai Shinji, the term was used in oral and written slang in the early 1980s, when personal ads magazines were launched and new terms emerged between contributors and readers. Miyadai then goes on to suggest that in the early 1990s the phrase was picked up by women using telephone clubs to find customers for occasional acts of prostitution. Miyadai suggests that it was later adopted by teenage girls working in date clubs to refer to dates with customers that explicitly excluded sexual intercourse, while from 1994 compensated dating came to mean paid dates with high school girls. Finally, Miyadai argues, following the extensive television coverage of compensated dating from the summer of 1996, schoolgirls began to use the term to refer to wandering up and down streets in pairs and waiting for groups of school and college boys to shout out to them. In this period, which corresponded with the height of media coverage – and the period in which the 1996 Youth Survey was conducted – it did not necessarily refer to sex at all, according to Miyadai (1997b: 10). Rather, looking like you might do compensated dating was in style. [See fashionable teenage girls squatting in Photograph 3.3.]



PHOTOGRAPH 3.3 Fashionable teenage girls squatting in Kichijoji. Photography by Maggie Lambert (1998).

Statistics

Conflicts over the gathering and interpretation of statistical evidence

In June 1994 the national assembly of the Parent Teacher Association was the first national organization to respond to the media reports of the use of telephone clubs by schoolgirls. A PTA survey indicated that 27.4 per cent of pupils, girls and boys aged fourteen to sixteen years old, claimed to have had experience of calling a telephone club, and one per cent of third-year junior high school pupils (aged fifteen to sixteen) claimed to have visited a bloomer sailor shop (Miyadai, 1994: 1–3).

In *The Decision of the Girls in Uniform* (1994) and subsequent best-selling books and articles written through the 1990s, Miyadai Shinji was insistent in his claim that the rate of involvement of girls in their mid-teens in the new sexual service industries was rising. Although he cited the 1994 PTA Survey as an important source supporting his thesis that schoolgirl prostitution had flourished from the late 1980s, Miyadai questioned the validity of figures for the Tokyo Metropolitan region. Presenting examples from his own Tokyo-based fieldwork, Miyadai commented that in 1993 he had visited a girls' high school where 'ten in a class of thirty-five to forty girls' had sold their knickers to a bloomer sailor shop, and almost the entire class had experience of calling a telephone club.

Miyadai Shinji estimated that in 1993 there were between six and ten thousand girls across the nation selling their underwear (Miyadai, 1994: 124) and pointed out, furthermore, that 90 per cent of the messages deposited in 'two-shot dial' voice mail telephone clubs were left by schoolgirls, of whom half clearly indicated an intention to prostitute themselves (Miyadai, 1994: 2). The question of role play in the sex industry – the possibility that some if not the majority of these voice mail entries may have been deposited by young women stating that they were schoolgirls in order to attract men, rather than by schoolgirls themselves – is overlooked. While Miyadai's research was based on qualitative ethnographic methodology in which he carried out 'deep' interviews with a self-selected segment of women claiming to be 'schoolgirls' whom he intercepted on the switchboards of telephone clubs, his claims about the extent of schoolgirl sexual deviancy were largely quantitative and based on hand counts in school classrooms and personal estimates.

Section chiefs in the Department of Women and Youth in Tokyo Metropolitan Government sought to subdue profitable media hysteria about compensated dating by undertaking their own investigations into the real situation. Each year the Tokyo Metropolitan Government commissions a large-scale sociological survey of youth behaviour and attitudes known in abbreviation as the Youth Survey (Seishōnen Chōsa). The survey commissioned in 1996 asked questions about telephone clubs and *enjo kōsai* and selected details of the results were more widely reported than usual. Statistics of compensated dating compiled by the 1996 Youth Survey (Seikatsubunkaka, 1996) were universally interpreted as high figures, and as official

proof of the seriousness of the problem of schoolgirl prostitution (*shōjo baishun*) – with which compensated dating was almost always elided. Headlines in newspapers shouted ‘Four Per Cent!’ The *Sunday Mainichi* claimed, ‘There’s no misrepresenting the meaning of compensated dating at four per cent’ (3rd November 1996: 138), while *Kōhyō* journal presented the same single figure as symbolic of all teenagers (‘The Experiences of the Compensated Dating Four Per Cent Generation’; July 1997: 26). As in the case of *hikikomori* reportage (see Horiguchi’s account in Chapter 6), numbers embedded in headlines soon became *social facts*.

There were weaknesses in the structure and distribution of the 1996 Youth Survey. These started with the low response rate. Out of 5,000 surveys distributed to junior high and high schools only 1,291 completed surveys were returned.³ Moreover, what was not reported was that a significant 2.9 per cent of twelve- to thirteen-year-old first-year junior high school boys also said they had done compensated dating (Seikatsubunkaka, 1996: 50), which raised serious questions as to what the word ‘compensated dating’ meant to these schoolchildren. Further, 54 per cent of the thirty-seven girls who said that they had done compensated dating said they had done it ten times or more, but in a separate question 54 per cent of these same schoolgirls indicated that they had been involved with compensated dating for one month or less, and a further 21 per cent said they had been involved for three months or less (Seikatsubunkaka, 1996: 51). In short, a number of girls claimed that they had been doing a lot of compensated dating during the recent past, namely between the spring and summer of 1996, the period of time which corresponded precisely with the mass circulation of the term in the mass media (see Figure 3.1 again). This raises questions about whether respondents sought to identify themselves with a fashionable new media keyword when this was offered to them in a survey.

Another statistical survey, also based in the Tokyo area, on Environmental Factors Influencing High School Girls and their Consciousness in Relation to Compensated Dating was commissioned by the Asian Women’s Foundation and carried out in October 1997.⁴ Noting the uncertainty of what the term ‘compensated dating’ may have meant to schoolchildren in previous surveys, the team, led by Fukutomi Mamoru, based at Tokyo Gakugei University, carried out preparatory interviews with thirty high school girls before designing the questions for a major quantitative survey to follow. On the basis of the preliminary interviews⁵ the team discovered that there remained ‘considerable variation in how high school girls defined “compensated dating”’ (Fukutomi *et al.*, 1998b: 35). This survey was distributed to 960 female high school students between the ages of fifteen and eighteen years old; 600 unspoiled responses were received. The high return rate can be attributed to the sensitive method of its distribution; respondents were selected at random from each of eighty neighbourhoods (*chōme*) in the survey field. Female researchers called on the selected respondents at home in person and anonymous surveys were distributed and returned by hand in sealed envelopes (Fukutomi *et al.*, 1998b: 39). Responses were more detailed than those in the 1996 Youth Survey. Specifically, 2.3 per cent of high school girls stated that they had been on a compensated date

that included sexual intercourse; another 2.3 per cent had been on a compensated date that included sexual activity other than intercourse; another 4.8 per cent said that they had been on a compensated date that involved meeting in a cafe, but had not involved any sexual exchange at all (Fukutomi *et al.*, 1998b: 13).

One problem with the interpretations of survey results in the media – that compensated dating was increasing at a precipitous rate – was that there were no previous statistics to use as a baseline. They represented what deviancy critic Jock Young (1971: 50) has described as ‘a fantasy crime wave, which does not necessarily involve at any time an actual increase in number’. Virtually alone among her contemporaries, journalist Satō Noriko made precisely this point in an article titled: ‘Schoolgirls and ‘*enjo kōsai*’ a good deal of hype’ (*Friday*, 30th May 1997). While statistics were used to give authority to the idea of an ‘increase’ in compensated dating, in fact, as with the ‘dramatically increasing’ numbers of unemployed *NEET* youth analysed by Tuukka Toivonen in his chapter in this volume, the new status both of the category and the research precluded the possibility of knowing whether the problem was really expanding.

Voyeurism and statistics

Official sociological survey results appeared to anchor media reports. Magazine editorials in fact emulated institutional research with their own surveys. In April 1997 *Views* magazine presented a ‘Survey of 1,000 High School Girls: the full data – graduation from virginity; graduation from telephone clubs; graduation from compensated dating; young ladies versus play girls; Tokyo Metropolitan High School versus Osaka State High School’ (*Views*, 1997: 171). Three months later, *President* magazine looked at ‘The real thoughts of modern high school girls (“my customer is virtually my dad”) – A survey of fathers and daughters: among high school children 65 per cent have experience of sex, 23 per cent have done compensated dating’ (*President*, July 1997: 280). In October 1997, the *Sunday Mainichi* lined up new figures with a review of ‘Eighty men that had compensated dates with sixty girls (girls that lust)’ (*Sunday Mainichi*, 12th October 1997: 160). The following July, the *Shūkan Hōseki* (The Weekly Jewel) thought it prudent to be ‘Asking 600 junior high school students “What do you think of compensated dating?”’ (*Shūkan Hōseki*, 16th July 1998: 20). Weekly and monthly current affairs magazines targeted primarily at male audiences, including the titles cited above, played a pivotal role in developing and expanding coverage of the topic and suggested that ever-higher numbers of schoolgirls were involved.

Rather than towering over the media in terms of methodological rigour and sensitivity to its human subjects, academic and semi-academic ‘research’ (*kenkyū*) was closely entwined with journalistic ‘information gathering’ (*shūzai*). Quantitative research, ethnography, and journalism converged into a sexualized commentary on girls. In a dialogue published in *Sunday Mainichi* magazine in November 1996, Miyadai Shinji quotes as an empirical source a survey of ‘100 schoolgirls walking through Shibuya’ carried out by *Ryūkō Kansoku Across* magazine. *Across* editors

happily discovered that ‘twenty-two girls out of 100 said they had done prostitution or compensated dating, and had no regrets’, and that a further ‘thirty girls or more’ of the remaining seventy-eight said that ‘if they came across the opportunity they would like to try prostitution’ (Murakami and Miyadai, 1996: 51–52). The conditions in which the survey was carried out go unmentioned. Investigative journalist Fujii Yoshiki was one of the small coterie of journalists that specialized in writing more concerned commentaries about schoolgirls. In the introduction to a chapter by Fujii published in *The New Book of Commercial Sex* (Ueno and Miyadai, 1999: 138) he refers to areas of Tokyo such as Shibuya and Ikebukuro as the ‘breeding grounds for compensated dating’, citing a television show as his source of information: ‘according to television shows where the reporter does a thorough street survey in Center Gai street in Shibuya, about one in every five girls has done compensated dating, and you can see that there are also girls who are clearly refusing to answer the question’ (Ueno and Miyadai, 1999: 138).

Even the most authoritative of authors exhibited extraordinarily little curiosity about the empirical evidence supporting the idea that they lived in an age of schoolgirl prostitution. Their approach to the topic tended to be overwhelmingly ideological and symbolic and their approach to sources intertextual. In the opening lines of an article published in *Sekai* (and later published in English in *Japan Echo*), eminent psychoanalyst Kawai Hayao declared that, ‘As I have not carried out any practical research specifically into this issue, I will base my analysis in references to newspaper articles, essays and research reports connected to compensated dating, and take the experiences of those authors as the accounts of psychological practitioners’ (Kawai, 1997: 137). Columnist Nakano Midori cites another journalist’s descriptions as source material in her scathing critique of the mental weakness of deviant schoolgirls: ‘About two years ago I read a book that reported on some 14-year-old schoolgirls engaged in prostitution. What struck me was the author’s description of how, throughout an interview with one of the girls, she was gripping her cell phone as though it were an amulet. It must have had a tranquilizing effect on her’ (Nakano, 2000: 62–63 [in English]). The popularity of deviant schoolgirls as the motif of intellectual discussion, art, film and photography in Japan in the late 1990s invites comparison with the way in which delinquent teenage boys were discussed in England in the 1960s, of which Stanley Cohen observed that ‘intellectual opinion produced appropriately intellectual, but otherwise just as spurious attributes’ (Cohen, 1972: 56).

Acting out the social problem

Suspicion that the stories about deviant schoolgirls were an invention of ‘the media’ was voiced early on by critical observers. *Tsukuru* magazine, a self-appointed media watchdog, produced a special issue on *The Symbolism of Schoolgirls* in 1995, in which editors excoriated weekly magazines: ‘After they have profited from published articles saying “It’s incredible what these girls will do!” they’ll print an editorial apology in

the next issue stating that they regret the possibly exaggerated terms of their article on schoolgirls and that henceforth the magazine will be refraining from any further involvement. This cycle of exaggeration and regret has become a distinct pattern' (Tsukuru, January 1995: introduction page).⁶

Sociologist Maruta Kōji (2000: 209–22) utilized social construction analysis to argue that compensated dating was essentially a 'pseudo-event' germinated within the culture industries. While it has been suggested that schoolgirls cast as deviant were 'exploited as symbols' (Leheny 2006: 79–82), something more involved than exploitation was also taking place. A small pool of journalists who became known as 'schoolgirl specialists' briefly emerged in the period between 1996 and 1998. They were linked to a small set of girls whose school commuting routes allowed them to regularly pass through central Tokyo, who began to treat appointments with journalists, television appearances, and dropping in on magazine editorials as a form of part-time work. According to one journalist: 'Typically girls get paid about three thousand yen to meet a journalist like myself for a couple of hours' (Matsuoka interview, 23rd December 1997). He described his schoolgirl contacts as 'professional schoolgirls' (*puro joshi kōsei*). There is some evidence to suggest that girls were aware of the type of answers that they believed their interlocutors would be pleased to hear. One freelance journalist who paid schoolgirls to meet her for interviews, complained that 'High school girls know what the media want them to say and they say whatever is required. They are ready to do that, and not just because they'll earn money, but because the media are irritating and very persistent – saying what they want is the quickest way to get rid of them' (Uchida interview, 25th December 1998). Evidence also suggested that a number of the same schoolgirl informants were recycled and passed between magazine editorials, freelance journalists and culture professionals.⁷ [See *kogyaru* types on a sofa by a print club machine in *Cawaii!* editorial office in 1997 in Photograph 3.4. They have come to hang out (*asobi ni kuru*) and chat with the editors, who can be seen at work.]

Schoolgirls encountered by editors in city centres and those receiving social surveys in their classrooms were also consumers of reportage on the sexual behaviour of Japanese schoolgirls. This reporting almost certainly served as a prompt, both informing and shaping the statements schoolgirls made about themselves. Media exposure became the catalyst for highly performative girls' street fashions that extended to the end of the decade and beyond. [See Photograph 3.5 of girls with up-to-the-minute caramel orange hair and platform boots (*atsuzoku*) posing in Shibuya in 2003.] As Laud Humphreys (1970: 37) said about representatives of a different kind of sexual behaviour framed as deviant in the United States: 'Their very willingness to cooperate sets them apart from those they are meant to represent.' [See Photographs 3.2 to 3.5.]

Discussing the impact of Alexandre Parent-Duchalet's seminal 1836 report on the personality of prostitutes in Paris, Alain Corbin encounters a similar conundrum. He argues that during the nineteenth century the 'portrait of the prostitute was repeated so often in the literature on prostitution and inspired so



PHOTOGRAPH 3.4 *Kogyaru* types on a sofa by a print club machine in *Cawaii!* editorial office in 1997.



PHOTOGRAPH 3.5 Girls with up-to-the-minute caramel-coloured hair and platform boots (*atsuzoku*) posing in Shibuya in 2003.

many novelists that, in addition to distorting the vision of later researchers [] it probably determined to some extent the behaviour of the prostitutes themselves' (Corbin, 1990: 7). Schoolgirls in Japan in the 1990s were simultaneously social and cultural subjects moulded by, and at times willingly embodying, the symbolic discussions about them. They developed theatrical outfits that reflected elements of the surrounding descriptions of them.⁸ As sociologist Fukutomi Mamoru notes in the introduction to the 1997 AWF Survey: '*Enjo kōsai* has become an arena in which to play a "stylish" and contemporary role' (Fukutomi *et al.*, 1998a: 82).

Government action and legal consequences

While evidence for the existence of a compensated dating problem may have been weak, debate about the problem encouraged first local governments and later national lawmakers to extend the legal controls on child prostitution. The first legal controls introduced in 1997 aimed to criminalize adults soliciting schoolgirls, seeking to protect juvenile females from male exploitation. Within three years, however, a New Youth Law (Shin Shōnen Hō, 2000) firmly re-established teenage girls (or boys) as responsible parties liable to severe criminal punishment if caught offering 'indecent invitations' or pimping one another as amateur prostitutes available for cash.

Prosecuting adults for soliciting (kaishun)

The Osaka branch of the international NGO, End Child Prostitution and Pornography in Asian Tourism (ECPAT), founded in Bangkok in 1992, had been active in campaigning against Asian sex tourism as well as domestic juvenile prostitution and pornography prior to the stories about schoolgirl amateur prostitution in Japan. In 1993/94, ECPAT launched a campaign against what it defined as child pornography published in the weekly magazines *Shūkan Gendai* and *Shūkan Post*. From 1996 the Tokyo branch of ECPAT became active, alongside the PTA and various quasi-governmental citizens' groups (*shimin dantai*), in campaigning for new local legislation against telephone clubs and soliciting from minors. These groups, organized and bolstered numerically by civil servants employed in the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's Women and Youth Department (Joseiseishōnenbu), began a modest Movement to Reform the Social Environment (Kankyō Jōka Kaizen Undō) on the streets of Tokyo in 1997. Activities in Shibuya and Shinjuku included removing advertisements for telephone clubs from public phone boxes and handing out leaflets printed by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government informing the public about new ordinances regulating telephone clubs and criminalizing compensated dating. Members of the PTA also organized teams to enter red-light areas and search for deviant schoolgirls on the premises of telephone clubs and date clubs.

In August 1997, Tokyo and many other prefectures added a clause to the Youth Ordinance to outlaw access to telephone clubs (*terekura*) for those under twenty years old. In December 1997 the Youth Ordinance was amended again to include a new clause making it illegal for adults to solicit sexual services from minors under the age of nineteen. This became known as the Solicitation Ordinance (Kaishun Jōrei). The use of the novel term *kaishun* (soliciting sex)⁹ instead of *bais-hun* (selling sex) was adopted after much debate amongst civil servants, in order to place the legal responsibility for compensated dating on adult males. The *kaishun* clause carried a maximum penalty of twelve months imprisonment or a fine of up to 500,000 yen in Tokyo. Tokyo Metropolitan Government also commissioned and placed a range of advertisements in broadsheets and on radio and television in November 1997 that warned the public against consorting with female minors. The ‘Save Teens’ television commercial showed members of the adult public – a baker, a gym teacher, and a builder – agreeing that adults must take responsibility for how they treat children. The advert finished with a guest appearance from the mayor of Tokyo, Aoshima Yukio, appealing for more ‘adult responsibility’ (*otona no sekinin*).

The right to sexual self-determination

There was another constellation of individuals in Japan that disagreed with the introduction of new legislation protecting juvenile females and that argued in favour of legalizing prostitution by abolishing the 1956 Prostitution Prevention Act. Their focus on sexual self-determination was highly libertarian and strongly influenced by the state of international discourse about prostitution, which in the 1990s was led by the accounts of North American Sex Workers.¹⁰ In 1996 Miyadai Shinji, the well-known journalist Fujii Seiji and Hirano Yūji, a children’s rights activist involved in UN activities on children’s rights,¹¹ founded the Sei no Kenri Hōron Kai (Sexual Rights Legislation Society). This collective, which also came to include feminist intellectuals such as Kawada Yukiko and Ueno Chizuko, campaigned for an end to all restrictions on female sexual autonomy. Compensated dating had been a touchstone for feminists who opposed the Prostitution Prevention Act, because it seemed to compound male control of female sexuality. The general position of the Sexual Rights Society was that ‘Whether or not prostitution is regulated, it must ultimately be considered an issue for personal discretion’ (Miyadai in Ueno and Miyadai, 1999: 66–67). Various members produced different theories about why schoolgirls did compensated dating, including the idea that it was a form of revenge aimed at their parents – ‘these girls grow up seeing the deception and hypocrisy of their parents and go on to exercise their right to sexual autonomy as an act of retaliation’ (Ueno and Miyadai, 1999: 61) – or the idea that sex work had lost its stigma and become accepted as an everyday form of casual labour by women (Hayami interview, 15th March 2003). A similar series of articles by feminist legal scholars arguing for the legal ‘formalization of compensation’ (*enjo*) appeared in the influential journal *Jurist* (Wakao, 2003: 192–93). Not all feminists agreed, however.

Within the leading Marxist journal *Gendai Shisō*, for example, ex-student of Miyadai, Asano Chie (1998: 123) excoriated Miyadai Shinji's work as opportunist and 'ideological' (*kūriteki*): 'The critics who emphasize "prostitution based on free will" and bind it to the idea of "sexual self-determination" take it upon themselves to predict and even to fabricate the image of the sexually liberated woman who, standing squarely, on the grounds of self-determination, sells her own body freely.' Asano's argument was that in practice young women entered into compensated dates in a society governed by gross power imbalances in which they had little power and could easily be exploited and physically endangered by the adults they met.

The Sexual Rights Legislation Society had little impact on the direction of law-making. Despite the vociferous objections of Osaka ECPAT and the Democratic Party (DJP or Minshutō), which collaborated to produce an alternative version of the bill putting more focus on the punishment of child sexual abuse, the coalition government moved to introduce the Child Solicitation and Child Pornography Prevention Act (*Jidō Poruno Jidō Kaishun Hō*) in November 1999. The Child Solicitation Act outlawed paid sex with children under the age of eighteen, and nationalized telephone club regulation. Its opponents believed that the Act was 'more concerned with regulating the pornographic media than it is with actual child sexual abuse' (Sonozaki Toshiko at Osaka ECPAT, 26th January 1999). The Bar Association of Japan and an organization calling itself the Manga Bōei Dōmei (Manga Defence League) also campaigned against the bill on the basis that it was essentially concerned with the cultural censorship of imagery, which would cripple the comic industry and do nothing to protect children (see Leheny, 2006: 102–7).

Laws for the National Police Association

The National Police Association (NPA) and members of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) whose manifesto was published as the *Sei to Jiko Kettei Genron* (The Thesis of Sexual Self-Determination) represented another set of actors severely disappointed by the 1999 Child Solicitation Act. Rather than being opposed, however, to the greater control of female sexual agency, conservative members of the Diet and the police believed that what was required was not a law to punish adult men for having paid dates with minors, but the stronger punishment of juvenile delinquents. In October 1997, the LDP organized a committee for the revision of the *Shōnen Hō* (Youth Law). In collaboration with the NPA it drafted the *Shin Shōnen Hō* (New Youth Bill) aimed at countering the focus of the Child Solicitation Law on 'adult responsibility'. In 2000, the Diet passed the New Youth Act stipulating that juvenile offenders between the ages of fourteen and twenty would now be sent to criminal court (*keiji saibansho*) rather than family court (*katei saibansho*), effectively lowering the age of criminal liability from sixteen to fourteen. The revised New Youth Act represented the inclination of police and conservative politicians towards the stricter control and punishment of youth misdemeanours and voluntary prostitution for teenage girls over the preceding forty years.¹²

In October 2002, the NPA established another committee to consider concrete strategies for dealing with the relocation of juvenile prostitution onto the internet. In June 2003 the Deaiki Saito Kisei Hō (Internet Introduction Site Act) drawn up by the National Police Agency came into law. This legislation barred minors under eighteen years old from access to internet introduction and dating sites and set heavy fines for site operators giving access to minors. The Internet Introduction Site Act redefined the newly established legal term ‘child solicitation’ (*jidō kaishun*) to signify any partner involved in arranging prostitution with juveniles, including juveniles themselves. Following the 2003 Act, juveniles could be fined up to one million yen for offering ‘indecent invitations’ (*fusei yūin*) on the internet (Gotō, 2004: 68). While legislation originally sought to criminalize male customers rather than schoolgirls, the National Police Agency and LDP politicians worked to rapidly overturn this legal position, with further legislation clearly identifying young women as guilty parties in their own purchase.

The historical context of voluntary sexual deviancy

Thus far we have traced how compensated dating (*enjo kōsai*) was constructed as a social problem through the media and the work of certain experts, and have also noted how the schoolgirls themselves contributed to the social problems discourse in their performative acts. Moreover, it was pointed out that statistics are also a part of the process of constructing the social problem rather than any valid evidence of its ‘real’ existence or extent, although discourses *can* bring ‘real’ impact in the form of government and legal action. Finally, in this section we shift to an account of the broader historical context in order to illuminate the highly symbolic nature of ‘compensated dating’ that challenges notions of girlhood, sexuality and independence.

Over the twentieth century the management of teenage women drifting into the sex industry as ‘amateur girls’ (*shirōto* girls) has been a key theme of legislation and police monitoring in Japan. In the context of a society featuring a large and well-established sex industry¹³ – one in which many fathers took up their legal right to sell their daughters into bondage in brothels and textile mills into the early decades of the twentieth century¹⁴ at a time when many wealthy businessmen and Diet representatives owned brothels – *voluntary* or casual prostitution instigated by women *for their own profit* has long been considered as a form of economic activity associated with problematic female independence. The image of apparently ‘bright and cheery’ schoolgirls undertaking compensated dating resonated with an institutionally embedded hostility with deep historical roots towards unlicensed or ‘hidden’ prostitutes (*kakushi baika*) (Sone, 1999: 175). Throughout the twentieth century, the law has in effect tolerated prostitution managed within recognized businesses, but prevented schoolgirls and amateurs from operating their own activities on the streets. The Youth Law (Shōnen Hō) was first introduced in 1922 and revised in 1948; and once again in 2000, as mentioned above, when it became the New Youth Act (Shin Shōnen Hō). Its primary concerns were and continue to

be preventing young women from ‘night time loitering’ (*shinya haikai*), ‘running away from home’ (*iede*) and ‘self-injurious activity’ (*jishō kōi*), each largely understood to be closely bound up with amateur prostitution. The 1956 Prostitution Prevention Act (Baishun Bōshi Hō) sharply increased the legal punishment of individual women attempting to carry out freelance sex work, although it was less able to control juveniles below the age of criminal prosecution (Leheny 2006: 66–67), making teenage girls the focus of monitoring and regulation thereafter.

Between 1952 and 1985 a Youth Ordinance (Seishōnen Jōrei) was introduced in one of three versions in every prefecture and became the principal law regulating the access of children and adolescents to the sex services industries (*fūzoku eigyō*) through the censorship of violent and pornographic materials and the control and punishment of those involved with sexual activities involving minors, largely schoolgirls (Sasaki, 2000: 6). In most prefectures the Youth Ordinance was updated in 1993 in response to a panic about manga that were thought to cater to the then newly discovered category of so-called *otaku* men with paedophile tendencies (Kinsella, 1998: 308–13). In the second half of the 1970s, the so-called ‘third wave of deviancy’ emerged (Sato, 1991: 203). Its characteristics were the spread and ‘generalization’ (*ippanka*) of deviant behaviour from lower-class and underprivileged children to the ‘normal’ (*futsū*) offspring of the middle classes and the increased involvement of teenage girls in sexual deviancy. Deviancy scholars noted that

[] previously, one could tell at a glance, from their appearance and aura, the sort of girls that would get guidance for sexual deviancy. Generally they would be the ‘dropout’ students getting reprimanded by their school administration from a relatively early grade. A few of them would be from broken homes, and had been handicapped by the way they had been raised [] Recently, however, that image has changed. The number of so-called ‘ordinary’ girls getting guidance for sexual deviancy has become conspicuous. Most of those put under guidance for sexual deviancy don’t have a guilty look; they look bright and indifferent.

(Kiyonaga, 1999: 102)¹⁵

Since 1976, annual Police White Papers (Keisatsu Hakusho) and Crime Statistical Tables (Hanzai Tōkeisho) have included a section tabulating the rates of female sexual deviancy and monitoring the contours of its perceived spread. Girls brought into police custody for guidance (*hodō*)¹⁶ are routinely asked to respond to a questionnaire that asks them to indicate their motive for sexual deviancy, by selecting from among the following answers:

- because of ‘interest (or curiosity)’ (*kyōmi [kōkishin] kara*);
- because of ‘liking a particular man’ (*tokutei no otoko ga suki de*);
- because of ‘wanting money for leisure activities’ (*asobu kane ga hoshikute*);

- because of 'liking sex' (*sekkusu ga suki de*);
- other reasons (*sono hoka*).

The number of girls answering that they 'voluntarily' (*mizukara susunde*) engaged in 'sexual deviance' (*sei no itsudatsu kōi*) and that their motivation was 'wanting money for leisure' has received particularly close attention through representation in charts and tables in police research and annual reports, indicating the continuity of a special sensitivity towards young women earning money by directly prostituting themselves.¹⁷ Police figures of girls apprehended for sexual deviance decreased by the 1990s, but the rate at which girls claimed to be motivated by 'money' increased. Some scholars have interpreted this response as indicative of a shift towards 'absolute prostitution' (Watanabe, 1997: 12): prostitution that is motivated not by need but by the desire for luxury. In a certain sense, fascination with 'wanting money' continued in stories of compensated dating which relished telling how schoolgirls were rewarded with 'brand name goods' (*burando shōhin*) and ostentatiously carried wads of 10,000 yen notes around with them.

Gender panic

Alongside the legal control of sexual freelancing has been a history of 'gender panic' in twentieth-century Japan, a litany of stories about effeminate and emasculated men (*mobo* or 'modern boys', *otaku*, *hikikomori*, *freeters*) and either insubordinate or wayward women. In the 1910s, privileged schoolgirls involved in a burgeoning culture of same-sex romance known as 'S' or sister relationships caused scandal (Robertson 1998: 68–69; 146–47); in the mid-1920s, journalists variously depicted '*modan gaaru*' (modern girls) as energetic, sexually liberated, uncouth, witty, independent, adventurous, and even militant, young women (Silverberg, 1991: 241–46).

Suspicious about women dressed as schoolgirls and dating male students in Ikebukuro Park surfaced from the first years of the twentieth century (in the 1990s, 'fake schoolgirls' were known as *nanchatte kōkōsei*). Schoolgirls were customizing their school uniforms from at least as early as 1928, when one record indicates that girls in Osaka had 'become a problem' by shortening their skirts to a point above the knee and having themselves tattooed (*Fukusō*, 1969: 47). In the immediate post-war period, teenage women were portrayed as disloyal and carefree – 'laughing amidst the ruins' (Sakaguchi, 1986 [1946]: 4). Early post-war news focused on *panpan* or Japanese prostitutes accompanying US soldiers, and acquiring luxuries such as nylon tights and lipstick. They were discussed with both contempt and fascination for their 'bold and subversive' attitudes (Dower, 1999: 132). Both the 'mixed-blood children' born of *panpan*–GI relationships and the problem of school-girl prostitution¹⁸ became the central concerns of the post-war anti-prostitution movement (Garon, 1997: 198), which culminated in the passage of the 1956 Prostitution Prevention Act.

From the 1970s in particular, independent, materialistic and inappropriate female behaviour has been repeatedly covered in current affairs reportage, leaving a trail of pejorative media terms for over-assertive women: '*burikko*' (Kinsella, 1995: 222–25), '*yellow cabs*' (Hirota, 2000), '*otachidai gyaru*' (girls dancing on raised platforms in lycra mini-dresses at Juliana's disco in the 1980s), or '*bodikon*' (girls in tight stretchy miniskirt outfits). A keyword attached to the pejorative descriptions of all these young women, including fashionable high school girls known as *kogyaru* in the 1990s, was '*gyaru*' (girl). Since the 1980s, *gyaru* has operated as an opposite to the more ideal *shōjo* (girl) in contemporary language, which tends to label women from a largely male perspective – *shōjo* implying obedient and innocent, and *gyaru* insinuating sexual, self-aware and pushy (Kinsella, 2005: 145–47).¹⁹

As with interest in failing young men from *otaku* to *hikikomori* to *NEETs*, media attention on schoolgirls and compensated dating in the 1990s became a 'multivocal symbol' to represent one of the most historically entrenched anxieties of modern Japanese society: the issue of young women, particularly 'ordinary girls' (*futsū no ko*) originating in good middle-class families, utilizing their sexuality (and perhaps the sex industry) to forge independent lifestyles and gender alliances that unify women across class boundaries.

Problems compensating women

The percentage of schoolgirls in the 1996 Youth Survey stating that they had done compensated dating was widely taken as the most reliable statistical indicator of the extent of schoolgirl prostitution. A quick calculation, however, of what this would have implied at the national level in 1996 provides an intriguing scenario. At the time that the 1996 Youth Survey was conducted there were 2.21 million junior high school girls and 2.26 million high school girls, a total national population of just under 4.5 million schoolgirls.²⁰ If the 3.4 per cent of junior high school girls and 4.4 per cent of high school girls saying that they had done compensated dating in the 1996 Youth Survey is applied to the national populations of junior high and high school girls respectively, the results suggest that there were 175,000 junior high and high school girls getting involved in compensated dating in spring 1996. This figure is equivalent to the population of a small city, almost four times the number of registered prostitutes in pre-war Japan (Garon, 1997: 94), or about the same figure as the number of 'comfort women' utilized by the Japanese Imperial Army between 1930 and 1945 (Yoshimi, 2000: 91–96).

In the summer of 1996, the Japanese public was effectively invited to consider the scenario of approximately 175,000 schoolgirls simultaneously launching their careers as prostitutes – each meeting customers for 'compensated dates'. This summer offensive sounds like a peculiar collective sexual fantasy – one transmitted to entire families in news broadcasts as they ate their evening meals. (See Photograph 3.2 again.) It was a scenario that corresponded neatly with the cultural image of schoolgirls as a guerilla army of sexy rebels taking over society that was so

prevalent in Japanese pop culture, film and literature in the 1990s. But was it also a shared public fantasy rooted in collective memory? The vision of a mobile army of schoolgirl prostitutes mirrored the recently reawakened history of several hundred thousand young women forced into sexual servitude as ‘comfort women’ to the Japanese imperial forces.

The volume of news and journal articles published on ‘comfort women’ (*ianfu*) and ‘compensated dating’ (*enjo kōsai*) is compared in Figure 3.2. Both of these narratives peaked during 1996 and 1997. What is equally striking is that the story of compensated dating is an inversion of the story of comfort women. Comfort women represent a narrative about innocent²¹ young women – most of them originally schoolgirls in colonized Korea – who were exploited by Japanese men and received little or none of the financial compensation they were promised at the end of the war and who have now filed lawsuits for compensation and a national apology. Compensated dating represents a narrative about greedy young schoolgirls, also within the jurisdiction of the Japanese nation state, who are guilty of voluntarily selling their bodies for large sums which they extort from Japanese men, and who deserve strict punishment for their unacceptable behaviour.

There was an unstated connection between the politics of activists and lawmakers who wanted to develop laws to punish men involved in buying sex (*kaishun*) from schoolgirls, and their broader criticism of Japan’s treatment of Asian women in the war. The link between compensated dating and comfort women lurked in the

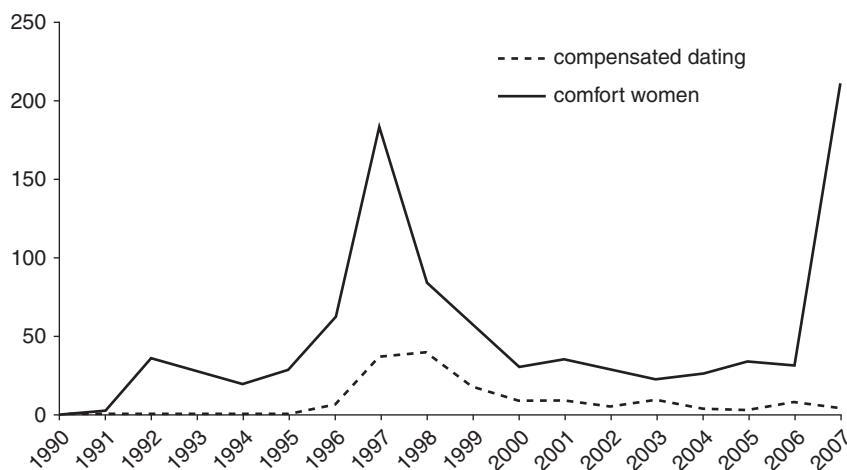


FIGURE 3.2. The volume of articles in broadsheet news reportage containing the terms either ‘compensated dating’ (*enjo kōsai*) or ‘comfort women’ (*ianfu*) in their titles between 1990 and 2007.

Source: Nichigai Associates, Magazine Plus database, accessed in 2008.

deeper background of cultural production in the late 1990s. Both topics, for example, were featured in Kobayashi Yoshinori's *Sensōron* (*War Talk*, 1998), the controversial right-wing manga account of Japan's role in the Pacific War. Both cropped up as allied causes in the leftist film *Bounce Kogyaru!* (1997). Some of the more far-reaching contributions to the subject, such as Ōtsuka Eiji's (1997) article on 'Fleeing from Compensated Dating and History' made the ideological connection explicit. Compensated dating can be understood as an extraordinarily resonant and influential cultural construction about youth deviancy. It serves as a powerful illustration of Victor Turner's analysis of the propensity of symbolic discourses to 'ramify into further semantic subsystems' (1975: 155, quoted in the first chapter, this volume), and of the dynamism of metaphor or 'borrowing between and intercourse of *thoughts*, a transaction between contexts' (Richards, 1936: 94) in the collective production of cultural symbols.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen an example of a moral panic which peaked in media coverage over two years, 1996 and 1997. Despite being a contemporary media event taking place in pre-millennial Japan, the debate about compensated dating had long roots in the politics, cultural symbols and structures of feeling linked to the conflict-ridden gender relations embedded within modern Japanese society. This case study about girls in trouble serves to illuminate by contrast the manner in which panics about *otaku*, *hikikomori* or *NEETs* have been largely focused on men rather than women. The evidence presented in this chapter points to the relatively conscious and concrete manner in which both statistics and narratives can move at specific moments between different categories of media production, and thereby both escalate and alter in form and function, from minor to major, from fictional to real, and from commercial to legal and governmental topics of concern. In the case of compensated dating, information moved upwards through the media hierarchy, jumping from pornographic magazines and girls' lifestyle magazines to current affairs weekly magazines, from those to broadsheet newspapers and television news and documentaries, before finally provoking reactions and research from local and national NGOs and government. There are three especially interesting points thrown up in this exploration of compensated dating. First, cutting-edge academic work on society and culture was significant and instrumental in escalating and validating media discourse on the topic. Academic researchers did not only play a follow-up role in the form of social research investigating after the event, but were instrumental in unearthing, expanding and validating social narratives. Second, the moral panic about compensated dating and interest in deviant schoolgirls helped to define, animate and in some cases remunerate a street subculture of *kogyaru*, – 'little *gyaru*' – through the theatrical performances of which further evidence about compensated dating was then derived. Third, the extraordinary and silent reverse correlation between the narrative of compensated dating and the narrative of

comfort women suggests the complex manner in which different political and legal issues can combine and interact through media production to result in *de facto* collective erasure, camouflage and displacement.

After 1998 the term ‘compensated dating’ largely disappeared from media discussions, shortly followed by *kogyaru*, not least because of direct police communications warning media and film companies against using and normalizing this term for an ‘illegal’ activity, and against using the term ‘schoolgirl’ in titles. *Kogyaru* and *ganguro* subculture and style were nevertheless spectacular, intelligent and shocking to the extent that they have carved out permanent posts in recent collective memory and are frequently and fondly re-enacted and memorialized as important moments in sartorial and cultural history.

Notes

- 1 Something similar to the performance of Tokyo media professionals ‘catching’ (*tsukamari*) schoolgirls happened in England in the 1960s. Stanley Cohen (1972: 141) recalls how, ‘Seaside resorts were invariably full of journalists and photographers, waiting for something to happen, and stories, poses and interviews would be extracted from the all too willing performers.’
- 2 ‘My article, in an Asahi publication, *AERA* [15th April 1996], was the first mention of compensated dating in the serious media.’ (Interview with Hayami Yukiko, January 1999)
- 3 Miyadai (1997a: 3) proposed that the reason why most schools were apparently unwilling to participate in the 1996 Youth Survey was because teachers were aware of the prevalence of prostitution amongst their pupils and were not willing to have this involvement disclosed in official statistics.
- 4 The Asian Women’s Foundation was launched in 1995 as a means of compensating so-called ‘comfort women’, using donations gathered from the national citizenry. It also received funds from the government budget (480 million yen) that were used in part for research projects. The stated agenda of its researchers was to promote human rights among women in a manner that could lead towards a ‘gender equal society’ (*danjo byōdō shakai*). (Personal email communication with a member of the 1997 Survey team, Ui Miyuki, February 2008.)
- 5 This interview survey is available in English as ‘Analytical Study on the Causes of and Attitudes toward ‘Enjo kōsai’ Among Female High School Students In Japan’ (Fukutomi *et al.*, 1998a).
- 6 As Stanley Cohen observed of news coverage in England about delinquent youth four decades earlier, ‘It is clear that people who denounce deviance may at the same time have a vested interest in seeing deviance perpetuated at least temporarily, until the phenomenon loses its “sales value”’ (Cohen, 1972: 141).
- 7 Pioneering journalist of compensated dating, Hayami Yukiko, shared some of her teenage friends with her best friend of that time, who was the sociologist Miyadai Shinji, also specializing in compensated dating copy. Hayami kindly offered to introduce me to some of her pool of first-hand but pre-used informants in 1998. She also recalled introducing a number of girls in her coterie to Murakami Ryu a year or so earlier to help him with his personal research in preparation for writing his 1996 script for the film *Love and Pop* (1998) (Interview with Hayami, January 2003).
- 8 A detailed exploration of the antiphony between frequently pejorative racialized descriptions of schoolgirls in the press and the fashions and styles developed by girls can be found in Kinsella (2005).

- 9 Matsui Yayori, feminist and senior editor at the *Asahi* newspaper, states that she invented the term *kaishun* during demonstrations against Japanese corporate sex tours to Korea in around 1973 Matsui Yayori in (Buckley, 1997:153).
- 10 The 1993 Japanese translation of Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander (eds.) *Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry* (Virago 1988) had a considerable impact amongst feminists and others already engaged politically with the conditions and the legal status of prostitution in Japan.
- 11 See more about Hirano Yūji's activism at <http://www26.atwiki.jp/childrights/>
- 12 In 1960 the police had introduced a Shōnen Keisatsu Katsudō Yōkō (Youth Policing Policy), revised in 1996, which promoted rigorous preventative guidance of 'pre-criminal' (*guhan shōnen*) individuals.
- 13 Suzuki Yūko (1996: 54) is a radical feminist intellectual who defines the pre-war licensed brothel industry (*kōshō seido*) as a *de facto* 'public prostitution system' and argues that it showed a great deal of continuity with the organization of the wartime comfort women system and the post-war sexual services industry.
- 14 From the 1880s in particular, tens of thousands of teenage girls were sold into bondage on fixed-term contracts of between approximately two to six years (Tsurumi, 1990: 60–61). Evidence from legal and court records suggests that by the 1920s and 1930s licensed prostitutes (of the legal age of eighteen or older) were somewhat freer and able to leave their masters mid-way through their contracts (Ramseyer, 1996: 109–34).
- 15 A police survey carried out in 1997 in the wake of news about compensated dating suggested that girls receiving guidance (*hodo*) for sexual deviancy and shoplifting were less distinguished by their socio-economic background than had been expected (Ishibashi *et al.*, 1997).
- 16 See a detailed explanation of police guidance in Leheny, 2006: 96–102.
- 17 A police sweep-up of unlicensed prostitutes in the first five months of 1947 led to 17,871 arrests (Garon, 1997: 198). A survey of the motivations of these women – an investigation which appears to have set the mould for subsequent police surveys into 'sexual deviancy' – found that only 47 per cent were motivated by financial hardship while 24 per cent were motivated by curiosity (Garon, 1997: 197).
- 18 In 1954, the Matsumoto incident in Kagoshima, in which a construction company boss was found to be supplying schoolgirls in uniform to his acquaintances, had a significant impact on the female Diet legislators and led to the 1956 Prostitution Prevention Act (Kamichika, 1955). Thanks to Sally Hastings for sharing this source with me.
- 19 Yamane Kazuma (1993: 35) summarized what was meant by *gyaru*: 'Gyaru originated with the economic supremacism of the 1980s and were bewitching young women who utilized their looks like weapons and infested cities with their combination of anti-social and infantile behaviour. They came to symbolize the *modus operandi* and way of thinking of that entire period.'
- 20 See http://www.jin-japan.org/stat/category_16.html (Accessed 2005).
- 21 As Ueno Chizuko has remarked in her commentary on 'immaculate victims' (Ueno, 2004: 89) there has been a tendency, both within the Japanese media and internationally, to present the comfort women as more violated *because* they were sexually inexperienced before they were enslaved in comfort stations.

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4

TAIBATSU

From educational solution to social problem to marginalized non-issue

Aaron L. Miller

Corporal punishment – loosely defined as the beating, hitting or kicking of the body to discipline or punish, by a person in a position of authority relative to a person in a subordinate position – is not a social phenomenon unique to Japan (Miller 2009a). Despite recent movements towards its eradication (*Economist* 2008; Miller 2009b), corporal punishment remains a widely used disciplinary practice throughout the world, more commonly used by parents at home than by teachers at school (Donnelly and Straus 2005: 4). Corporal punishment has been used in Japan for centuries, but it was first labelled ‘*taibatsu*’ in the Meiji Period. This chapter demonstrates how the definition and educational value of *taibatsu* have been debated ever since, and how the term has alternatively been seen as a ‘solution’, ‘problem’ and even ‘marginalized non-issue’.

This chapter does not seek to quantitatively measure whether Japanese people are more likely to use *taibatsu* than people in other nations. This is an endeavour fraught with problems. It also implies that there is a ‘best practice’ for disciplining youth, regardless of time and place. Even though I do not personally advocate the use of physical punishment, this chapter is not a recommendation to the Japanese to either continue to use *taibatsu* or to eradicate it altogether. That is a decision only Japanese people can make.¹

Rather, this chapter interprets the transitions in *taibatsu* discourse in the post-war period and shows how this controversial term has symbolized time and context-specific educational perspectives. Drawing on an extensive literature review in Japanese and English, and on interviews with Japanese government officials, this chapter explores why and how *taibatsu* progressed from being first seen as an ‘educational solution’ for increasingly ‘wild’ and undisciplined schools (in the 1970s and 1980s), to being constructed as a ‘problematic’ way that teachers disciplined youth (in the 1980s and 1990s), to being marginalized by other, more pressing ‘problems’ like ‘child abuse’ and ‘bullying’ (in the 2000s).

History and sociocultural context

Punishments in ancient Japan were strongly influenced by Chinese law (Schmidt 2002: 9). The term *sotatsu*, which referred to the ‘random whipping of the common people’ (*yatara ni muchi utsu koto*) by Chinese landlords with a three-metre ‘carrot stick’ (*ibara* or *ninjinboku*), can be found in the *Man’yōshū*, the oldest collection of Japanese poetry. This suggests that forms of corporal punishment have been used in Japan since at least the Nara Period (710–94). We also know that there was corporal punishment in the latter half of the Nara Period for students who failed exams at universities (*ryō*) (Emori 1989: 6). Corporal punishment has therefore been used for hundreds of years in Japan, especially in educational settings,² though the ways that related practices have been understood have drastically differed across time and context.

The linguistic roots of ‘discipline’ and ‘punishment’ in Japan are closely related to the body. One term for ‘discipline’ in Japanese, *shitsuke*, literally means ‘beautifying’ the ‘body’. *Taibatsu*, as its Chinese character (*kanji*) ideographs maintain, literally means the ‘punishment’ of the ‘body’. In common parlance, *taibatsu* implies hitting any part of the body with the fist, palm, whip or bamboo stick, kicking, boxing of the ears, or making someone sit in *seiza* position (kneeling with the buttocks resting on the heels). At times, it has also referred to forcing someone to stand holding buckets of water for long periods of time, starving someone of food or depriving them of the right to be in the classroom.

Despite these historical and linguistic roots from China, the translation of the word ‘corporal punishment’ as *taibatsu* was a consequence of Japan’s opening up to the west. Japan Ministry of Education (MOE) Minister Tanaka Fujimaro (1845–1909) came across the English term ‘corporal punishment’ in a New Jersey law banning the practice in that state’s public schools during his participation on the Iwakura Mission³ between 1871 and 1873. This New Jersey law later became the basis for Japan’s 1879 national prohibition of corporal punishment in Japanese schools (Table 4.1).⁴

Although punishment of the body was used in Japan long before Tanaka translated the New Jersey law, the term ‘*taibatsu*’ is thus a relatively new addition to the Japanese language. However, there has been little consensus regarding the definition – and educational value – of *taibatsu*. Although the Japanese government has at times offered definitions of *taibatsu*, most of these definitions have been ambiguous. While one observer of *taibatsu* may describe it as ‘violence’ (*bōryoku*), another may justify it as ‘guidance’ (*shidō*) or ‘discipline’ (*shitsuke*). One may say that it is ‘abuse’ (*gyakutai*) while another may call it ‘the whip of love’ (*ai no muchū*) (*Asahi Shinbun* 2006; Miller 2009a). There has been significant contestation around the use and appropriateness of physical punishment (Fukuzawa and LeTendre 2001: 9).

Many scholars of Japan (e.g. Morikawa 1990; Hori 1994; Hirata and Okada 1998; Yoneyama 1999; Botsman 2005; Imazu 2006) accordingly argue that the analysis of ‘corporal punishment’ must be based less on universal, global definitions

TABLE 4.1. History of legal considerations concerning *taibatsu* in Japanese schools

1879	Prohibition of <i>taibatsu</i> enacted in Article 46 of Education Law (<i>kyōiku reidai 46 jo</i>)
1885	Repeal of Law prohibiting <i>taibatsu</i>
1890	Prohibition of <i>taibatsu</i> reinstated in Article 47 of Law of Primary Schools (<i>shōgakkō reidai 47 jo</i>)
1900	Prohibition of <i>taibatsu</i> repealed (second time)
1941	Prohibition of <i>taibatsu</i> reinstated (second time)
1945	<i>Taibatsu</i> prohibited in Article 11 of Fundamental Education Law (<i>gakkō kyōiku hōdai 11 jo</i>)
1948	Ministry of Justice Memorandum (<i>tsūjitsū</i>) entitled ‘ <i>Chōkai no teidō</i> ’ (Levels of Discipline) issued (December 22)

Source: Kobayashi *et al.* 1997; Terasaki 2001.

and more on individual, socioculturally contextualized incidents. They rightly note that *taibatsu* means different things to different people. This multivocality helps to explain why *taibatsu* has been seen as both an ‘educational solution’ by some and a ‘social problem’ by others.

Statistics

There is some evidence to suggest that corporal punishment is on the decline in schools worldwide. In the United States, half of all states have banned the practice, and the percentage of children being hit in public schools has reportedly decreased from 3.5 per cent (1,521,896 students) in 1976 to 0.46 per cent (223,190 students) in 2006 (Center for Effective Discipline). Similarly, owing to a 1998 ban that outlawed corporal punishment in schools in the UK, corporal punishment has become used less often as a disciplinary tool (Turner 1998). Several international organizations have vigorously moved to eschew corporal punishment in favour of other less violent disciplinary measures (e.g. The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, The Center for Effective Discipline, The Society for Adolescent Medicine, Japan Federation of Bar Associations).

Unfortunately, because reliable statistics are unavailable, it is difficult to say whether the practice is on the decline in Japan. In the 1990s and briefly in the new millennium, the MOE tried to understand the extent to which *taibatsu* existed in the public schools it oversaw. The MOE asked schools to report incidents to them that they deemed to be *taibatsu* (Figure 4.1). Figures are only available for the years 1990–2003, however; government interest in the topic was relatively short-lived.⁵ Media coverage also intensified in the 1990s (see Figure 4.2).

Why did the MOE only collect statistics on *taibatsu* between 1990 and 2003, and why did the media, in particular the *Asahi Shinbun*, cover stories of *taibatsu* most seriously in the 1990s and early to mid-2000s? To fully understand why *taibatsu* became constructed as a ‘social problem’, we need to pay special attention

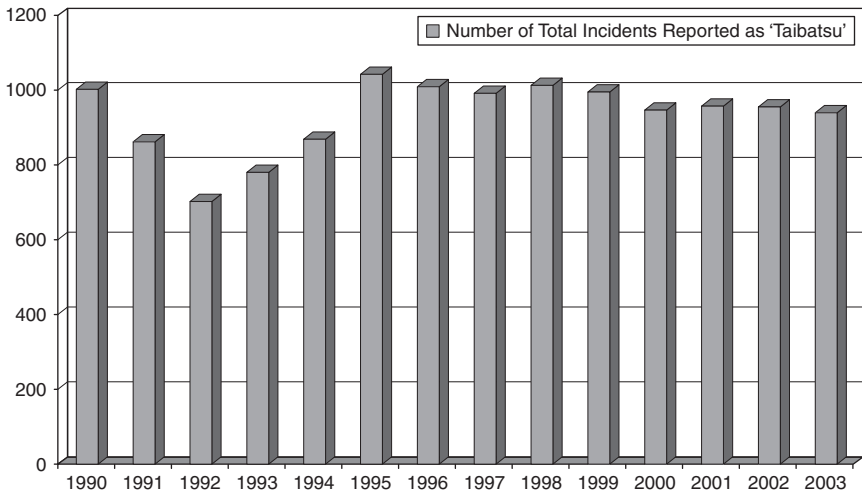


FIGURE 4.1 Government statistics on *taibatsu*.

(Source: MOE Statistics, www.mext.go.jp, accessed August 4, 2007)

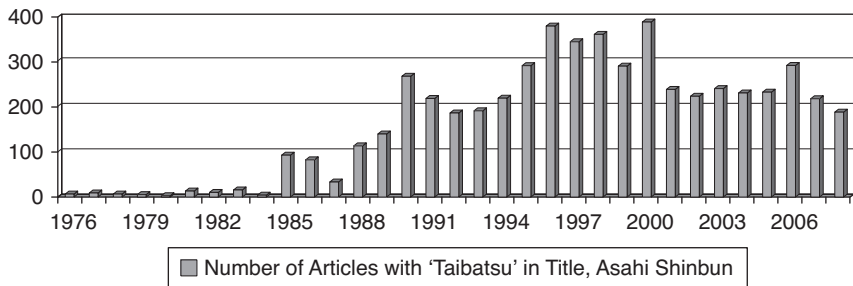


FIGURE 4.2 Transitions in *taibatsu* discourse.

(Source: *Asahi Shinbun* Kikuzō II Database (all editions but excluding *AERA* or *Shūkan Asahi*))

to certain high-profile incidents, to post-war educational discourses that associated *taibatsu* with a regime of so-called 'managed education', and to political debates around the time that the MOE decided to discontinue collection of *taibatsu* statistics.

The construction of *taibatsu* as both 'solution' and 'problem'

Taibatsu as 'solution': School violence and managed education

During the so-called high economic growth period (*kōdo keizai seichōki*, 1955–73), in which Japan emerged as a global economic power, the Japanese education

system was widely trusted to produce intelligent, obedient workers. These workers were expected to diligently toil in order to make their companies – and by extension, Japan itself – profitable. Discipline was a driving force behind this connection between the education system and the economy: teachers emphasized the importance of learning by rote memorization and rebellious students were not tolerated. *Taibatsu* was occasionally employed to ensure that Japanese classrooms remained orderly so that instruction could continue, uninhibited by unruly distraction.

Beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Japanese education system was increasingly perceived as being in a state of crisis (see Chapters 1 and 2 in this volume). ‘School violence’ (*kōnai bōryoku*), both between teachers and students and between students and other students, was increasingly seen as a problem afflicting Japanese schools (Okano and Tsuchiya 1999, Yoneyama 1999, Kakinuma and Nagano 1997). MOE statistics suggest that ‘school violence’ continued to grow even throughout the 1990s (see Figure 4.3). Outside the school, ‘youth crime’ (*shōnen hanzai*) hit its peak in 1983, according to Japanese Police Agency statistics, and the media storm around issues of youth crime and violence against adults invited Japanese teachers to use stricter forms of discipline to keep young people orderly. *Kanri kyōiku* (‘controlled’, ‘regulated’ or ‘managed education’), which emphasized rigid control and strict discipline of student behaviour, was perceived to be the necessary and appropriate antidote for ‘school violence’ (Imabashi 1986).

To many, *taibatsu* was seen as the means to make ‘managed education’ work (Miyata 1994: 219; Kakinuma and Nagano 1997; Okano and Tsuchiya 1999; Yoneyama 1999). Morikawa (1990) notes that teachers – especially those in charge of physical education – were expected to play the role of ‘corporal punishment teachers’ (*taibatsu kyōshi*). This role was deemed essential to maintain the hierarchy and order of the school. Yoneyama and Naitō (2003: 322) agree: ‘Teachers who use

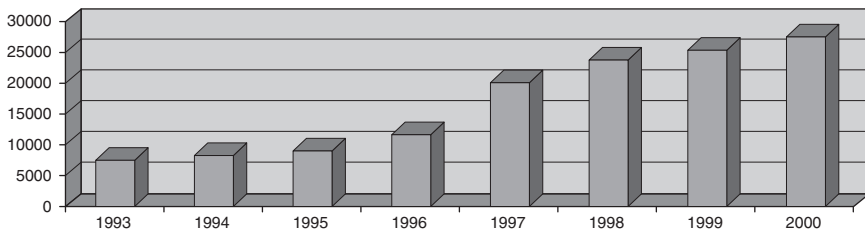


FIGURE 4.3 Incidents of ‘school violence’ in elementary and junior high schools.

(Source: MOE Statistics, <http://www.mext.go.jp>, accessed August 8, 2007)

Note: MOE Survey methodology for measuring ‘school violence’ changed between the 1996 and 1997 surveys, which explains the huge jump seen between these years (see <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/statist/04120801/008.pdf> p. 73, for details).

physical violence against students were often incorporated as an essential part of the school management.'

In one example that illustrated the predicament faced by many teachers around this time, a teacher writing under the pseudonym Satō Ichirō reflected on the early years of his career in the 1980s (Satō 1999). Satō (1999: 157–59) explained how *taibatsu* was considered the only means to combat the threat of 'school violence' at his 'wild' (*areta*) junior high school: 'There was a group of ten or so third-year delinquents who swaggered around the school like they owned the place – they stole other students' food at lunchtime – It was the kind of school where if a teacher warned a student, he would get hit or made fun of – They had been kicked out of their homes by their parents, so we couldn't send them home.' As a young teacher, his frustrations came to a head when this group of boys forced some first-year students to smoke: 'I could not allow that. I gave in to temptation and hit one of the boys, over and over again. I hit him from first period all the way to third period. As I did I thought: "I'll convince you with blows. I'll convince you with blows"' (Satō 1999: 157–58). Satō believed that he was strong enough and young enough to instruct without *taibatsu*, but he soon found that he did not have the 'know-how' to use methods other than *taibatsu*. Meanwhile, his fellow teachers espoused 'managed education' and the prescription that *taibatsu* was necessary to combat 'school violence'.

As Japan's education system was increasingly seen to be in a state of crisis, disciplinary measures such as *taibatsu* and educational regimes such as 'managed education' were called upon to solve 'problems', in particular school violence, youth crime and delinquency. Many people saw *taibatsu* as the proper remedy for these increasingly unruly classrooms and the only way to ensure youth obedience.

Taibatsu as 'problem': media coverage of 'extreme' incidents

If 'school violence' was the problem and 'managed education/*taibatsu*' were the solutions, how did *taibatsu* itself become viewed as a 'problem'? The answer is that 'extreme' incidents of *taibatsu* were sensationalized and taken out of context by the Japanese media, thus creating a 'moral panic' over even 'milder' forms of *taibatsu*.⁴

Perhaps the best-known cases of *taibatsu* in Japan were the 'Totsuka Yacht School Incidents' (*Totsuka yotto sukūru jiken*). Named after an Olympic yachtsman called Totsuka Hiroshi (photograph 4.1), the Totsuka Yacht School opened in 1976, with Totsuka as its principal. It dealt primarily with 'problem children' (*mon-daiji*), many of whom had previously refused to attend school or stayed locked up in their rooms all day. Between 1979 and 1983, several children under Totsuka's watch went missing and/or died during what Totsuka described as 'rehabilitation' training. In one of these incidents (1982), coaches under Totsuka's authority hit a thirteen-year-old boy with sandals and bamboo sticks called *shinai*, threw him into the ocean without a life jacket, and simulated the act of drowning him. Subsequent court records showed that the boy died from internal bleeding, the



PHOTOGRAPH 4.1 One of Totsuka's books insists that he can 'fix' problem children.

stress of full-body shock, and severe trauma (*Asahi Shinbun*, 30 October 1991). The Totsuka Yacht School Incidents set off a media firestorm that was subsequently addressed both in the scholarly and popular educational debate over *taibatsu* (see Miller 2009a; and Miller and Toivonen 2010). More than any others, the Totsuka Yacht School Incidents served to bring *taibatsu* into the public discourse on education, in part because Totsuka is a charismatic public speaker and author. He has written many books defending his theories (Totsuka 1983, 1998, 2003). When Totsuka was released from prison (2006) for his role in these incidents, he maintained defiantly, '*Taibatsu* is education' (*taibatsu wa kyōiku da*).⁶

There were other headline-grabbing incidents (Table 4.2). In 1985, a Gifu boy was severely beaten for breaking school policy by bringing a hair dryer on a school trip. A court gave his teacher a three-year sentence, and, disagreeing with Totsuka's pronouncement, stated that the teacher's actions 'had no relation to education' (*kyōiku to wa muen no kōi*) (Watanabe 1986: 45; Yoneyama 1999: 92). In 1991, at Kazenoko Gakuen, two children died after the school's principal left them in solitary confinement during the height of summer (Yoneyama 1999: 93).

TABLE 4.2. Key ‘extreme’ *taibatsu* incidents.

1979–1983	‘Totsuka Yacht School Incidents’
1985	‘Giyō Hair Dryer Incident’
1991	Kazenoko Gakuen Incident
2006	Boy at <i>Ai Mental School</i> mental institution dies. Counsellor Sugiura Shōko is arrested.
2007	Sumo wrestler Tokitaizan dies after coach and ‘senior’ (<i>senpai</i>) led beating

These incidents were unquestionably tragic. But it was likely media coverage of these ‘extreme’ incidents that was responsible for both spotlighting the continued existence of *taibatsu* in Japanese schools, and causing an increasing number of people to believe that *all forms* of *taibatsu* should be viewed as a ‘problem’, not a ‘solution’. This media coverage likely inflated the ‘problem’ in people’s minds beyond what was actually merited. A number of scholars have pointed out that care needs to be taken to distinguish between the number of actual *taibatsu* incidents and the public awareness of *taibatsu* created by media coverage (Imabashi 1986; Okano and Tsuchiya 1999: 209; Wray 1999: 102; Yoder 2004: 45).

Media focus on the most ‘extreme’ incidents of *taibatsu* has shifted attention away from the fact that educators who employ milder forms of *taibatsu* are still going unpunished (Imazu 2006). There is a significant gap between the number of reported cases of *taibatsu* and the number of teachers punished, according to official MOE statistics (see Figure 4.4).

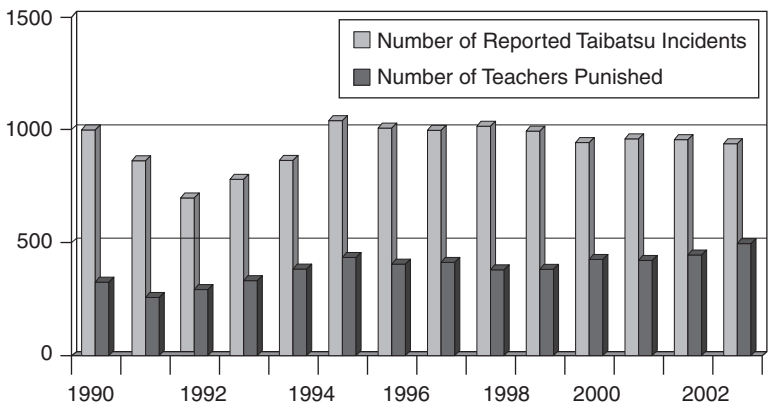


FIGURE 4.4 Number of teachers punished for *taibatsu* compared to number of incidents reported.

(Source: MOE Statistics, <http://www.mext.go.jp>, accessed August 4, 2007)

The marginalization of a 'problem': The discontinuation of government *taibatsu* statistics and *taibatsu*'s relabelling and redefinition

In this way, *taibatsu* was first seen as an 'educational solution' (in the 1970s and 1980s) but then became an 'educational problem' (in the 1980s and 1990s). More recently (2000s), however, *taibatsu*'s status as a 'problem' has been marginalized as the Japanese government has discontinued taking statistics, the media have begun to focus on other 'educational problems' such as 'bullying' and 'child abuse', and interest groups have tried to redefine and relabel *taibatsu*.

One measure of any 'social problem' is whether the government determine it important enough to warrant collecting statistics. The Elementary and Junior High School Education Bureau of the Young Students Division (*shotōchūtō kyōiku kyoku jidō seitōka*, hereafter EMSEBYSD) within the MOE, collected statistics on incidents reported as '*taibatsu*' from 1990 until 2003. The EMSEBYSD provided no *taibatsu* statistics for any year after 2004 in their 'Survey Regarding Various Problems in the Guidance of Students' (Japan Ministry of Education 2007a), the survey in which *taibatsu* statistics had previously been reported. The EMSEBYSD depended on schools reporting incidents and then classifying them either under the heading '*taibatsu*', or under the heading 'incidents that might be *taibatsu*' (*taibatsu de wa nai ka*). An official from the EMSEBYSD said in a telephone interview that they had to stop collecting statistics because they 'could not define what *taibatsu* was' (personal communication, November 13, 2007). The definition of *taibatsu*, he said, was 'ambiguous' (*aimai*). The EMSEBYSD responded to the questions 'why did the MOE stop collecting statistics on *taibatsu*?' and 'why did it stop collecting them at this particular point in time?' with the following e-mail message:

Until the 2004 survey, (which gathered and published statistics on incidents in 2003) we collected statistics in a survey called 'Survey Regarding Various Problems in the Guidance of Students' and, using an extremely vague definition, we published them as 'The Number of Incidents That Might Be *Taibatsu* in Schools'. We had to assume that many of the incidents would be disputed (and we could never say whether any incident was officially an incident of *taibatsu*), so we decided, after a discussion within the department, to stop taking the statistics altogether. We still consider *taibatsu* to be a problem, but it just so happened that we had to stop taking statistics at that time.

When the MOE stopped publishing *taibatsu* statistics in 2004, however, it implicitly downgraded *taibatsu* from its status as 'social problem' and marginalized it to 'second-class' status among all 'social problems'.

At the same time, the MOE continued to collect statistics on other 'first-class' 'social problems' within Japanese education, such as 'bullying' (*ijime*) and 'child abuse' (*jidō gyakutai*), both of which also relied on ambiguous definitions.

The term '*gyakutai*' (abuse) has recently begun to be used in government documents describing incidents of teacher-to-student violence, incidents that had in the past been called '*taibatsu*'. In a report published in 2005 concerning 'Various Problems Related to Student Guidance', the word *taibatsu* is not used at all, though 'violence' (*bōryoku*) and 'child abuse' (*jidō gyakutai*) are both mentioned many times. In May 2006, the MOE published a report under the heading 'Efforts Being Made at Schools to Prevent Child Abuse', with the word *taibatsu* only mentioned twice. In contrast to the years between 1990 and 2004, *taibatsu* is no longer the MOE's preferred term to describe violence by a teacher against a pupil. (It is important to keep in mind that national educational laws prohibiting *taibatsu* in Japanese schools have remained unchanged throughout this time.)

When I asked the EMSEBYS for a definition of the phrase 'child abuse in schools' (*gakkō ni okeru jidō gyakutai*), a phrase that had been used in recent publications (e.g. Japan Ministry of Education 2006) and seemed to overlap with earlier perceptions of *taibatsu* in Japanese schools, officials said that they did not have a particularly clear one (*toku ni nai desu*). But by relabelling incidents previously viewed as *taibatsu*, the Japanese government consciously selected a term – *gyakutai* – that was less controversial. Unlike *taibatsu*, which is highly contested, advocates of physical discipline cannot champion *gyakutai* because it carries a more consistently negative connotation. No one in Japan would say that '*gyakutai* is education', as Totsuka did with *taibatsu*.

These linguistic changes by the government are mirrored by recent media terminology. The terms 'corporal punishment' and 'school' (*taibatsu* and *gakkō*) are now used together much less than the terms 'abuse' and 'school' (*gyakutai* and *gakkō*) (Figure 4.5). The *Asahi Shinbun*'s Kikuzō II archival database shows that the term '*gyakutai*' (abuse) has gradually come to replace the term *taibatsu* in the media, though not altogether (Figure 4.6). 'Abuse' discourse has served to marginalize the need for the media to discuss or the government to measure *taibatsu*.

This government and media relabelling took place amidst an extremely important politico-educational debate of the time. A few years after the so-called 'room to breathe' (*yutori kyōiku*) education reforms were implemented (2002), conservatives, led by then Prime Minister Abe Shinzō, sought to repeal them.⁷ The Education Rebuilding Council (*kyōiku saisei kaigi*, hereafter ERC), an education advisory council convened by Abe, made efforts to redefine *taibatsu* (BBC 2007). In 2007, the ERC's seventeen conservative-leaning education 'experts' from business, academia and government recommended that, while teachers should neither be allowed to 'inflict bodily harm' (*shintai ni tai suru shingai*) on students, nor be able to cause any kind of physical pain, the definition of *taibatsu* should be changed (from a 1948 Ministry of Justice (MOJ) Memorandum which had hitherto defined *taibatsu* in schools⁸) to no longer include 'making a student stay after class to study' or 'making a student leave the classroom'.⁹ The ERC also suggested that neither making students clean the classroom, nor taking away their mobile phones, nor making them stand during class, should be considered *taibatsu*, though they

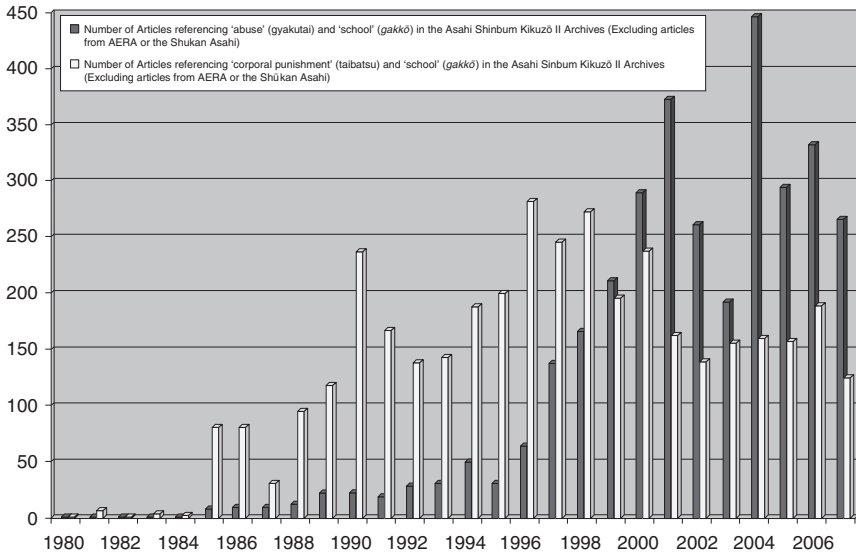


FIGURE 4.5 'Abuse' vs. 'corporal punishment' (Search results with 'school').

(Source: *Asahi Shinbun Kikuzō II Database* (all editions but excluding *AERA* or *Shūkan Asahi*))

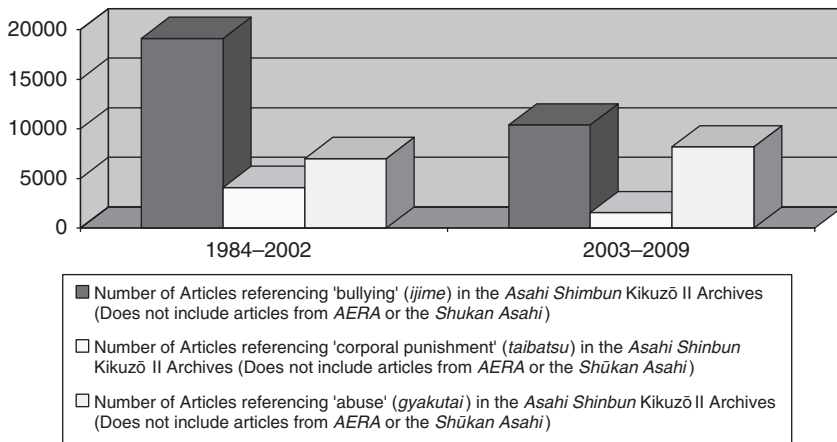


FIGURE 4.6 Articles referencing 'bullying', 'abuse' and 'corporal punishment'.

agreed that prohibiting students from using the bathroom should still be (*Nihon Keizai Shinbun* 2007). Yamatani Eriko, lead member of the ERC, said, '[the old definition of *taibatsu*] deprived teachers of the means to instruct children' (quoted in Nakamura 2007). The ERC seems to have wanted to pare down the old MOJ definition of *taibatsu* (see note 8) in order to rehabilitate the term for greater public

use. Perhaps they wanted to clarify the term in order to distance themselves from Totsuka's post-prison statement in 2006, '*Taibatsu* is education'.

The ERC's recommendations in 2007 may not directly relate to the discontinuation of *taibatsu* statistics – after all, the ERC and the EMSEBYSD are separate government institutions – but by ceasing to take statistics after 2004 and relabelling incidents of teacher-to-student violence as 'abuse' rather than 'corporal punishment', the EMSEBYSD set the stage for the ERC to 'revise' the definition of *taibatsu*. They did this by once again calling into question the definition of a social issue that had long been debated and whose definition had long been considered 'ambiguous'. If anything, their actions only added more confusion to the situation.

This definitional ambiguity was the stated reason for the discontinuation of *taibatsu* statistics, but the MOE continues to take statistics on other 'youth problems' that are also difficult to define. One is 'bullying' (*ijime*). Now, instead of focusing on the 'problem' of teachers unlawfully striking students, the MOE has begun to focus more on the 'suffering' caused by unkind peers. Although the MOE does not define *taibatsu* in a 2007 MOE publication entitled 'Regarding the Outlook of the Survey on Various Problems in the Guidance of Students', it does define a victim of *ijime*: 'someone who, while they have normal human relations, feels mental pain after receiving psychological or physical attack' (Japan MOE 2007b). The language used in their definition of 'bullying' is remarkably similar to the 1948 Ministry of Justice definition of *taibatsu*, except that instead of the expression 'bodily suffering' (*nikutaitekina kutsū*), the definition of 'bullying' uses the expression 'physical suffering' (*butsuritekina kutsū*). This linguistic continuity supports the 'youth problems pedigree' outlined in Chapter 1, where meanings of successive social categories are closely intertwined (also see Chapter 6 by Horiguchi). It also shows how certain social problems, when appropriated by the media or government, supplant others.

Conclusion

Based on a 'diachronic' approach that attempts to show how meanings have been defined in context, this chapter on *taibatsu* has offered a glimpse at how social issues involving Japanese youth can be constructed as both 'problem' and 'solution', and how other issues are used to marginalize their importance. It therefore has shown how societies go through so-called 'paradigm shifts', even with respect to the dominant view of a single 'youth problem' (Kuhn 1962). It has also explored how *taibatsu* discourse relates to wider cultural and educational debates as well as to structural changes in Japanese society.

Though the perceived increase of 'school violence' and the perceived effectiveness of 'managed education' caused many to consider *taibatsu* an 'educational solution' (1970s and early 1980s), *taibatsu* gained its status as a 'problem' on a national level in the aftermath of 'extreme' cases like the Totsuka Yacht School Incidents, when actors like the media and the MOE began to take an interest in

such matters (late 1970s through 1990s). *Taibatsu* was thereafter viewed as a ‘problem’ until it was marginalized by the discontinuation of MOE statistics (2004) and associated relabelling in the government and media (2005–present), the attempted redefinition of *taibatsu* by the ERC (2007) and the entrance of other ‘problems’ in media discourse. Like *otaku* (Chapter 1), which shifted from a symbol of ‘twisted deviance’ to an ‘item of coolness’, and like *hikikomori* (Chapter 6), which was said to represent both the withdrawal of youth within Japan and Japan’s ‘withdrawal’ from the world, *taibatsu* has symbolized different things to different people at different times. Also like *otaku* and *hikikomori*, the media has capitalized on ‘extreme’ and violent *taibatsu* incidents to fuel ‘moral panics’. Like *ijime* (Chapter 1), *taibatsu* was first seen as a ‘positive mechanism of socialization’ but later became seen as a social problem. *Taibatsu* was, like other ‘problems’ discussed in this volume, considered a ‘problem’ when the media and government took interest in it, and quickly became a non-issue when these actors decided to ignore it.

Unlike other issues in this book, however, *taibatsu*’s evolution – from ‘solution’ to ‘problem’ to ‘marginalized non-issue’ – is unique. This is partly because *taibatsu* is an *act*, not a *state* of passive youth inactivity like *hikikomori* or a socially constructed youth *category* like *otaku*. Nor is it a ‘problem’ between youth, like *ijime*. In fact, *taibatsu* is not a ‘problem’ of youth *per se*, but rather a ‘problem’ of how adults *treat*, *discipline* and *punish* youth. But *taibatsu*’s uniqueness also lies in the fact that it was seen as an ‘educational solution’ long before it was seen as a ‘social problem’. While many ‘youth problems’ in Japan have evolved as media-driven ‘moral panics’ (Cohen 1972) followed by marginalization, *taibatsu*’s evolution began with an earlier stage as ‘educational solution’. Finally, the issue of *taibatsu* has been debated in Japan since the term was coined in the Meiji Period and in this respect is perhaps different from the rest of the topics discussed in this book.

The group most directly influenced by *taibatsu* – the youth ‘victims’ of it – are comparatively ‘muted’ or ‘silenced’ in *taibatsu* discourse (Ardener 1975; Yoneyama 1999). In their place, interest groups and interested individuals have constantly struggled to define and contest the term. When people mainly focused on ‘school violence’ and ‘Japanese education in crisis’, teachers, parents and scholars highlighted *taibatsu*’s ability to solve these problems. When the media discovered a charismatic character named Totsuka Hiroshi who obstinately stood by his position that ‘*taibatsu* was education’, they penned articles vilifying him. Totsuka fought back, though, writing another book outlining his position (Totsuka 2007). This shows how ‘media panics’ and ‘claims-making’ are complementary processes (see Chapter 1).

The interplay between these groups and individuals underscores the inherent conflict in any society and shows how the issue of ‘corporal punishment’ has had a polarizing effect on Japanese educational perspectives. Totsuka’s statement that ‘*taibatsu* is education’ has persuaded many of *taibatsu*’s educational and disciplinary value, and he continues to receive considerable support from Tokyo

Governor Ishihara Shintarō and conservative businessmen. Totsuka's assertion also symbolizes a disciplinarian paradigm of education that harkens back to an 'imagined' past when the Japanese education system 'worked' to produce diligent, obedient workers for corporate Japan. In this view, education serves the economy, not the other way round. Meanwhile, influential anti-*taibatsu* advocates such as Morita Yuri (2003) contest Totsuka's view and advocate the relinquishment of such 'harsh' disciplinary methods and the adoption of a more merciful education system.

These contrasting opinions remind us that interest groups and interested individuals will continue to try to influence the discourse on discipline in a way that best serves their own agenda (Dahrendorf 1959: 241–48). There will always be some who consider such disciplinary measures to be 'solutions' to 'youth problems', some who consider them as a chief cause of 'youth problems', and some who will not consider them at all.

Notes

- 1 This is not to justify even such 'milder' forms. I personally advocate more creative disciplinary measures. These can include, for example, the establishment of strict rules that are consistently adhered to, better and consistent use of effective communication, especially the use of praise to a greater extent than criticism, and when punishments are necessary, the limiting of freedoms that students would normally enjoy.
- 2 This chapter does not deal with corporal punishment in penal or familial domains.
- 3 The Iwakura Mission (*Iwakura Shisatsudan*), which was initiated in 1871 and led by Iwakura Tomomi, sent Japanese diplomats around the world to gather the information and knowledge needed to modernize after Japan's long period of isolation.
- 4 Tanaka may have been directed to this law by Rutgers University (New Jersey) professor David Murray, who had been employed by the Japanese government as a 'hired foreign teacher' (*oyatoi gaikokujin kyōshi*) to help reform Japanese education.
- 5 In 2001, the Ministry of Education (MOE) was restructured and became the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT; Monbushō). However, this chapter uses the old abbreviation 'MOE' even when discussing developments in the 2000s for the sake of consistency.
- 6 Totsuka and the 15 coaches who worked under him all served prison sentences. Totsuka's sentence was initially six years of 'hard labour' (*chōeki*), but he only served three (2003–6). For the 'crime of confinement', Kazenoko's principal received a six-year sentence (later reduced to five years in consideration of his ailing health).
- 7 With these reforms, 30 per cent of the core curriculum was reduced in elementary and junior high schools and independently selected electives were introduced. Only physical education remained mandatory at the high school level – all other classes were optional. According to Nathan, the 'emphasis [was] clear: selective learning, subjectivity, and above all, student autonomy' (Nathan 2004: 33).
- 8 This MOJ Memorandum (*tsūtsu*), published on December 22, 1948 and entitled 'Chōkai no teido' (Degrees of Discipline), stated that the term *taibatsu* connoted 'discipline which inflicts physical pain and infringes on the body of a victim' (*shintai ni tai suru shingai, hiba-tsusha ni nikutaiteki kutsu o ataeru yō na chōkai*) and also gave concrete examples of what *taibatsu* was: 'Some kind of discipline which is physical and has the nature of physical discipline like hitting, kicking, in other words direct infringement against the body like *tanza* (sitting quietly), *chokuritsu* (making stand up straight), *inokori* (left somewhere), *hirō* (fatigue), and *kūfuku* (hunger)' (quoted in Emori 1989: 256).

- 9 One section from the MOJ Memorandum that the ERC wanted to change read: 'children who are lazy or disruptive cannot be sent outside the classroom' (*jūgyō chū namaketa, sawaida to itte seito o kyōshitsu gai ni dasu koto wa yurusarenai*).

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5

THE 'DISCOVERY' AND 'REDISCOVERY' OF CHILD ABUSE (*JIDŌ GYAKUTAI*) IN JAPAN

Roger Goodman

At first gloss, the issue of child abuse might appear slightly out of place in a book on 'youth problems'. Do the victims of child abuse fall into the category of 'youth'? Stoetzel (1955: 65) pointed out in his post-war examination of Japanese youth that, although there was an abundance of words for children in Japanese, they tended to be very specific in their scope. He suggested that *kodomo* covered the years from birth to age six, *shōnen* referred to boys and girls from six to about 15, and *seinen* meant those from 15 to adulthood, ostensibly at 20, but in some usages not until marriage. In the case of child abuse in Japan, the most commonly used word is *jidō*, which is generally taken to refer to children of elementary-school age (6–12), as opposed to *seito*, which refers to those of secondary school age (12–18). In the case of the returnee schoolchildren discussed in [Chapter 2](#), we saw that the bureaucratic term *shijō* was used, which is the combination of the Chinese characters for 'child' and 'woman'. The nuances of all of these terms are of course always contested, but overall in Japan there is a sense that the biggest difference is between adults and non-adults, with entry into the workforce being seen as the minimum prerequisite for entry into adulthood. All non-adults have historically been seen as in need of protection and as extensions of the adults who are responsible for them.

Even if one wanted to take a narrower definition of 'youth' as those in their teens and above, it would still not be inappropriate to include a chapter on child abuse in a book on youth problems. There are two reasons for this. First, although this does not come through clearly in the Japanese data, there is no doubt that teenagers are also victims of abuse just as adults become victims of domestic violence in Japan. Second, as we shall see later, one of the main debates about child abuse in Japan today is around the role of young, and often single, mothers as abusers.

Another reason why the ‘discovery’ of child abuse in Japan fits well into this book is that it is probably the easiest of the case studies which we cover to set in a comparative perspective. There is a huge literature about the discovery of child abuse in many industrialized societies with which the Japanese case can be compared and it is an area where the social constructionist approach has frequently been applied. [Figure 5.1](#) (adapted from Taylor, 1992 and Buchanan, 1996) provides a particularly graphic example of how abuse is ‘discovered’, dealt with, disappears from the social agenda and then reappears. The feminist historian Linda Gordon (1988) documented this cycle over a hundred-year period in the United States, linking it to the rise of women in the workforce and male attempts to keep them in the domestic sphere. Reder, Duncan and Gray (1993: 8–13) have attempted to briefly document the relationship between ‘child abuse’ and changing historical and social views of children and families in the UK over a 200-year period. There are two elements of the Japanese example of ‘discovering’ child abuse which are of particular interest. The first is the vehemence with which the issue of child abuse was denied in the 1980s; the second is the rapid rediscovery of child abuse in 2010 after it had appeared to be slipping off the political and social radar following its previous peak exactly ten years earlier (see [Figure 5.2](#)).



FIGURE 5.1 Cycles of the discovery of child abuse (Adapted from Taylor, 1992 and Buchanan, 1996).

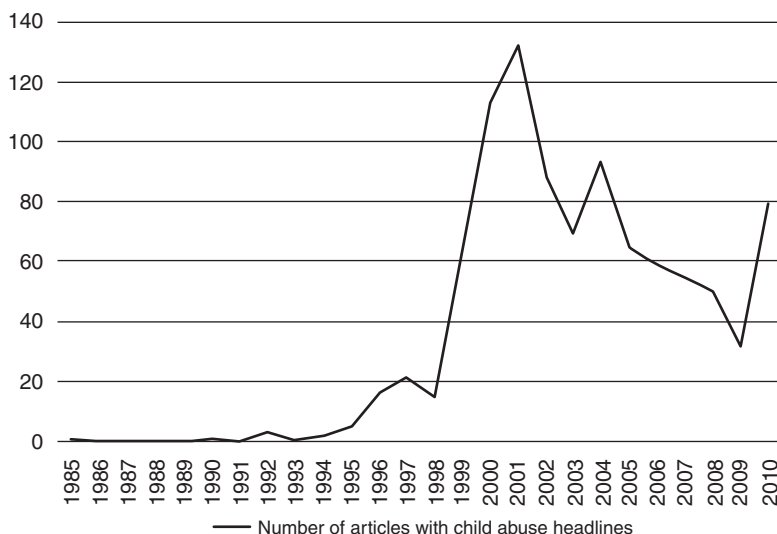


FIGURE 5.2 Number of articles with the phrase ‘child abuse’ (*jidō gyakutai* or *kodomo gyakutai*) in their titles between January 1985 and November 2010 (*Asahi Shinbun* morning edition).

Cultural explanations for the supposed lack of child abuse in Japan in the 1980s

As Figure 5.2 shows, a search of the *Asahi Shinbun* database for headlines with either the expression ‘*jidō gyakutai*’ or ‘*kodomo gyakutai*’ (the two most common expressions for ‘child abuse’ in Japanese) showed up a mere eight headlines in the decade 1985–95 and only one before 1990. In the context of the problem of child abuse having come to be seen as so widely prevalent in the United States from the 1970s and the UK and other European societies from the 1980s, this needs some explanation.

The majority of Japanese, including many professionals in child welfare, believed that in contrast to most western societies there was no, or virtually no, child abuse in Japan in the 1980s (see, for example, Ikeda, 1987: 204). Indeed, rather than ignore the topic completely, the absence of abuse in Japan was confidently explained in terms of the stability of the Japanese family, community and wider society, in all of which aspects the Japanese system was seen as different from western societies (see Wagatsuma, 1981, for a good example in English of this argument).

The structure of the Japanese family, it was maintained in the 1980s, made the likelihood of child abuse much lower than in western societies, because ‘traditional’ family ties remained strong (60 per cent of the elderly still lived with someone of a younger generation as opposed to only 8 per cent in the UK and 14 per cent in the US). This meant not only extra hands to help but also extra eyes to detect abuse. Crude divorce rates (the number of divorces per total population)

were less than half those of the UK and almost one-quarter those of the US (JIC, 1987: 92). Annual illegitimacy rates were still below 1 per cent (compared to around 30 per cent in the US and UK and over 50 per cent in some European countries). Teenage mothers were virtually non-existent; almost 90 per cent of teenagers who became pregnant had abortions (Kojima, 1986: 136). Japan had not only one of the highest average ages at first marriage for both men (28) and women (almost 26), but also one of the highest proportions of the population getting married (Ochiai, 1996: 55). Few women had followed the path of an increasing number of women in western Europe and North America of bringing children up by themselves. Single parent families constituted less than 1.5 per cent of all households (Peng, 1995). This situation, which, at least on the surface, demonstrated astonishing stability, was structured by the so-called 'postwar family system' (Ochiai, 1996) that comprised remarkably standardized life-courses (Brinton, 1994) and that in turn relied on the high stability of the employment system.

Both the status and style of motherhood were also seen as playing a major role in preventing child abuse in Japan. Japan had a well-documented and sharply drawn division of labour around gender (male, public sphere; female, domestic sphere) where the two roles were ideologically supposed to complement each other. For women, the dual role of mother and wife was seen as a professional one, and fulfilling it well conferred high status. Non-working women described themselves as *sengyō shufu* (professional housewives) on official forms (Imamura, 1987). At the start of the UN Year of the Child (1991), the then Prime Minister Kaifu made a speech in which he declared that the reason Japan had few social problems and a well-educated population was that women stayed at home and looked after their children. With 96 per cent of mothers in Japan finishing senior high school and over 40 per cent completing some form of tertiary education, Japanese mothers were almost certainly the most highly educated in the world as well as, on average, among the most mature in years at the time they became mothers.

Other factors that were also seen to make child abuse unlikely included the continuing stability of the community, the high status of community institutions and the acceptance of the authority of the State. The system of local police boxes (*kōban*) meant a much closer relationship between members of the police force and the local community than in most western societies. The *minsei jidōin* system (see Goodman, 1998) meant that any abuse of children within the local community should be picked up very early by voluntary welfare workers, who were members of the same community. Teachers enjoyed high status in society and parents listened to and accepted their advice. Schools gave regular physical check-ups to all children and insisted that parents follow up any concerns by visiting their doctors.

Finally, the stability of post-war society more generally was seen as important in explaining the absence of abuse of children. As sociologists who often argued a link between the two might have put it, the lack of deprivation precluded an increase

in depravation. The fruits of Japan's impressive post-war economic growth had been relatively equally shared throughout the society. Over 90 per cent of the population annually declared themselves to be members of a mass middle class and there was a widespread belief in both the cultural homogeneity of the Japanese population and the lack of significant minority groups. Recorded rates for all forms of serious crime were very low compared with all other OECD countries. Murder rates were one-fifth, rates of reported rape one-tenth, and rates of robbery one-sixtieth of those in the UK. Arrest rates were remarkably high – 98 per cent for murder and rape; almost 80 per cent for robbery (JIC, 1987: 92) – and those arrested were almost always convicted. People in Japan had the sense that they and their children lived in a very safe country. Overall, therefore, it was argued that for a wide variety of reasons Japan diverged from the view of many non-Japanese experts at the time (see Korbin, 1987), that child abuse was a concomitant feature of all developed societies.

Why, then, did the 'problem' of child abuse emerge when it did in the late 1990s, leading to a media-led 'moral panic' by the turn of the century? Who were the actors involved in its definition, and what were the concrete policy actions that resulted from the claims-making process? This chapters will deal with such questions through historically examining the process of how child abuse was socially constructed and how cultural assumptions concerning categories such as 'parent' and 'child' have shifted within this process.

The discourse on 'hidden' child abuse

It should be said that even before the 1990s not everyone in Japan accepted that there was no child abuse in the country. Ikeda (1987), for example, suggested that those few cases of abuse that were reported were probably only those instances where it was impossible for the abuse to be ignored any further. Others laid the low rates of reported abuse on factors such as a lack of a well-articulated system of reporting and recording child abuse and a strong reluctance to get involved in the personal business of others, in part, according to Kitamura *et al.* (1999: 24), because of fears of being sued by victims' parents for defamation. Technically, under Article 25 of the 1947 Child Welfare Law, anyone who sees a child who is not being properly cared for is obliged to report it to the *jidō sōdanjo* or the local child welfare office. The law, however, is not backed up by any sanction. Very few people reported their concerns about children with whom they had no direct link; in 1990, of the 12,000 child welfare cases referred to the 12 Tokyo *jidō sōdanjo*, only 0.9 per cent were referrals by neighbours. Even doctors and teachers often appeared unwilling to report suspicions of abuse (Hashimoto, 1996: 146). A 1991 survey in the Kinki district of Japan suggested that less than half of the doctors in the area would unconditionally report to *jidō sōdanjo* child abuse cases which they came across in the course of their work (JTW, 12 December 1994). Similarly, while teachers at the compulsory school level (up to the age of 15) were obliged to visit students at home at least once a year, it would appear that they very rarely took

suspicious of possible child abuse any further than talking directly to the parents and/or guardians involved.

Even when cases were taken further, some critics suggested that the local government workers in the *jidō sōdanjo* were reluctant to seek recourse to the law for fear that a case they brought would be unsuccessful and that this might harm their future careers in local government. As a result, the trend appeared to be to redefine cases of suspected child abuse as '*yōiku kanren*' (general concerns to do with bringing up children) and attempt to advise the parents on correct and acceptable practice, rather than seek to remove the child, even temporarily, to a safer environment.

Further, there was considerable evidence that the police were reluctant – and of course Japan was far from alone in this – to get involved in domestic 'disputes'. The section of the police that dealt with such cases had little or no specialist training in dealing with issues of abuse and tended to be looked down upon by other sections of the force. According to various voluntary civil rights groups, girls who were picked up by the police for teenage prostitution sometimes claimed that they had been abused at home, but were often taken back there without their allegations being examined (*JTW*, 13 June 1994).

Even if the police did wish to pursue a case, it was widely recognized that the courts were reluctant to become involved in issues of child abuse because of the rights afforded to parents in Japan. According to Kamiide (1990: 8), although there was a provision for removing parental powers under Article 33–36 of the Child Welfare Law, there were only ten instances where this was put into force in 1990. In any case, even when courts placed children in *yōgoshisetsu* (children's homes), parents retained the right to remove them when they wanted.

Moreover, as Ikeda (1982: 489 and 1984: 11) noted, once a child was removed from an institution by its parents, the case was considered closed, and there was no follow-up work undertaken with the family or monitoring of the child. Some homes were sensitive to this and, as a result, there were examples of children being hidden in homes or moved around between homes as the only means of protecting them from parents or guardians who wanted to claim them back (see Sargeant, 1994).

Defining child abuse

Even before the 1990s, therefore, a handful of groups dealing with child welfare issues began to question whether the apparently low level of child abuse in Japan was genuine and, as a result of pressure from these groups, some surveys were undertaken to monitor the situation.

Among the most interesting features of the first surveys of child abuse in Japan were their definitions of what constituted child abuse (see Fujimoto, 1994). A 1973 survey, the first to be carried out by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, used the five categories of: abandonment; murder; *oyako shinjū* (discussed below); murder by abandonment; and abuse, which was defined as causing physical injuries by

violence, not providing food over a long period and endangering life. The distinction in the survey between 'abandonment' and 'murder by abandonment' referred largely to where the child was found abandoned. In the former case, children were generally left in open public areas such as parks, hospitals or post offices with the intention that they should be found and taken into care; in the latter case, they were found locked in their own homes or coin lockers and had been left to die.

The survey was undertaken in the light of reports of an increase in the number of infants being abandoned by mothers in coin lockers, which had recently been installed in Japanese railway stations. Indeed, over a quarter of all murdered babies that had been abandoned were, according to the survey, found in coin lockers and, while countermeasures were taken in 1981 which dramatically reduced the number, the practice continued, as did other forms of 'murder by abandonment' (see Kouno and Johnson, 1995). According to some commentators, however, there was a considerable degree of sympathy towards the mother in such cases. If the mother of the abandoned baby were found, she was rarely given a prison sentence. According to Haley (1998: 88–89), around 40 per cent of prosecutions in cases of maternal infanticide were suspended and 'where mothers are sentenced, sentences tend to be light and seldom do the courts actually enforce even a mild sanction Japanese generally empathize with the mother and tolerate without condoning the action'.

The category of '*oyako shinjū*' in the 1973 survey perhaps gives the most interesting insight into how ideas about abuse are linked to the relationship between parent and child in Japan. *Oyako shinjū* is also known variously in Japanese as *boshi shinjū*, *fushi shinjū* and *ikka shinjū* where the first word in each expression (starting with *oyako shinjū*) refers respectively to parent–child, mother–child, father–child and whole–family, and the word *shinjū* connotes a double suicide committed out of love. (It is indeed the word used for a suicide pact made by lovers.) Neither in Japanese – nor in English translation – is the word 'murder' ever used in what is, in practical terms, the murder of the child by the parent followed by the parent's suicide.

The practice of *oyako shinjū* has a long history in Japan, but high rates have particularly been recorded in times of economic depression. In the 1930s, it became so widespread that it was in response to it that the government enacted the first child welfare legislation in 1933 (*Jidō Gyakutai Bōshihō*) and 1937 (*Boshi Hogohō*).

Figures for *oyako shinjū* are clearly difficult to collect and there is wide variation in the numbers given for different years. The crux of the problem is that no official figures are kept and hence researchers have to rely on newspaper reports and many cases either do not reach the newspapers or else are reported only in local editions. From the top end of the scale, Pinguet (1993: 49) cites an unidentified source giving a figure of 494 cases in 1975; Garrison (1984) gives the figure of 400 reported incidents of *oyako shinjū* involving over 1,000 deaths in 1983; Takahashi (1977: 66) states that there were 59 cases during the three months of April, May and June of

1974; Tsuji (1982: 2) says there were 80 cases reported in the Tokyo edition of the *Asahi Shinbun* for 1978; CAPNA (1998: 63–64), again working from media reports, suggests that there were 54 incidents leading to the deaths of 76 children in 1996 and 1997 combined. In surveys of *oyako shinjū*, it would appear that 70–80 per cent are in fact cases of *boshi shinjū* (mother-and-child suicide); almost all involve married parents generally in their 30s; and it would appear to be largely an urban phenomenon, although this may reflect the rate of reporting as much as of actual practice. The vast majority (over 80 per cent) of the children who died were aged seven or less.

Describing what is in effect child-murder as family-suicide is revealing of social attitudes. Even more revealing, though, are accounts of the criticism of those who have committed – or who have attempted to commit – suicide without first killing their children. Takahashi (1977) and Garrison (1984) both describe the case of a mother who unsuccessfully attempted suicide and was reportedly severely criticized by members of her community for not having murdered her children first; she successfully performed *boshi shinjū* at her next attempt. The specifically cultural nature of *oyako shinjū*, however, is best demonstrated when the practice has taken place overseas, a well-documented example of which is the so-called ‘Santa Monica *Oyako Shinjū* Case’ (see Woo, 1989).

In 1985, a Japanese mother in her mid-30s, on discovering her husband’s infidelity and with one failed marriage behind her already, decided to commit suicide and took her two children (aged four years and six months) to the beach with her. She managed to drown the children in the Pacific Ocean but was rescued by people who were on the beach at the time and subsequently found herself facing prosecution for the double murder of her children. The Japanese-American community, with support from Japan, managed to collect a 25,000-name petition on her behalf appealing that the case should be viewed as an example not of child murder but of *oyako shinjū*. Her supporters argued that there had been no malice towards the children in what she had done: indeed, she had done it out of her love for them and, hence, she should be given a lenient, probationary sentence. According to Woo (1989), her American lawyer was unwilling to pursue this cultural defence, not least because, in arguing that she knew what she was doing in killing the children, she would be seriously prejudicing her own position in terms of American law. Instead, he found a number of American psychologists who were able to diagnose her mental state at the time of the incident as one of ‘introjection’ – the inability to distinguish her own life from those of her children, which in American cultural terms could be termed a form of temporary insanity – and thereby neatly turned a cultural practice (*oyako shinjū*) into a psychological pathology.

The above case goes a long way in demonstrating the different perceptions of the parent–child relationship in Japan and the United States at the time. In Japan, the child has often been described as a *mono* (object) that is an extension of, rather than separate from, the parent (Yamamura, 1986: 34). The rights of the family have come before those of the child and, where the child has clearly suffered, this has

been explained in terms of the over-zealous actions of an adult who was acting only in the best interests of the family. The idea of children-as-property and the dominance of family rights over children's rights is an important theme in many of the debates around youth problems in contemporary Japan. According to Wagatsuma (1981: 120), writing in the early 1980s, the fact that parents were more likely to kill or abandon their children than keep and abuse them explained the apparently low rate of the forms of child abuse that were practised in other societies. Similarly, Ikeda (1987: 206) made a distinction between what she called Japanese-style (*Nihongata*) forms of abuse (such as abandonment and *oyako shinjū*) and 'western' (*Ōbeigata*) forms of abuse (such as sexual and physical maltreatment).

In 1988, another large survey of child abuse in Japan was undertaken which did not include the category of *oyako shinjū* at all. Instead, the definition of abuse used was 'physical violence, abandonment and desertion, neglect or refusal to protect, sexual assault, emotional abuse and prevention from attending school' (Tsuzaki, 1996: 112–16). These categories were much closer to definitions of abuse in North America and northern Europe at the time.

The figure for sexual abuse in the survey (less than 5 per cent of all abuse cases) appeared to show a situation in Japan which was quite different from that in the US and UK, where, as Hacking (1991) pointed out, sexual abuse had by itself in the late 1980s become virtually synonymous with the category of child abuse. (According to Pringle [1998: 33], however, within Europe, the focus on sexual abuse is peculiar to the UK.) La Fontaine (1988, 1990) has argued that it was the redefinition of child sexual abuse in terms of an abuse of power that led to a major change in the perception of abuse in general in the UK in the mid-1980s; the redefinition of incest as child abuse was a particularly important step in this process. In contrast, Allison (1996: 7), for example, examines in detail articles that explored the issue of mother–son incestuous relations in the 1970s and 1980s in Japan, the tone of which she describes as ranging 'from condemnatory to sympathetic and almost celebratory'. Even today, Japanese law still does not recognize incest (*kinshin sōkan*) as a crime – though morally it may be abhorred – unless rape or indecent assault has taken place (which may be difficult to prove) and the victim is prepared to press charges (which is very hard for them to do). In the 1980s, therefore, child sexual abuse reporting was almost always limited to the sexual abuse of girls over the age of ten (almost always by adult men) or the forcing of children to perform obscene acts with a third party (Ikeda, 1987: 70). In the 1988 survey, all but one of the cases of sexual abuse were of girls over the age of ten. In all but one case, the perpetrator was a man. Indeed, one interesting feature of the rising rates of reported child abuse during the 1990s was that the relative proportions of different categories of abuse generally remained the same with only around six per cent defined as involving sexual abuse, in part, Kitamura *et al.* (1999: 24) have suggested, because of embarrassment at investigating suspicions and fears of stigmatizing victims. Indeed, it is interesting to note that while the total number of cases of reported child abuse continued to grow in the 2000s, the proportion that

were defined as 'sexual abuse' had fallen to around three per cent by 2008 (see <http://www.crc-japan.net/contents/situation/pdf/10011303.pdf>; accessed 4 January 2011).

The definition of physical abuse in the early 1990s was also unclear in Japan. Indeed, when child abuse hotlines were set up in Osaka and Tokyo in 1990 and 1991 respectively, they immediately received up to 20 calls a day mainly from mothers wanting to know whether what they were doing to their children constituted abuse and, if so, what they could do to stop it (Nashima, *JTW*, 13 June 1994). By the end of the first year of both hotlines, some 90 per cent of all calls were on the same theme (Katō and Tatsuno, 1998: 108–9). Much of the uncertainty reflected by these callers related to the fact that the use of physical force against children was described using a number of different expressions: *taibatsu* (corporal punishment), *chōkai* (disciplinary punishment), *gyakutai* (abuse) and the more general term, *shitsuke* (training) (see Miller's chapter in this volume). Only the third of these terms carries a totally negative connotation, while the others could all be used in a positive sense depending on the context. As Hendry (1986: 11) points out, for example, the Chinese character for *shitsuke* is made up of two parts meaning 'body' and 'beauty'. The right of parents to use *chōkai* 'in so far as it is necessary' is enshrined in article 822 (*chōkaiken*) of the revised Civil Code (Oda, 1997: 168).

Even when the use of physical punishment by staff in children's homes (*yōgoshisetsu*) was banned by law with the revision of the child welfare law in 1998, a survey carried out almost two years later suggested that only 30 per cent of homes had actually instituted rules prohibiting it and only 15 per cent instructed their staff about the rights of the children in their care (*AS*, 12 April 2000).

The 'discovery' of child abuse in Japan

The 1988 survey seemed to show a sudden 450 per cent increase in cases of child abuse dealt with by the *jidō sōdanjo* since a previous survey undertaken only five years earlier. Certain groups immediately declared that the statistics were the 'tip of the iceberg' (*hyōzan no ikkaku*) (see Ueno, 1994: 9) and that child abuse was a serious issue that needed to be confronted in Japan. Partly in response to these concerns, in 1990 the Ministry of Health and Welfare constructed an official definition of child abuse – limited to the four categories of physical abuse, neglect or the refusal to protect, sexual abuse and psychological abuse (see *KH*, 1997: 91 for a fuller definition) – established the category of 'abuse' (*gyakutai*) among the reasons for a consultation at *jidō sōdanjo*; and began to publish statistics annually. Some subsequent statistics also included the category of *tōkō kinshi* (prevention of children from attending school), but the numbers were so negligible that they were normally excluded. The construction of this definition can be seen as the beginning of the modern recognition of child abuse and explains why 1990 is taken as the baseline for all subsequent figures on the supposed 'growth' of the

problem (Takahashi, 2009: 325). [For a good account of the debates over the definition of child abuse in Japan in the early 1990s, see Jidō Gyakutai Bōshi Seido Kenkyūkai, 1993.]

In both the Kansai and the Kanto regions, the main actors in constructing the debate about child abuse at this period were lawyers, paediatricians, nurses at the local health centres (*hokenfu*), academics such as Ikeda Yoshiko, and a few well-known and outspoken individuals who worked in family courts, *jidō sōdanjo* and *yōgoshisetsu*. Together they began to put together a federation of interested parties. As so often in the history of child welfare and youth work in Japan, the first major initiatives in dealing with the perceived new and growing problems of child abuse were privately started rather than organized by the State. These were the establishment of two child-abuse telephone counselling services (*jidō gyakutai sōdan denwa*) in 1990 and 1991 in Osaka and Tokyo respectively. The Osaka line was set up by a voluntary group that called itself Jidō Gyakutai Bōshi Kyōkai (Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse, APCA). It received 90 per cent of its funding from the Kansai Television Company – which screened three one-hour documentaries on child abuse in 1989 – and it was a non-profitmaking, non-governmental organization staffed by part-time workers. When the line was set up, concerns were expressed over the role of a major television company and the potential for ‘commercial exploitation’. As a result, it came to be run by a board of 20 members, of whom ten or more had to be employees of the local government. The introduction of these new players from outside the original interest groups involved in the debate about child abuse in Japan marked the beginning of the ‘industry’ which began to emerge around the issue during the following decade, just as [Chapter 1](#) describes similar industries developing around other youth problems.

The opening of the Tokyo line in May 1991 was preceded by a large conference, which brought together a number of different groups to discuss child abuse from a variety of perspectives. This conference, together with the opening of the telephone lines, presaged a sudden growth in awareness of child abuse in Japan and a new vocabulary – specifically the expression ‘*jidō gyakutai*’ – quickly entered the public arena. An analysis by Ueno (1994: 5) of the keyword expression ‘*kodomo no gyakutai*’ (child abuse) in articles (and not just headlines) in the *Asahi Shinbun* (Tokyo edition) showed two uses in the last six months of 1988, nine instances in 1989 and 20 in 1990. During the second half of 1991, articles appeared not only in medical and legal journals but also in popular women’s magazines and newspapers. NHK, the national broadcasting company, aired ‘specials’ on child abuse on three consecutive nights in September. New special interest groups were also formed: the ‘WE’ group in Yokohama for professionals and victims; and the Stop Child Sexual Abuse (STOPCSA) group for victims only. A number of mothers who had abused or were abusing their children set up their own self-help group to tackle the problem called the Kodomo o Gyakutai Shite Shimau Haha Oyatachi (Mothers who cannot stop abusing their children).

The statistical measurement of child abuse and rising awareness

From the late 1990s, discussion of child abuse became an increasingly regular and institutionalized part of the world of child welfare specialists. Official figures on child abuse, while apparently still very low by North American and north European standards, had begun to show the kind of exponential growth that those societies had seen in the 1970s and 1980s (see Figure 5.3) although even the reported 50-fold increase over 20 years and quintupling over the previous decade was far behind the explosion of reported cases in the United States where, with double the population of Japan, the number of reported cases of child abuse rose from 7,000 in 1967, to 60,000 in 1972, to 1.1 million in 1980 to 2.4 million in 1989 (Gilbert, 1997: 3; Hacking, 1991: 259).¹

The increase in professional awareness of child abuse was made most noticeable by the increasing number of prefectures and major cities (Hokkaido, Fukushima, Tochigi, Saitama, Gunma, Yokohama, Shizuoka and Wakayama) that followed the example of Osaka and Tokyo and set up their own organizations to monitor and advise on cases of abuse. These organizations included institutions such as health centres, schools, hospitals and clinics. An association called Nihon Kodomo no Gyakutai Bōshi Kenkyūkai (Japan Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, JaSPCAN) was established as an umbrella organization to bring together the many regional and local groups. Its third and fourth meetings in 1997 and 1998 in Yokohama and Wakayama were attended by over 1,500 professionals from almost all areas of child welfare.

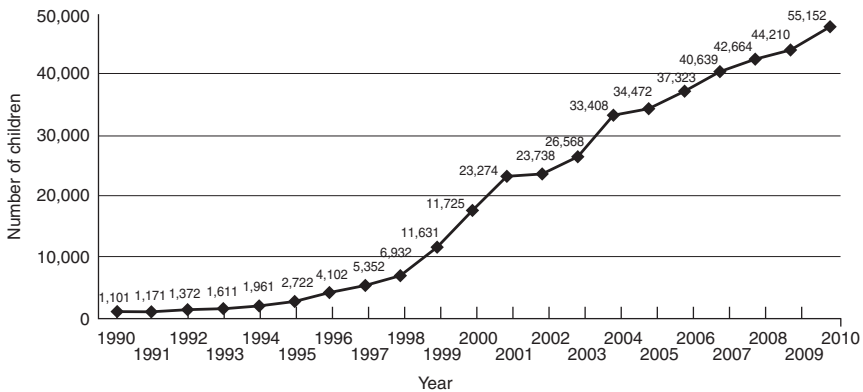


FIGURE 5.3 Increase in child abuse cases dealt with by *jidō sōdanjo* in Japan, 1990–2010.

(Source: <http://www.orangeribbon.jp/about/child/>, accessed 8 January 2011).

During 1999, the issue of child abuse was forced into the public consciousness even more strongly. In part, this was due to discussion of a new child sex law (introduced in November 1999) in the light of what, as Sharon Kinsella describes in detail in her chapter in this volume, was perceived to be a growing problem of young girls offering underage sex in exchange for money (a phenomenon known as *enjo kōsai*) and international criticism of Japan as the source of 80 per cent of the commercial child pornography available on the Internet (*DY*, 10 December 1998). In part, it was due to a growing awareness of how far Japan was out of line with some western societies in dealing with the issue of domestic violence, following the arrest of the Japanese Consul General in Vancouver for abusing his wife; he is alleged to have said that what he had done was acceptable practice in Japan. In part, it was due to the continuing efforts of a number of groups, including doctors, lawyers and those in the child welfare world to continue to raise awareness of the issue. Newspapers mounted a number of investigations into the subject and a survey by the *Mainichi Shinbun* reported that between January 1997 and April 1999, 83 children had been killed as a result of abuse inflicted on them by their parents or other adults (Yamashina, *MS*, 26 August 1999). In large part, too, it was due to the increasing vigour of citizens' groups throughout the 1990s, which in turn had become considerably sensitized to the issues of children's rights by the debates which had taken place in Japan during the 1990s in relation to whether the country should, or should not, become a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (see Goodman, 1996).

By the late 1990s, therefore, there had been a major reappraisal of the notion, prevalent at the beginning of the decade, that Japan was immune from the problem of child abuse that afflicted industrial societies in the west. At the end of 1999, it was announced that there was a great increase in the number of reports to *jidō sōdanjo* about suspicions of child abuse from members of the public (*MS*, 16 November 1999). The media, which had previously limited itself to reporting overall levels of abuse, now began to focus increasingly on individual cases, often in gruesome detail. While most reports focused on abuse in the family home (with a large proportion of these highlighting the role of step-parents or live-in partners), other reports also described horrendous cases of abuse taking place in unregulated kindergartens and private welfare institutions. In many cases, the inactivity of the state authorities was widely criticized. The case of a six-year-old boy, Masato-kun, was particularly widely reported, since he was killed despite the fact that no fewer than three *jidō sōdanjo* in two different areas of Japan had been aware that he was being abused. An NHK report (*Close-up Gendai*, 29 June 1999) on the case was particularly critical of the *jidō sōdanjo* in question and, for probably the first time, workers at *jidō sōdanjo* found themselves under pressure for not having actively intervened earlier, as happened in the UK following the growth in awareness of child abuse in the 1980s, particularly following the Jasmin Beckford case (see Franklin and Parton, 1991). In some reports, the issue of child abuse in Japan took on the aura of a moral panic so that, rather than simply 'discovering' the possibility of child abuse in society, some sections of the media were beginning to suggest that

it was endemic, and some experts that the real rates in Japan were no lower than those in western societies (see, for example, Kitamura *et al.*, 1999: 21).

As a review of three of Japan's national quality newspapers – *Yomiuri*, *Asahi* and *Mainichi* – and its Kyōdo news agency during two separate periods shows, it was unusual for more than a few days to pass in the middle of 2001, when reporting on child abuse reached its peak, without a story appearing in the Japanese media about the issue. As Table 5.1 shows, in the *Asahi* newspaper alone there was

TABLE 5.1. Child abuse stories in Japanese newspapers in mid-2001.¹

5 to 18 May 2001

5 May	<i>Mainichi</i> : Girl beaten to death for eating dog food
6 May	<i>Mainichi</i> : Random torture leaves Sayuri a vegetable
7 May	<i>Kyōdo</i> : Officer's wife arrested for fatally injuring colleague's baby
8 May	<i>Yomiuri</i> : Police arrest couple over abandonment of boy's body
9 May	<i>Mainichi</i> : Autopsy of toddler reveals parents' starvation tactics
11 May	<i>Asahi</i> : Total child abuse cases may be over 30,000 per year
14 May	<i>Asahi</i> : Everyone has role in preventing child abuse
	<i>Kyōdo</i> : Aichi women pleads guilty to murdering 2-year-old daughter
17 May	<i>Yomiuri</i> : Poll: Babies often target of serious abuse
	<i>Mainichi</i> : Child abuse arrests increase by 27%
	<i>Kyōdo</i> : Child abuse soars, 16 dead in 3 months. Report
18 May	<i>Yomiuri</i> : National Police Agency: Child abuse cases up 30%

20 June to 10 July 2001

20 June	<i>Kyōdo</i> : Aichi woman gets suspended term for leaving daughter's body in icebox
21 June	<i>Mainichi</i> : Staggering 18,000 child abuse cases reported last year
22 June	<i>Asahi</i> : Reported child abuse cases up 50%
	<i>Yomiuri</i> : Child abuse cases grow 17-fold over past decade
	<i>Japan Times</i> : Child-killer sent up for 15 years
23 June	<i>Yomiuri</i> : 2 arrested over death at nursery
	<i>Mainichi</i> : Woman dumps newborn's body
24 June	<i>Kyōdo</i> : 73% of female inmates in central Japan sexually abused
26 June	<i>Mainichi</i> : Abusive parents jailed over baby bottle bashing
30 June	<i>Kyōdo</i> : Shimane woman nabbed for drowning infant daughter
2 July	<i>Mainichi</i> : 450 kids killed by abuse over 10 years
4 July	<i>Mainichi</i> : Osaka step-dad beats bed-wetting daughter to death
5 July	<i>Mainichi</i> : Woman admits to fatally beating stepson
9 July	<i>Kyōdo</i> : Man gets suspended term for hanging boy upside down
10 July	<i>Mainichi</i> : Man fatally bashes baby for not drinking milk

¹ As far as possible, the list includes stories only once even if they are covered in other newspapers.

one headline on child abuse more than once every three days in 2001. These shocking headlines are a powerful example of just the kind of intense, momentary moral panic ‘episodes’ that Imoto and Toivonen identify in the first chapter of this book.

One of the most interesting aspects of [Figure 5.2](#) is how, after reaching a peak in 2001, reporting on child abuse in Japan appeared to decrease in subsequent years only to begin to climb again in 2010. This latest moral panic about child abuse was triggered by what became known as the Edogawa-ku incident of seven-year-old Kaito-kun, who was battered to death by his parents in January 2010. This tragedy was followed by a number of sensationally reported cases, such as the abuse of a six-year-old by his mother’s common-law husband in Nagoya, a four-year-old starved to death in Saitama, and the case which received the most coverage of all where a three-year-old girl and one-year-old boy were found starved to death after their mother (a divorced 23-year-old hostess) had abandoned them in their apartment in Osaka. In 2010, all the national newspapers produced ‘special reports’ on child abuse, highlighting the social problem both in relation to these individual tragedies but also in connection with campaigns planned to mark the tenth anniversary of the implementation of the Child Abuse Prevention Law in 2000. As we shall see later, however, the explanations in Japan for the re-emergence of interest in child abuse in 2010 were related to very different social and economic issues than was the case in 2000.²

From the ‘discovery’ of child abuse to policy responses

The philosopher, Ian Hacking (1992: 193), in his well-known article, ‘World-making by kind-making,’ pointed out that:

The selection of child abuse as a vital classification has had enormous consequences in the law, in day-to-day social work, in policing the family, in the lives of children, and the way in which children and adults represent their actions, their past, and those of their neighbours.

The widespread public activity and debate at the turn of the millennium surrounding the issue of child abuse certainly had important implications for the relationship between the State, parents and children in Japan as well as suggesting a different way of thinking about such apparently ‘natural’ and incontestable categories as ‘parent’ and ‘child’.

Under pressure of reports of the dramatic increase in cases of child abuse, the government announced that to tackle the problem it would increase its budget by an unprecedented 90 per cent to 900 million yen from April 2000 (YS, 29 August 1999) and to 2.14 billion yen from April 2001 (*Kyōdo*, 25 August 2000). This was increased to 4.7 billion by fiscal year 2003 and then increased by a further 350 per cent to 16.6 billion yen for fiscal year 2004 (YS, 18 February 2004), all against a background of severe government cuts in overall public spending.

The extra money was spent on a number of new programmes including the establishment of a hundred committees across the country with members from schools, day-care centres, local government welfare offices and newly established urban child and family support centres. These committees were charged with raising awareness in the community about child abuse, especially among the police, doctors and teachers. In particular, they were to take some of the burden away from the *jidō sōdanjo*, whose workers were in danger of being swamped by the increase in the number of child abuse referrals. Over one-third of the new money was invested in a national training centre for child abuse prevention and almost a quarter on introducing support – in the form of specialist staff and psychotherapists – for children living in children's homes who had been abused before coming into care. Children in care had previously been thought to be in need of protection (*hogo*) but not treatment (see Goodman, 2000).

In May 2000, the Japanese Diet passed the Child Abuse Prevention Law (to come into effect in November of the same year) to tackle what was widely accepted to be the growing problem of child abuse in Japanese society. The new law greatly strengthened the powers of the heads of the 157 prefectural child consultation centres (*jidō sōdanjo*) both to take children into care and to prevent parents from removing them or even contacting them once they were in care. It made it mandatory for those working in the educational, welfare and medical fields to report suspicions of abuse to the appropriate authorities. It obliged the police to provide back-up to officials conducting on-the-spot inspections of the houses of families where officials suspect abuse might be taking place, and it provided that abuse – which was fully defined in law for the first time – was no longer permitted under the guise of discipline or child-rearing. In April 2000, the Tokyo metropolitan government became the first local government in the nation to establish a section to deal exclusively with child abuse cases. It took the step because the existing system was no longer able to function due to the sharp increase in abuse cases and the number of people seeking help at the child consultation centres (YS, 11 August 2000). According to a survey by the *Mainichi* newspaper, social workers forcibly entered 90 households where child abuse was suspected in the 11-month period before the implementation of the new Child Abuse Prevention Law compared to only 20 such 'raids' during the previous 42 years in total (MS, 12 December 2001).

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, the child abuse prevention legislation continued to be strengthened. Lack of concern about child welfare in the community was seen as one of the biggest problems (see Nagao *et al.*, 2006). A survey in Saitama Prefecture in 2004, for example, suggested that only 25 per cent of people knew they had a responsibility to contact a child consultation centre when they witnessed child abuse (Saitama-ken, 2004). A government committee reported that there were 17 cases in 2004 of children who died despite being known to the centres (Jidō Gyakutai Iinkai, 2007). In the light of these reports and surveys, the 2000 law was revised twice (in 2004 and 2008) in order to give greater authority to the child consultation centres to conduct unannounced

visits to homes and greater protection for children who have been abused, as well as introducing new child-abuse prevention measures such as the so-called Hello Baby project, which provides home visits for parents of new infants up to the age of four months, and the greater use of foster parents and small-scale children's homes for children who have been taken into care after abuse (*Child Welfare*, No. 12, 2009: 47–48).

Japanese explanations for the 'increase' in child abuse

The 'discovery' of child abuse was largely as a result of the campaigns of a variety of different groups in Japanese society. It is particularly interesting, however, to look at the explanations that these different groups developed for the apparent increase in child abuse.

In the 1990s, explanations for the increase in child abuse in Japan focused largely on the nuclearization of the Japanese family (see Shinano Mainichi Shinbunsha, 2000 and AS, 17 December 2000 for good summaries of these views). New mothers had virtually no experience of childcare (as their mothers had had with, for example, nephews and nieces), nor did they have grandparents around to advise them or prevent them from abusing their own children. Further, the nuclear family that had developed had not been formed, as in western societies, around the husband–wife relationship, but instead centred on, some said to an unhealthy degree, the mother–child bond. In post-war sociological works on the Japanese family, the father had often been described as being more firmly 'married' to the company than to his wife. A survey from the early 1990s suggested that 30 per cent of fathers spent under 15 minutes a day on weekdays playing with or talking to their children and only 50 per cent spent more than 30 minutes. Even on Sundays, over 40 per cent of fathers spent less than an hour interacting with their children (Yuzawa, 1994: 66). As a result, the nuclear family was seen as being particularly stressful for mothers. This stress was exacerbated, by what Ohinata (1995a, 1995b), called the 'myth of motherhood', the idea that women were naturally (*sententeki ni*) programmed to be good and caring mothers. This myth, according to Ohinata (2000), meant that women were unprepared for motherhood when they first faced it and often felt inadequate and unable to seek help when they experienced problems. To add to their problems, mothers in Japan had been put under intense pressure to perform as perfect parents. Much of this pressure had come from cultural expectations: mothers had been expected to suffer for the sake of their children (Azuma, 1986: 7) and expected to consistently work on improving their parenting skills (what Befu, 1986: 24–25, called 'role perfectionism'). Should they fail in any mothering skills, then their inadequacy had been constantly reinforced by images of parenthood presented in the enormous quantity of child-training literature, which emphasized that there was a way to do everything properly (see Dingwall, Tanaka and Minamikata, 1991).

The combined effects of lack of support from a husband, extended family or the wider community, plus the myth of motherhood and the idea that women were

directly responsible for the success of their children were recognized in the notion that many women suffered from what was known as *ikuji neurose* (child-rearing neurosis) (see Kojima, 1986). From the early 1990s, books on the problems of bringing up children became increasingly popular in Japan (see Shiina, 1993; Tachibana, 1992). Perhaps most revealing of the pressures on mothers were surveys which suggested that mothers were the main abusers of children, something which, I have suggested elsewhere (see Goodman, 2000; [chapter 8](#)), made it easier for the government to implement some of its policies to alleviate the stress on women in Japan and thereby potentially increase the birth-rate.

In the 2000s, a different set of explanations began to emerge for the rise of child abuse in Japan. Indeed, the emergence of these new explanations demonstrates some of the fundamental changes which were taking place in Japan, which we will pick up again in the final chapter of this book. While the explanations of the 1990s drew heavily on the issue of gender, they almost completely ignored the question of class. In the 2000s, however, child abuse became much more closely linked with debates in Japan about the disintegration of the middle class, growing social inequality and child poverty (see, for example, Abe, 2008; Shimizu *et al.*, 2010). Gender has, of course, been part of these debates, but it is interesting to note that, while mothers are still the highest category of abusers reported to the child consultation centres, a very different picture emerges if one looks at the statistics of those actually charged with abuse by the police (Takezawa, 2010). In 2008, these figures were birth fathers 27 per cent; birth mothers 30 per cent; step, adoptive and common-law mothers 1 per cent; step, adoptive and common-law fathers 43 per cent. Many of the most severe cases of child abuse reported in Japan in recent years have been perpetrated by the boyfriends and common-law husbands of single mothers, and it is this last category which has, as a result, become increasingly associated with the problem.

As Hertog (2009) has documented in great detail, the number of single mothers in Japan has remained remarkably stable as a proportion of the total population for almost a century with only 1.5 per cent of all children born outside wedlock, compared to averages of 30–50 per cent in many west European and North American communities. The small size of the community has often meant that they have been all but invisible in Japanese social policy programmes. In 2009, however, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in Japan released its first report in 45 years on Japan's relative poverty rate (the ratio of households with incomes which do not meet the poverty line of half of the median income). The survey (based on data collected in 2007 when the median income was 2.28 million yen per year) showed that 15.7 per cent of households were below the poverty line. The relative poverty rate for single-parent households in Japan was 54.3 per cent, three times the general poverty rate and much higher than for comparable groups in other developed societies (UK 23.7 per cent; 19.3 per cent in France). These figures generated considerable debate in Japan, in particular about how difficult it was for children in poor households to escape being caught in a cycle of poverty (*Child Welfare*, No. 13, 2010: 13). It is the poverty that children in

such families find themselves in that leads Shimizu *et al.* (2010) in their book *Kodomo Gyakutai to Hinkon* (Child Abuse and Poverty) to suggest that they are particularly vulnerable to abuse.³ Certainly, as the psychiatrist Otaki Toshihiro (quoted in Brasor, 2010) has pointed out, the media have tended to focus on extreme cases where immature, poor parents abuse their children and where the main abuser is either a stepfather or the boyfriend of a single mother. This is, in part, he suggests, because these situations are so much easier to explain than cases involving birth fathers or mothers.

Conclusion

Despite the 50-fold increase in reporting of cases of child abuse in Japan, it is still not clear if there is more abuse of children in the country now than there was at the start of the 1990s. The figures may simply demonstrate changes in people's awareness of what constitutes abusive behaviour and a greater preparedness to pass on concerns about behaviour to the state authorities and for those authorities to investigate those concerns. As can be seen, the 'discovery' of child abuse in the 1990s was due to the pressure of a number of different interest groups including, according to Ueno and Nomura (2003), child welfare institutions, which needed, in order to stay open, more resources and more children to be placed in them at a time when the total number of children in the population was declining rapidly.⁴ It was the constant bombardment of stories from the media, and particularly the powerful Mainichi group, however, which probably was most important in making the government act with what, in Japanese legislative terms, was considerable haste in defining and implementing policy to tackle the newly discovered problem of child abuse. In doing so, it radically altered the relationship between the State and parents in giving much greater powers to state authorities to intervene in a context that previously had been seen as the exclusive and private domain of the family. Clear comparisons can be drawn here with the UK and the role of the BBC (especially Esther Rantzen's programmes on Child Line) in mid-1985, which led to much greater awareness of, and financial support for, victims of abuse.

Parents were no longer seen as being 'naturally' and unquestionably good and it was no longer unthinkable that they might, in certain circumstances, resort to abusing their children. Families were no longer considered sacrosanct. The stability of the family – seen by many in the 1980s as one of Japan's greatest strengths in comparison with many western nations – was no longer seen as necessarily superior to the rights of its individual members, particularly women and children. Even those who worked with children – in nurseries and child welfare institutions, for example – who had previously been held to be largely above suspicion, were no longer immune from prosecution. In many ways, the breakdown of the positive image of the Japanese parent and family was yet another example of a growing list of social, cultural, political and economic institutions in Japan which came to be questioned in the light of Japan's long economic recession during the 1990s. In a very short time, institutions (from the company system to the community to the

family) previously accepted as being ‘good’ (and used as part of the explanation for Japan’s economic and social miracles) became viewed much less positively and as contributing to Japan’s contemporary woes.

There is one clear difference between the issue of child abuse and some of the other issues which we have explored in this volume, which is that the children themselves have been seen as innocent victims of abuse, while, in the case of social problems such as *kikokushijo*, *enjo kōsai*, *hikikomori*, *ijime* and *otaku*, the youth themselves have been seen at times as deviant and in need of change. Even so, as with the case of physical abuse (*taibatsu*) described by Miller in his chapter in this volume, there has been a measure of sympathy for abusing birth mothers who have not themselves been provided with sufficient support to bring up their children, especially where people have believed that what they did was done out of concern for their children even if the children were hurt in the process.

The ‘discovery’ of child abuse in Japan has already had profound effects on the relation between the State and families, on the concept of the child and on the development of Japanese social policy towards children, and there is little doubt also that it will continue to exert an influence for several years to come.

This chapter has set out to describe how in the 1990s the convergence of a series of different actors brought out into the open the issue of child abuse, from which many in Japan had thought the society was immune. It has also shed light on how an industry developed around the child abuse issue once it had been brought into the open in the early 1990s, and on how the perception of child abuse as a problem has grown significantly over the subsequent two decades, and continues to grow. Whether it has been the changing social context which has kept the issue of child abuse in the spotlight in Japan or whether it has been the interest groups (both private interests and the State) drawing on new social discourses so as to keep it there is (as with the social construction of all social problems) hard to say.⁵ It is important though to conclude with a point which sometimes gets lost in the social constructionist account, which is that there is no doubt that some children in Japan are abused and that anything that is done to keep attention focused on the issue and that leads to better support of such children must be recognized as a positive contribution to society.

Notes

- 1 It is important to point out that the definition and system for collecting statistics during this period in the United States was constantly changing. It was of course also changing in Japan. In 2004, for example, the Child Abuse Prevention Law expanded the meaning of abuse to include both exposure to domestic violence and non-intervention in the case of a co-habitant’s abusive actions.
- 2 There are some interesting similarities here with the emergence, disappearance and re-emergence of reporting on bullying (*ijime*) in Japan between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s, which is discussed in [Chapter 1](#) of this volume.
- 3 A more dramatic connection between the current socio-economic situation in Japan and child murder (filicide) is suggested by Yasumi and Kageyama (2009).

- 4 One of the most interesting statistics in this light is that the number of children (30,500) in children's homes (*yōgoshisetsu*) was almost exactly the same in 1980 and 2007, despite the massive drop in the number of children in the population over the same period; moreover, the national capacity of all children's homes has not changed at all over the past 30 years.
- 5 Some of the people who have led the recent discourse on the link between poverty and child abuse have been child welfare workers such as Yamano Ryōji (who has a social work degree from the US). More research is needed, however, to discover how concertedly these actors have worked to keep the issue alive and how successfully budgets have been maintained for supporting the work of those in the child protection field. According to Sasaki (2010), the number of social workers training is currently on the decrease in Japan and the turnover of those in the profession is on the increase, which suggests that this is still not seen as an attractive profession to enter.

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 JIC: *Japan: An International Comparison*, produced annually by the Keizai Kōhō Centre (Japan Institute for Social and Economic Affairs)
 JTW: *Japan Times Weekly* (changed to fortnightly from 1999)
 KH: *Kodomo Hakusho* (White Paper on Children, produced annually by the Nihon Kodomo o Mamoru Kai)
 Kyōdo: *Kyōdo Tsūshin* (Kyōdo News Agency)
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 YS: *Yomiuri Shinbun* (Yomiuri Newspaper)
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6

HIKIKOMORI

How private isolation caught the public eye

Sachiko Horiguchi

Hikikomori, noun. In Japan: abnormal avoidance of social contact; acute social withdrawal; (also) a person, typically an adolescent male, engaging in this; a recluse, a shut-in.

(Oxford English Dictionary 2010 edition [Simpson 2010])

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the alleged isolation of a stratum of young people who were said to have trouble making friends, working or attending school surfaced as a prominent social problem in Japan. One of the most curious of the country's many youth issues, the phenomenon came to be known as '*hikikomori*' and it quickly entered the vocabulary of citizens and policy-makers alike. Fascination with the idea that hundreds of thousands – if not millions – of Japanese youth might be 'socially withdrawn', disengaged or even mentally unwell was so strong that the issue soon splashed beyond the borders of Japan.¹ In 2006 the American journalist Michael Zielenziger published one of the earliest accounts of *hikikomori* in the English-speaking world, which raised the visibility of this phenomenon in the west (Zielenziger 2006). Intriguingly, Zielenziger (2006) argues that *hikikomori* has now come to stand for the entire Japanese nation.

How did *hikikomori* emerge as a universally recognized concept within Japan denoting both the 'pathology' of withdrawal as well as those who engage in it? What forces were responsible for turning a particular form of isolation – a seemingly private experience – into a public problem of such prominence that, crossing linguistic and cultural boundaries, it was listed in 2010 in the *Oxford English Dictionary*?

To shed light on these questions, the present chapter attempts a brief 'history' of *hikikomori* by tracing the origins of the term and charting its rise into one of Japan's most powerful symbolic youth categories. As in the other chapters of this volume, a constructionist approach is adopted so as to unlock how it was possible for a new category to so rapidly take on such significance, impacting on everything from

psychiatric practice and media discourses to family behaviour and government policy. While drawing on Japanese-language literature as well as media analysis, the chapter is also informed by ethnographic fieldwork carried out in the Tokyo metropolitan area from 2003 to 2005 and in 2010. This fieldwork comprised participant observation at youth support organizations and family support organizations as well as interviews with support staff, *hikikomori* youth, psychiatrists and key actors such as Saitō Tamaki.

The first task of this chapter is to briefly set out some of the supposed ‘predecessors’ of *hikikomori* to emphasize that, on the one hand, this particular term surfaced relatively recently and, on the other hand, that it had discursive roots in pre-existing youth types and medical categories. What then follows is an account of how social withdrawal was ‘discovered’ through the actions of key claims-makers and institutions. Here, we identify two distinctive periods, the 1990s and the early 2000s, with the latter witnessing a societal crisis over *hikikomori*. The analysis is then deepened through a discussion of the distinctive interest groups that are sometimes collectively called the ‘*hikikomori* industry’ (*hikikomori gyōkai*).

One further note is in order. In unpacking the debate on *hikikomori* and perceiving it as a socially constructed phenomenon, are we making the claim that it is, in fact, not ‘real’? In a strict sense, the answer has to be yes, partly because the language surrounding this issue is so fluid, contested and often simplified, that it cannot correspond to any fixed ‘empirical’ behavioural reality. Statistics, as we will see, have been fraught with ambiguities. More fundamentally – and this is consistent with this chapter’s key argument – *hikikomori* embodies many assumptions and connotations that are specific to a particular time and process. The way in which being isolated from social relationships is understood necessarily differs according to historical and spatial location. The labour market, the family (including household size), schools as well as psychiatric services were so different as recently as the 1960s that the idea of *hikikomori*, as currently conceptualized, would probably have received little attention. It is necessary, therefore, to clearly distinguish between the individual-level *behaviour* of being isolated from the socially constructed *meaning* – and potential problematization – of that isolation.

Hikikomori predecessors

Despite what has just been discussed, Japanese commentators routinely posit that *hikikomori* existed even before the term was coined (see Genda 2001: 90; Saitō 2002: 34; Kudō and Saitō 2001: 15). It is suggested that the condition of being ‘withdrawn’ in one way or another was in the past alluded to in numerous other youth categories and that these previous categories evolved over time into the current *hikikomori* issue. The social constructionist view of youth problems tends to be agnostic on the issue of whether there really was a natural evolution from one youth problem to another, but it is interested in the way that commentators describe and explain current issues in terms of earlier ones. It is worth considering, therefore, why and how *hikikomori* emerged as a widely encompassing category available for

use by various individuals and organizations with interests in varying aspects of asocial youth; the *hikikomori* label embodies the meanings and images of various preceding categories (see below), which tended to focus on particular behavioural or psychiatric dimensions of asocial behaviour among youth.

In retrospectively speculating why *hikikomori* failed to emerge as a public problem earlier than it did, some commentators (Saitō 2001; Teo 2010: 181) cite as one reason Japan's presumed culture of dependence (*amae*; Doi 1986). Such commentators suggest that growing affluence allowed Japanese families to indulge their children in all imaginable ways, thereby postponing independence. The existence of *amae*, or so the argument goes, made such parental tendencies seem somehow 'natural' and unproblematic. Parents let their offspring co-reside with them even after graduation and entering the labour market. However, this kind of retrospective speculation, though widely practised, amounts essentially to a *post hoc* reconstruction of history from the vantage point of current-day youth categories. Instead of trying to rewrite history using a category that did not exist prior to the 1990s, it is more fruitful to look at how earlier constructions of youth behaviour came to be woven into the debate on *hikikomori*. It is in this sense that the 'predecessors' of *hikikomori* are listed in Table 6.1.

The behavioural categories identified here – *futōkō* (school non-attendance), *Katei nai bōryoku* (violence in the home; Kawai 1986), *moratorium ningen* (moratorium people; Okonogi 1978), and *otaku* (nerds; see Chapter 1) – map neatly onto the youth problem pedigree set out in Chapter 1. Aspects of all these constructions have contributed to the anatomy of the *hikikomori* discourse. In other words, they have constituted 'discursive threads' that various expert and lay actors have cited in trying to make sense of the *hikikomori* phenomenon, typically making the possibly problematic assumption that *hikikomori* is indeed empirically related to each of these prior categories. School non-attendance is the category that has most frequently been linked to the issue of social withdrawal since the 1990s, with the latter viewed as an extension of the former in an empirical sense (Saitō 1998: 39; Shiokura 2002: 232). On the other hand, the psychiatric categories identified in Table 6.1 reveal a parallel medical discourse that has been championed by Japanese psychiatrists. The availability of these categories has allowed psychiatrists to draw links between asocial behaviours of youth and psychiatric categories. It is also worth noting that the key figures in the debates on some of the behavioural categories – *futōkō* and *moratorium ningen* – were indeed psychiatrists, a pattern evident in the role that psychiatrist Saitō Tamaki played in the emergence of the *hikikomori* problem. At the risk of jumping ahead of the story, discussions surrounding 'inactive' young people in 2000s Japan can be well understood by viewing them in terms of competing behavioural and psychiatric discourses.

Stage I: *hikikomori* prior to the 2000s

Public discussions on *hikikomori* gradually began to emerge from the early 1990s onwards. In what can be seen as the first stage of this youth problem, a small circle

TABLE 6.1. *Hikikomori* ‘predecessors’.

Category	Term	Meanings and time period
Behavioural	<i>Futōkō</i>	School non-attendance; children who do not go to school (1950s–, particularly 1970s–)
	<i>Kateinai bōryoku</i>	Violence in the home (1970s–)
	<i>Moratorium ningen</i>	Moratorium beings, incorporation of Erikson’s ‘identity diffusion syndrome’ by psychiatrist Okonogi Keigo (1970s–)
	<i>Otaku</i>	Deviant subculture obsessives lacking in social skills, sometimes with violent inclinations (Chapter 1)
Psychiatric	<i>Taijinkyōfu</i>	Phobia of interpersonal relations, defined by Morita Masatake (early 1920s–)
	<i>Taikyaku shinkeishō</i>	Re-naming of ‘student apathy’ (Walters) by Kasahara Yomishi (1970s–)

of government officials, psychiatrists and private organizations were involved in highlighting, managing and defining it (see [Tables 6.2](#) and [6.3](#) for key events and actors in this period).

It is telling that the beginning of the process was marked by the publication of a government report on ‘asocial behaviour’ among youth. Following this analysis by the Committee for Youth Issues (*Seishōnen-mondai Shingikai*) in 1989 (Takayama 2008: 27), the 1990 White Paper on Youth introduced a categorization of young people where those who exhibited ‘antisocial’ behaviour were distinguished from ‘asocial’ youth, including those who were withdrawn. The Ministry of Health and Welfare (MHW; now MHLW) then launched ‘the *Hikikomori/futōkō* child welfare pilot project’ (*Hikikomori/futōkō jidō fukushi-taisaku model jigyō*). Though intended only for those aged under 18, the appearance of the term *hikikomori* in the project title helped raise the public visibility of the issue (Kayama 1997: 92–95).

Starting with serial reports in the *Mainichi Shinbun* in 1994, *hikikomori* began to appear with increasing frequency in the mass media from the early 1990s onwards. In the mid-1990s, Japan’s national TV broadcaster NHK aired a feature programme on the topic that introduced the activities of *Friend Space*, a support group run by Tomita Fujiya in Chiba Prefecture. This group provided isolated youth with a ‘place to be oneself’ (*ibasho*) (Shiokura 2002: 144–49). The most notable mass media coverage in the 1990s was Shiokura Yutaka’s serial report on *hikikomori*, ‘Longing to live with others: withdrawing youths’, in the *Asahi Shinbun*, which featured six articles in February 1997. Shiokura’s reports introduced examples of actual *hikikomori* youth while also introducing support groups.

In what would later prove a landmark event, the psychiatrist Saitō Tamaki published *Social Withdrawal: Never-ending Adolescence* (*Shakaiteki Hikikomori: Owaranai Shishunki*)

TABLE 6.2. Key *hikikomori*-related events in the 1990s.

1991	MHW <i>Hikikomori/futōkō</i> child welfare pilot project launched
1997–8	Shiokura Yutaka’s serial report in the <i>Asahi Shinbun</i>
1998	Saitō Tamaki’s publication of <i>Shakaiteki Hikikomori</i>

in 1998. Saitō chose to employ the term *shakaiteki hikikomori*, which he explained was a direct translation of the English ‘social withdrawal’ included in the American Diagnostic and Statistical Manual [DSM] (Saitō 2002: 26). The definition he gave to this concept was:

A condition where a youth withdraws into the home and does not participate in society for a period of over six months, of which a mental illness is not likely to be the primary cause.

(Saitō 1998: 25)

Saitō emphasized that *hikikomori* was not a label for a disease but for a ‘condition’ or a ‘state’. At the same time, he insisted that withdrawal could best be overcome through psychiatric intervention. Importantly, Saitō suggested that psychiatrists could best distinguish between the behaviours that were peculiar to the condition of *hikikomori* and the symptoms of mental illness. He also suggested that psychiatrists could provide medical treatment for any secondary symptoms springing from prolonged withdrawal, such as depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder (Saitō 2002: 69).

Manipulating numbers: the impact of the one million estimate

After Saitō had provided a working definition for *hikikomori* youth, he and other commentators attempted to quantify the problem. This was less than straightforward.

TABLE 6.3. Key *hikikomori*-related actors and their orientations in the 1990s.

Name	Position	Orientation to hikikomori
Saitō Tamaki	Psychiatrist at Sasaki Hospital, Chiba	Not a mental disease, yet best treated by psychiatrists; student of Inamura Hiroshi (see Chapter 2)
Tomita Fujiya	Leader of <i>Friend Space</i> , Chiba	Psychological problem, but not treatable by only psychiatrists
Shiokura Yutaka	Journalist for <i>Asahi Shinbun</i>	An issue to be reported on sympathetically; important to understand the needs of <i>hikikomori</i> youth and families

It has been widely acknowledged that the two key difficulties in counting the number of *hikikomori* relate to the challenge of conducting surveys of people who shut themselves in their homes and the ambiguity of the definition itself (Shiokura 2000: 223–24; Kudō and Kawakita 2008: 76–77). Interestingly, however, though Saitō's first book on *hikikomori* had not given specific numbers, from 1999 onwards he consistently propagated the estimate of one million (Kudō and Kawakita 2008: 76–77). Criticized on empirical grounds, one interview found Saitō admitting that he had indeed simply come up with this statistic based on his clinical experience.² The one million figure quickly became, in the early 2000s, an established 'fact' (see Hisada 1999).

Following Saitō's 'one million declaration', there have been several other attempts to measure the prevalence of *hikikomori* in Japan. A Health and Welfare Ministry survey published in 2001 reported about 6,000 cases, and other surveys based on varying, ambiguous definitions provide estimates ranging from 300,000 to 700,000 (see Koyama *et al.* 2010; Naikakufu 2010). Nevertheless, no other estimate has eclipsed Saitō's in visibility, demonstrating the keenness of key actors to play up the importance of the 'problem' as well as the corresponding willingness of the media and the public to embrace exaggerated estimates of controversial youth problems.

Stage II: *hikikomori* emerges as a social problem proper

On 21 December 1999, a young man abruptly entered the playground of Hino Elementary School in Kyoto and, in a tragic moment that would shock the whole of Japan, stabbed to death a little boy with whom he had no prior connection. The suspect – a 21-year-old unemployed youth – committed suicide after being requested to attend a police station early the following year.

On 28 January 2000, the Niigata police discovered a 19-year-old female confined in the house of a 37-year-old unemployed male. The young woman had been missing for no less than nine years. The 73-year-old mother of the perpetrator, despite dwelling in the very same house, had reportedly not noticed the woman because she had never been allowed into her son's room.

On 3 May 2000, during the national 'Golden Week' holidays, a 17-year-old boy from Saga hijacked a *Nishitetsu* express bus and stabbed a passenger to death. Subsequent coverage revealed that the boy had stopped attending high school after only nine days, seldom had contact with friends, and was inclined to shut himself away.

While different in their details, the media reported that, in each of these three cases, the perpetrator had been a *hikikomori*. The incidents came to be associated with the issue of withdrawal and provoked societal fear against socially reclusive young men. What followed was a wave of further media coverage, some, if not all, of which represented the *hikikomori* as potentially dangerous (see Figure 6.1).³ The image of such mentally ill youth – predominantly, young men – was increasingly linked to violence. This interpretation was reinforced by psychiatrists and parents' self-help associations that speculated that up to 80 per cent of *hikikomori* cases were

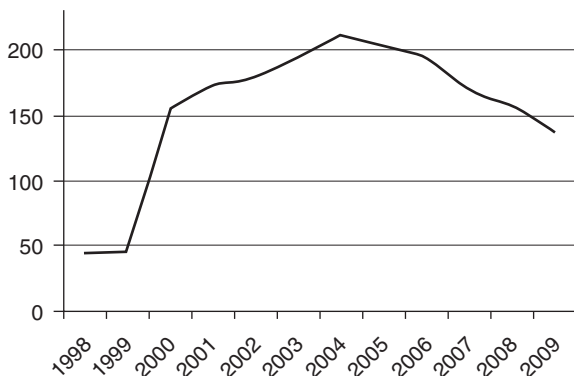


FIGURE 6.1 The number of articles including the term *hikikomori* (either in *hiragana* or in Chinese character and *hiragana*) in either their headings or main texts in the morning edition (Tokyo) of the *Asahi Shinbun*, 1999–2009.

linked to violence in the home (*kateinai bōryoku*) (Kudō 2008: 51–52). Foreign media also started to pay attention to social withdrawal among Japanese youth at around this time, usually linking the phenomenon to juvenile violence (Moshavi 2000; Austin 2000; Larimer 2000; BBC 2002a).

The above-mentioned three incidents did much to push the issue of *hikikomori* from the private realm of the family to the public domain. The strong association with violence implied that, rather than an issue of youth well-being or social participation, *hikikomori* were a significant threat to physical security – a deviant and unstable group that had to be controlled or rehabilitated in some way. Saitō Tamaki, who entered the debate at this particular moment, came to be established as the leading expert on *hikikomori*. Meanwhile, the so-called *hikikomori tōjisha* – those who self-identified as *hikikomori* and claimed to have experienced withdrawal – were not given a significant voice (see Shiokura 2000: 179). As with the case of most other mainstream youth problems, those who were most directly affected were a ‘muted group’ during this phase of the *hikikomori* debate. The way in which *hikikomori* was discussed in the public domain caused even greater discomfort among families which had already felt ashamed of their problems (Shiokura 2000: 177; Kitayama *et al.* 2001: 10). The following years saw no major changes in the way that this issue was treated in the media: more crimes allegedly committed by the *hikikomori* were reported and linked to violence, though in most cases these involved fatal attacks against parents or other family members.⁴

Debates on definitions and the *hikikomori* industry

From reading stories circulated by global English-language media, one would be forgiven for thinking that there is a strong consensus in Japan regarding all aspects of the ‘problem’ of *hikikomori*. When we scratch the surface and examine domestic

TABLE 6.4. Overview of key *hikikomori*-related events, 1999–2006.

1999	Kyoto elementary school boy murder
2000	Niigata confinement case Nishitetsu bus hijack Zenkoku Hikikomori KHJ Oya no Kai launched
2001	MHLW <i>Guideline</i> (incomplete version)
2002(–2004)	NHK <i>hikikomori</i> support campaign
2003	MHLW <i>Guidelines</i> (final version)
2004	Genda Yūji introduces NEET in <i>Chūō Kōron</i>
2006	Ai Mental School scandal

debates in some detail, however, we find that the term ‘*hikikomori*’ has been a fiercely contested concept ever since its creation. The dimensions of the debate go beyond formal definitions and range from the interpretation of its causes and appropriate responses to its cultural significance.

We have already seen that Saitō Tamaki, who quickly became a leading authority on *hikikomori*, defined it in terms of withdrawal into the home for a period of over six months, of which a mental disease is unlikely to be the main cause. He moreover posited that the condition usually manifested by the late twenties, though he later refrained from specifying a precise age range for *hikikomori*. In later accounts Saitō posited that it is not the condition of staying in the home that is most critical but the fact that *hikikomori* were not ‘taking part in society’, defined as attending school, working, or having intimate human relationships beyond one’s family. He also defended the period of six months as a useful cut-off point in distinguishing serious cases of withdrawal from less acute ones.

At this point it is instructive to note how the Japanese government came to define *hikikomori* in its *Guidelines for Intervention by Local Mental Health Services in Social Withdrawal Among Those in Their Teens and Twenties* (MHLW 2001; 2003). The purpose of compiling the *Guidelines* – which drew on surveys conducted at public health centres across Japan – was to advise institutions on how to deal more effectively with socially withdrawn youth.⁵ The 2001 *Guidelines* were in part a reaction to the public outrage that ensued over *hikikomori* in 2000.⁶ The final version (2003) defined *hikikomori* almost exactly in line with Saitō’s definition, with its focus on (1) young people who continued to shun social participation while leading a life centred around the home for six months or longer, and (2) cases where such behaviour did not result mainly from a mental illness such as schizophrenia. Here, ‘shunning social participation’ indicates not going to school or work, as well as being excluded from social relationships beyond the parental home.

The above *Guidelines* enshrined *hikikomori* as a recognized social problem, designating public mental health centres and certain other institutions as responsible for addressing it (Itō and Yoshida 2005: 17–20). The key for recovery from *hikikomori* was identified as the parent(s), often the ones seeking support for their issues in the

TABLE 6.5. Key actors from 2000 onwards.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Orientation to hikikomori</i>
MHLW	Government	Welfare and family issue; should receive some government support
NHK	TV broadcast station (website publisher)	Should be acknowledged by the wider society as a problem (NHK has provided discussion forums for withdrawn youth)
Kudo Sadatsugu (see also Chapter 7)	Leader of a prominent youth support group, Tokyo	Economic independence should be a key goal (offers employment support)
Futagami Nōki (see also Chapter 7)	Leader of a large support group, Chiba	Victims of isolated families (carries out house visits and employment support)
Okuyama Masahisa	Leader of KHJ, a parents' self-help group, Saitama	Welfare issue; families of <i>hikikomori</i> require support from the State
Osada Yuriko	Leader of 'Osada-juku' (sister of Sugiura Shōko), Nagoya	Disciplinary rehabilitation the main effective response
Sugiura Shōko	Leader of Ai Mental School, (sister of Osada Yuriko), Nagoya	Disciplinary rehabilitation
Ueyama Kazuki	<i>Tōjisha</i> (a self-identifying <i>hikikomori</i>)	Crucial to get youth's voices heard (blogs)

'private' realm (see Horiguchi 2011 for a detailed account of support seeking). The *Guidelines* demonstrated Saitō's large influence over the definitional process behind *hikikomori*, exemplifying a common pattern where those who manage to set themselves up as 'experts' at critical moments in the 'career' of a social problem are typically invited by the government to devise responses to the very problems they have, in a strict constructionist sense, been involved in creating.

Despite their powerful influence, both Saitō's and the government's conceptions of *hikikomori* came under severe criticism and contestation from multiple directions. For example, the psychiatrist Takaoka Ken (2001), the sociologist Takemura Yōsuke (2002) and the social critic Serizawa Shunsuke (2002) advocated a contrasting positive view of *hikikomori*. Rather than defining withdrawal as a pathology to be addressed through psychiatric intervention, they suggest it may be a highly necessary process in many individuals' lives. Consequently, this group of commentators criticize Saitō for what to them seemed like the medicalization of *hikikomori*, i.e. his attempts to position withdrawn youth as an object for medical intervention.⁷

In addition, three other groups put forth contrasting positions on *hikikomori* in the 2000s. First, clinical psychologists (*rinshō shinrishi*) stressed the dimension of human relationships and related psychological conflicts from which withdrawn youth suffer. Tanaka Mihoko (2001: 9), for example, states that one large contributing factor to withdrawal is the loss of relationships and a subsequent lack of conversation. She regards *hikikomori* as a 'disorder of essential human relationships' and argues that responses should focus on the rejuvenation of such relationships. Agreeing with the more positive perspective of Takaoka and others, Tanaka believes that *hikikomori* may represent a temporary retreat from the outside world that can facilitate valuable 'inner work' – processes which enable one to rethink one's life and redevelop oneself.

Private-sector youth support leaders typically hold their own ideas regarding the origins of withdrawal and offer similarly original responses. Miller and Toivonen (2010) have shown that, though incredibly diverse, Japanese youth support groups (which lie outside formal education and the labour markets) can be located along the two continua of disciplinarian/accommodating and employment-oriented/non-employment-oriented. Falling on the accommodating and less employment-oriented side of the spectrum, *Friend Space* and its founder Tomita Fujiya (2002: 52) posit that *hikikomori* is a psychological condition in which one is longing for contact with others but cannot establish such contacts. Tomita emphasizes the psychological dimension of withdrawal rather than focusing on the aspect of physical seclusion, though he does not express the view that *hikikomori* should be medicalized (Tomita 1992: 148). As noted above, *Friend Space* has been reported to offer a so-called *ibasho* (a place to be oneself), where participants are allowed to relax and engage in some communication-oriented programmes.⁸ Another key figure among Japan's private-sector youth supporters, Kudō Sadatsugu of *Seishōnen Jiritsu Enjo Centre* (Youth Support Centre), disapproves of Tomita's psychologically oriented definition and suggests that *hikikomori* should be viewed as 'children and students (adults) who only stay at home and can only interact with their family or a very limited number of people' (Kudō and Studio Pot 1997: 48–51). As a response, Kudō offers a systematic regime of employment-oriented, mildly disciplinarian but voluntary training that is expected to lead to a viable job or a sustainable social role. Another organization, Osada-juku in Nagoya, is a residential institution that defines *hikikomori* as dependence and adopts a strongly disciplinarian approach to rehabilitation (Osada 2003: 38–41). This organization frequently appeared in mainstream media during the early 2000s panic over *hikikomori*, with some TV programmes filming the visits of the leader Osada Yuriko to the homes of withdrawn youth. She has been caught on tape yelling violently at reclusive young people ('Don't depend [on your parents]!') and getting parents to do the same; sometimes she even slaps withdrawn youth or pours buckets of water over them. She typically goes on to persuade her targets to enter residential facilities and learn to lead a communal life. Although Osada's group has understandably attracted much publicity, its violent tactics have not been accepted by the majority of support groups, which take a more accommodating approach. Incidentally, Osada's sister, Sugiura Shōko, was

arrested in 2006 for causing the death of a member due to violence in a residential institution in Aichi Prefecture that had adopted a similar disciplinarian approach. This ‘Ai Mental School scandal’, reminiscent of the Totsuka Yacht School scandal (see Chapter 4), clearly showed the lack of policing of privately run support institutions and suggested that there was a shortage of public support, leading Aichi Prefecture to improve its *hikikomori* measures (see Serizawa 2007). In any case, despite considerable variety in approach, we can see from the above that youth support institutions and their leaders believe that the *hikikomori* can be meaningfully supported via non-medical means, though most believe violent techniques should be avoided.

Journalists, not being directly involved in support programmes, often try to adopt the viewpoint of withdrawn young people themselves. The leading reporter during the early stage of the *hikikomori* problem, Shiokura Yutaka (2000: 203–6), for example, defines withdrawal as ‘a condition in which retreat from social relationships or activities lasts for long beyond one’s intention, and includes cases in which one maintains human relationships with one’s family’. In an attempt to fuse different voices and views in his writings, Shiokura is among those journalists who have made an effort to establish a degree of consensus across diverging perspectives on withdrawal.

In addition to these formulations, there is another distinctive layer to the *hikikomori* debate that could be called that of ‘cultural interpretation’. Though too extensive to review in full here, many discussions of social withdrawal have examined it in relation to ideas and ideals of ‘independence’, ‘maturity’ and ‘adulthood’.⁹ It is especially worth noting here that Saitō, in an in-depth analysis of Japanese culture using Doi Takeo’s theory of dependence (*amae*), once argued that the very problem of *hikikomori* is itself an ongoing *Nihonjinron*, or discussion of ‘Japanese-ness’ (Saitō 2001: 127). Very much resembling other past and current youth debates in Japan, *hikikomori* has sharply highlighted the (shifting) boundaries between socially accepted and deviant behaviour, supplying social commentators as well as other citizens with an explicit obverse image of a wholesome, culturally appropriate kind of young person.

The above has brought us somewhat closer to understanding the contested nature of *hikikomori*, but it is important to conclude this section by noting that discussions around withdrawal have not only targeted those who most clearly fit into the officially defined category (see Kudō 2004: 49–62). As in other youth debates, the meanings of *hikikomori* have ramified and the term has been used to refer to very different groups of people, including: the mentally ill; those with friends but without jobs as well as those with jobs but without friends; and those that on some level seem to possess a reclusive side to their character. In fact nearly anyone living in Japan at present could attest to personally knowing a *hikikomori* or his/her family, but this is not necessarily proof of the continuing spread of a withdrawal ‘epidemic’ but rather an indication of the popularity of the term and its application to highly diverse situations. However, in another common pattern, there are also active efforts to assert and maintain the boundaries between *hikikomori* and

other social categories: on 2channel BBS internet boards, for example, the term *nisehiki* ('fake *hikikomori*') is used to refer to those who are judged to sound like they are not 'true' *hikikomori*; similarly, in self-help groups for withdrawn youth, one may hear members remarking something along the lines of 'he is not *hikikomori*; he is just *otaku*'. As Chapter 7 will go on to show, such negotiation of boundaries became more active with the introduction to Japan of the category 'NEET'. Finally, at all of the levels at which *hikikomori* has been discussed, it has typically been represented as an ethnicized, gendered and classed phenomenon, where 'Japanese' rather than 'foreign' (or non-Japanese) youth, males rather than females, and the offspring of relatively affluent middle-class families rather than those of lower socio-economic households have been at the centre of the debate.

The end of social withdrawal?

If the late 1990s saw the initial appearance of *hikikomori* on the public radar and if the early 2000s witnessed its rapid evolution into a fully fledged moral panic, what has happened to the issue since? Has it continued to attract societal attention and resources, or has it begun to quietly fade into relative irrelevance?

The clearest threat to the 'survival' of *hikikomori* as a social problem may have been the emergence of the debate on the so-called NEETs, 15- to 34-year-olds 'not in education, employment or training'. First appearing in Japan in 2004, this new discourse reformulated the question of inactivity more in terms of employment (or lack thereof) than mental welfare and family relationships. Once again, continuity can be perceived between the imagery and language around *hikikomori* and NEET, with 'lazy' and more or less 'socially inept' young males occupying the centre of the discourse. Interestingly, this change in terminology was reflected in how some private support groups that had previously called themselves '*hikikomori* supporters' started to call themselves 'NEET supporters', or simply incorporated both of these terms in their names. This change in the framing of youth work clearly had much to do not only with the use of labels but also with the somewhat more generous funding that flowed towards 'NEET countermeasures' after 2005.¹⁰ Several other experts – especially those who had a deeper vested interest in the perpetuation of *hikikomori* – insisted on strictly distinguishing between the categories of social withdrawal and NEET. Saitō, for example, emphasized that, while *hikikomori* often required support towards building their communication skills, NEETs primarily needed employment (Saitō 2004: 7). However, as Toivonen suggests in this volume, the emergence of NEET, when seen from an expanded perspective, may have been more of a blessing than a curse for most youth support practitioners and other youth experts, for it produced a new wave of interest in the social marginalization of young adults at the time.

Coinciding with the appearance of the NEET label, sociological discussions of *hikikomori* support started to employ the European concept of 'social exclusion' (Higuchi 2004: 3; Itō and Yoshida 2005: 23). This perspective tends to portray *hikikomori* not as a less relevant category than before, but as a socially disadvantaged group

that requires economic as well as social, cultural and political support. Another recently emerging category often discussed in relation to *hikikomori* is developmental disability (*hattatsu shōgai*) (see Murao 2005: 10), and lay supporters as well as psychiatrists and psychologists are found to be increasingly employing this category to seek out appropriate ways of dealing with *hikikomori* youth. Partly owing to the efforts by the leading parents' association (Zenkoku KHJ Hikikomori Oya no Kai; see above), in August 2008, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare established a budget of 500 million yen to set up *hikikomori* support centres across Japan. The year 2010 was an important year in governmental involvement in the *hikikomori* problem: the new Law for the Promotion of Support Towards the Development of Children and Youth (Kodomo Wakamono Ikusei Shien Suishin Hō) (2010) promised further state support for *hikikomori* measures, new *Guidelines* were issued by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2010), and the Cabinet Office (Naikakufu 2010) reported on a nationwide survey on *hikikomori*. These recent trends show that *hikikomori* is still seen as a social problem in Japan. Indeed, it seems clear that social withdrawal has become institutionalized to the extent that certain powerful actors and agencies now have a continuing interest in keeping the problem on the agenda.

Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the conundrum of how *hikikomori*, which has now become one of Japan's most internationally recognized youth problems, emerged and developed in the 1990s and early 2000s. The rise of socially withdrawn youth is an issue which closely followed the patterns set out in the introductory chapter to this volume. Against a pre-existing legacy of similar youth problem conceptualizations (including school non-attendance), *hikikomori* came to be defined by the psychiatrist Saitō Tamaki in the late 1990s, after which it quickly entered the national consciousness through key publications as well as episodes of 'moral panic'. As in the case of the *otaku*, these moral panics were fuelled by violent incidents that the media liberally interpreted and explicitly associated with the category of socially withdrawn *hikikomori*. The government reacted to these events quickly by issuing a set of guidelines for related welfare institutions, but it has not necessarily yet met the expectations of those most directly involved in the *hikikomori* issue – the young people who have taken on the label, their families and the *hikikomori* industry among them – many of whom still feel the need to bring more attention to it.

Finally, though the term has remained a part of colloquial Japanese vocabulary ever since the early 2000s, the salience of *hikikomori* appears to have diminished following the breakthrough of 'NEET' in 2004 and 2005 (see Chapter 7). This could be interpreted either as the demise of one youth problem in the face of another, or as its re-emergence in a new guise. Recalling the cyclical pattern of youth problems set out in Chapter 1, both of these perspectives would seem to have an aspect of truth to them. However, the recent recurrence of attention somewhat modifies the picture: social withdrawal is clearly not a problem which is considered

to have disappeared in Japan (see e.g. *Asahi Shinbun*, 19 May 2010; Aoki 2010; Onoda 2010). Certain interests have succeeded in sustaining *hikikomori* beyond the typical youth problem 'life-span' of two or three years, and it may be only a matter of time before it once again catapults to the centre of public attention in Japan, not to mention the global media. The demographic changes that Japan is currently undergoing, analysed by Goodman in the closing chapter of this volume, suggest that the next *hikikomori* controversy may well focus on 'social withdrawal among the aged', providing us a rare example of how a youth problem can sometimes mature into an 'adult' malaise.

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Notes

- 1 After broadcasting an original programme on the *hikikomori* problem in Japan in 2002 (BBC 2002a), the BBC's UK website began to carry comments from British parents who had seen the show and were worried over social withdrawal among their own children (BBC 2002b).
- 2 His clinical view was that the number of *hikikomori* would roughly match that of schizophrenics, who are said to comprise roughly one per cent of the Japanese population (though he did not want to suggest the *hikikomori* were schizophrenic) (see Saitō 2003: 56–57). Saitō (2002: 29) also made reference to 'school non-attendance' statistics, noting that roughly 20 per cent of children in this category usually become *hikikomori*.
- 3 This reporting closely resembled the patterns of past media coverage on motorcycle gangs (*bōsōzoku*; Sato 1991: 191) and the *otaku* (see Chapter 1).
- 4 Two homicides of family members allegedly committed by '*hikikomori*' occurred on 24 November 2004 in Ibaraki Prefecture and brought renewed attention to the *hikikomori* issue (Murao 2005: 9).
- 5 Their 2003 survey, conducted at 61 mental health centres and 633 local health centres across Japan, found 14,069 reported cases of withdrawal. Among these, data was available for 3,293 cases, revealing an average age of 26.7, though ages ranged widely from 13 to over 30.
- 6 One key actor prompting the health ministry to conduct a nationwide survey and to publish the *Guidelines* was Zenkoku Hikikomori KHJ Oya no Kai, a nationwide parents' organization set up in June 2000 by Okuyama Masahisa, a father of a *hikikomori* son.
- 7 'The medicalization of life', according to Ivan Illich (1975: 31–60), refers to the process in which the medical community tries to create a 'market' for its services by redefining certain events, behaviours, and problems as diseases. In this conceptualization, the institution of medicine is seen as serving the interests of powerful controlling groups in claiming a monopoly over the definition of deviance and associated remedies.
- 8 See Kaneko 2006 for an account of a group taking a similar approach.
- 9 Saitō suggests that the 'Japanese model of independence' expects a mature person to live with his/her parents and to take care of them, partly based on Confucian ideals, while the 'Western model' expects a mature person to maintain his/her own livelihoods and to be physically away from parents (2002: 51–54; 2003: 104–12).

- 10 The privately run youth support organizations are often strategic in selecting and emphasizing labels that would bring in public funding. Some organizations in Tokyo, for example, re-emphasized the *hikikomori* label once funding was made available through Tokyo Metropolitan Government's *Compass* scheme (2008–11) targeting *hikikomori*.

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7

NEETs

The strategy within the category

Tuukka Toivonen

Non-working youth called '*niito*' increase 1.6-fold over ten years, have no will to work, sponge off parents.

(headline, 17 May 2004, Sankei Shinbun)

Non-studying, non-working youth, '*niito*', will reach one million in six years says a Dai-Ichi Seimei Study.

(headline, 22 October 2004, Asahi Shinbun)

This situation must be improved before we experience a rapid increase in livelihood assistance recipients and homeless people.

(Genda Yūji in Asahi Shinbun, 9 April 2005)

[] if we leave *niito* to their own devices, it is likely they will turn into targets for livelihood assistance. [] we are taking action so as to have such youth swiftly return to work.

(Official, Career Development Support Office, MHLW May 2007)

Introduction

When the private think tank Nomura Research Institute conducted an online survey regarding 'non-employed youth' (*jakunen mugyōsha*) in the autumn of 2004, a mere 17 per cent of the respondents claimed to be familiar with the acronym *NEET* (Nomura Sōgō Kenkyūjo 2004). Strikingly, however, when carrying out fieldwork in Japan just a few years later, I had a hard time encountering a single soul – either young or old – who had not heard this word before, or who did not have their own opinion regarding *NEETs*. A walk into any book store would yield a preliminary explanation as to why: the term adorned the covers of dozens of popular books and magazines, of which some were intended as parenting guides ('how to ensure your child does not turn into a *NEET*') and others as general explanations ('who *NEETs*

really are and whom we should blame'). Provocative magazine articles sometimes suggested this newly emerging group was not only an outrage but a threat to the nation.¹ The virtual world had, if anything, heated up even more: typing the word *NEET* (in its indigenized *katakana* form as *niito*) into Google Japan yielded well over seven million hits as of March 2009, exposing the extent of the debate that had unfolded up to that point. Even the business press took interest in the issue and imagery of *NEET*s to the extent of running high-profile feature stories on the topic, as shown in Photograph 7.1.

How could the seemingly dry, technical policy category of 'Not in Education, Employment, or Training' originating in the UK become the object of such intense attention in Japan in the mid-2000s? Why was this category introduced in the first place, and what, if any, *strategic intentions* were at play? Moreover, what were the predominant symbolic meanings that came to be ascribed to *NEET*?

The present chapter deals with precisely these questions by tracing the process by which *NEET* was socially constructed in the Japanese context after 2003. Drawing on the research strategies developed by Kitsuse and Spector (1977), it traces the definitional and promotional activities of central actors who initiated and



PHOTOGRAPH 7.1 'Princes and NEETs', the cover of the magazine *Nikkei Business*, August 2007.

led this process. Without endorsing any of the derogatory usages of *NEET* or making light of relevant socio-economic changes, the present chapter's prime concern lies with the strategic dimensions of youth problem construction. It argues that *NEET* was promoted in the first place to open the door for new youth *policies*: in other words, it was a category that embodied a tangible 'mission'.

Two sides to every label

Because considerable conceptual confusion prevails both in Japan and abroad over how to best approach *NEET* as a phenomenon, this chapter clarifies the debate by recognizing the two-fold nature of *NEET*: while initially introduced in technical policy reports as a *public policy target group category*, it very soon took on a second life as a widely disseminated *social category* with strong moral connotations.² The two dimensions are inextricably linked and have interacted in important ways, but it is highly useful to posit them as analytically distinct at first.

By *public policy target group category* I refer to technical definitions and labels that delineate, and therefore construct, a particular group based on certain shared characteristics – be it youth who are unemployed, elderly atom bomb victims, or mothers who are unmarried – as a potential target for policy responses. These definitions are usually, but not always, devised by prominent policy analysts and/or government officials as well as, in some cases, politicians. Together with statistics – the collection of which they directly inform – target group categories offer a fundamental technology for the governing of populations in modern societies (see, for example, Best 2001): they facilitate the State's efforts to monitor social change and justify its policies. As with all categories, however, target group formulations are open to manipulation and by no means offer an objective basis for policy measures.

By *social category*, on the other hand, I point to the more explicitly symbolic labels used in the general public arena instead of, or in addition to, technical publications. These denote groups of people who are, again, claimed to share certain characteristics of interest. This is clearly a broader notion than that of target group category as anything from 'permanent worker' (*seishain*) and a 'once-divorced person' (*batsu-ichi*) to 'those around 30' (*arasā*) can be considered a social category. Nevertheless, how these categories are constructed and articulated can critically shape how the objects of categorization are treated in society. As documented across the chapters of this volume, Japanese mainstream society appears to be no different to western countries in terms of its capacity to continuously generate new social types, many of which flag deviance from socially constructed ideas about the organization of 'normal' or 'natural' life-courses, such as expectations regarding when and in which order key life events such as job-market entry or marriage should take place.

It is hardly surprising that social categories regularly interact with, and are sometimes adopted as, target group categories. Schneider and Ingram (1993, 2005, 2008) have conceptualized the interrelationship between how specific groups are constructed and the policies they 'receive'. At the core of their schema is the negotiation of *deservingness*: whether a given group is represented positively or negatively

has implications for whether they are viewed as ‘deserving’ or ‘undeserving’ of benefits. While this should not, of course, suggest that the relative generosity of social measures targeted at a given group is entirely predetermined by that group’s moral status in society, Schneider and Ingram’s work nevertheless directs us to pay more analytical attention to how the (shifting) representations of particular groups structure policy-making.

The official Japanese definition of *NEET* – unmarried 15- to 34-year-olds who are ‘Not in Education, Employment, or Training’ at the time of surveying – tells us, therefore, very little about the strategic and symbolic significance of this category. To seek a deeper understanding, I shall first trace the emergence of *NEET* as a legitimate target group and then examine its curious transformation into a distinctive social category with contested meanings.

The emergence of the target group category NEET

Bridging the Gap: New Opportunities for 16–18 Year Olds Not in Education, Employment or Training was the definitive report that all early Japanese articles on *NEETs* cited in 2003–5 as they sought to ground their arguments regarding this puzzling new phenomenon. The interesting point to note is, of course, that this document was issued by the Cabinet Office of the United Kingdom – with absolutely no reference to Japan – in the early years of the Blair era, amid growing fears over the ‘social exclusion’ of 16- to 18-year-olds and the UK’s relatively low educational participation rates. Roughly a tenth of British youth in this age group were found to be inactive at any one time because of factors such as ‘educational underachievement and educational disaffection’ as well as ‘family disadvantage and poverty’ (Social Exclusion Unit 1999). Inactivity was found to be disproportionately concentrated among those from working class and ethnic minority backgrounds. Based on basic comparative indicators, the UK was indeed an outlier in terms of its low educational participation rates, especially at the high school (i.e. upper secondary) level: at ages 16, 17 and 18 the respective participation rates in the school year 2000/2001 were 86, 74 and 55 per cent in the UK against the EU-15 averages of 93, 84 and 74 per cent (Eurostat 2004: 30). Japan, on the other hand, found itself at the other end of the international spectrum, with 88 per cent of 18-year-olds graduating from high school in 2001 (Obunsha 2004), suggesting that, if there was a problem of exclusion among Japanese youth in the early 2000s, it was of quite a different nature. This striking structural dissimilarity made the transfer of this education-related policy concept from the UK to Japan all the more puzzling.

What was missed by Japanese writers in the early 2000s was that the roots of the ‘NEET’ concept in fact stretched back much further. In the mid-1990s, some researchers employed the term ‘Status Zero’ – based on the technical, residual statistical category ‘status 0’ – to denote essentially the same demographic. But, since this was deemed too derogatory by some, ‘Status A’ came to be used in its stead (see for instance the report on *Young People Not in Education, Training or Employment in South Glamorgan* by Istance, Rees and Williamson, 1994). The concept then continued to

transform amid the interactions of researchers and politicians, mutating from 'EET' to 'NETE' and then finally, to 'NEET'. Although criticized as excessively 'sanitized' or otherwise misleading by prominent youth scholars, 'NEET' became popular in high levels of the government due to its catchiness and marketability (Williamson 1997: 82).³

It was this evolved but contested version of the British 'status 0' category that came to be picked up by leading Japanese labour scholars in 2003. Despite appearances to the contrary, this was not an entirely random incident. *NEET* found its way to Japan through two pivotal reports commissioned by the Occupational Skill Development Bureau of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (hereafter, MHLW) with the purpose of generating fresh policy initiatives. Jolted by the 'discovery' of two million *freeters* (15- to 34-year-old part-timers; see Glossary) in 2002, some labour bureaucrats within the MHLW began to turn their attention from retraining measures for 'restructured' middle-aged workers to youth employment problems (interview, the former chief of the Career Development Office, 4 July 2007).

Both reports were compiled by the government-affiliated think tank the Japan Institute of Labour Policy and Training (JILPT, formerly known more conveniently as the Japan Institute of Labour, JIL). The first report investigated active labour market policies for young people in wealthy western countries; the second focused on various small institutions in Japan that supported youth in their 'school-to-work' transitions (Kosugi 2003; Kosugi and Horii 2003). While the first report highlighted the '*NEET* problem' in the British context, it was the latter of the two that applied it explicitly to Japan. In hindsight, it was this seemingly innocuous move that produced the first sparks in what would later flare up into a full-blown '*NEET* crisis'.

Not unpredictably, authors Kosugi and Horii found that the '*NEET*-layer' within the Japanese youth population had indeed grown drastically in size in the period they covered (1995–2000). Drawing on the National Census (*Kokusei Chōsa*), they calculated that in the year 2000 there were as many as 760,000 15- to 34-year-olds – excluding those non-employed youth who were reportedly engaged in housework (*kaji*) – who 'expressed no will to work', leading them to argue that appropriate countermeasures were badly needed. Kosugi and Horii had effectively produced a formulation of 'Japanese-style *NEETs*' that would become the more or less standard definition in the following few years.

Significantly, the authors gave no explanation as to why the *NEET* category should include 'youth' up to the age of 34 as opposed to 24 or 25 as in most other OECD countries (it was only remarked that there had 'recently been an increase' in inactive 30- to 34-year-old young people in Japan). Interviews that I undertook with several key actors in Japan's youth policy community provide some clues to this puzzle.

The research director in charge of the above reports, Kosugi Reiko of the JILPT, has explained that the 15 to 34 age range was chosen partly because, as of 2003, it was already being applied to part-time-working *freeters*; using the same range for *NEETs* would facilitate comparisons and a more integrated analysis of the

two issues. Another contributing factor was that, since Japan had no pre-existing policy measures for inactive youth, there was no need for more finely distinguished gradations and a catch-all approach seemed most appropriate (interview, Kosugi Reiko, 17 May 2007). This meant, among other things, that highly educated youth who failed to enter employment upon graduation could also be included among the potential target groups of any new measures (Kosugi interview in *Asahi Shinbun*, 2 October 2004). This choice reflects not only Japan's high educational participation rates, but also the fact that the *NEET* debate was, at least in its initial years, generally preoccupied with middle-class youth rather than with the offspring of relatively deprived families.⁴

Offering a more historical perspective, a key labour bureaucrat at the MHLW posited that the 15 to 34 age bracket followed from the gradual expansion of the State's general definition of 'youth' in the post-war era. Whereas the so-called 'working youths' (*kinrō seishōnen*) of the 1960s and 1970s were defined as those between ages 15 and 19, the upper age ceiling had gone up, first to 24 (1980s), then to 29 (1990s), and finally to 34 (2000s). Paralleling this shift, the words used by the labour administration to denote 'youth' had also changed, from *seishōnen* (youngsters and juveniles) to *seinen* (youngsters) to *wakamono* (young people) and *jakunen* (youth; *jakunen* is used mainly in formal contexts). For the critical sociologist, this shift serves as a good reminder of how the meanings of even taken-for-granted categories such as 'child', 'youth' and 'adult' may undergo substantial redefinition in a relatively short span of time.

When Kudō Sadatsugu, the most influential civil society youth work 'veteran' in Japan, was asked the same question regarding the expansiveness of the *NEET* age-range, he started by highlighting cultural factors that led Japanese parents to feel intense responsibility for their offspring's education and careers (interview, 22 April 2007). Kudō recounted how a small group of scholars (including Kosugi Reiko and Miyamoto Michiko) had made explicit demands on the MHLW in the early 2000s to extend their upper limit for 'youth' from 29 to 34, following their realization that there were a substantial number of over-30-year-olds who had not yet reached 'adulthood' and required support.⁵ Another key explanation given by leading bureaucrats (including the former head of the MHLW, Administrative Vice Minister Togari) was that using the 15 to 34 range was necessary in order for statistics – and hence for policy – to include those young people who had failed to enter the labour markets in the 1990s during the so-called 'employment ice-age' (*koyō hyōgaki*; see Rebeck 2005), the youth who subsequently came to symbolize the so-called 'Lost Generation' (which was another important social category that negatively branded a large swathe of young Japanese adults).

What is especially interesting about these explanations is that, despite covering issues of tremendous importance in their own right, they all but omit one obvious but critical fact: by employing an extraordinarily wide, although culturally plausible, age range, claims-makers could produce a higher total number of *NEET*s than would have been possible had they focused on a narrower demography such as 15- to 19-year-olds or even 15- to 24-year-olds. Being able to 'prove' with ostensibly

objective ‘data’ that there were hundreds of thousands of apparently idle jobless youths gave key advocates a powerful symbolic means to stir up alarm and create a sense of ‘moral panic’ via the media.

It is, of course, nothing new to note that various actors manipulate statistics to support their own agendas, but it is worth briefly tracing how this ‘numbers game’ was played in the particular case of *NEETs*, for it reveals some fascinating dynamics. Table 7.1 below lists different numbers put forth by central researchers and think tanks between 2003 and 2006.

What this table tells us, first of all, is that a striking range of figures – from 400,000 to 2.5 million – was cited in the first years of the *NEET* debate. That these numbers drew on at least seven different surveys partly accounts for this diversity, but equally consequential were the intricate definitional battles fought in the background.

One pivotal conflict revolved around the issue of gender roles: were unmarried, formally non-employed women who reportedly engaged in housework (*kaji*) to

TABLE 7.1. The reported numbers of *NEETs* in 2003–2006 and respective sources of statistical data.

Number	Explanations and data sources
760,000	15–34-year-olds who were <i>NEET</i> (excluding those who did housework) in 2000 (Kosugi and Horii 2003). Data source: National Census (Ministry of General Affairs).
2.5 million	15–34-year-olds who were <i>NEET</i> (including women who did housework or cared for children) in 2002 (Genda 2004). Data source: Special Labour Force Survey and Basic School Survey.
400,000	15–24-year-olds who were <i>NEET</i> and expressed <i>no desire</i> to work or study in 2003 (Genda and Maganuma 2004). Data source: Labour Force Survey Detailed Results.
640,000	15–34-year-olds who were non-employed and not in education (excluding those who did housework) in 2003 (Kosugi Reiko; interviewed in <i>Asahi Shinbun</i> , 2 October 2004). Data source: White Paper on the Labour Markets 2004 (MHLW 2004).
1 million	A projection of the number of <i>NEETs</i> in 2010 (Dai-ichi Seimei Research Centre; quoted in <i>Asahi Shinbun</i> , 22 October 2004).
520,000	15–34-year-old <i>NEETs</i> in 2003 (excluding those who did housework; MHLW; quoted in <i>Asahi Shinbun</i> (6 March 2005). Data source: White Paper on the Labour Markets 2004 (MHLW 2004).
847,000	15–34-year-olds who were <i>NEET</i> (including those who did housework) in 2002 (Cabinet Office; cited in <i>Asahi Shinbun</i> , 24 March 2005). Source: Employment Structure Basic Survey.
640,000	15–34-year-olds who were <i>NEET</i> (excluding those who did housework) in 2002–2006 (MHLW, numerous articles and publications in 2004–2006). The most widely accepted and cited figure since 2005. Source: Labour Force Survey.

be counted as *NEETs* or not?⁶ The answer of Genda Yūji, a central claims-maker (see below), was an emphatic ‘yes’, based on the contention that many female survey respondents preferred to say they were ‘engaged in housework’ when they really were ‘out of work’ (Genda 2007). The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, however, disagreed, preferring to take the ‘housework’ category at face value and thus keeping to Kosugi’s original definition.⁷ When the Cabinet Office adopted Genda’s definition, an intriguing intra-government conflict emerged over who should be considered a *NEET*. This was eventually won by the MHLW, as its figure – which showed there were around 640,000 *NEETs* between 2002 and 2006, excluding women doing housework – became the most widely cited one from the mid-2000s (see Figure 7.1). This was significant, as the MHLW was the government organ directly in charge of developing new social programmes for non-employed youth.

The battles over definitions and aggregate *NEET* statistics were coupled with a yet more subtle strategy of omission. The percentage shares of non-employed youth were consistently de-emphasized in policy discussions and were almost never mentioned in the public debate. This was understandable as no more than 1.9 per cent of 15- to 34-year-olds (2.5 per cent of 18- to 19-year-olds) were outside education, employment or training as of 2003 (Kosugi 2005: 7–9). Although describing the same phenomenon, it is clear that trumpeting the figure ‘640,000’ in academic and general publications was far more effective a way to raise alarm over *NEETs* than pointing out they had ‘dramatically increased’ to just two per cent of the 15- to 34-year-old population. Also conspicuously absent from the debate was any information regarding the length of time youth generally spent in the *NEET* category, which would have made it much easier to gauge the ‘seriousness’ of the issue.⁸

What we learn from the above is, first of all, that it was a select group of policy actors who initially introduced the term *NEET* to Japan and then went on to call

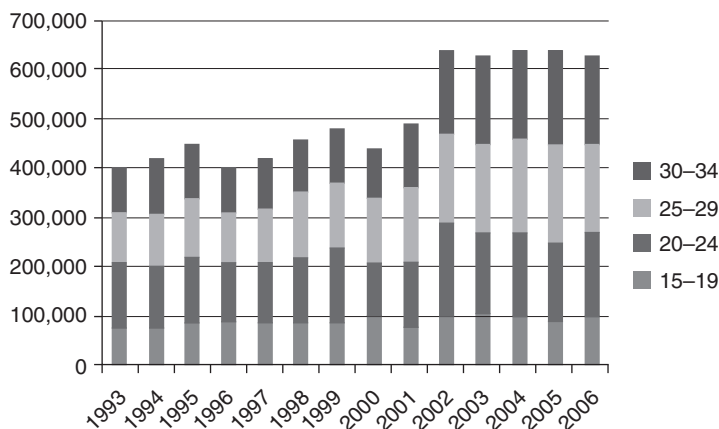


FIGURE 7.1 The number of *NEETs* in each age group between 1993 and 2006. (Source: Labour Force Survey (as cited in MHLW 2007).)

for new measures to tackle this ‘problem’. The process of defining and counting *NEETs* was not only messy but characterized by substantial contestation and conflict between actors who were in the position – in other words, who had the power – to participate in the definitional process. As this case reminds us, all statistical (as well as qualitative) ‘evidence’ is produced within certain social relations and built upon explicit and implicit assumptions that the sociologist and critical policy analyst must unpack.

The social category *niito*

NEETs do not have confidence in themselves. One out of two *NEETs* feel that they are inferior in terms of sociability, initiative and communication skills compared to other people of their age.

(Genda and Maganuma 2004: 165)

Niito are ravaging the wealth and pensions of the state and parents.

(Asai and Morimoto 2005: 15)

As it transformed from a dry policy term into a widely known, almost fashionable label, *NEET* took on strong new symbolic meanings with significant social and policy consequences. While the definitional process of the *policy* category (as outlined above) was all but monopolized by labour researchers, its colloquial image was crafted through a much less centralized process in the mass media between 2004 and 2006.

The beginnings of this process can be traced to the efforts of Genda Yūji of Tokyo University, one of Japan’s most prominent labour economists and the author, in 2001, of the widely acclaimed book *Shigoto no Naka no Aimai na Fuan* (A Nagging Sense of Insecurity About Work). Genda first engaged with the issue of non-employed youth in a handful of magazine articles in the first half of 2004, drawing attention to a stratum of young people who were ‘not fortunate enough to even become *freeters* or *shitsugyōsha*’ (the latter meaning formally unemployed) and who hence fell into the curious category of *NEET* (Genda and Maganuma 2004). He argued that it was high time to consider support measures for this group which had hitherto been all but ignored by society and policy.

Citing the results of a small, unrepresentative Internet survey, Genda described *NEETs* as lacking in communication skills and self-confidence. These characteristics that *NEETs* were presumed to share were adopted in numerous articles as well as in official government publications (see for example the Health, Labour and Welfare White Papers for 2005 and 2006). Moreover, by spelling the word not in the Roman alphabet as *NEET* but in the Japanese *katakana* script as *niito*, Genda both shifted the category from the narrow realm of labour market policy to that of broader social debate and also facilitated its ‘indigenization’.⁹

Although JILPT’s Kosugi Reiko also helped popularize *NEET* by interpreting the issue for the mass media,¹⁰ the defining publication of the debate was without doubt *Niito: Furiitā demo naku, Shitsugyōsha demo naku* (*Niito: Neither Freeter nor*

Unemployed) by Genda and the freelance writer Maganuma Mie, published in July 2004. Intended as a general interest book rather than an academic volume, it explored the issue of *NEETs* by drawing on a mix of statistical data and journalistic interviews. Although it did thus employ statistics to argue there had been a dramatic increase in youth who were essentially inactive (Genda and Maganuma 2004: 20–22), the main contributions of this best-selling book were conceptual and moral. First, by drawing a strict line between *NEETs* and the officially unemployed, and by portraying the non-employed youth whom Maganuma had interviewed as ‘adult children’, it intentionally aroused outrage over ‘lazy’ youth who were violating established work norms and helped to feed a type of ‘moral underclass’ discourse.¹¹ Second, in an apparent contradiction of the foregoing, Genda emphasized that it was not that *NEETs* did not want to work, but that they simply *could* not, for one reason or another. The book therefore sent a very mixed message, as it stirred up controversy while simultaneously attempting to temper criticisms regarding the personal failings of ‘unmotivated’ youth. In a media environment where the disparagement of young people was already rampant, this would soon prove an impossible balancing act.

The volume by Genda and Maganuma was quickly followed by an array of other publications as well as a stream of public debate on the topic of youth employment and non-employment.¹² Significantly, alongside professional researchers, youth support practitioners – mostly former *futōkō* and *hikikomori* supporters who now framed themselves as *NEET* experts – began to put out their own books in the following year. Futagami Nōki’s *Kibō no Niito* (The Niito of Hope, 2005) was an early exemplar of this genre.¹³ Based on interactions with hundreds of young people and their parents that he had had during his career as a private youth worker and manager, Futagami’s book bitterly critiqued not just the Japanese family but also social structural factors that he said were responsible for youth marginalization. Others, including the young social entrepreneur Kudō Kei (who was closely involved in the development of the Youth Independence Camps, which we will look at later) soon released books that explained their own perspectives on young people and support practices (see for example Kudō 2005, 2006). The tone of such expert-authored books was generally much more down to earth than that of scholars, but in other respects they supplemented rather than challenged the assertions of Genda and Kosugi. They did, however, take serious issue with dominant mass media representations and public perceptions of non-employed youth that had, at this point, already become established. Table 7.2 clarifies the basic positions of key scholars and experts vis-à-vis *NEETs*.

How, then, did the Japanese mass media construct *niito*? Most major media, from respectable broadsheets such as *Sankei Shinbun* to less respectable weekly magazines, seemed more than happy to sensationalize *NEETs* and play up the controversy of ‘rapidly proliferating’ workless youth. In a large part, this, of course, helped those who wished to raise awareness of the problem of youth non-employment. What was less useful to the original claims-makers though, was the aggressively asserted view that non-working youth were not only lazy and unmotivated, but essentially

TABLE 7.2. How key scholars and experts constructed *niito* in 2004 and 2005.

Genda Yūji	<i>Niito</i> are youth who do <i>want</i> to work but are simply unable to do so; they typically lack confidence and communication skills; many have low educational qualifications and/or are drop-outs
Kosugi Reiko	<i>Niito</i> are not only a private issue but also a <i>social</i> problem that largely results from labour market change; four distinctive categories of <i>niito</i> exist, one of which is universal and three of which are Japan-specific
Futagami Nōki	It is a misunderstanding that <i>niito</i> have simply no interest in work; they are victims of rigid social values, conservative parents, abusive workplaces and dire job markets
Kudō Kei	<i>Niito</i> are not lazy but in fact <i>desperate</i> to work and become financially independent; in Japan, it is vastly more stressful to remain jobless than it is to work

Sources: Genda (2004); Genda and Maganuma (2004); Kosugi (2005); Futagami (2005); Kudō (2005, 2006).

worthless and by implication undeserving of any public support. It was such strongly negative representations of *niito* – most unabashedly expressed in ‘variety shows’ on TV – as glaringly deviant that the youth workers I met while conducting fieldwork invariably resented and challenged.

There was, however, a spectrum of positions on *NEETs*. As a bureaucrat in charge of the MHLW’s ‘youth support policies’ put it, ‘it is not that all Japanese people lean towards the same direction, calling for more [youth support] measures, or calling for existing measures to be abolished; there is a variety of opinion on this issue’ (interview, 30 May 2007, three bureaucrats in charge of youth measures, Career Development Support Office, MHLW). There are several ways to analyse this diversity of opinion. One technique is to compare different sources, using ethnographic evidence as well as newspaper reporting. In a previous study (Toivonen 2009), I analysed the views of practitioners as well as of dozens of supported youth (at 15 Youth Support Stations and Youth Independence Camps altogether; the nature of these programmes will be briefly explained below) and conducted a content analysis of relevant *Asahi Shinbun* articles.¹⁴ A striking finding that emerged was that, contrasting with the negative, damning social images of *NEETs* that youth workers thought were predominant in Japan, reporting in the *Asahi* in fact took a relatively constructive, even positive attitude to non-employed youth. Although a third of the articles I surveyed did associate *NEETs* with ‘a lack of motivation’ for work or study, the newspaper also called on society to provide more support to youth on their way to independence. Moreover, the voices of central claims-makers such as Genda, Kosugi and Kudō featured very frequently, positioning the *Asahi* essentially as an ‘ally’ of these actors and helping to build support for their policy agendas. Table 7.3 attempts to summarize dominant constructions

of *NEET* based on newspaper reporting as well as ethnographic evidence and everyday contexts.

Notwithstanding the diversity of opinion across different types of media, social groups and individuals, it is safe to say that, from 2004, the social category of *niito* came to be constructed in the public consciousness in predominantly negative terms as lazy, uninterested in work, and generally low in motivation. At its most basic, this is consistent with a deficit model of youth that places blame on the moral shortcomings of individual young people while de-emphasizing social structural issues. Since earlier youth problems such as the *parasite singles*, part-time working *freeters* and the socially withdrawn *hikikomori* were debated in broadly similar terms in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, one can perceive considerable thematic continuity between *NEET* and its predecessors (see Chapter 1).

At the same time, there is one easily missed but critical discontinuity that is fundamental to understanding the full significance of the *NEET* debates between 2003 and 2006. This concerns the reframing of youth inactivity or ‘exclusion’ as primarily a matter of employment rather than of ‘welfare’. It may be recalled that, as posited by Horiguchi in the preceding chapter, the *hikikomori* debate that directly preceded *NEET* produced a strongly medicalized, stigmatizing discourse that suggested withdrawn youth were often mentally ill. The consequence was that, despite its construction as a ‘social problem’, the *hikikomori* came to be understood predominantly as a private family issue, making it very difficult to justify substantial new public policy measures. In this respect, *NEET* was decisively different: with the intervention of labour economists, youth inactivity was swiftly repositioned as an employment problem, with direct, measurable consequences for the economy as

TABLE 7.3. Tracing the dominant constructions of *niito* as a social category.

Source	Content
Newspaper articles (<i>Asahi Shinbun</i> , September 2004–September 2005)	‘Those who do not commute to school, engage in work or receive occupational training’ (<i>gakkō ni mo kayowazu, shigoto mo shite orazu, shokugyō kunren mo ukete inai wakamono</i>); associated with a ‘lack of motivation’; in need of support
Youth support staff and supported youth (April 2007–March 2008)	<i>NEETs</i> are seen by mainstream society as lazy sluggards (<i>namakemono</i>), as disgraceful (<i>mittomonai</i>), worthless (<i>kudaranai</i>), spoilt and dependent (<i>amaete iru</i>) and as having no work motivation (<i>hataraku iyoku ga nai</i>); yet <i>NEET</i> is less negative in its connotations than <i>hikikomori</i>
General everyday contexts (April 2007–March 2008)	<i>NEETs</i> are often seen as lazy and irresponsible, but any young person who is even temporarily out of work can casually and sometimes jokingly be called a <i>NEET</i>

well as the stability of the social security system. As shown by the quotes on the first page of this chapter, key claims-makers made a direct link between the increase in *NEETs* and the social security system, which was already seen to be on the verge of collapse and would have to carry additional burdens were non-employed youth allowed to become welfare claimants. This view was pushed by those bureaucrats who were in charge of new youth measures. In a conservative public policy context where welfare (*fukushi*) was strongly associated with the private sphere of the family, but where the economy (*keizai*) was placed at the very centre of the public realm, shifting the focus of youth inactivity – whatever its actual causes or solutions – towards the latter frame made strategic sense if one wanted to garner support.¹⁵

Discussion

So far this chapter has traced the path of *NEET* from its country of origin, the UK, through the reports of certain policy analysts into the general Japanese mass media arena, where it took on a distinctive identity as a popular social category. This section will take the present account further by discussing the role of specific interests in shaping the *NEET* debate as well as some of the debate's immediate 'outcomes', both of which are closely related to the key themes of the present volume.

Interests

While the central claims-makers of the *NEET* campaign – scholars such as Genda and Kosugi, practitioners such as the two Kudōs (father Sadatsugu and son Kei), as well as several MHLW officials – have already been identified, the issue of interests has not yet been addressed. What were the salient motivations of these actors, and which other groups might have hoped to benefit from the *NEET* debate in one way or another?

At the risk of over-simplification, one can identify three particular organizations and one distinctive sector that clearly had a vital interest in the 'problem' of jobless young people. First, the MHLW's Occupational Skill Development Bureau (which had commissioned the critical JILPT reports on youth labour market measures) had an institutional 'mission' that it was struggling to maintain. The old 'Working Youths' Homes' – the Ministry's classic youth programme that had at one time comprised over 500 activity centres across Japan – had by the early 2000s descended to virtual irrelevance. A particularly enterprising new chief of the Career Development Support Office in the first half of the 2000s recognized the need to introduce new, up-to-date programmes. Second, the Japan Institute of Labour Policy and Training was under pressure to produce new, 'socially relevant' research. By the early 2000s, it had become widely seen as one of those wasteful semi-governmental organizations where high-ranking bureaucrats found comfortable and lucrative post-retirement jobs in a process known in Japanese as *amakudari* (literally, descent from heaven). While this was not necessarily a fair appraisal of the organization's

contributions – the institute continued to be highly regarded by many domestic and international researchers – the JILPT had to fight for its survival and it had much to gain from the emergence of new social problems over which it could claim expertise. Third, the Institute of Social Science (ISS) at the University of Tokyo (where Genda was a faculty member) faced somewhat less acute but not altogether dissimilar issues as JILPT. It, too, was under growing pressure to produce research that was not only of high quality, but that was policy relevant and could thus attract research funding in an increasingly competitive higher education sector. Compared to the 1960s and 1970s, when the ISS was oriented more towards Marxist theorizing than pragmatic public policy issues, the 2000s thus saw this research institute adopt a much more cooperative stance towards the central government as well as mainstream media.

At the same time, while enjoying lesser visibility and political influence, some of Japan's youth support institutions also had a critical interest in the debate on *NEET*s. Though not necessarily an industry-wide campaign, some of the best-situated youth work veterans, such as Kudō Sadatsugu, had been in regular contact with officials within the MHLW since the early 2000s (Adachi 2006). Kudō's position was very clear. He has consistently demanded that youth support institutions be recognized as providing a public service that benefits not just individual support-seekers but the wider society and economy as well, and he certainly helped raise awareness regarding youth problems and support measures within the MHLW. Once this new category materialized, youth support institutions began to reframe their activities as '*NEET* support measures' (as opposed to *hikikomori* and/or *futōkō* measures), partly in order to qualify for government subsidies. As we observed in [Chapter 1](#), private institutions both actively shape, and are shaped by, dynamic youth problem discourses.

It is conspicuous that two other potential beneficiaries of youth policies – parents of young people and young people themselves – appear to have played a much less strong role in lobbying for new youth measures through the *NEET* debate. The youth workers that I met during fieldwork in 2007 and 2008 argued that parents with offspring who were, for whatever reason, formally inactive and/or socially withdrawn typically felt ashamed and thus grew rather isolated in their respective communities, making it difficult for them to collectively make demands for new social support measures (though such demands were not altogether absent prior to the *NEET* controversy: see Horiguchi's chapter). With the exception of the aforementioned Kudō Kei – the well-networked son of the youth support pioneer Kudō Sadatsugu – who took part in the planning of new support programmes, the voices of youth also remained largely absent from the debates about them. Partly spurred by the *NEET* critique that Honda co-authored with two young writers (Honda *et al.* 2006), there was a slight change to this situation from 2006 onwards, as spirited young authors, many of whom claimed to have personally experienced painful marginalization in the past (with the labour activist Amamiya Karin being perhaps most well-known such writer), began producing polemical books on the topic.

Outcomes

What were some of the salient ‘outcomes’ of the Japanese *NEET* debate? In other words, if we assume that it indeed was a campaign with certain strategic objectives, what did it produce beyond new categories and discourses? The short answer is that the campaign produced Japan’s first support programmes to ‘socially include’ young people who were engaged in neither study nor employment and who could not be reached via more conventional employment services such as Hello Work (the general public employment service offices) or the Job Café (employment counselling offices targeted at students and youth with *freeter* work backgrounds). These new programmes consisted of the Youth Independence Camp (2005), a residential ‘work and life skills’ training programme, and the Youth Support Station (2006), a drop-in counselling centre with diverse career and psychological counselling functions (Toivonen 2008). *NEETs* were perceived to be the foremost target group of these two new measures, although in actuality, the measures came to serve a much narrower demographic with more specific conditions such as severe childhood trauma and other vulnerabilities (which subjected youth in this group to great difficulties in the post-industrializing and poorly protected labour markets; Toivonen forthcoming).

It is important to note just how closely interlinked the youth problem discourse and corresponding policy measures were in the case of *NEETs*. Once the issue of non-employed youth had been placed on the public and government radars in 2004, new policies appeared with only a minimal delay in 2005 and 2006. As Figure 7.2 shows, it was in these two years that the media’s interest in *NEETs* appeared to reach its most intense level.

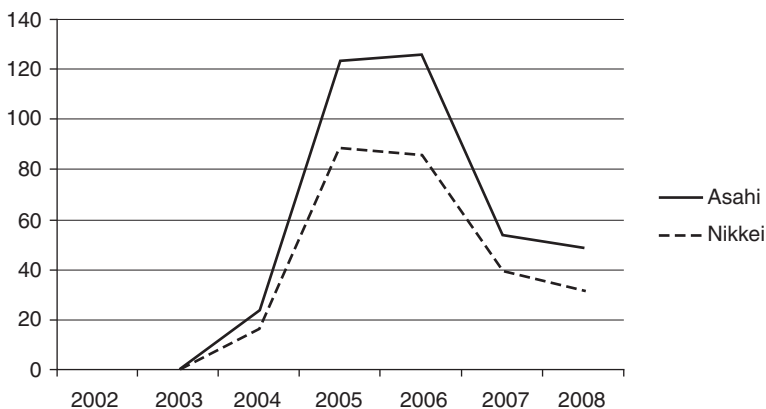


Figure 7.2 The annual number of articles that feature *NEET* (*Asahi Shinbun* and *Nihon Keizai Shinbun* (*Nikkei*), 2002–2008).

Sources: Kikuzo II Visual for Library 2009; Nikkei Telecom21 2009.

Note: The articles included here contain either the acronym ‘*NEET*’ or the word *niito*, or both.

The history of the *NEET* debate follows that of other social problems in Japan. A new category was established; statistics were used to show a rise in incidence; ‘problems’ and ‘solutions’ were aired; public awareness was raised through high-profile media debate; and finally, new measures were introduced. Interestingly, the negative image of *NEET*s as ‘lazy’ and ‘unmotivated’ – fiercely challenged by the likes of Honda *et al.* (2006) – was little more than an unfortunate aside in a campaign that was otherwise successful in bringing about concrete policy change. That claims-makers and bureaucrats managed to reconstruct youth inactivity as a matter of employment rather than mental health and welfare seems to have been the most crucial factor here.

Conclusion

The emergence of *NEET* in the Japanese context demonstrates how this new category was the outcome of concerted claims-making efforts by a handful of key actors. If one looks at the definitional battles that *NEET* became subjected to, the ‘numbers game’ where statistics were manipulated to raise concern, and the media’s treatment of this new category, it seems clear that the construction of *NEET* amounted essentially to a *strategic campaign*. One key aim of this campaign was to introduce new youth policies targeted at an ‘excluded’ layer of young people, though it remains important to place this aim in the context of individual and institutional interests. The goal of making novel policies was indeed reached, but it is much less certain whether the actual scope and contents of the resulting programmes matched the original claims-makers’ expectations (see Toivonen forthcoming).

Our understanding of the process analysed in this chapter benefited from making a clear analytical distinction between the target group category *NEET* and the social category *niito*. This is a basic distinction that can surely be applied to all other problem youth categories that have relevance to public policies. As the present account has suggested, it was precisely through the *interaction* of these two distinctive dimensions that sufficient momentum was generated for new social programmes. Arguably, paying attention to such interactive processes – rooted in the assumption that youth debates on the media and more esoteric policy categories as well as policy-making efforts are intimately intertwined – is essential to fully grasping the complex dynamics of mainstream youth problems in Japan and beyond.

Notes

- 1 See, for instance, the special feature section of the April 2006 issue of *Seiron*, entitled ‘Will *Niito* Destroy This Country?’.
- 2 Lunsing (2008), for instance, misses this distinction and offers a rather confused critique of popular *NEET* literature in Japan; OECD (2008) on the other hand pays scarce attention to the domestic processes that produced the social category *niito* and the implications of such political processes for policy outputs.

- 3 The Home Office did not like 'Status Zero', as it was seen to lack these qualities (Howard Williamson, interview, 23 April 2009). 'NEET' was criticized again in the 2000s as promoting a 'deficiency model' of youth and for biasing policies towards simply getting youth to 'exit' this category without concern for their long-term careers or well-being (see e.g. Yates and Payne 2006).
- 4 Genda, in the various articles he penned on the issue in 2004, did strive to bring attention to the poor employment opportunities enjoyed by those youth who did not, for one reason or another, enter or graduate from high school, but this never became more than a footnote in the mainstream *NEET* debate.
- 5 In the context of Japanese youth support, 'adulthood' is typically referred to as the attainment of a sufficient degree of psychological and economic autonomy vis-à-vis one's parents. It is thus closely associated with the central concept of 'independence' (*jiritsu*). As opposed to the relatively simple definitions of the government, youth supporters such as Kudō and Futagami hold much richer philosophies of adulthood and independence, linking these symbolic concepts to social participation (*sanka*) and even interdependence (see Horiguchi's chapter, Miller and Toivonen 2010, and Toivonen, forthcoming, for further interpretations).
- 6 In contrast to Britain, for instance, it is vital to note that 'housework' in this context was not assumed to include child-rearing, since only *married* women are expected to have children in Japan (see e.g. Hertog 2008). There is a separate policy category for single parents, which partly explains why lone carers never featured in the Japanese *NEET* debate.
- 7 There was never any real disagreement over the exclusion of *married* men and women from the *NEET* category, as marriage tends to be taken as unequivocal evidence of 'social inclusion' in Japan (Toivonen 2008).
- 8 The dearth of publicly accessible longitudinal panel data on youth certainly contributed to this latter omission (see Brinton 2003 on data availability issues in Japan).
- 9 Immediately after the publication of his article in *Chūō Kōron*, Genda addressed a combined study council of the ruling and opposition parties at the Japanese Diet, which raised awareness of the issue of non-employed youth among politicians to the point of prompting the opposition Democratic Party to incorporate 'NEET counter-measures' into its Upper House election Manifesto (*Asahi Shinbun*, 2 October 2004).
- 10 Kosugi first discussed the issue in an interview that was published in a *Sankei Shinbun* article on 17 May 2004 with the provocative title 'Non-working youth 'niito' increase 1.6-fold in ten years, have no will to work, sponge off parents' (Honda *et al.* 2006: 18). Summarizing the findings of an interview survey that she had conducted with her colleagues, Kosugi was one of the first to identify distinctive *sub-categories* within *NEETs*.
- 11 Miyamoto (2004) stresses the arbitrariness of the decision to separate *NEETs* conceptually from the unemployed in light of the very narrow definition of unemployment in Japan. In most employment surveys, a person is counted as 'unemployed' only if he/she is without a job and pursues job-seeking activities in the final week of the relevant survey month – otherwise the same person is excluded from the labour force as 'non-employed' or *NEET* (Miyamoto 2004: 24).
- 12 The first major forum took place in November 2004 under the title '*Wakamono Mugyōsha no Jitsujō to Shiensaku o Kangaeru*' ('Thinking about the Current Situation of Non-employed Youth and Support Measures'). Its proceedings were quickly published by JIL in its academic journal *Rōdō Kenkyū* in December 2004, which provided the most comprehensive synopsis of policy debates on 'NEETs' at the time, comprising contributions from all key authors except Genda.
- 13 This and other *NEET* books are part of a wider, older body of literature on youth problems and rehabilitation authored by practitioners such as Kudō Sadatsugu, Wada Shigehiro and the infamous Totsuka Hiroshi (of the Totsuka Yacht School; see Miller's chapter in this volume).

- 14 I analysed all articles carried by the Tokyo morning edition (*chōkan*) of the *Asahi Shinbun* that directly addressed the issue of *NEETs* (as opposed to just mentioning the term) between 12 September 2004 – the date the first article on *NEETs* appeared – and 9 September 2005, amounting to 27 articles in total. I focused on the critical first year of reporting to observe initial claims-making and definitional efforts. It is important to point out that the *Asahi* is considered a left-of-centre newspaper in Japan.
- 15 The public–private distinction, though amenable to numerous different usages, is a central analytical axis in much of public and social policy literature (see e.g. Seeleib-Kaiser 2008 and Gilbert 2002).

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8

SHIFTING LANDSCAPES

The social context of youth problems in an ageing nation

Roger Goodman

As the case studies which we have examined in the previous chapters have shown, the most important focus for understanding why particular social problems were ‘discovered’ in Japan at particular points in time – and, conversely, why others were not – lies in looking at the individual actors, institutions and organizations involved. Social problems do not appear out of a vacuum, but are the result of human activity and interaction. They also have a social history which starts with their discovery and results in their treatment or redefinition as no longer a problem. These social histories can only be dug out through long-term fieldwork in Japan and a detailed reading of relevant documents and interviews with the major ‘claims-makers’, those individuals who have pulled the economic and political strings necessary to bring the social issue they are concerned with to public prominence. Indeed, the necessity for the claims-makers to have access to media and policy-makers explains the often greater attention given to apparently ‘middle-class’ youth social problems. While the ‘claims-makers’ may be the original strategists and translators of these issues, they are often joined by a burgeoning industry which seeks to provide analysis and treatment. The problematic youth themselves tend to be peripheral to the debates about them, not least because, as we argue, most of those who work on Japanese mainstream youth problems work on the assumption that these problems are the natural consequence of features that are indigenous to Japanese culture and society. If these ‘cultural’ problems can be treated, then, so the thinking goes, the quality of life for the youth who suffer from them will naturally be improved.

This final chapter starts by looking at the role of Japanese culture in the explanations of youth problems in Japan. It also wants to lift the focus from the human agency and interest groups who have been central to the construction of youth problems in Japan and look at the broader social, political and economic context in which these debates have taken place over the past two decades. Just as this context has shaped the debates about youth problems in Japan, the debates themselves have

provided an interesting commentary on the changing context for youth lives in Japan. Indeed, these debates about youth problems have touched on important issues about what it is to be a young person in Japan and even what it is to be Japanese.

As we use the debate about problem youth to address major issues in contemporary Japan, it is important not to lose sight of either the youth themselves or their purported problems. One of the criticisms which can be levelled at the social constructionist approach is that it can appear to deny the actual existence of the problems that it is used to examine. That is absolutely not our intention in this volume. There is no doubt that being a youth in Japan today can be, as in any society, problematic. For many young people, the problems they face can be traumatic and even have tragic consequences. What we are interested in examining is how these problems are classified – by whom and when and how – and how young people interact with these classifications, which may give them an identity and even a set of rules for behaving in society. As the philosopher Ian Hacking (1999: 31) has pointed out: ‘Ways of classifying human beings interact with the human beings who are classified.’ Not all young people need to accede to the ‘role’ that these classifications provide – and many are adept at switching between ‘problem’ roles such as ‘school-refuser’, *hikikomori* and NEET – but they provide powerful frameworks within which they can be categorized and treated by mainstream society.

Japanese ‘culture’

A huge amount has been written about the role of culture in understanding Japanese society and there exists a huge industry of ‘cultural brokers’ to feed it. Underlying much of this literature and industry is the assumption that Japanese culture is different from that of other societies, possibly even ‘unique’. These assumptions are both internally generated as part of Japanese national discourses (where collectively they are known as *Nihonjinron*, or theories of Japaneseness) and externally by foreigners who write books on ‘The Japanese Mind’, or ‘The Inscrutable Japanese’ or even simply on ‘The Japanese’, as if homogeneity was one of these underlying Japanese traits. Among the key underlying assumptions about Japaneseness in this literature are the ideas that the Japanese are: group-minded, harmonious, consider hierarchical relations more significant than horizontal ones, and place a positive evaluation on such personal characteristics as recognizing their dependency on others, duty, emotional sensitivity and relativism (see Goodman, 2005 for a fuller account).

Much of the literature which we have critiqued in the previous chapters has undertaken a culturalist analysis of individual social problems in Japan. The Japanese cultural ‘propensity’ to act in groups, for example, has often been used to explain bullying, the propensity to moral relativism to explain *enjo kōsai*, the propensity to see their society as homogeneous to explain the so-called problems of *kikokushijo*. The existence of the ‘socially withdrawn’ *hikikomori* has been blamed on the

tendency of Japanese parents to indulge (*amaeru*) their offspring (see Horiguchi's chapter). There are serious problems with such culturalist arguments, however, which is why we have largely eschewed them in this volume. In particular, if these cultural traits are endemic to the Japanese people, why does interest in them arise and then disappear at particular points of time? To some extent – and the case study of the *kikokushijo* in particular seemed to demonstrate this point – we might argue that culturalist (or essentialist) arguments help to construct youth problems as much as they help to explain them.

There have been other kinds of discourses which we have come across in the case studies in this book which have tried to reduce social problems to single explanations. In her analysis of children, labelled '*futōko*', who did not go to school in the 1980s in Japan, Yoneyama Shoko (1999: 191) identified four distinctive adult discourses, each with their own solution and treatment:

1. Psychiatric discourse: suffering from mental illness; solution – medical treatment/confinement;
2. Behavioural discourse: suffering from laziness; solution – discipline and punishment;
3. Citizens' discourse: rebelling against the school system; solution – total acceptance by others, support network, social reform;
4. Socio-medical discourse: suffering from school burnout; solution – good rest, medication if required.

The first two of these attribute the problem to the youth themselves, the last two to the social institutions in which they have to operate. While it is possible, of course, that all four elements may exist in the case of children who refuse to go to school, commentators, according to Yoneyama, invariably focused on a single explanation. We have seen a very similar phenomenon in the cases we have examined in this volume. The key question we have sought to answer is why do commentators focus on particular explanations at particular points of time. What the case studies have also shown is how, when a commentator or researcher is working within a particular paradigm for thinking about a particular youth problem, it is very hard for them to think about that problem in any other way until a new research paradigm has been constructed.

Is there a danger of throwing out the baby with the cultural bath water? Does culture play no part in our understanding of the construction of social problems in Japan? There are some features in the case studies we have examined which certainly at first gloss *look like* cultural explanations. One good example is the platform and status which is afforded to academics and professionals, in the guise of what are called in Japanese *hyōronka* (social critics) or *senmonka* (experts), to express their views through all forms of media. As we have seen, there has been a group of such individuals in almost all of the case studies who have taken advantage of this status to propel their case. The example of *hyōronka*, however, should be seen as an institutional feature of the Japanese media and not a cultural one; institutional

features are highly amenable to change (and indeed often do change) while cultural ones are, if they exist at all (and that is in itself a debatable point), much less so.

If we do not give much space to cultural arguments in our case studies, we believe strongly in understanding the ever-changing economic, political and social context, because these have often explained why one particular set of interest groups was able to get a particular social problem recognized when others were not. Many of the key underlying social issues in Japan which relate to the various youth problems we have examined in this volume have been mentioned in passing. In this final chapter, I intend to draw out some of these underlying themes more strongly and show how the study of youth problems in Japan is also the study of Japanese society in a deeper sense. I focus on three areas in particular which have had the most significant impact on the treatment and behaviour of youth: Japan's demographic structure, its education system and its labour market.

Japan's changing demography

If the issues which are tackled in the case studies in this volume are seen as 'problems', lurking behind them is a sense of a much bigger crisis which goes under various names in Japanese that are generally subsumed in the English term, 'ageing society'. The so-called crisis is actually made up of four distinct, though linked, elements: increasing longevity, declining fertility, a changing population pyramid and a decreasing population size.

In the case of longevity, average life expectancies at birth increased from just over 50 for men and just under 54 for women in 1947 to a combined average of 81.9 in 2005. By 2005, Japan officially had the oldest population in the world with a median average of just over 43 years (it was just over 22 in 1950). While it is predicted by some to lose the record for the oldest population by 2050 to China (mainly due to the one-child policy in China), Japan will retain the record for life expectancy, which is expected to increase to over 88 years. According to Smil (2007), by 2050 it is possible that Japan will have nearly five million people aged 90 or over and more than half a million centenarians, 90 per cent of them women.

In the case of falling fertility, the total fertility rate (the number of babies that women will have on average during their childbearing years) dropped from 5.24 in 1920 to 4.32 in 1949 (the first post-war baby boom when 2.7 million babies were born) to 2.14 in 1973 (the second post-war baby boom when 2.09 million babies were born) to 1.57 in 1989 (when only 1.25 million babies were born). As Glenda Roberts (2002) has written in detail, at this point the Japanese government decided for the first time to raise public consciousness of the potentially calamitous effects of such a low birth-rate; the media dubbed this the '1.57 shock'.

It is worth pausing, particularly in the context of Japan's youth labour market, to consider the shape of, as well as the reasons for, Japan's falling fertility rate. Significantly, the average number of children that married women are having has remained at around 2.2 over the last three decades and the illegitimacy rate at around one per cent; the decrease in fertility is almost totally due to an increase

in women of reproductive age not getting married and not having children (see Fukuda, 2009). The average age for women to get married in Japan is fast reaching 30 and there is no development of the concomitant pattern seen in many western societies of women having children outside wedlock. According to some sources, this is due to a conscious choice by women to stay in employment and not have children: the fertility rate for working women in the late 1990s was 0.60 against 2.96 for those not working (Harada, 1998). Significantly, the State and certain interest groups, as well as well-connected 'policy entrepreneurs', have recently tried to promote more comprehensive 'work-life balance' measures to overcome this situation, where women believe they are led to choose between their careers and having children (see Toivonen, 2010). However, the most influential groupings of employers, including notably the influential Employers' Union, Keidanren, do not, according to some commentators (Seeleib-Kaiser and Toivonen, forthcoming), seem to have fully accepted this argument, and the gendered nature of Japan's labour market continues to further complicate the development of effective employment-oriented family policies.

In terms of Japan's changing population structure, it is currently estimated that by 2025, almost 30 per cent of the total population will be 65 or over and it will have almost as many people over the age of 80 as under the age of 15; barely two people of so-called working age (15–64) will be supporting every person of 'retirement' age, 65 or over, while in 1950 the figure was 11:1 and in 1999 still 4:1. Given the continuing expectation that the current generation in work will support both the next generation and also those who have retired, it can be seen that a huge burden is being placed on those in work. If direct taxes were set to meet all these direct costs, they would have to be among some of the highest in the world, in a society which has, by European standards, enjoyed relatively low tax regimes. In any case, the current generation which is entering the workplace knows that it will not only have to pay much more to look after its predecessors (who enjoy some of the best company pensions in the world, especially if they have been in public service or working for large companies, see Campbell, 2003) but will also have to invest a considerable proportion of their remaining income in their own pension plans. Underlying this challenging demographic situation and increasingly skewed support ratios lies a more fundamental political conundrum. Will those in their twenties – already less enthusiastic about voting than their elders – have a voice in Japanese politics as they represent an increasingly smaller minority cohort vis-à-vis the ballooning and politically more active elderly proportion of the population?¹ It is clear that, alongside crude economic models of demographic sustainability, the question of inter-generational solidarity is likely to become increasingly significant for a hyper-ageing Japan in the coming decades.

In terms of Japan having a shrinking population, this process has already started. The population reached a peak in 2006 of around 128 million and has begun to shrink. The most conservative estimate assumes a reduction in the region of 40 per cent by the end of the current century, the most widely accepted estimate is for a reduction of 50 per cent, and the most radical estimate is of 70 per cent, which

would mean the Japanese population would shrink to around 40 million. This of course assumes that, unlike most other OECD countries, Japan continues to have no plans for immigrant labour. There remains considerable resistance to immigrant labour in influential circles in government, media and the population more generally, and even if immigration restrictions are eased, the level of immigration would have to be very high indeed (around 650,000 a year every year until 2050 according to some estimates) to reverse the reduction in the size of the Japanese population which has already started and keep it at its current size.

The Japanese experience of an ageing population is in many ways a test case for other societies. The dramatic demographic shift which is taking place in the country directly or indirectly affects every sector of society, from maternity wards to undertakers. This shift has generally been talked about in terms of constituting a 'crisis', although some have argued that the changing demographic structure in Japan could lead ultimately to a more open, international, egalitarian society with a generally high quality of life for the population as a whole (see Goodman and Harper, 2006). What is not in doubt, though, is that there is great concern about the issue in Japan. Japan is a country with very few natural resources other than its young people, and as the population gets older and smaller the importance that is placed on the well-being of these young people becomes greater. How young people are socialized and enter the labour market is of crucial importance to the whole society and it is perhaps not so surprising that there is such alarm when sections of Japanese youth appear to be dropping out of mainstream society.

Apart from Japan's changing demography, therefore, there are two institutions which have had a direct effect on Japan's youth: the education system and the labour market. We need to look at each of these in turn and in particular how they interacted with the changing political and economic climate as Japan suffered from almost two decades of economic recession following the bursting of the land price bubble in late 1989.

The changing education system and youth labour market

Few institutions in Japan have seen greater attempts at reform over the past two decades than the education system. In many ways, the underlying features of the Japanese education system introduced by the Meiji leaders remained in place right up to the 1980s. The system remained highly centralized and designed to produce what the workplace needed in order to drive Japan's economy. It produced male workers who would conform to the ideology of the large companies they joined and female workers who were socialized to act in a supporting role in the workplace and then leave when they got pregnant in order to bring up the next generation of workers.

In the case of both male and female workers, the education system provided a clear connection between success in the school system and the quality of job that they could secure. Top employers drew their new workers from the top universities, which in turn took their students from the top secondary schools, which admitted

their students on the basis of how well they had done in entrance examinations taken at the age of 15. These examinations were concentrated largely on memory tests in literacy, numeracy and scientific and social scientific facts. The system led to the development of a highly literate, numerate and well-informed population that consistently came out at or near the top in comparative international tests, that had a very short tail of non-performers, and produced a workforce able to understand and apply new ideas in a manner that has been the envy of other employers the world over for the past 40 years.

The education system was seen to be so effective not only because the goals were so clearly laid out, but also because most participants (and their families) believed that they had an equal chance of success in a system that was genuinely meritocratic, although it was curious that, while publicly most people appear to have signed up to the principle that everyone has an equal chance if they tried hard enough, privately most families were investing whatever resources they had available in order to make the chances of their own offspring more equal than those of others. The most visible form of this investment was attendance at cram schools (*juku*) for children from as young as six or seven onwards, the quality and frequency of which was closely linked with family wealth (see Roesgaard, 2006). It was this informal educational sector – combined with other features such as family support, space and time for self-study, and home tutors – which provided the best explanation for why, when the first large-scale studies on social mobility were carried out in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Japan's population appeared to have no greater level of inter-generational mobility than that of most other OECD countries (Ishida, 1993).

Throughout the middle part of the 1980s, a high-status committee (Rinkyōshin) set up by the then Prime Minister, Nakasone Yasuhiro, discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the Japanese educational system and made a series of recommendations for change. A large number of commentators, parents, teachers – and indeed children themselves – complained that the focus on examinations throughout their school career placed too much pressure on children, a condition which was widely dubbed 'examination hell' (*shiken jigoku*). Some commentators related this pressure to what was perceived to be a growing problem of children burning out and either turning in on themselves (through self-harming or refusing to go to school) or turning on others (through bullying or violence against parents or teachers). Japanese employers, while they recognized the role that the education system had played in developing hard-working and compliant workers, were more concerned about the education system developing more creative workers who could invent new ideas that they could turn into products for Japan's export-driven economy.

The 1980s reform committee began a long-term process of change in the education system in Japan that was to have major ramifications a decade or so later. In particular, it placed more emphasis on the individual. It presaged the introduction of the five-day week and the end of compulsory school on Saturdays (so that children had more time to explore by themselves outside school) and the new philosophy of '*yutori kyōiku*' (or 'relaxed education', where they have more time to explore by themselves inside school) and a reduction in the amount of fact learning

that students needed to do in class. Because of the bureaucratic nature of the Japanese Ministry of Education, however, it was to be almost fifteen years before many of these proposals actually became reality, by which time a great deal had changed in Japan.

For example, although the signs were clearly there for all to see after the event, the dramatic downturn in the Japanese economy following the bursting of the economic bubble at the beginning of the 1990s was not on the horizon in the mid-1980s, when education reform was being so earnestly debated. The stability of the previous three decades of low unemployment, job security and increasing economic growth was replaced by two decades of economic uncertainty, the emergence of widespread youth unemployment and the development of a huge band of part-time and short-term workers (see the figures at the beginning of [Chapter 1](#)). The link between school success and a stable career was no longer as clear as it had been previously (Brinton, 2011) and, while a degree from a top university remained a passport to stability, attending a lower level university became an increasingly less secure investment (Kariya, forthcoming). At the same time, though largely concealed in macro data, a new disadvantaged layer of youth suffering from socially produced ‘incapacities’ – sets of dispositions and skills not valued in the post-industrial labour markets – appeared and was the target of limited policy measures (Toivonen, forthcoming).

The early 1990s also saw the emergence of a new political philosophy which coincided with the new economic conditions. In response to both internal and external pressure to normalize the way that the market worked, the Japanese State introduced deregulation (known in Japanese generically as *kisei kanwa*) in all spheres of the society, including education. While the State retained its watching brief over the whole education sector, increasingly institutions were left to make their own decisions over what they offered and consumers of education their own decisions over what they took.

Deregulation went hand in hand with the introduction of a new ‘audit culture’ which demanded greater transparency from public institutions over how they used tax-payers’ funds. It is important not to exaggerate the extent of the cultural change, but even those who provided education, teachers, began to be viewed rather less as *sensei* (‘those who go before’), who decided what was good for children, and more as public servants, who responded to tax-payers’ demands. This new culture of ‘civil society’ perhaps could also explain the overthrow of the Liberal Democratic Party after 55 years of virtually continuous rule, in August 2009, by the completely untested Democratic Party. The authority figures of the immediate post-war period lost a lot of their lustre for the new youth population.

The political, economic and of course demographic changes from the early 1990s onwards (the number of 18-year-olds in the population peaked in 1992 and dropped dramatically by around 40 per cent over the subsequent 18 years) had dramatic effects particularly on the youth segment of Japanese society. The most significant was the increasing diversification of society and a growing gap between the poor and the better-off, summarized in Japanese under the single word ‘*kakusa*’

(literally ‘gap’ or ‘disparity’). In the case of the education system, for example, the demographic shift has had a major impact on the amount of work needed to get into a higher education institution. Research by the sociologist Kariya Takehiko (see Kariya and Rosenbaum, 2003) shows that, while students at the top high schools are working as hard, if not harder, than ever before to pass examinations into the top institutions which provide the increasingly valuable ticket to a secure job, those in lower-level secondary schools, knowing that they have a ‘free pass’ into a university at roughly the level they would expect to enter in any case, have virtually stopped working altogether. In many ways, the finding – that schoolchildren recognizing an easy path through the school system decide to take it – should not be deemed as surprising. What might be more serious is the very strong correlation that Kariya’s research shows between those who fall on either side of the competitive/non-competitive boundary and social class background. The increasingly conspicuous relationship between social class and educational success (and the breakdown of the widespread belief that Japan is one large middle-class society) is likely to rapidly undermine the consensus that education in Japan is a meritocratic system and to reduce the effort that those from disadvantaged backgrounds invest in order to succeed through the education system (see, for example, Yamada, 2004; Okano, 2009).

Although more individuals from all social backgrounds have more opportunities to attend either four-year or two-year universities in Japan due to the decline in the number of people of traditional university-attendance age in the population, an increasingly large proportion of the population has been opting out of either system in favour of vocational higher education. In particular, the increasingly conspicuous failure from the mid-1990s of many lower-level universities to guarantee access to a job for life led to the dramatic expansion in the proportion of those attending tertiary-level vocational colleges known as *senmongakkō*, where the focus is more on providing marketable skills than simply educational credentials.² The proportion of higher education students going to full-time post-secondary non-university vocational schools (*senmongakkō*) more than doubled between 1992 and 2004 from 10 per cent to nearly 20 per cent of all school leavers.³ Moreover, many students were entering *senmongakkō* on completion of their university or junior college degrees and over 25,000 students a year were dropping out of university (forfeiting their entrance and annual fees) in order to re-enrol in *senmongakkō* – a process known as ‘reverse transfers’ in North America. Many students attend *senmongakkō* at the same time as they attend regular university (so-called ‘double-schoolers’). *Senmongakkō*, which in the 1970s were dominated (80 per cent) by female students, were now roughly 50:50 in their gender balance; while the success rate in finding a job has dropped among university male graduates from around 80 per cent to 60 per cent during the 1990s, the rate for those from *senmongakkō* remained consistently around 80 per cent. Some *senmongakkō* indeed guarantee employment to all those who complete their courses.

The rising importance of *senmongakkō*, of course, was closely linked to the changing Japanese youth labour market. Following the recession of the early

1990s, youth unemployment rose rapidly. Indeed, it would be more accurate to say that it appeared for the first time since the end of the Second World War. Unemployment for 15–24-year-olds hit a peak of over 10 per cent, while for those between 15 and 19 years old it was 12 per cent. Just as conspicuous were the increasingly rapid turnover rates for new graduates, which became tagged the ‘7-5-3 phenomenon’ (punning on traditional *shichi-go-san* Shinto ceremonies for children aged three, five and seven) due to the pattern of 70 per cent of junior high school leavers, 50 per cent of senior high school leavers and 30 per cent of graduates leaving their jobs within the first three years. These were dramatic figures in a labour market which had been characterized by long-term employment relations. As Toivonen (2009: 14ff.) has pointed out, the issue which caused the most shock in Japan during the 1990s was the development of part-time working youth called ‘freeters’, of whom, by 2002, some newspaper reports suggested there were as many as two million. These ‘freeters’ became increasingly vilified by the Japanese media as lacking in work commitment and perseverance, a viewpoint which was best exemplified by Yamada Masahiro’s best-selling 1999 book, which introduced the idea that the youth of today in Japan were ‘parasite singles’, who were happy to let their parents provide free board and lodging for them even after they had finished their education. While others contested this negative viewpoint (see, in particular, Genda, 2005, who argued that those in non-regular work were more the victims of a labour market that could not accommodate them than indicators of a new form of self-centred youth individualism), the proportion of non-regular workers (*hiseiki shain*) among those aged 15–24 climbed to over 45 per cent by 2003, up from 17 per cent in 1988; among those aged 25–34, long considered a group enjoying stable employment in Japan, it increased to over 30 per cent in the same period. The 1990s saw the young in Japan increasingly excluded from Japan’s famous lifetime employment system. Non-regular workers (which included part-time, contract, subcontract and agency temporary workers), earn on average roughly half of what regular workers earn and, while they are freer from the demands of their employers, can also be much more easily dismissed. As the 1990s turned into the 2000s, it was also clear that such workers were finding it increasingly difficult to re-enter the permanent employment system later in their careers, despite the introduction of *tenkan* (transfer) systems which were introduced to enable non-regular workers to shift to regular status. It was, in short, a very tough time for young people to find work and what has been termed ‘generational inequality’ has become increasingly conspicuous in the labour force (Sato, 2010).

The rising unemployment rates in Japan also had a major impact on the whole concept of welfare and state responsibility in the society. Tamai Kingo (2003: 45–46), one of the leading historians of Japanese welfare developments, summarized the recent trends thus:

Since the 1990s the functions of the families and companies, which make up the core of the Japanese model of welfare provisions, have significantly

weakened. As for the family, the model based on the male family breadwinner and full-time housewife has been changing with increasing rates of labour participation among married women. Closure, bankruptcies and mergers of companies (have) weakened the provision of company welfare schemes. Companies have started replacing full-time workers with part-time workers in order to reduce the cost of salaries and welfare payments. It has become increasingly difficult to sustain the Japanese model (with) the newly emerged concept of a 'safety net'.

The vacuum in welfare provision created by the inability of the family, community and corporations to provide support as in the past was increasingly filled by the private sector. This has been important for several of the case studies of 'youth problems' which we have examined. Historically (see Goodman, 2008), private agencies in Japan have been very similar to 'public' agencies in a number of 'conservative' welfare states in the west in the way that they operated under what was known as the '*sochi itaku*' or '*sochi seido*' placement system. Under this system, the State had control over placing individuals in private institutions; it dictated terms and fees, and institutions had no right to refuse placements if they wished to continue to be registered and to be eligible for state funds. This system was left over from the immediate post-war period when there was no money to build state welfare institutions, and private institutions, most of which were family businesses, needed state support in order to survive financially. The 1990s, however, saw a significant move away from such a placement system to a contractual relationship being developed directly between individuals and service providers, introduced in large part to make service providers more responsive to consumer demand. Although as yet the State is still not able to make payments to for-profit welfare institutions (though this has been under consideration for some time – see Izuhara, 2003), it has certainly been possible to see the emergence of competition in some, if not yet all, of the private welfare markets (Hiraoka, 2001). Value-for-money, transparency, competition, deregulation, accreditation and an emphasis on measuring outcomes are all becoming part of the new social welfare (and educational) discourse in Japan in a way that they have been in the UK and US for at least 20 years (Kono, 2005). The last 15 years have also seen the emergence of new welfare-related professionals trained at the expense of, and accredited by, the State, for example, the statutory requirement to employ clinical psychologists in schools. The development of a private and professional welfare system has, as we have seen in this volume, played an important role in the 'discovery' and 'treatment' of a number of the social problems which we have looked at. Clearly, the fact that such institutional reforms have coincided with dramatic demographic changes – which have meant a sharp decrease in the total number of children and youth potentially needing treatment – has, at least for some, greatly amplified the pressure to emphasize certain social problems. This helps to explain why certain social problems were 'discovered' when they were, and how they were 'treated'.

Conclusion

It is easy to see from the foregoing account how young people in Japan over the past 20 years have found themselves in an increasingly vulnerable position. The ageing of the population has meant that they face supporting an increasing number of elderly people during their working years while saving to support themselves in old age. The economic recession of the past 20 years has made it increasingly difficult for them to find secure jobs for life. Instead, many have found themselves in an increasingly unstable and peripheral segment of the workforce with diminishing chances of ever finding permanent employment. An education system which promised the chance of job security if one worked hard has become increasingly less meritocratic, condemning many from families which do not have the resources to invest in supplementary education to give up completely on getting into the top universities. Some, indeed, have given up on the formal four- and two-year university sector and decided to invest in the unregulated vocational education sector instead in the hope of improving their employment prospects. Given these conditions, it is perhaps not surprising that the country as a whole has become increasingly concerned about 'youth problems',⁴ and the increasingly squeezed middle-classes most concerned about the prospects of their own children, which had seemed so secure when they were born. The media, as the media do in all democratic societies, have picked up and reflected these anxieties back to these families, supported by academics and research institutions which have increasingly been under pressure to make themselves look more policy-relevant recipients of tax-payer money. At the same time, the marketization of the welfare field has led to the development of institutions which have had an interest in identifying 'youth problems' and proposing ways through which they could treat them. It has been the combination of all of these features which explains, we have argued in this book, the 'construction' of recent youth problems in Japan.

Youth problems, however, have of course existed in Japan from long before the current recession. Indeed the cases of *kikokushijo* and *enjo kōsai* are largely products of a period of high economic growth. Young people in Japan, as we have said before, are the country's most important natural resource and so they need to be both protected and controlled and we can see elements of both of those processes in all the case studies in this volume. While youth problems reflect and are shaped by broader social forces, therefore, the relationship is a complex one which needs to be teased out in individual cases from a close examination of the narratives of the main claims-makers.

Lest anyone is left with the impression of Japanese youth and Japan itself in a state of perpetual disaster and moral and social panic, it is perhaps important to end this book on a comparative note. One of the most interesting features about contemporary Japan is that, despite all the internal cultural debates about its economic and social problems, the country in early 2011 had only just been overtaken by China as the world's second largest economy and still possessed the world's highest life expectancy, lowest rate of infant mortality and among the

highest rates of general education and literacy and lowest rates of serious crime, drug use, illegitimacy and divorce. The young generation in Japan may be having a difficult time in comparison to their immediately preceding generations, but they are in many ways much better off than their counterparts in almost all of the rest of the world. Indeed, the explosion of youth expression in Japan in art, fashion and drama has led some to suggest that the end of the fixation on personal financial wealth and security that characterized the bubble economy of the 1970s and 1980s and a greater focus on personal and social development that has characterized the period since may ultimately lead to a better-balanced, more caring society and population.

Notes

- 1 The role of the youth population in the broader political debate in Japan does not appear to be much discussed in the literature on Japan's changing demography. At first gloss, this may appear surprising given the power of student protest in post-war Japan, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. As Ellis Krauss' (1974) classic work has shown, the Japanese employment and family system has had the ability to turn those who are politically radical in their twenties into political conservatives in their forties and hence they have posed little threat to the dominant social structures in Japan.
- 2 *Senmongakkō* are divided into eight fields of specialization: medical, such as nursing (30 per cent of students); culture and languages, including interpreting (21 per cent); industrial, including construction and mechanics (14 per cent); services affected by hygiene regulations, including cooking (12 per cent); commerce, including accounting (10 per cent); education and social welfare, including childcare and care of the elderly (9 per cent); fashion and domestic science (4 per cent) and agriculture (0.3 per cent). In contrast to the early days, when subjects such as dressmaking and home economics were popular, today, medical-related subjects constitute the fastest growing area, and new fields are constantly emerging, such as the study of animation/*manga* or social work for the elderly, reflecting the changing societal/industrial needs of Japan.
- 3 Regional variations in these figures are huge: almost twice as many school leavers proportionally go on to *senmongakkō* in Niigata (29.1 per cent) as in Tokyo (15.3 per cent). At the same time, almost five times as many school leavers proportionally go directly into paid jobs in Miyazaki (31.3 per cent) as in Tokyo (6.8 per cent) and only 60 per cent as many go on to university in Okinawa (31 per cent) as in Tokyo (53.5 per cent).
- 4 According to Kariya (2010), since the 1990s, youth problems in Japan such as NEETs and *hikikomori* have all been related to issues about youth employment.

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GLOSSARY

ai no muchi (愛の鞭): The whip of love, a phrase that is often used to justify the use of *taibatsu* or other strict forms of (physical) discipline.

Akihabara (秋葉原): Tokyo's famous electronics district, and the centre of the world of *otaku*.

amae (甘え): Normally translated as 'dependence'. A term coined by psychiatrist Doi Takeo in the 1970s, it has a positive connotation, unlike its English equivalent.

baishun (売春): Prostitution. Defined as the selling of sex and made illegal under the 1956 Prostitution Prohibition Law.

Baishun Bōshi Hō (売春防止法): 1956 Prostitution Prevention Law. Established public women's centres to rehabilitate 'women in need of protection' from prostitution and other 'deviant' or otherwise undesirable behaviour.

batsu-ichi (バツイチ): Someone who has divorced once. Derives from the 'X' drawn over a previously married couple's names in the family registry (*koseki tōhon*) when a marriage is formally annulled.

bilin-gals (バイリンギャル): Slang word for bilingual young women, punning on the words 'bilingual' and 'girls'.

bōryoku (暴力): Violence. Refers to various forms of physical attack, including, in some cases, corporal punishment. Some definitions also include mental or psychological attack.

Career Development Office (キャリア形成支援室 / Kyaria Keisei Shienshitsu): A sub-unit within the Occupational Skills Development Bureau of the MHLW that focuses on on-the-job training as well as other youth employment and welfare measures.

Child Pornography and Child Solicitation Prevention Law (児童ポルノ児童買春法 / Jidō Poruno Jidō Kaishun Hō): This law was implemented on a national level in December 1999. In its first year, 2000, 777 arrests were made through this law; in 2001, this rose to 1,026.

chōkai (懲戒): Disciplinary punishment.

chūzaiin (駐在員): Businessmen who are temporarily stationed abroad by their company.

Committee for Youth Issues (青少年問題審議会 / Seishōnen Mondai Shingikai): An advisory committee to the Prime Minister's Office.

Crime Statistical Tables (犯罪統計書 / Hanzai Tōkeisho): Annual statistics on crime issued by the Ministry of Justice.

deaikei sites (出会い系サイト / deaikei saito): Internet dating sites: an internet variant of 'introduction services'. Became more heavily used in the late 1990s after the heavy regulation of Telephone Clubs from 1997 onwards.

Deaikei Site Kisei Hō (出会い系サイト規制法): Law to Regulate Solicitation of Children through Matching Business via Internet sites. Introduced in 2003. Matching business sites targeted in the law provide websites where users can post advertisements and make their email addresses available for other users. Such business operators are obliged by the Law to verify that the user is 18 years old or older and to specify in the site that no one under 18 can use the site. The Law also: (1) punishes anyone who solicits a child for sexual intercourse or other sexual acts; (2) prohibits a person who is 18 years old or older from having sexual intercourse or other sexual acts with a child; (3) punishes anyone who solicits a child for dating by offering compensation; and (4) prohibits a person who is 18 years old or older from having a date with a child if the person pays a fee.

eijūsha (永住者): 'Permanent' expatriates, as opposed to *chūzaiin*.

enjo kōsai (援助交際): Compensated dating. Also sometimes translated as 'assisted dating'. This was a minor slang term until it became a key term in the mass media in the mid-1990s. Compensated dating has no precise definition, but in the 1990s it generally meant a date with a high school girl in exchange for money, goods or the price of the meal, which she repaid by her companionship or by sexual favours.

freeter (フリーター): A combination of the English 'free' and the German 'arbeiter' with the literal meaning of 'free worker'. The term was invented in the 1980s and utilized by the Recruit personnel agency to portray new forms of agency work in a positive light. Originally perceived as freelancing youth who avoided the drudgery of working in a company to pursue their dreams, in the 2000s *freeters* came to be viewed, at least in part, as *involuntary* young part-time workers.

fukushi (福祉): Welfare. The connotation of this particular term is generally more positive in Japan than in, say, the United States, and it is rarely associated with concepts such as 'welfare dependency' or 'welfare mothers'.

futekiō shōjō (不適応症状): Mal-adaptation symptoms. The term was used to refer to the maladjustment of *kikokushijo* on their return to Japan. Since then, it has been used widely to refer to symptoms of *tekiō shōgai* (adjustment disorder), believed to be induced by stress in the educational and work context.

futōkō (不登校): School non-attendance. A term commonly used from the late 1990s in place of the term *tōkōkyōhi* (school refusal), which reflects a wider perception that the children do not necessarily refuse to go to school, but may find themselves unable to go to school, even if they want to, for a variety of reasons.

fūzoku (風俗): Sexual services sector.

fuzoku gakkō (付属学校): Schools attached to Japanese universities. Also sometimes known as ‘laboratory schools’, such schools generally offer an easier route into the university to which they are attached.

gakkō (学校): The most generic term for ‘school’.

ganguro (ガングロ): Loosely meaning ‘black face’ (*gan* [face]+*guro* [black]) or ‘extreme tanners’ (from *gan gan* [extremely, very] *kuroku suru* [to blacken]). *Ganguro* girls also wore white make-up on their lips and eyes and dyed their hair shades of blonde or white. This look emerged from the *kogyaru* trend and was an extreme sartorial style on the streets of Tokyo in 1999 and 2000.

gyakutai (虐待): Abuse. Applied when a person in a protective position (usually of authority), fails to protect their charge, either through a lack of care or neglect, or else uses violence.

gyaru (ギャル): ‘Girl’. Originating in the mid-1980s, the term refers to a younger woman or teenage girl who presents herself as lively, assertive and sexually confident. Sometimes used in opposition to presenting oneself as a demure and obedient *shōjo*.

hattatsu shōgai (発達障害): Developmental disabilities. This term appeared in the Japanese media in the 1990s, as a category that includes ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), learning disabilities, Asperger’s syndrome and other developmental disorders, but excludes intellectual disabilities.

Hello Work (ハローワーク / Harō Wāku): The official nickname of Japan’s public employment service offices (PESOs). Formally known in Japanese as *Kōkyō Shokugyō Anteijo*.

hikikomori (ひきこもり・引きこもり): The condition of social withdrawal; person/people who withdraw from society.

hikikomori gyōkai (ひきこもり業界): The ‘industry’ of public and private organizations and individuals dealing with *hikikomori* support.

hiseiki shain (非正規社員): ‘Irregular’ workers; literally, those who are *not* ‘regular’ workers (*seishain*). There is a large gap between the social status and the wages of non-standard and standard employees in contemporary Japan.

hogo (保護): Protection.

hokenfu (保健婦): Nurses at local health centres. Recently replaced by the gender-neutral term *hokenshi* (保健師).

hoshūkō (補習校): Overseas Japanese schools, funded by the Japanese government, that provide supplementary education (often at the weekend) for expatriate children.

hyōronka (評論家): Intellectual critic. Generally a university professor, but can be used to refer to anyone who speaks and writes for a general media audience and whose opinions play a role in shaping public discourse.

ianfu (慰安婦): The so-called ‘comfort women’. Mainly Korean and Chinese women forced to offer sexual services to Japanese soldiers during and prior to the Second World War.

ibasho (居場所): A ‘place to belong to’. A place where one (especially socially marginalized or isolated youth) can simply ‘be him/herself’ without feeling the strains of social pressure to meet expected roles.

ijime (いじめ): Bullying. The perceived intentional infliction of harm, physically and/or psychologically.

ikuji neurose (育児ノイローゼ/ikuji noirōze): Child-rearing neurosis. Condition that emerged as a problem with the nuclearization of Japanese families from the 1960s, when middle-class mothers (typically full-time housewives) came to take on all responsibility for child-rearing. Closely associated with child abuse and neglect. The word *noirōze* comes from German, the source of much medical terminology in Japanese.

ippansei (一般生): ‘Regular students’. A term frequently used in opposition to *kikokushijo*.

ISS (社会科学研究所 /Shakai Kagaku Kenkyūjo): Institute of Social Science at Tokyo University. One of Japan’s few independent social science research institutes. Marxist by background, but now actively involved in empirical and public policy-oriented research, reflecting a cooperative relationship with the government.

jakunen (若年): A formal term for ‘youth’ and ‘young adult’; rarely used in daily speech.

jakunen mugyōsha (若年無業者): (A) non-employed youth. A technical and relatively neutral (yet ambiguous) equivalent of the term ‘NEET’. Distinct from ‘unemployed’ (*shitsugyōsha*) as this latter term implies the loss (*shitsu-*) of a previously held job. That a sharp distinction is currently made between ‘non-employed’ and ‘unemployed’ youth relates not only to the strategic way in which ‘NEET’ was constructed, but also to the Japanese social security system, which does not usually recognize those with a background in part-time (or irregular) jobs as eligible for unemployment benefits.

Jidō Gyakutai Bōshi Kyōkai (児童虐待防止協会): Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse, APCA.

jidō gyakutai sōdan denwa (児童虐待相談電話): Child-abuse telephone hotlines; first set up in 1990 and 1991 in Osaka and Tokyo respectively.

jidō kaishun (児童買春): Child solicitation. Illegal act of soliciting a minor to engage in sexual activity.

jidō sōdanjo (児童相談所): Child guidance centres. The primary public agency charged with supervising and carrying out the provisions of the Child Welfare Law.

JILPT (日本労働研究研修機構 / Nihon Rōdō Kenkyū Kenshū Kikō): Japan Institute of Labour Policy and Training. Japan’s foremost government-affiliated labour research institute; sometimes criticized as a so-called *amakudari* organization that offers comfortable and lucrative jobs to retiring bureaucrats.

jiritsu (自立): Independence. Literally, to ‘stand by oneself’ (*jibun de tatsu*). Common usages in the context of youth issues include: economic independence (*keizaiteki jiritsu*), psychological independence (*seishinteki jiritsu*), independence from parents (*oya kara no jiritsu*).

jiritsu-shien (自立支援): ‘Independence-support’. A term that denotes various support measures targeted at youth, single mothers and the disabled that aim to further one aspect or multiple aspects of ‘independence’ (as variously defined).

Job Café (ジョブカフェ / Jobu Kafe): Japan’s first major public employment service for young adults. Launched in the early 2000s. Usually located next to a Hello Work office.

juku (塾): Private educational businesses that offer supplementary tutoring to prepare for the competitive school and university entrance examinations. Although widely known as

‘cram schools’, with the declining number of children, *juku* are increasingly offering remedial education and personalized tutoring.

kaigai chōki taizaisha (海外長期滞在者): Long-term Japanese expatriates.

kaishun (買春): Prostitution, defined as the buying of sex or sexual solicitation. The term became current at a local political level from 1997 and was legally adopted at a national level in 1999.

kaji (家事): Housework. A combination of the Chinese characters for ‘house’ or ‘family’ (家) and ‘work’ (仕事). During the NEET debate, there was considerable controversy over whether unmarried women who said they were engaged in ‘housework’ were to be counted as NEETs or not.

kakusa (格差): Literally, ‘gap’ or ‘disparity’. A media buzzword, particularly after the Koizumi administration period (2001–6), describing the social inequalities that became increasingly visible as a result of deregulation policies.

kanri kyōiku (管理教育): Controlled, regulated or managed education. Education that emphasizes discipline and strict behaviour, mostly associated with education policies widely used in the 1970s and 1980s.

katei saibansho (家庭裁判所): Family court.

kawaiō (かわいそう): Pitiful; worthy of pity. An expression often used when one person feels sorry for another.

keiji saibansho (刑事裁判所): Criminal court.

keizai (経済): The economy.

kenkyū (研究): Research. As conducted and published by market research organizations, scholars, students, or within NGOs and government departments.

kibō (希望): Hope. The term has been used as a key concept in social science research in Japan from the mid-2000s (see e.g. Yamada Masahiro’s work on ‘disparities of hope’ [*kibō kakusa*] and Genda Yūji’s project on ‘the science of hope’ [*kibōgaku*]).

kikokushijo (帰国子女): Japanese returnee schoolchildren. Coined in the 1960s to refer to schoolchildren of business expatriates (*chūzaiin*) that have returned to Japan after having lived abroad. Also referred to as *kikokusei* (in official contexts) or ‘*kikoku*’ (as a more informal term).

kindaika (近代化): Modernization process. Refers mainly to the surge of westernization after the Meiji Restoration (1868) when Japan ended its isolation (*sakoku*) policy, and to the rapid industrial and economic growth of the post-war period (late 1950s to 1970s).

kinshin sōkan (近親相姦): Incest.

kisei kanwa (規制緩和): Literally ‘deregulation’; also taken to refer to the promotion of competition. Deregulation movements are widely considered to have started with the privatization reforms of the early 1980s, and accelerated in the 1990s because of the economic recession – particularly following the ‘Big Bang’ reforms announced by Prime Minister Hashimoto in 1996 – although they have continually faced opposition from the vested interests of bureaucrats, regulated industries, consumers and unions.

kōban (交番): Local police box.

kōdo keizai seichōki (高度経済成長期): High economic growth period (1955–73), associated with Japan's re-emergence as a member of the global community of advanced industrialized nations.

Kodomo no Gyakutai Bōshi Sentā (子どもの虐待防止センター): Centre for Child Abuse Prevention, CCAP. Privately established in 1991, it became a state-supported *shakai fukushi hōjin* (social welfare service corporation) in 1997.

kogyaru (コギャル): First coined in 1993 and current from 1996 to 1998, the term referred to teenage girls who appropriate the (supposedly) sexy and cool urban *gyaru* style. It came to mean a schoolgirl typically wearing white 'loose socks' with a school skirt rolled up at the waist and turned into a mini-skirt, and in winter sporting a woollen fawn check Burberry scarf.

kōhai (後輩): Junior/inferior (cf. *senpai*); younger member in a dyadic, hierarchical relationship. A *kōhai* is expected to remain loyal and obedient to his/her *senpai* in exchange for protection and guidance.

kokusaika (国際化): Internationalization. The term became the catchword of Prime Minister Nakasone's policy discourse in the mid-1980s, as part of his agenda to cultivate national pride through asserting Japan's presence in the international community.

kōnai bōryoku (校内暴力): School violence. Designates violence either between teachers and students or between students and other students; increasingly perceived as a problem afflicting Japanese schools beginning in the late 1970s and into the early 1980s.

konkatsu (婚活): The marriage-seeking activities of unmarried women and men; pun on *shūkatsu* (就活), the competitive and systematized activities of graduate job-hunting. Coined by sociologist Yamada Masahiro in 2007, who argued that contemporary socio-economic conditions made the idealized 'natural' matching of marriage couples through romantic love difficult.

kosei (個性): Individuality. Became a keyword in educational discourse from the 1980s; the nurturing of *kosei* was emphasized to counter and reform the rigidity and competitiveness of the post-war educational system.

Kyōiku Saisei Kaigi (教育再生会議): Education Rebuilding Council. Council convened by then Prime Minister Abe Shinzō. Comprised of 17 conservative-leaning 'experts' from business, academia and government. Many of the Council's recommendations were articulated in response to the so-called *yutori kyōiku* reforms, which Council members believed 'deprived' Japanese schoolchildren of a disciplined learning environment.

kyōshi (教師): Teacher.

Lost Generation (ロスジェネレーション / Rosuto Jenerēshon): The cohort of young adults who left school in the 1990s and early 2000, following the bursting of the property bubble at the start of the decade, and failed to gain a stable position in the labour market.

MEXT: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; see entry for 'Monbushō' below.

MHLW (厚生労働省/Kōseirōdōshō): Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. Created in 2001 when the Ministry of Labour merged with the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MHW) as part of a major administrative restructuring. The main national-level administrative organ dealing with *hikikomori*, NEET and child protection issues.

MHW (厚生省/Kōseishō): See above.

minsei iin (民生委員): Social welfare volunteers appointed by the local authorities to offer advice and support to community residents.

minsei jidōiin (民生児童委員): Those appointed as *minsei iin* with the added brief of watching over the well-being of children and pregnant women in their neighbourhood.

mobo (モボ): ‘Modern boys’. The effeminate and cultured male companions of ‘modern girls’, a much-feted type of liberated and fashionable young woman to be seen about town in the second half of the 1920s.

MOE: Ministry of Education; see entry for ‘Monbushō’ below.

Monbushō (文部省): Ministry of Education (MOE). Monbushō was restructured in 2001, merging with the Science and Technology Agency to become the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), or Monbukagakushō (文部科学省).

mondaiji (問題児): Problem child or problem children. Catch-all term that can refer to children with behavioural, social or medical problems.

moratorium ningen (モラトリアム人間 / moratoriumu ningen): Literally, ‘moratorium human’. A term coined by psychiatrist Okonogi Keigo in the 1970s referring to youth who are reluctant to join the adult world.

namakemono (怠け者): A lazy person, a sluggard.

nihongata (日本型): Japanese-style.

Nihonjin gakkō (日本人学校): Full-time Japanese overseas schools, offering state education to expatriate children.

nihonjinron (日本人論): Literally, theories on the Japanese. Generally refers to the body of literature that discusses the uniqueness of Japanese culture in relation to race, geography and history.

Nihon Kodomo no Gyakutai Bōshi Kenkyūkai (日本子どもの虐待防止研究会): Renamed in 2004 as Nihon Kodomo Gyakutai Bōshi Gakkai, or the Japan Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, JaSPCAN. Established in 1996 to produce and disseminate research for the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect in Japan.

NEET: ‘Not in Education, Employment or Training’, a British policy category for youth aged 16 to 18 presumed to be at high risk of social exclusion. Adapted for use in Japan in 2003 by researchers affiliated with JILPT. Also see entry for *niito*.

NHK (日本放送協会 / Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai): Japan Broadcasting Corporation. The Japanese equivalent of the BBC.

niito (ニート): The Japanese youth category that grew out of the policy term NEET. Usually, an out-of-the-labour-force young adult whose idleness is presumed to be due to his (sometimes her) laziness and lack of commitment to a proper work ethic.

ōbeigata (欧米型): ‘Western’-style.

Occupational Skill Development Bureau (職業能力開発局 / Shokugyō Nōryoku Kaihatsukyoku): A major section within the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare that

oversees policies pertaining to skills development within and outside workplaces in Japan. Also tasked with improving young workers' welfare. The main orchestrator, through its Career Development Office, of 'NEET support measures' in mid-2000s Japan. Sometimes translated as the Human Resources Development Bureau.

otaku (おたく・オタク): Nerd. In currency since the 1980s, when it was an insider term used by fans of anime and manga. It has since been linked to a variety of media images including the Akihabara district in Tokyo. Its usage has broadened to refer to any type of avid 'specialist' – for example, *densha* (train) *otaku*, *rekishi* (history) *otaku*.

oyako shinjū (親子心中): 'Parent-child suicide'. Cases of suicide where one or both parents commit suicide, forcing their child to die with them.

oyatoi gaikokujin kyōshi (お雇い外国人教師): Hired foreign teacher, among the many foreign government advisors that Japan hired during the Meiji Period, in fields such as agriculture, medicine, law, engineering, military affairs and education.

parasite single (パラサイトシングル / parasaito shinguru): A single person living with his/her parents even after finishing school, remaining dependent on them for basic daily needs such as housing and food. A term coined by sociologist Yamada Masahiro in 1999.

Police White Papers (警察白書 / Keisatsu Hakusho): Annual White Papers issued by the National Policy Agency.

purofu (プロフィール): Profiles. An online mobile phone service used to display a user's 'profile' to communicate with networks of friends; became popular among Japanese high school girls from 2006.

Rinkyōshin (臨教審): Short for Rinji Kyōiku Shingikai (臨時教育審議会). Ad hoc national council on educational reform; established in 1984 under the leadership of former Prime Minister Nakasone to discuss educational problems and implement reform.

rōdō (労働): Labour; work. Combination of *rō* (trouble; effort; pains) and *dō* (work).

sakoku jidai (鎖国時代): 'Closed country period'. The period marked by the policy of seclusion of the Tokugawa *bakufu* from the mid-seventeenth century until the arrival of Commodore Perry's ships in 1854.

seinen (青年): A young adult, aged roughly from 20 to 25.

sei no jiko kettei-ken (性の自己決定権): The right to sexual self-determination.

seishain (正社員): A 'regular' worker with a non-time-limited employment contract. Seen in mainstream media and across the middle-classes as vastly superior to usually less stable and poorly paid 'irregular' (*hiseiki*) employment. An important criterion of the attainment of adulthood for men in particular.

seishōnen (青少年): Young people; juveniles and young adults.

Seishōnen Kenzen Ikusei Jōrei (青少年健全育成条例): See Youth Ordinance.

senryō shufu (専業主婦): 'Professional' or full-time housewife. This tends to include also those married women who, alongside fulfilling domestic duties, engage in part-time work outside the home.

senpai (先輩): Senior/superior (cf. *kōhai*), older member in a dyadic, hierarchical relationship. A *senpai* is expected to protect and guide his/her *kōhai* in exchange for loyalty and obedience.

shakaijin (社会人): A ‘full member of society’; usually, a full-time regular worker, with the connotation of adult status. This term embodies the close association between the status of full-time worker and adulthood in post-war Japan. See also *seishain*.

shidō (指導): Guidance, (moral) instruction, leadership or coaching. Chinese characters mean ‘to point out the path’; can be thought of as the mentoring that people in positions of authority are expected to offer to their juniors.

shimaguni konjō (島国根性): Island mentality. Used to describe the insular nature of the Japanese.

shitsugyōsha (失業者): The unemployed; an unemployed person. See also the entry for *jakunen mugyōsha*.

shitsuke (躰): Discipline, training or breeding; elements of the Chinese character mean ‘beautifying the body’, implying a connection between ‘discipline’ and the ‘body’, and perhaps even corporal punishment.

shōjo (少女): Girl. The dominant and formally recognized term for a female under about 15 years of age, current through the twentieth century. Its cultural rather than sociological usage typically refers to ideal, gentle and even pure representations of female youth.

shōnen hanzai (少年犯罪): Youth crime. Usually refers to crime committed by individuals aged 7 to approximately 18 or 20.

shūkanshi (週刊誌): Weekly current affairs magazines, typically targeted at male commuters.

shuzai (取材): Information gathering or more casual research conducted by and for media and culture producers.

sōshokukei danshi (草食系男子): ‘Herbivorous’ young men who are friendly and home-oriented, and who do not put much energy into pursuing women, love and marriage. Coined in 2007 by writer Maki Fukazawa and current since 2008.

taibatsu (体罰): Corporal punishment, the beating, hitting or kicking of the body to discipline or punish, by a person in a position of authority relative to a person in a subordinate position.

taijin kyōfu (対人恐怖): Phobia of interpersonal relations. A term coined by psychiatrist Morita Shōma in the 1920s.

taikyaku shinkeishō (退却神経症): Retreat neurosis. A term introduced by psychiatrist Kasahara Yomishi in the 1970s, originating from ‘apathy syndrome’ which was coined by R. H. Walters in the US.

tekiō kyōiku (適応教育): Special education to help youth adapt to a new environment. Literally, ‘adaptation education’.

telop (テロップ): Television opaque projectors. A subtitling technique, phased in around the mid-1990s, used to enhance the visual presence of talk on television by flashing transliterated comments across the screen in bright colours.

terekura (テレクラ): Telephone Club. A variant of introduction services rooted in the sex service industry that became significant from the late 1980s. Customers can enter the booths of a call centre to receive calls or listen to voice mail messages from women and thereafter make their own arrangements to meet them. Alternatively, members can access voice mail services from home using a members’ calling card.

tōkō kinshi (登校禁止): Prevention of children from attending school.

tōkō kyohi (登校拒否): School refusal. In currency from the 1960s to 1990s, *tōkō kyohi* tended to be seen as individual laziness or an illness that should be remedied. Movements led by founders of ‘free schools’ (privately run alternative spaces for children who do not go to school) strongly criticized such views, leading the Ministry of Education to announce in 1992 that *tōkō kyohi* could happen to any child, and by the late 1990s it came to be replaced by the term *fuōkō*.

tokubetsu waku (特別枠): Special quotas for *kikokushijo* or other ‘special’ categories of entrants provided by Japanese universities. Also applies to the quotas offered in some senior high schools.

tsūshin kyōiku (通信教育): Long-distance education programmes; correspondence courses.

ukeirekō (受け入れ校): ‘Reception schools’. Generic term for schools which are part of the special educational provision for *kikokushijo*.

ura saito (裏サイト): Unofficial sites. Online discussion boards where students and parents of a particular school leave anonymous comments.

ushinawareta 10-nen (失われた 10 年): Japan’s ‘lost decade’ that ensued after the burst of a massive real-estate bubble in the early 1990s, when the economy stagnated and when the opportunity to make important reforms to the system is said to have been missed.

yōgoshisetsu (養護施設): Residential child protection institution.

yōiku kanren (養育関連): General concerns to do with bringing up children.

Youth Law (少年法 / Shōnen Hō): The Shōnen Hō was implemented in 1922 and updated in 1948 in response to the desire to control deviant youth behaviour and prevent promiscuity and casual prostitution amongst girls. It was amended in 2000 and became the Shin Shōnen Hō (New Youth Law).

Youth Ordinance – titled 青少年健全育成条例 (Seishōnen Kenzen Ikusei Jōrei) or 青少年保護育成条例 (Seishōnen Hogo Ikusei Jōrei) depending on prefecture, the Youth Ordinance was added to the local legislation of almost all prefectures between 1952 and 1985 to prevent youth delinquency and violence. Through the Ordinance, sexual and violent media content is regulated and effectively censored, and youth are prevented from close interaction with the sex service sector (*fūzoku*). The Youth Ordinance has been updated on various occasions and in 1997 it became known as the Solicitation Ordinance (Jidō Kaishun Jōrei). In Tokyo Metropolitan Prefecture, the Ordinance was controversially revised in December 2010 to include ‘harmful’ and ‘indecent’ images of ‘virtual youths’ (*hijitsuzai shōnen*) and to give the Metropolitan government greater powers to enforce the law’s provision. This followed a statement by UNICEF Japan in March 2008 calling for a further tightening of child pornography laws, including a ban on sexual depictions of minors in manga, anime and video games.

yutori kyōiku (ゆとり教育): Relaxed education or room-to-breathe education reforms, implemented gradually from the late 1990s to lessen the stress on Japanese students, who were previously subjected to intensive rote memorization and ‘examination hell’.

wakamono (若者): Young adults aged up to the late twenties and early thirties. The broadest word for ‘youth’ in Japan.

Wakamono Jiritsu Juku (若者自立塾): The Youth Independence Camp. A neo-traditional youth training programme for 'NEETs' launched by the MHLW in 2005 and implemented by NPOs and other voluntary and private groups.

wakamono jiritsu shien (若者自立支援): Youth independence support. The generic label given to the government's youth support measures since the mid-2000s. Equated with support towards economic independence in government publications, but in practice inclusive of diverse support measures.

Wakamono Support Station (若者サポートステーション / Wakamono Sapōto Sutēshon): Youth Support Station. A multi-dimensional counselling programme for young adults started by the MHLW in 2006 and delivered, mainly by non-governmental entities, at 100 locations across Japan as of 2011.

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