The Era of Bullying: Japan under Neoliberalism

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Introduction

Bullying (ijime) and school nonattendance (futoko) have been the key 'behavioural problems' among students in Japan since the mid-1980s. School nonattendance has been consistently dealt with by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoE),[1] but there have been few systematic efforts to curb bullying by the school administration either at national or local levels. The contrast is clear also at the grassroots level. Unlike school nonattendance which led to the development of a major social movement in support of futoko students and their parents,[2] bullying has rarely been considered by Japanese citizens to be an issue deserving of coordinated action.[3]

One apparent reason for this difference is that bullying is generally hard for adults to recognise,[4] whereas school nonattendance is highly visible; adults find school students outside school during class hours and teachers find empty seats in the classroom. A more fundamental reason, however, is that school nonattendance is generally seen to be a problem of student maladjustment to school and society, whereas bullying is, to a large extent, a manifestation of students' adjustment to human relations around them. The notion that 'bullying prepares children for the future' describes this reality. Even though its political incorrectness may inhibit adults from being explicit about it, indications of tacit approval of bullying are ubiquitous in schools and society at large.

The perception of bullying as a 'rite-of-passage' experience is not unique to Japan. Comparatively speaking, however, Japan, where conformist and hierarchical pressures have been considered relatively strong, be it for cultural or institutional reasons, would provide an excellent case to illuminate sociological aspects of bullying. In fact, the possibility that bullying is pathological overadjustment to the group-oriented society [5] and hierarchical and power-dominant human relationships has been pointed out.[6] Again, neither pressure to conform nor hierarchical human relations is unique to Japan. However, analysis of the Japanese case can clarify the relationship between these and bullying.

Bullying, moreover, appears to have become a key concept in understanding Japanese society today. Recent publication of popular titles which claim Japan to be a 'bullying society' (ijime shakai) suggests the centrality of the concept at this time.[7] The common thesis is that conformist and hierarchical pressures in Japan have been so great that bullying has become the key to understanding human relations at school, work and society at large. The paper examines this thesis first by looking into bullying among Japanese youth, followed by analysis of the broader socio-political climate of Japan since the late 1990s.

PART 1: BULLYING CRISES IN JAPANESE SCHOOLS
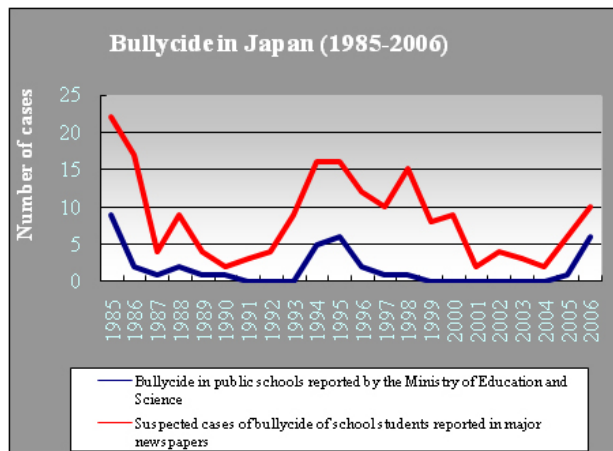
1. The Third Peak

Figure 1

Figure 1 shows the number of school students who took their own lives after being bullied by other students (i.e. ijime-suicide or *bullycide*) for

the period 1985-2006. The red line indicates the number reported in major newspapers, and the blue, the official statistics by the MoE.[8,9] The graph begins in 1985, the year the MoE started to collect data about bullying. Since then, it is estimated that at least 200 students have taken their own lives because of bullying. In most cases, the students died in 'ordinary' circumstances, being bullied by 'ordinary' ('good') students. It is this ordinariness of their situations that links bullycide with the everyday life of schools.[10]

Bullycide constitutes only the tip of the iceberg. Beneath it are numerous others who have been killed, injured, physically or psychologically impaired,[11] or disabled because of bullying.[12] Some victims of bullying direct their anger at the innocent, as was the case with the indiscriminate knife attack by a 16-year-old in Tokyo in January 2008.[13] Bullying also causes and triggers school non-attendance. Official statistics for 2000-2006 show that 'trouble with friends' (presumably victimisation in most cases) accounted for the annual average of 11.3% (or 2,834) of school nonattendance of primary and 21.9% (or 22,613) of junior high school students.[14] As will be discussed below, there has been a problem in the accuracy of the statistics on bullycide. Nonetheless, they provide the most reliable of all statistics on bullying which otherwise fluctuate wildly depending upon the definition of bullying and the method of data collection.

The graph shows that there have been three peaks at roughly ten-year intervals. The first two peaks coincided with a case which attracted extensive media coverage: the 1986 case of Shikagawa Hirofumi (13) in Tokyo,[15] and the 1994 case of Ohkochi Kiyoteru (13) in Aichi.[16] It is hard to know how well these peaks reflect the actual number of bullycides, let alone the incidence of bullying. It is possible that they reflect, to some extent, public awareness of the issue heightened by media reportage. Nonetheless, the *recurrent* pattern in the graph suggests that whatever measures taken to reduce bullying in the past decades have had limited success. If anything, victims may be confronted with a greater sense of helplessness in the third peak as is discussed below.

2. Denial and Deception

The third peak was triggered in early October 2006 through the expose that despite having found several suicide notes, a school and the local board of education in Hokkaido kept denying for over a year that bullying had caused the suicide of a 12-year-old girl. In mid-October, another victim, Mori Kesuke (13) of Fukuoka, took his own life. The principal first denied the bullying that Kesuke mentioned in his suicide note, but announced later that the boy had been the target of bullying initiated by his homeroom teacher. In late October, a 14-year-old girl in Gifu committed bullycide. Again, after initial denial and much pressure from her parents, the school

acknowledged that she had been the target of bullying, as indicated by her suicide note. In six weeks in October and November 2006, six cases of bullycide, and the suicide of a principal who misled the media about the bullycide, were reported in the media. The media was flooded with images of principals and board of education members kowtowing in front of the altar of the deceased, or bowing low in front of the cameras, apologizing for their 'inadequate response' to bullying.


Mayor and educational board members (Mizunami, Gifu) apologizing at a media conference.

Although the concentration of incidents of bullycide in such a short period was unprecedented, the tendency for school authorities to suppress such cases was not.[17] They had often reacted in indeterminate or evasive ways to such incidents. Between 1985 and 2006 there were 17 court cases of bullycide where local administrations, including the school concerned, were found liable – by negligence or

inertia – for the death of the students (i.e., circa 8 to 9 per cent of some 200 known cases of bullycide for the period).[18]

What was new in 2006 was that because of the repeated misrepresentation by school authorities the matter reached the MoE. The validity of the MoE statistics on bullycide which were based on reports by prefectural boards of education was questioned. Figure 1 shows a consistent gap between newspaper reportage and MoE statistics. This might be partly because of the fact that national and private schools were not included in the official statistics until 2005 (which constituted in 2007 1.2% of primary, 7.3% of junior secondary, and 24.2% of senior secondary schools). It might also reflect the reluctance on the part of school to recognise and/or report bullycide. The number of bullycides for 1999-2005 had been recorded as zero, but, under pressure, late in 2006 the MoE announced that it would reassess the statistics.[19] An MoE notice, addressed to all chairs of prefectural and municipal boards of education, governors, and vice chancellors of all national universities with affiliated schools, urged that bullying not be hidden. However, teachers and school administrators understand that 'problems' such as bullying, school nonattendance, student injuries, accidents, etc. would impact negatively upon their performance evaluation.[20] Unless this system of evaluation is changed, the consistent gap in the graph is likely to persist.

3. Shattered Trust and Lost Authority
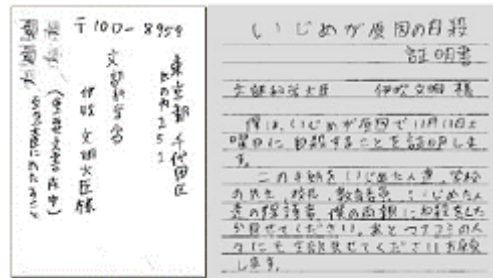
The envelope and the 'certificate' addressed to the Minister of MoE. Source: Mainichi Interactive   7 November 2006[23]

One of the consequences of the repeated exposure of cover-ups by school authorities is that it shattered students' and the general public's trust in teachers, principals, and boards of education.[21] This came to a head in early November, 2006 when a 'package' was received by the MoE, addressed to its then Minister Ibuki Bunmei. It appeared to be from a boy who wrote that he would take his own life if 'my teacher does not caution the bullies' in two days time. The 'package' consisted of a 'certificate' declaring 'This suicide was caused by bullying' together with seven separate letters addressed to the Minister, board of education, the principal, class teacher, classmates, their parents, and his own parents. No details were given to identify the student or school, however, and the content of the package suggested that it was a desperate voice of protest about the corrupt social relations surrounding ijime, rather than a direct call for help. The following are some excerpts from the

package. [22]

'The certificate: This suicide was caused by ijime'

> I certify that I'm going to commit suicide because of ijime, on Saturday 11 November. Please show this letter to the bullies, teachers, the principal, bullies' parents, and my parents. Also, please show all the letters to the media.

To the Minister of Education and Science Ibuki Bunmei

> The reason I write this letter is that I find it too hard to live on. Bullies have never been punished. I told teachers about ijime, but they've done nothing. I told my parents about it but I was only told to 'put up with it'. They contacted the principal and the board of education, but nothing changed. My parents and teachers only say 'your personality is the problem', so 'put up with it'. If the situation does not improve before Wednesday 8 November, I'll take my own life as I wrote in 'The

> certificate: This suicide was caused by ijime'. I'll do it at school. I can trust no one, so I write to you Minister Ibuki Bunmei…. Please release my name to the media on Saturday 11 November. Please. Please.

To all classmates:

> Why do you bully me?… I am going to kill myself because of your bullying…. I saw on the TV that bullies went with teachers, the principal and board of education to destroy evidence, tell lies and say that there was no ijime. No bullies take responsibility. It's the fault of adults. You may think that you'll be protected by adults, but you're wrong. I wrote letters to many people so that you must all kill yourselves to take responsibility….

To the class teacher:

> Why don't you help me? I told you about ijime many times and so did my parents. You told me to 'hang on' and 'it is your fault'… If you don't caution the

bullies by Wednesday 8 November, I'll commit suicide at school on Saturday 11 November. You're no different from bullies. I'll hold a grudge against you forever and will never forgive you. When I die, you'll tell lies on TV. You'll definitely say that 'there was no ijime' or 'there is no causal relationship between ijime and suicide'…. I can't trust you. So I've decided to write to the Minister. Other teachers are the same. I can't trust teachers. They pretend that they haven't seen ijime. You saw me being bullied, didn't you? But you did nothing. Why? I don't understand.

To my parents:

When you read this, I will be gone. I'm sorry. I couldn't stand it any more. Bullies, teachers, the principal, board of education – they're all the same. I saw on TV that there were others who want to commit suicide, and I found that I don't have to put up with this any more. I'm going to die because of the bullies, teachers,

the principal, and the board of education…. They'll all try to avoid responsibility as I saw on TV. I can see that and I hate them.

The letters were filled with resentment toward the system which silences the voice of the victim even after death. The blackmail of self-annihilation, the direct appeal to the Minister, and the request to involve the media are adopted as a strategy to gain a voice as victim. The letters also indicate the impact the series of cover-up scandals had on victimised children, leading them to believe that no help could be expected from adults. By the end of November, 43 letters of similar content were received by the MoE. The MoE noted that the cover-up incidents had seriously undermined the trust and authority of school administration. [24]

This does not mean, however, that the authority of teachers collapsed suddenly in 2006 because of the ijime-crisis. Rather, the scandals delivered a powerful blow to their authority, which had been on the decline for some time, vis-à-vis students, parents and society at large. Teachers had been blamed by the media for all sorts of school-related problems. With their authority undermined, it was increasingly difficult to maintain order in classrooms. The hollowing of teacher authority goes hand in hand with the sense of lack of norms in society which can lead

to the sense of isolation and anxiety at an individual level. The most controversial bullycide in 2006, the case of Mori Kesuke, illustrates this juncture of hollow authority of teachers, normlessness, new modes of class management, and bullying.

4. 'Reading-the-vibes' Teachers: Bullying as a Method of Class Management

The suicide of Mori Kesuke became especially controversial because the school admitted that Kesuke had been the target of 'bullying' by his homeroom teacher before he was bullied by his classmates. It was disclosed, for instance, that Mori's teacher, who ranked students by using the classification of strawberries: 'first class', 'second class', and so on, labelled Kesuke as a strawberry 'unfit to dispatch'.[25] To consider whether such behaviour constitutes bullying or not, it is necessary to clarify the definition of bullying.

The standard definition of bullying consists of three elements: 1) imbalance of power, 2) abuse of power, and 3) sense of fun felt by the bully and humiliation, by the bullied. There must be a clear difference in power between the bully and the bullied, whether it is physical, psychological (e.g. verbal), or social. Group bullying is a powerful way of bullying as it establishes supremacy of the bullying group in all these respects, and it is the predominant form of bullying in Japan where it is unusually prevalent .[26] Collective or not, the imbalance of power *per se* is inevitable in many

aspects of life, especially in formal organizations, and is not inherently bad. The imbalance becomes bullying when power is *abused*, so this abuse of power constitutes the second element of bullying. The third is the sense of fun that the bully finds in the humiliation of the bullied. The bully's defence that 'it was just fun' proves not innocence, but guilt. This element often distinguishes abuse from the legitimate use of power held by individuals who hold managerial positions, although this is hard to detect for obvious reasons.

What happened in Kesuke's class was a quintessential example of bullying. It involved a clear *imbalance of power* between teacher and student with the teacher *abusing* his power by making hurtful and humiliating remarks. The teacher's remarks made the class *laugh* while *humiliating* Kesuke. Each time the class laughed, it sided with the teacher, making him the ringleader of the bullying group. By making the class laugh, the teacher gained power to manage the class. Order may have been maintained, but at the cost of filling the class with negative energy, uneasiness, insecurity and fear arising from the lack of clear norms.

Without being able to rely on an intrinsic sense of right or wrong, students constantly have to read the 'vibes' in class for a sign of what is acceptable at a particular point in time. 'Reading the vibes' (or *kukiyomi*, a compound word made up of 'kuki', meaning 'air' or 'atmosphere' and 'yomi',

from the verb 'yomu', meaning 'to read'; thus literally: 'reading the atmosphere', 'sniffing the air', or 'reading the mood') becomes the method of survival in the normless space of a classroom.

Fujiwara Tomomi, a writer and critic, pointed out that bullying has become a convenient method of class management for some teachers who have lost the authority to manage their class. He writes:

> When a homeroom teacher cannot be the pivot of the class, the atmosphere of the class becomes permanently unstable. Such a class is in need of a clown. The model to follow can be found in variety-shows in television, which revolve around a clown – the bullied – who is constantly laughed at each time s/he screams at being poked and pushed. The class follows the same power dynamics. To 'read the vibes' means to grasp instantaneously the role to be played by each individual, to select a victim, and to direct the whole scene. The skill to operate 'vibes' can be regarded as a 'petit-fascism' in contemporary society. Some teachers have fallen into using this technique as it is an easy way to manage a class. Thus bullying has become a method. [27]

The key to Fujiwara's point is that the teacher in this context needs to 'sniff out' the mood of the class before positioning him/herself cleverly to enthral the students. Only when s/he can get the attention of the class successfully by making them laugh does this 'method' of class management work. The teacher therefore is not an isolated tyrant, but has a complicit relationship with the 'vibes' of the class or 'classroom climate'. To try to make students laugh carries a risk, however. If the attempt fails, the teacher risks being labelled '*samui*' (uncool) or '*kimoi*' (sick) – contemptuous labels often used to refer to adults who unsuccessfully try to be funny to go along with the young. To avoid that risk, the laughter must also induce a sense of fear among students. Thus, *some* teachers consider 'bullying' the easiest strategy for class management.

5. 'Reading-the-vibes' Students: Bullying as a Way of Reducing Tension

For many children and teenagers, 'reading-the-vibes' is a skill essential for social survival. Amamiya Karin, a prominent punk critic and novelist, widely seen as a voice of the disadvantaged, recalls.

When I was in the first year of junior high school, there was a lot of ijime around me, and I was always reading the vibes to avoid being the next target. The tension was extremely high. In order to protect myself, I had to concentrate all the time, doing such things as following what the powerful person had said, or laughing at a particular moment [28]…I knew that I would be targeted one day and was constantly on my toes to avoid it, and that was in a way tougher than the time I was actually being bullied [29]… When bullying of someone else began, the tension of the place eased at once. All felt relaxed. I felt that atmosphere every day.[30]

The young expect each other to be able to sense subtle nuances of communication, and to be able to say something quickly to enliven the atmosphere. Those who cannot do it get excluded.[31] This ability is considered to be so important in peer relations that, 'KY' which stands for 'Kuki ga Yomenai', meaning 'unable to read the vibes', became a buzzword in 2007.[32] In order to measure how well you are equipped

with this skill, a '*Kukiyomi* test' or 'KY test' is available online free of charge.[33] The importance of raising children who can sense the mood is also preached on a website for young mothers.[34]

'KY' is one of the most commonly used '*keitaigo*' (mobile-phone terms). There is even a word, 'KY-go' (KY-language), to refer to acronyms used in mobile-phone and internet communications especially by teenage girls. Thus, 'MK5' stands for '*Maji Kireru 5 byomde*' meaning '5 seconds before I really snap'. Some KY-go have multiple meanings, such as 'JK' which can be 'Joshi Kokosei'(senior-high school girl), but also 'Jodan Kitsui' ('got to be joking') or 'Jodan wa Kao dake ni shite' ('your face is a joke and let's leave it at that').[35] To understand which one is meant in a particular context, one needs to be constantly connected with others and keep up with the flow of the communication. In two ways, then, 'KY phenomenon' is associated with the culture of bullying: KY provides an instant means to label others for not being able to read the vibes, and KY-go provides a means of communication which is inherently exclusive while providing fun for those kept within the circle.

The prevalence of 'reading-the-vibes' as a skill and 'KY' to refer to those who lack it, suggests the intensity of the pressure to conform felt by Japanese youth and the infinitely subtle, fast and unpredictable mechanism of inclusion and exclusion. It has become a way of relating, a way

of 'friendship'. The IT-based communication, especially the exchange of text messages through the mobile phone, has pushed this mode of friendship to a new height. The technology, however, is nothing but a means of communication: it can also be used to build stable human relations which have nothing to do with bullying. Reading-the-vibes phenomenon is based on a pattern of bullying that has been prevalent among school students in Japan over the years: what I call 'Type B bullying'.

6. Bullying as the Learnt Behaviour of Good Students: Type A and Type B Bullying

According to the most comprehensive survey on bullying in Japan, about a quarter of students in primary and junior high school are involved in bullying, and nearly half of the students who had been bullied were bullied by close friends.[36] The 'role' of perpetrator and victim was found to rotate,[37] so that almost 10% of primary school students and over 4% of junior high school students are '*bully-victim's*; i.e., they are bullied and they in turn bully others.[38]

Bullying has to be understood as a continuum, whose two ends are shown in Figure 2 as contrasting types. Since this is only a conceptual model, the reality may not be so clear-cut. 'Type A' is the bullying by an individual 'problem kid', or a group of 'problem kids' who bully others, often outside the friendship loop. Their 'role' as perpetrator is more or less fixed, although they

could very well be victims in a different setting (e.g. at home). The cause of bullying is likely to lie primarily in the individual attributes of the bully, such as personality and family background. This is where the solution to this type of bullying can be sought.

Figure 2

'Type B' 'bullying, on the other hand, mainly involves *good students* with few signs of 'problematic behaviour'.[39] They tend to be engaged in group bullying where there is considerable rotation in the roles of bully, victim, or bully-victim. A longitudinal study found that the actual students involved in bullying either as bully or victim changed substantially while the total proportion of students involved in bully/victim problem remained constant.[40] Type B bullying occurs largely among 'friends'. The prevalence of this type of bullying, which involves substantial numbers of 'good students' with rotating roles, suggests that there are *environmental factors* at work, i.e. that bullying cannot be attributed only to the characteristics and/or backgrounds of each individual student.[41] It should also be considered as a social and cultural issue, requiring structural

solution. This is the type of bullying that is very difficult for teachers to discern since they are often part of the same system. However, it is the type of bullying that teachers can play a key role in reducing.[42]

A scene from a film 'Mondai no nai watashitachi' [We who have no problems]

The Japanese school has been known as a place where the pressure to conform is strong. Ijime can be a manifestation of students' over-adjustment to excessive pressures to conform at school where 'group' is used to maximise conformity.[43] Through ijime, students learn to be docile to the powerful, at least on the surface, and to be aggressive to the socially weak. Endo Mika, a Japanese American, schooled in the US and doing a PhD at Chicago University, made the following observation while working as a volunteer at a facility for school-nonattending children.

> When I first met these children, I was very shocked…. I noticed something peculiar in the way they used words. They spoke

very fast, with high tension, and I was surprised to see that they *could not* endure *not to keep up the high tension*. At the same time, they used violent language such as 'Die' (*shine*), 'Shut up' (*uzee*), 'Erase yourself' (*kiero*) with a surprising calm… One day, a child asked me a question and my answer showed a lack of confidence. Then the other child said to me, 'Hey, the way you answered is weak, touch up! (*shoboi zo*)…. If you answer that way, you'll get bullied'…. Listening to the language they use, I often feel suffocated. 'Feeling empty' (*munashii*), 'don't be weak, toughen up' (*shobo*), 'not fitting in' (*uiteiru*), 'can't read the vibes' (*kuki yomenai*)– After observing children whose communication is dominated by such language, I came to understand why children find it difficult to step into school.[44]

The quality of 'friendship' maintained by this kind of communication is likely to be thin, unstable, and filled with anxiety. According to Unicef, 30% of the 15 year-olds surveyed indicated that they 'feel lonely' which was almost

three times higher than the next highest-scoring country.[45] There is some survey evidence of such a thinning of human relations in Japanese society.[46] There are many factors explaining the diminishing human relations, but it is possible that bullying has worked as a vehicle for it. While it is important to have 'social intelligence' to be able to sense the mood in a particular setting, the notion of non-conformity as problematic contravenes the principle of a civil society where diversity and tolerance are cherished.

PART 2: THE ERA OF BULLYING

1. The Discourse of the Strong

Ogi Naoki, a leading educational critic, points out that the third peak of bullycide (1997-present) differs qualitatively from the previous two. Although the first two peaks did not witness a substantial reduction in bullying, Ogi, nonetheless, values the progress made between 1985 and 1996 in terms of the level of general awareness of bullying as a human rights issue. According to Ogi, however, this progress 'vanished into thin air' after around 1997 and it was as if the public understanding on bullying had 'reverted by twenty years to that of the 1980s'.[47]

Ogi holds that the real issue behind bullying among school students is the rise of the 'logic of the powerful' in society. In relation to the

discourse on bullying, he points out, the trend is now to work on the victim rather than on the bully, by giving the victim kind encouragement such as 'be positive and survive', 'there will come a better time' or 'hard experiences will be useful to you', all of which eventually suggest that the victim should persevere. These messages have replaced the previous ones directed towards bullies such as 'it is a shame to bully someone' or 'it is uncool to bully, so stop it'. The shift in the ijime discourse, he argues, symbolises the decline in the public awareness of human rights and the widespread inability to be sympathetic to the socially disadvantaged in general. This, he suggests, reflects the broader changes in social, economic and political climate of Japan in the late 1990s.[48]

The change has been pointed out by others as well. "'Stop bullying!' is the phrase required by the era when the notion of the survival of the fittest prevails" writes Shin Sugo, a human development consultant who published, with a psychiatrist Kayama Rika, *Ijimeruna!: Yowaimono ijime shakai Nippon* [Stop Bullying!: Bullying-the-weak society, Nippon].[49] Saito Takao, a journalist, points out in *Anshin no fashisumu: Shihai saretagaru hitobito* [The fascism of the easy-going: people who want to be ruled] that the tendency to reduce social issues to individual responsibility by using the word 'jikosekinin' [one's own responsibility] became prevalent in the late 1990s.[50] At the same time, he continues,

power-dominant human relations such as power harassment and sexual harassment increased in the workplace, as follows:

> In the workplace, the performance-based wage system and temporary employment are linked to the notion of 'do it on your own responsibility' [*jikosekinin*]. In this environment, democratic procedures and the spirit of mutual help have been lost, on the one hand, and sexual harassment, bullying (power harassment), and over-aggressive and exclusive human relations became common and established, on the other.[51]

According to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, consultations sought by individual citizens concerning labour conflict increased by more than 90% between 2002 and 2007, whereby in 2007 bullying and power harassment constituted the second largest category accounting for 12.5% of all consultations.[52] They include verbal intimidations such as: 'How stupid you are, being unable to understand such a thing!', 'You cause trouble to others', or 'If it is so hard, why don't you quit?'.[53] There are numerous reports of physical, verbal, and sexual abuse and harassment at work,[54] including such cases whereby a young woman's being hit,

kicked and stepped upon on the face with a shoe by a senior employee.[55]

2. Neoliberalism and Social Change in the Late 1990s

Saito Takao points out that underlying these trends are globalisation dominated by US-style neoliberalism, which advocates unlimited free-market competition, coupled with neoconservatism, the political philosophy that upholds traditional values, limited welfare and the interventionist approach to international affairs to maximise national interests.[56]

Indeed, the late 1990s was the time when the neoliberal reform was adopted in full in Japan.[57] In 1995, a report by Nikkeiren (the former Japan Federation of Employers' Associations), *Shinjidai no 'Nihonteki keiei'* ['Japanese management' for the new era][58] laid the foundation to promote the employment of a massive number of casual workers who provide cheap 'disposable' labour with little job security while imposing on full-time workers an achievement-based assessment system.[59] The number of full-time employees actually peaked in 1997 and declined rapidly thereafter.[60] The 'working poor' who maintain regular employment but remain poor due to low wages and an absence of benefits and security surfaced as a social issue in 1998.[61] The number of households on welfare has risen steadily since

around 1997 (Figure 3). The number of suicides exceeded 30,000 in 1998 for the first time in Japan's postwar history and remained above that figure throughout the following decade. The impact of the 'lost 10 years' of the post-bubble economic slump was reflected in these realities, producing the 'losgen' (the lost generation or 'rosujene'), some 20 million Japanese now in their twenties and thirties who finished education in the 1990s and have been deprived of opportunities, resources and institutional security to work and live.[62].

While the need for social security increased dramatically, the social security system had been under pressure in the political climate of neoconservatism, which aims to minimise the cost of social welfare. A 52-year-old taxi driver with health problems, for instance, died of starvation in Kitakyushu in 2007, two months after being cut from the dole. His partly mummified body was found one month later in a house where the supply of gas, water, and electricity had been stopped. The last entry in his diary was 'I want to eat a rice ball'. Two men died in Kitakyushu in similar situations in 2005 and 2006, including a 56-year-old man with disabilities whose application for social welfare had been rejected.[64] It was revealed through a whistleblower that the staff at the welfare office in Kitakyushu had been given a quota for application forms in order to keep low the number of welfare recipients, which sometimes

meant threatening and shouting at people who asked for the form.[65] While the case of Kitakyushu may be atypical, it indicates the kind of pressure under which the system of social welfare operates in the political climate of neoconservatism.

It is possible that the declining system of social security – whether it be 'life-time' employment, social welfare, pension, or medical insurance – fuels the individual needs for the sense of security. The driving force of 'reading the vibes' – whether it be a method of classroom management, a way of relating to friends, or a method to maximise security – is $fear$.[66] Bullying associated with 'reading the vibes' may have become particularly prevalent since the late 1990s as a way to minimise fear and maximise the sense of safety and security.

3. Violence and the Declining Rule of Law

The diminishing sense of security seems to be accompanied by a sense of norms crumbling at various levels of Japanese society. The cases of bullying-style punishment/training that led to the deaths of young people in Japan's core institutions of self-defence and sumo wrestling may be taken as representative.

In September 2008, a 25-year-old petty officer died of an acute subarachnoid haemorrhage after being hit in a martial-art-style 'training fight' at the school of the Maritime Self-Defence Force in Hiroshima. He had been forced to fight 15 other

members, 50 seconds each, one after the other, while being surrounded by them and forced to stand up and fight. The instructors were present and told the media that it was a 'farewell present' to the officer who was to leave the course for the special task force in two days.[67] One junior officer testified that the atmosphere was such that it was impossible to say 'No' to taking part.[68] The Ministry of Defence regards the death as 'an accident incurred in the course of duty' with due compensation.[69] The captain of the Special Force where the death occurred was reassigned.[70] Criminal liability was pressed against nobody.

This case resembles that of the death in 2007 of a 17-year-old stablemate of a sumo wrestler, Tokitsubeya, from multiple-trauma shock after being beaten with a beer bottle by his stablemaster, forced to fight for half an hour against three senior wrestlers under the order of the master, and kicked and hit with a metal bat after he fell. Everyone went along with the order in order to 'straighten up' the boy who had fled from the stable.[71] The master and three wrestlers have been arrested and indicted.[72] Two other cases of physical violence against junior wrestlers were subsequently reported.[73]

Deceased 17-year-old Tokitaizan (Saito Takashi)

It is hard to tell to what extent these cases reflect recent change in Japanese society, i.e. wide-spread violence and the absence of norms, and to what extent 'traditional practice' in each institution. However, the violent death of a stablemate during 'training' was unheard of, and the relationship between recent increase in suicide among Self Defence Force officials and bullying, violence and lack of discipline has been noted.[74]

The gravity of the problem of eroding social norms surfaced most strikingly in April 2008 in the government's reactions to the Nagoya High Court decision that Japanese operations in Iraq are unconstitutional. The Court judged that airlifting of multinational combat troops into the war zone of Baghdad by the Air Self-Defence Force (ASDF) was unconstitutional, being integral to the use of force by the United States.[75] The decision was final, since technically the government won the case which was about compensation to the plaintiff, and so no appeal was possible.

In response to the decision, the then Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura Nobutaka stated publicly that the government 'could not accept such a court ruling'[76]; the then Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo, stated that the decision 'would have no impact on the continued deployment of the ASDF to Iraq'[77]; the then Foreign Minister

Komura Masahiko, said that 'the judgement reflects the opinion of only one person [the judge]. I will read the judgement document when I have more time after retirement'; and the then ASDF Chief General Tamogami Toshio, said that most of the members of ASDF engaged in the operation would feel that the decision 'has nothing to do with us' ('*sonnano kanken*'). Tamogami's reply was couched in the catchphrase of comedian Kojima Yoshio,[78] known for dancing about shouting it wearing only swimming trunks. These responses 'raise questions about the rule of law and the separation of powers in Japan.'[79] Craig Martin wrote:

> Representatives of the government, and the military, have made public statements contradicting the findings of the court, rejecting its conclusions, and dismissing the relevance and significance of its constitutional interpretation…. This response by the executive branch of government to a judicial decision in a constitutional democracy is difficult to comprehend. It raises questions about the extent to which the rule of law is respected. It provokes concerns about the continued normative power of the Constitution. It creates serious doubts about the proper distribution of power among the three branches of government within the democratic structure of the state.[80]

Although this government response to the decision was not directly linked to bullying, it highlighted one facet of a society where the culture of bullying prevails: the denial of the principles and ethos of democracy and rule of law.

PART 3: TEACHERS AS LYNCHPIN: BULLYING POLITICISED?

The social changes in the late 1990s discussed above – the dominance of the culture of the strong, neoliberalism, economic polarization, and crumbling norms - seem to have a synchronous relationship with the promotion of nationalism. The second half of the 1990s saw the emergence of a number of 'neo-nationalist, revisionist, and reactionary Diet organizations'[81] to preach the legalisation of *hinomaru* (the rising sun flag) as Japan's national flag and *kimigayo* (His Majesty's Reign), national anthem in 1999. In this context, teachers seem to have played an extremely

complex role vis-à-vis the bullying among students discussed earlier on the one hand, and broader political change, on the other.

1. Kimigayo Discipline and Peace Education since the Late 1990s

In late-1990s Japan, the school climate became more heavy-handed and less democratic. So called '*Kimigayo* discipline' of teachers who did not comply with the order to stand up and sing *kimigayo, the emperor-praising national anthem*, at school ceremonies became rampant since 1998, *preceding* the legalization as shown below.
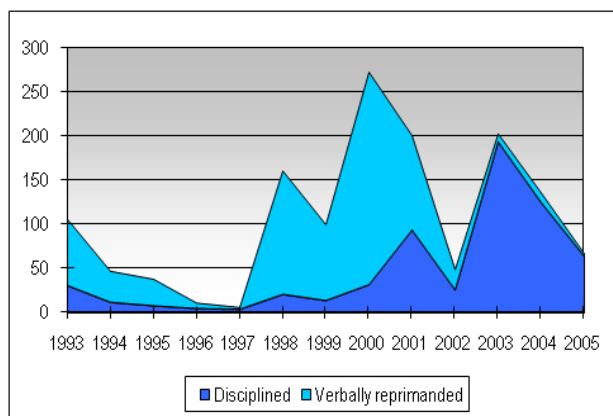
Figure 3: The number of teachers disciplined or verbally reprimanded in relation to *kimigayo* and *hinomaru* 1993-2005. Source: Produced based on data available from MoE (2002-2005)[82]

Between 1998 and 2005, 570 teachers were officially disciplined and 620 verbally reprimanded in relation to *hinomaru* (the national flag) and *kimigayo* Sato Manabu, Tokyo University professor of education, points out that such a systematic and large-scale crackdown on

teachers is rare in the history of education, second only to the 'red-labelling of teachers' in 1932 under fascist Japan.[83] Although the majority of cases involved an official 'verbal reprimand' (*kunkoku*) or 'written reprimand' (*kaikoku*), in reality this meant being labelled an 'ideologically prejudiced teacher' (*henko kyoshi*) or 'incompetent teacher' (*shidoryoku busoku*) constantly marked and watched, and likely to be transferred to a remote school.[84] As Figure 3 indicates, the general trend is that official discipline has largely replaced verbal reprimand, suggesting the adoption of tougher measures towards teachers.

Most of the *kimigayo* discipline occurred in Tokyo and Hiroshima. In 2005, for instance, Tokyo accounted for 70% and Hiroshima 30% of the *kimigayo* discipline administered cases in the nation.[85] The Tokyo Metropolitan administration under Governor Ishihara Shintaro has launched extremely hawkish educational policies since 2000,[86] with even schools for handicapped children no exception. In one school in Tokyo the principal ordered teachers to hold bedridden students to make them stand up while the anthem was sung,[87] and in another, a teacher who took a student with disability to the toilet during the singing was chased by an angry deputy and told to put diapers on such students so that they could remain standing during the singing.[88]

Hiroshima, on the other hand, has been under

enormous pressure *because* of its strong peace education. It is reported that the percentage of primary and junior secondary schools which have a peace education curriculum declined from 95% in 1997 to 24% in 2004 as a result of directives from the board of education and the MoE.[89] It is even reported that the board of education of the city of Onomichi in Hiroshima prefecture instructed principals to remove *all* Hiroshima Peace Calendars distributed freely to schools and that the directive was carried out within a few months in 2003.[90]

A series of lawsuits has been filed by individual teachers and groups of teachers concerning the punishment inflicted upon them in relation to *kimigayo* Although the decisions have been mixed, the Tokyo District Court ruled in September 2006 that the policy of the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education of forcing teachers to sing *kimigayo* during school ceremonies violated Article 19 of the Constitution, which guarantees freedom of thought and conscience, and Article 10 of the Fundamental law of Education, which prohibits subjecting education to improper control'.[91] The court ordered the board to pay 30,000 yen in damages to each of the 401 plaintiff teachers, and 'not to go after such teachers, saying the imposition of punishment would constitute *abuse of power* (Italics added).[92]

2. The Revision of the Fundamental Law of Education and the Ijime Crisis of 2006

As the pressure to silence teachers built up, The Fundamental Law of Education, whose Article 10 constituted one of the legal grounds of the above decision, was revised in the New Fundamental Law of Education enacted in December 2006. Where the original Article 10 stated that education should not be subject to improper control, the revised clauses allow the central government and local administrations greater power to control education. Among other changes, three stand out. First, the word 'peace' was erased from the preamble: in the formula 'we shall…endeavour to bring up people who love truth and peace', 'peace' was replaced with 'justice'. Second, where nurturing 'independent spirit' and 'spontaneous spirit' of the individual was one of the main aims of education in the original law,[93] these phrases disappeared in the revision. The aim of education became, inter alia, cultivation in the mind of children of 'a sense of morality', 'autonomy for self-control', and 'a sense of public spirit/duty', and of an 'attitude to respect tradition and culture'.[94]
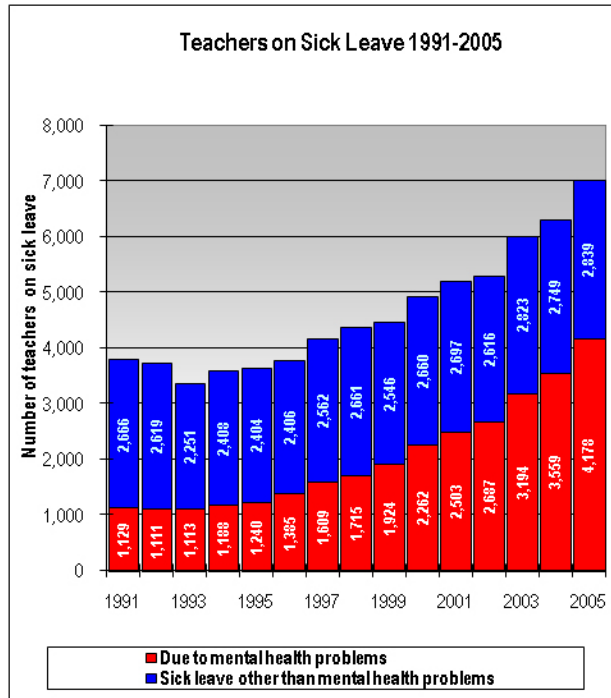
Teachers on Sick Leave 1991-2005

Figure4

The revision of the Fundamental Law of Education, together with the revision of Article 9 of the Constitution which declares state pacifism, were the 'twin towers' of the LDP's political agenda in the postwar period. Some suspect the possibility that bullying among school children may actually have been used through media management to clear the path to achieve the former.[95]

Four days after Prime Minister Abe Shinzo took office on 26 September 2006, it was reported that a school in Hokkaido had covered up the ijime-suicide which happened almost one year earlier.[96] This report was the first of a series of ijime-related news discussed earlier, which literally swamped the media in October and November. On 10 October, the Abe cabinet

established the Education Rebuilding Council, and with minimal debate in part due to the preoccupation with bullying, the revision of the Fundamental Law of Education was passed on 16 November, just about the time the media reportage on bullying began to subside. For two months, teachers and school authorities in general were on the defensive. Confronted with the bullying scandals and a strong public sense of the need to reform education, Abe expressed serious concern about bullying, positioning it as a central problem to be solved in the Council, and publicly projected the image of a Prime Minister with a mission to solve the problem of ijime.[97] When the 'dust' of the bullying crisis settled towards the end of the year, the revision of the Law had already been accomplished.

The state of health among teachers seems to reflect the changes described above. Figure 4 shows the number of teachers who took sick leave during the period 1991-2005.[98] Before 1997, the number was fairly stable, ranging between 3,300 and 3,800 teachers. In 1997, however, the number for the first time exceeded 4,000 and started to increase dramatically as a result of mental-health problems. The number of teachers who took sick leave due to mental-health related problems tripled in 10 years between 1996 and 2005, and that figure exceeded 4,000 in 2005, despite the fact that the total number of teachers declined by 4.7% (over 45,000 teachers) during this period.[99] While there are

obviously multiple factors accounting for the breakdown of each individual teacher, such an increase seems to point to an increase in the difficulties they faced at work since around 1997.

PART 4: POSSIBILITIES FOR CHANGE

1. Historical and Comparative Relevance

The social changes witnessed since the late 1990s are of course not unique to Japan. They need to be understood in a broader context of the global regime of neoliberalism and neoconservatism, led by the US, to which Japan has held a dependant position as a 'client state'.[100] What is observed in Japan may thus be applicable to varying degrees in other parts of the world. The same can be said about the pressure to conform. The KY pressure seems an extreme version of the human relationship among 'other-directed types', i.e. individuals with weak sense of autonomy who depend upon each other to maintain their sense of being, which David Riesman held to be the dominant mode in America in his 1961 publication of the classic, *The Lonely Crowd*.[101]

Historically as well, the collective bullying in a hierarchical social structure, as represented in the sumo-stable affair and the Maritime Self-Defence Force affair, has strong resemblance with '*shigoki*' practiced in the Japanese military toward the socially weak, by those who themselves had been

oppressed by others.[102] Maruyama Masao pointed out, as characteristic of the Japanese populace before and during the war, the tendency to bow uncritically to authority and to replicate the oppressive treatment by the powerful to the less powerful.[103] These were also features of people under fascism in Germany according to Erich Fromm [104] and Theodore Adorno, what Adorno call the 'authoritarian personality'.[105]

These commonalities suggest that bullying in Japanese society today is not something unique to Japan or its culture but has a lot to do with its particular social, political, economic and institutional milieu since the late 1990s, which has an eery resemblance to societies under fascism.

2. Japanese Society at a 'Chaos Point'?

Ervin Laszlo, a philosopher of science, argues that the existing systems of the world have been crumbling and heading for a catastrophe, but that there is still a chance to bring about a breakthrough instead of a breakdown. This is because, he argues, the world is at a chaos point where a tiny fluctuation can trigger a major change in the system, causing a so-called 'butterfly effect' such that[106] "if a monarch butterfly flaps its wings in California, it creates a tiny air fluctuation that amplifies and amplifies and ends by creating a storm over Mongolia."[107]

Laszlo also writes that these trends can change depending on changes in people's values and expectations.[108] This paper's analysis of bullying in a broad socio-political context of Japan suggests that bullying has been augmented at individual, social and national levels. But this does not mean that there is no hope for change.

Like the rest of the world, it is possible to consider that Japanese society is at a 'chaos point'. If indeed Japan is at a chaos point, what sort of small fluctuations may lead to paradigmatic change?

> 1. Juxtaposed with the neoliberal and neoconservative trends described above, citizen activism has also been notable especially since the 1995 Kobe earthquake. Japanese civil society has developed precisely in the decade of increased bullying and reactionary pressure on education.[109]

> 2ï¼ŽThe Fundamental Law of Education was revised, yet the revision of the constitution's Article 9 is expected to be very difficult: Some 7,000 citizens groups have emerged at the grassroots level to demand its retention.[110] (Access the homepage of the "9 jo no kai" or Article 9 Society" through this link (http://www.9-jo.jp/))

> 3. During the period the revisionist view of history gathered strength, the

opposing view also gained strength. The 'New History Textbook' which was the revisionist vehicle to promote nationalistic education in 2001 was overwhelmingly (99.8%) rejected by local boards of education.[111] Two politicians with strong nationalistic agendas, Abe Shinzo as Prime Minister in 2007 and Nakayama Nariaki as Minister for Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism for the Aso Cabinet in 2008, fell from power as 'KY's, being out of touch with the needs and the sentiments of the public and commonsense. Oe Kenzaburo who challenged the official denial of the 'forced mass suicide' by the Japanese military during the battle of Okinawa won the case, and former General of Japan's Air Self Defence Forces, Tamogami Toshio, who ridiculed the Nagoya High Court decision on Japan's involvement in the Iraq war mentioned above, also fell from the sky for his essay defending Japan's colonialism and war.[112]

3. Institutional Reform at School for Culture of Change

One consequence of the 2006 bullying crisis is that bullying has become an educational issue involving not only students but teachers, principals, boards of education, and the MoE as

parties *directly* involved. It is no longer the 'fire on the other side of the river' for any party. Shortly after the 2006 crisis, the MoE published a collection of examples of how schools had responded to the issue of bullying. One of the 35 examples contained a checklist designed to help teachers raise awareness of potential human rights issues in their dealings with students.[113] The report states:

> In order to create a school and a class that does not allow bullying to happen, it is important that each teacher consciously cares about each individual student and expresses it in her/his attitude every day. Teachers should fully recognise that what they say or do has significant influence upon students and pupils. Anybody worthy of the name of a teacher should never hurt a student or encourage bullying of the student by other students.[114]

This is not to say that the student-teacher relationship is the only factor relevant to bullying among students. As discussed in this article, bullying is associated with institutional structure and climate that allow and promote the domination by power in various aspects of society, not just at school. Young people can be

exposed to such a mode of human relations directly or indirectly at home, through the media, and other influences outside school and home.

Yet precisely because of the injustices in human relations outside school, the school must be a sanctuary where students can feel safe and secure. To feel secure should not demand that they 'read the vibes' of the place quickly, or take part in bullying, or avert their gaze from bullying around them. The sense of safety and security should be felt without compromising fundamentally the sense of being oneself.

The key to reduce bullying seems to be, initially, for teachers and other adults to deal promptly and caringly with each small incident of bullying. Research shows that students who have experienced being bullied tend to trust teachers less, consider teachers less caring and more tolerant to injustices.[115] By using cases of bullying as leverage, it might be possible for teachers to gain greater respect and trust, not only from those who are directly involved in bullying but also other students who witness how the teacher has responded to the socially weak.

At the institutional level, in order to establish mutual trust between students and teachers, practices that harm students such as corporal punishment and senseless penalties should be eliminated.[116,117] In order to enable teachers to have caring relationships with students, work

conditions that allow them to do so will be needed. A democratic and supportive work environment free of discrimination and harassment of any sort (including power harassment) will also be essential to create a school climate that will nurture positive human relations in general. If human relations at school can be changed gradually in the effort to reduce bullying, it might be possible for school to bring about a culture of change outside school as well.[118]

In a school that is encapsulated in the culture of caring, students will have little fear of being different from others. Nor will they be afraid to 'change the air' instead of 'sniffing it out' or 'feeling the vibes'. To allow students to learn to be their individual selves may indirectly help Japan to minimise the risk of being further drawn into what has been termed the 'fascism of the easy-going', where the more 'safe' and 'secure' people feel, the more their freedom is restricted.[119] To deal with small cases of bullying in everyday life may seem trivial, but perhaps constitutes the effective means to challenge the existing culture of power and the broader social roots of bullying.

The political imperative to deal with bullying in Japanese schools also presents an opportunity. Paradoxically, there are indications not only in Japan but around the world that increasing numbers of people are interested in and pursuing alternative ways of life based on new paradigms of relationships, including the pursuit of alternative education.[120] Bullying may appear insignificant yet it may become a powerful catalyst to bring about change to a society at a chaos point.

Notes:

1. The Ministry of Education (*Monbusho*) changed its name to the Ministry of Education and Science (*Monbukagakusho*) in 1991. In this text, an acronym of MoE is used to cover both.

2. Wong, So fei (2008) 'Reframing Futoko (school non-attendance) in Japan – A Social Movement Perspective' unpublished PhD thesis, University of Adelaide.

3. Kamata, Satoshi (1998) *Ijime shakai no kodomotachi* [Children in bullying society] Tokyo, Kodansha bunko, pp.215&277.

4. An official survey found that some 40% of primary, 30% of junior secondary and 70% of senior secondary teachers, and about 70% of parents were not aware of the victimisation of their students or children. See the survey through this link (http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/houdou/08/06/960604.htm) (25/08/2008).

5. See for instance, Takekawa, Ikuo (2005) *Ijime gensho no saikento: Nichijyo shakai kihan to shudan no shiten* [Reexamining ijime phenomenon: the perspective of group and the everyday social norm] Kyoto, Horitsu bunkasha.

6. Yoneyama, Shoko (1999, and 2007 paperback edition through Routledge Paperbacks Direct) *The Japanese High School: Silence and Resistance* London & New York, Routledge, pp.157-241.

7. This includes, for instance, *Ijimeruna! Yowaimono ijime shakai Nippon* [Stop bullying!: Nippon as bullying society of the weak] by Kayama, Rika and Shin, Sugo (2008, Kadokawa one tema 21) and *Ijime shakai no kodomotachi* [Children in the bullying society] by Kamata, Satoshi (1998, Kodanshabunko). Other books of the similar vain which do not carry 'bullying society' in the title include: *Anshin no fashisumu: Shihai saretagaru hitobito* [Fascism of the easy-going: people who want to be ruled] by Saito, Takao (2004, Iwanami shinsho), and *Tomodachi jigoku: 'Kuki o yomu' jidai no sabaibaru* [Friendship Hell: The survival of the generation which 'reads the vibes'] by Doi, Takayoshi (2008, Chikuma shinsho).

8. The blue line in Figure 1 is based on MoE, "'*Jido seito no mondai kodo to seito shido jo no shomondai ni kansuru chosa (Heisei 18 nendo)' ni tsuite*", [Regarding the 2006 report on "Survey on issues on teacher guidance regarding problematic behaviour among school students"] Access here. (http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/houdou/19/11/07110710.htm) (10/02/2008). MoE has brought into a number of changes to the collection of data on bullying for 2006 statistics onwards. The figure for 2006 includes national and private schools, whereas figures prior to 2006 include public schools only.

9. The red line in Figure 1 is based on 1) '*Monbukagakusho happyo no kodomo no ijime jisatsusha to kuichigau shimbun hodo sareta ijime jisatsu*' [The discrepancy in the number of ijime-suicide reported by the media and the Ministry of Education and Science], Takeda, Sachiko (2004), *Anata wa kodomo no inochi to kokoro o mamoremasuka?: Ijime hakusho* [Can you protest the life and the soul of children?: The white paper on bullying], Tokyo: Wave shuppan, p.264; and 2) Table '*Kodomo ni kansuru jiken/jiko 1*' [Cases and accidents relating to children 1], the website, 'Nihon no

kodomo'

(http://www.jca.apc.org/praca/takeda/list01. html) [Children in Japan] (by Takeda, S.) (10/02/2008).

10. See for instance, Kamata 1998, *Ijime shakai*, pp.213-219; Ogi, Naoki (2007) *Ijime Mondai to do mukiauka* [How to face the problem of bullying] Iwanami Booklet no. 695, pp.43-46, Yoneyama (1999), *Silence and Resistance*, pp.157-185.

11. See for instance Kayama & Shin (2008), *Stop Bullying*, pp.60-66. (see note 7 above.)

12. Details are available on the table *'Kodomo ni kansuru jiken/ jiko*' by Takeda above.

13. The 16-year-old student who attacked people on the street in Shinagawa, Tokyo, in January 2008 told the police that he had been bullied at school. See Sankei News article. (http://sankei.jp.msn.com/affairs/crime/0801 07/crm0801071937026-n1.htm) (28/08/2008).

14. MoE, *Jido seito no mondai kodo to seito shidojo no shomondai ni kansuru chosa*

[A survey on behavioural problems of pupils and students and issues of student guidance] 2000-2005, available through this website (http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/toukei/001 /index31.htm) (20/10/2008).

15. Actual names of the victims are being used here in the effort to provide them with the opportunity to 'voice' their experience. They have been widely reported in the Japanese media. Japanese names included in the body of the text are given in Japanese style, i.e. family name first, except where the name of the person in English is well established.

16. For details see Yoneyama (1999) *Silence and Resistance*, pp.157-159.

17. See Yoneyama (1999) *Silence and Resistance* especially, pp.177-181.

18. See *'Kodomo ni kansuru jiken/ jiko*' by Takeda above and *Ijime Saiban* [Ijime trials] special issue (no. 126) of *Kikan Kyoikuho*, September 2000, Tokyo: Eideru kenkyusho.

19. Mainichi shimbun (2006) *'"Ijime jisatsu" 16ken atta: Monkasho "zero" happyo no 7kan nai ni'* [There were 16 cases of ijime-suicide in the 7 years when the MoE reported nil], 4 November. The revised figure as not been published yet as at 17 December 2008.

20. Anonymous teachers of Tokyo (2007) *'Ima kyoiku genba de naniga okite iruno ka'* [What is happening at schools now?] *Sekai*, February 2007 (no. 761), p.135.

21. MoE *'Ijime Mondai e no torikumi no tettei nituite (Tsuchi)'* [Regarding the total

permeation of measures against bullying: a notice] 19 October 2006. Access through this link (http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/seitoshidou/06102402/001.htm) (17/11/2008).

22. Mainichi Interactive (2006) *'Jisatsu yokoku tegami: "Ikiteikunoga tsurai"'* (http://www.mainichi-msn.co.jp/today/news/20061107k0000e040057000c.html) [Letter announcing ijime suicide: 'too hard to live on'] Mainichi Interactive, 07 November (02/12/2006).

23. Left photo: Ibid. Right photo is from Shibui, Tetsuya (2006) *'Tanrakuteki na kodomo jisatsu no hodo'* (http://www.ohmynews.co.jp/news/20070410/3930/print) [Simplistic reportage on the suicide of children], Ohmy News (25/08/2008).

24. See note 21 above.

25. Yomiuri Online 19 October 2006 *'"Karakai yasukatta" ryoshin to gakkogawa hanashiai de kyoyu'* (http://kyushu.yomiuri.co.jp/news/ne_06101602.htm) ['He was an easy target' said the teacher at a meeting with the student's parents] (19/10/2006).

26. Some 80% of bullying among school students in Japan has been reported to be collective (Morita Y., Taki, M., Hata, M., and others (1999) *Nihon no ijime* [Bullying in Japan], Kaneko shobo, Tokyo, p.41) when the figure is 60-65% in Scandinavia (Olweus, D. (1993) *Bullying in Schools*, Oxford, Blackwell, p.39) and 40 to 60% in Australia (Rigby, K. (1996) *Bullying in Schools*, Melbourne, Australian Council for Educational Research, p.39). Moreover, collective bullying in Japan accounts for over 90% of bullying that lasts for more than a week. See Yoneyama, S. & Naito, A. (2003) 'Problems with the paradigm: the school as a factor in understanding bullying (with special reference to Japan), *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 24(3), p.319 for a review on these points.

27. Fujiwara, Tomomi (2006) *'"Kuki yomi" to kashita kyoshi tachi* [Teachers who turned to be 'kuki yomi'], *Chuokoron*, December, pp.30-31. All translations of Japanese texts included in this article is mine.

28. Amamiya, Karin and Kayano, Toshihito (2008) *Ikizurasa ni tsuite: Hinkon, Identity, Naitonalism* [On the sense of 'hard to live on': Poverty, identity and nationalism', Kobunsha shinsho, p.151.

29. Ibid, p.30.

30. Ibid, p.31.

31. Kagami, Ryuji (2006) *'Seitoha okaruto ni kaserareta "anchi" to shiteno shimei* [A mission to pursue the position of 'anti' to the traditional

occultist] , *Chuo Koron*December, p.166.

32. See *'2007 U-can shingo ryukogo taisho kohogo Gendaiyogo no kisochishiki' (http://singo.jiyu.co.jp/nominate2007.html)* [Nominations for the 2007 U-can prize for new words and buzzwords for Gendaiyogo no kisochishiki]' (23/07/2008).

33. See for instance, *'Kukiyomi tesuto (http://www5.big.or.jp/%7Eseraph/zero/ky.cgi)* [Reading-the-vibes test] (27/07/2008).

34. Matsubara, M. 'SQ no takai kodomo ni sodateru 7tsu no pointo' (http://allabout.co.jp/children/childcare/closeup/CU20080205P/) [7 points to raise a child with a high SQ], Ikuji no kisoshishiki [Basic knowledge on child rearing: All about] (27/072008).

35. *'Joshi kokosei no ryakugo, ryukogo' (http://ky-test.livedoor.biz/archives/672077.html)* [Acronyms and buzzwords used among high-school girls] (24/07/2008).

36. Morita et al. (1999), *Nihon no ijime* pp.86&185. (See note 26 above.)

37. Taki, Mitsuru (2001) 'Relation among bullying, stress and stressor: A follow-up survey using panel data and a comparative survey between Japan and Australia', *Japanese Society* 5:25-40.

38. Morita et al. (1999), *Nihon no ijime* p.86.

39. Ogi (2007) *Ijime Mondai.* (See note 10 above.)

40. Taki, Mitsuru (2007) *Evidence ni motozuku ijime taisaku* [Evidence-based Interventions against bullying] Kokuritsu kyoiku seisaku kenkyujo kiyo [National Institute for educational policy research] (http://www.nier.go.jp/kyoutsu2/kiyou136-1 19.pdf) no. 136. (01/11/2008).

41. Yoneyama (2003) 'Problems with the paradigm', *BJSE*, pp.315-330. (See note 26 above.)

42. Shoko Yoneyama (in press) 'What can be done by classroom teachers', in Esther Ng (ed.) *Breaking the Silence: Bullying in Singapore* Harvest Centre for Research Training & Development.

43. See for instance, Yoneyama (1999) *Silence and Resistance,* especially Chapter 7 'Ijime: the price of super-conformity'.

44. Endo, Mika (2008) *'Futoko to no hajimete no deai'* [My first encounter with school nonattendance], *Horistikku kyoiku nusu* [Holistic education news] *The newsletter of Japan Holistic Education Society,* no. 59, pp.15-18.

45. Unicef, The United Nations Children's

Fund (2007) 'Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries' (http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/feature/fe6100/n ews/20060611i213.htm), p.38.

46. Yomiuri Online (2006), 'Ningenkankei "kihakuni" 80%' [80% indicated that human relations became thinner], 12 June 2006, (16/06/2006).

47. Ogi (2007) *Ijime Mondai,* pp.8-9. (See note 10 above.)

48. For points in this paragraph, see Ogi (2007) *Ijime Mondai,* pp.8-11.

49. Shin & Kayama (2008) *Stop Bullying!* p.197. (See note 7 above.)

50. Saito (2004) *Anshin no fashizumu,* pp.18-20. (See note 7 above.)

51. Saito (2004) *Anshin no fashizumu,* p.21.

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