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Erica Peaslee
Carnegie Mellon University

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Erica Peaslee

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Professor Yasufumi Iwasaki

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Abstract

During my time at Carnegie Mellon University and abroad at Japan's Waseda University, I have learned a great deal about the Japanese educational system. Recently, the adolescent suicide rate in Japan has risen to be twice as high as the same rate in the United States. When studying this discrepancy, one topic that is irrevocably tied to adolescent suicide is the issue of bullying in Japan; although many school officials would prefer to push it under the rug, the fact remains that bullying is a serious issue that many youths face as they make their way through the educational system. According to the Japan Times Online, 91% of Japanese students who committed suicide between 2004-2007 mentioned school related problems as one of the main reasons for their untimely deaths, many of which undoubtedly include bullying. To further develop my critical analysis, I analyzed the cultural factors in both countries that shape the way in which bullying occurs and determined which factors contribute to the fatality of bullying in Japanese schools, such as why American teachers are so quick to intervene while their Japanese counterparts either ignore offenses or, in some rare cases, take part. Certainly, many Japanese students face bullying without committing suicide; however, concurrent with the rise in suicides, school refusal and rates of hermit-like behavior have also skyrocketed in the past few decades.

Thus set out to answer these questions: what are the leading causes of child and adolescent suicide in Japan, which specifically Japanese cultural factors contribute to the fatality of bullying in Japanese adolescents, and how are these factors highlighted through the lenses of gender, history, and different cultures? I hypothesized that the difference between both the physical means through which the bullying occurs and certain cultural factors and phenomena in both America and Japan are the main causes behind the discrepancy.

Introduction:

During my time as an undergraduate at Carnegie Mellon University, I have learned a

great deal about the Japanese educational system. When studying education, one topic that

always seems to come up is the issue of bullying in Japan; although many school officials would

prefer to push it under the rug, the fact remains that bullying is a serious issue that many youths

face as they make their way through Japan's highly competitive educational system. Although

bullying is undoubtedly present in both the American and Japanese educational systems, the

adolescent suicide rate in Japan is ludicrously high. Furthermore, in their suicide notes, 91% of

Japanese youths mentioned school related problems as one of the main reasons for their untimely

deaths, many of which undoubtedly include bullying (Japan Times Online, 2007).

Even though bullying is also a problem in America, it seems much less frequent, harsh,

and leads less often to child suicide. Thus I began to wonder what factors contribute to the

fatality of bullying in Japanese schools. Because school bullying is by no means a Japanese-

specific phenomenon, I decided to research the specific cultural factors present in Japan (but not

America) that lead to its heightened rates of adolescent suicide due to bullying. I was also

interested in analyzing the cultural factors in both countries that shape the way in which bullying

occurs, such as why American teachers are so quick to intervene while their Japanese

counterparts either ignore it or, in some rare cases, take part.

When Americans think of bullying in middle or junior high schools, we tend to imagine

students getting stuffed into lockers, spreading gossip, and calling each other by rude names.

Although there is no one complete definition of bullying, a comprehensive explanation provided

by Dan Olweus (creator of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program) is as follows: "A person is

bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of

one or more other persons and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself" (Olweus, 2009).

Alternatively, a commonly cited Japanese definition of ijime (lit. "bullying") is given by Y. Morita, a Japanese expert on the subject: "(ijime is) a type of aggressive behavior by which someone who holds a dominant position in a group-interaction process, by intentional or collective acts, causes mental and/or physical suffering to another inside a group" (Morita et. al., 1999). It is extremely interesting to note that although "bullying" and "ijime" are often used as cross-linguistic synonyms, their common definitions hinge on such different principles. Undoubtedly, addressing the dichotomy between the two allows researchers to pinpoint some of the key factors that make bullying so fatal in the Japanese society.

In comparing these definitions, some of the cultural differences in bullying practices become apparent. I hypothesized that these differences, specifically the cultural effects of the Japanese ideals of conformity and group identity versus the American ideal of individualism and the Japanese drive towards fostering harmony, are some of the major factors that lead to the severity of bullying and its oft-fatal consequences in Japan. For example, because Japanese students are more conscious of group membership and belongingness as being important to their self-esteem than American students, the fact that perpetrators of ijime specifically undermine the group status of their victims may be a factor that leads Japanese students to feel more severely depressed by their victimization.

However, there are certainly other factors that lead to Japan's higher adolescent suicide rate, such as Japan's religious identity and its specific views on suicide. And we must not forget that adolescent suicide does occur in America. As the media has been apt to point out recently, many of these controversial suicides occur because of bullying and victimization. Thus I set out

to answer these three questions: (1) what are the leading causes of child and adolescent suicide in Japan, (2) which specifically Japanese cultural factors contribute to the fatality of bullying in Japanese adolescents, and (3) how are these factors highlighted through the lenses of gender, history, and different cultures?

Furthermore, I hypothesized that differences in the means through which bullying is usually carried out and dealt with in both countries are main factors in the disparity in severity and fatality across Japanese and American cases of bullying. To test these less than pleasant hypotheses, I began by summarizing cross-cultural data trends in prevalence and types of bullying by utilizing a number of sources. My analysis mostly focused on historical and academic texts, statistics, websites, interviews, and popular media.
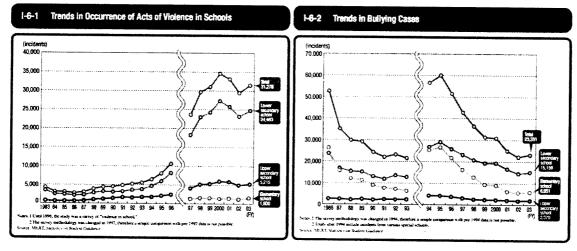
Background Information:

To begin my research, I interpreted the results of a survey on bullying conducted in 1997 that was given to approximately 7,000 Japanese $5^{th} - 9^{th}$ graders (Ishikida, 2005). Researchers found that between September and December of 1996, at least 14% of the students had been the victims of ijime. Of the almost 1000 bullied students, ~87% had been teased or slandered, ~55% had been ostracized, ~36% had been kicked, hit, or threatened, and 16-17% had been extorted. These children reported that most of the bullying had occurred in their actual classrooms, although many also reported instances on other school grounds and even on their way to and from school.

A similar American study of bullying in schools conducted in the early 2000's found that roughly 11% of students between grades six to ten had been bullied over the course of their time in school (Safeyouth.org, 2009). Almost all of the cases were verbal (slander or threats),

although some were physical. Few American children reported being victims of extortion, and

most of the bullying happened on school grounds.

MEXT, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology,

reports that although violent incidents in schools are rising (see chart 1-6-1), instances of ijime

are falling (chart 1-6-2). However, because many Japanese teachers receive poor marks or lose

bonuses for reporting instances of bullying in their classrooms, many choose to fabricate their

reports (Ishikida, 2005). Because MEXT's analyses are based on numbers that come from these

falsified reports, it should be noted that these estimations are far lower than the actual numbers

of cases (Morita et. al., 1999). Furthermore, it is important to note that private schools and

institutions were not added to these estimations until 2000:

Graphs courtesy of MEXT: http://www.mext.go.jp/english/statist/05101901.htm

This data shows that even if these estimations are lower than accurate, incidents of both violence

and bullying are most frequent in junior high schools, which is where I decided to focus the

efforts of my research.

In 2005, the Japanese Ministry of Education stated that between 1999-2005, there were

zero adolescent suicides directly related to bullying (Yoneyama, 2009). However, upon releasing

this information to the public, the ministry received so much bad press from the media and the

general populace that they eventually admitted their statement had been made in error and agreed

to take another look at some of the cases. When they looked at forty "random" cases of child and

adolescent suicide (researchers believe that the cases they choose may have been in their favor),

it was concluded that ijime was explicitly related to suicide in at least fourteen of the forty cases.

Also in 2005, the suicide rate in Japan was recorded at 24.4 suicides out of 100,000

people per year (World Health Organization, 2009). In the United States, the 2005 suicide rate

was recorded at 11 suicides per 100,000 people per year. For people between the ages of fifteen

and twenty-four, Japan reported 14 suicides per 100,000 people whereas the American rate was

only 10 people out of 100,000. The biggest difference was seen when gender was separated: 18.4

and 16.1 adolescent men per 100,000 committed suicide in Japan and America respectively.

However, young women in Japan committed suicide at a rate of 9.3 per 100,000 as opposed to

only 3.5 per 100,000 young women in America. The fact that in 2005 suicide rates of Japanese

females between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four was almost triple the American rates is

extremely surprising. This disparity may point to the fact that ijime tactics are less gender-

specific than bullying tactics; American female bullying is mainly verbal while male bullying is

more physical, but Japanese boys and girls were almost equally likely to report being the

perpetrators and victims of physical and verbal abuse (Morita et. al., 1999). According to

psychologists, violent harassment may have a stronger negative effect on a young adult's psyche

than verbal harassment does, which helps to explain this cross-cultural discrepancy (Siegler et

al., 2011).

Beyond the recent bullying trends in Japan, there are a number of factors of Japan's

cultural history that may have lead to the severe types and effects of ijime in modern Japan.

Specifically, I would like to focus on the Japanese necessity of fostering harmony, the ceaseless

drive towards conformity, and the group membership phenomenon (Reader, 1991). For a major period of Japan's history, the smallest unit given individual rights was the family; through this and a number of modern studies, it becomes apparent that for at least the past few centuries, individualism has not been an ideal in the Japanese society.

When tied with the Japanese status hierarchy, this lack of individualism has lead to both the Japanese ideal of conformity and the idea that people can only be happy or fulfill their life's purposes through group membership. Because individualism is so frowned upon, Japanese people (especially teenagers) are under intense pressure to conform to strict standards of normalcy. Unfortunately, the emphasis placed upon conformity creates easy targets for bullying; those who fail to conform for any reason (looks, athletic abilities, academic intelligence, etc.) are often looked down upon with disdain and singled out for their perceived differences.

Data Collection & Analysis Procedures:

Fortunately (or unfortunately), there has been an abundance of research on the statistics of bullying and ijime in middle and junior high schools in both America and Japan, respectively. In America, when the media chooses to discuss these issues, they often have a sort of spin that filters our perception of the events at hand. Although these issues are not often discussed interpersonally in Japan, there are a number of television dramas, movies, and comic book series targeted at adolescents and young professionals that depict ijime and suicide in something close to its true form. Researchers speculate that since students often turn to popular media as a way of identifying with similar individuals to find consolation for their problems as they can normally find no other avenue of outlet for discussing and dealing with them. However, this itself may

seem to backfire, as Japanese pop culture does not exemplify the steps through which bullied

children can fight back and begin to heal.

That being the case, to flesh out my project, I chose to pursue the more emotional aspects

of bullying by looking at case studies of bullied Japanese youth and conducting interviews with

American middle school, high school, and college students. To get more information on Japanese

cases, I analyzed data from two teachers of English in Japanese public schools: one from the

web-blog entries of a former privately hired English instructor, the other from an interview I had

with a family friend who spent over ten years teaching English in Japan in the 1980-1990's. I

also analyzed case studies of Japanese students who had committed suicide because of bullying

(often called "bullycides") found in British, American, and Japanese newspaper articles and

educational texts (see the Works Cited section for a complete list). No formal questionnaires

were given to obtain this information; instead, I was interested mainly in getting first-hand

information of actual cases of ijime to discern the cultural factors that lead Japanese adolescents

to commit suicide.

I spoke with sixteen different American students (ages ranging from fifteen – twenty-one

years) about their experiences with bullying in junior high school (I contacted ~30 people within

this age range, but only sixteen had actually dealt with bullying while they were in middle or

junior high school). Five of the students I interviewed were or had been students at private junior

high schools, four had attended a private performing arts high school, and the remaining seven

were either attending or had attended public school. Although I did not strictly follow a specific

script when giving the interviews, I made sure to ask each informant these questions:

- "If you were ever bullied in high school, how did the bullying make you feel about your self-
  esteem? Did it ever make you contemplate suicide?"

- "Were you ever specifically bullied about being short or tall? Did students bullying you about your height make you feel hopeless or depressed?"
- "When you were bullied, how did you cope?"
- "Did your friends ever stick up for you when you were bullied? Did you stick up for them?"
- "Did your parents find out when you were being bullied? If so, what did they do?"
- "Did you ever have experiences with teachers stopping bullying (either verbal or physical)? Do you think teachers often knew about the bullying that went on at school?"

I took notes about their experiences, and analyzed them in conjunction with the Japanese case studies to draw comparisons between the methods of the bullying and the underlying cultural factors that affect the severity and fatality of bullying in Japan versus the United States.

Results of Data Collection:

It appears that without a doubt, bullying is the leading cause of suicide in Japanese adolescents. Through my analysis of interviews and case studies, I was able to answer my initial research question of which specifically Japanese cultural factors contribute to the fatality of bullying in Japanese adolescents. First of all, I found that the tactics used by bullies and perpetrators of ijime actually tended to be very similar, although Japanese bullies were slightly more likely to extort their victims than their American counterparts. For example, two of the Japanese bullycide cases I examined stemmed almost entirely from cases of verbal abuse, which is an extremely common (although not often fatal) tactic used by American bullies.

According to the editors of VOANews.com in Tokyo, Japan, there was an unfortunate case in 2006 in which a twelve-year old girl committed suicide by jumping off of her school's roof. The reason behind her suicide was, not surprisingly, ijime. However, the only bullying that the girl had been found to have suffered was that she had been repeatedly teased by her classmates for being shorter than average height. When I mentioned this to one of my American

interviewees who had also been teased about being shorter than average in middle school, she proclaimed, "That's ridiculous! Why would anyone kill themselves for being teased about their height? Besides… aren't all Japanese people kind of short anyway?"

These types of responses to bullying seem to indicate that American adolescents do not internalize many aspects of bullying as Japanese children seem wont to do. For example, the Japanese high school television drama *Watashitachi no Kyoukasho* begins with an actor posing as a psychologist reciting a list of outward behavioral signs shown by children who are bullied. Although the psychologist may be an imposter, the list that follows is indisputably accurate: withdrawal from social situations, anxious behavior, prone to tears with little or no incitement, to name a few (Siegler et al., 2011). Many American psychiatrists may be surprised to learn of this list, because the American Psychological Association does not recognize many of these extreme behaviors as being indicative of a bullied child. Rather, they are often cited by American psychologists as outward behaviors of children who have been abused or victimized by trusted individuals or caregivers. In the West, we posit that abuse by a caregiver leaves deeper scars in the psyche of a child than does school bullying. However, in Japan, the two seem to take very similar psychological routes.

Regardless of its causes, this disparity is undoubtedly linked to the fact that although bullying is common in both America and Japan, it is often more fatal in Japan. If children who are bullied show deep behavioral scarring and defeatist psyches, it follows that they will be more likely to commit suicide. Thus, I posit that the process by which cultural factors in Japan lead bullied children to internalize so much of their struggle and despair is one of the leading causes of the elevated adolescent suicide rate in Japan.

Furthermore, one of the other American students I interviewed quipped that although he had been made fun of for being short throughout middle school, it had not bothered him much because he had never felt the need to fit in with the bullies and therefore did not care if they thought he was short. Why, then, would the Japanese girl mentioned before have been rendered so hopeless by her victimization that she would go so far as to commit suicide as a result when six of the American students I spoke with had been bullied for having the same less-than-average physical characteristics yet never once contemplated committing suicide because of it?

One may immediately posit that individual differences are at play, and assume that she was simply biologically prone to depression that caused her to commit suicide. While there is certainly something to be said about individual differences, they do not constitute the whole story. The disparaging suicide rates between Japan and the U.S. lead researchers to believe that there are other factors above and beyond random personal disposition that determine whether or not a child chooses to commit suicide when faced with negative personal experiences.

Judging by the responses noted before and the responses of three of the other people I interviewed who had also been teased about their height, it would appear that the Japanese ideal of conformity plays a large role in the unfortunately fatal consequences of ijime. Because Japanese students are under such great pressure to conform, if they are unable to meet the norm they may feel more hopeless and depressed than their American counterparts who tend to view individuality as a positive quality. Pointing out differences in physical or mental characteristics may hold a greater negative importance for Japanese children than it would for American students; in Japan, differences are by no means considered "special." In fact, the most common Japanese words for "different" and "wrong" are one and the same!

On this topic, I received an interesting comment from a family friend who had lived in Japan for a number of years. She is about six feet tall with a full head of curly, platinum blonde hair; although she claimed that she was never bullied or harassed as an adult in Japan who clearly differed from the normal, she did feel that she often received both positively and negatively "special" treatment. Furthermore, on the subject of her half-Japanese son who was born and raised in Japan, she proclaimed, "We (his father and I) were so happy that he looks so Japanese... I was worried that he would come out blonde-haired and blue-eyed, and that we would have to home-school him or bring him back to the States because he'd be picked on in school!" The fact that she had seriously contemplated leaving her job and moving her family to another country to avoid bullying because of a (potential) physical inability to conform to Japan's standards was something that I found absolutely shocking.

To further highlight this cultural difference, 43% of the 460 Japanese minors who, in 2005, were charged with having committed crimes in the form of ijime said that they chose to bully victims that were "weak, did not offer resistance and, most importantly, did not fit in with the group" (VOANews.com, 2007). Contrastingly, while fourteen of my American interviewees felt that they had been bullied because they were weak or they did not fit in with the bullies, none of them felt that they had been singled out by a group that they identified with. Rather, it seemed that although there were multiple groups of students within any class who shared some common traits or hobbies, in each group no student was singled out as a target for bullying. When prolonged bullying (e.g. more than one instance of negative behavior towards an individual) did occur, it appeared that it was more likely that one group of "meaner" or "tougher" students were picking on a student in another group or simply the entire other group.

One insightful response came from a sixteen year-old informant when he commented, "Of course there were bullies in my middle school, but they were kind of a clique; I mean, I didn't have a class filled with bullies or anything… there's always somebody around who has your back." Even my informants from private performing arts junior high schools stressed that although there were one or two bullies in their smaller-than-average classes, they never felt that the whole class was picking on them or that everyone in their clique had turned on them.

In my analysis of a number of Japanese bullycide cases and research studies, I noticed that Japanese students rarely come to the defense of their bullied classmates, even if they are friends of the victims. Even students who say that they do not condone ijime rarely attempt to stop it when it happens in front of them. This seems to occur mostly because they fear that in defending the victims, they may single themselves out and actually become new targets for ijime. Thus in Japan, bullying often reaches a situation where it is the group versus the individual. In contrast, my informants all conceded that bullying in American schools often stems from a small group of bullies who pick on almost all of the students who are not in their clique. Because of this, American students are rarely put in a situation where they are utterly surrounded by bullies day after day, which may lead them to have a brighter outlook on life when compared to bullied Japanese youth.

On an even darker and more controversial note, evidence was found in the case of Mori Keisuke, a thirteen-year old Japanese boy who hung himself in his family's barn after bullies from his class had pulled his pants down while they were in the boy's restroom, that suggested Keisuke had been victimized by his homeroom teacher before the other students had decided to pick on him (Yoneyama, 2009). This case was also steeped in verbal abuse; however, this time it was the Keisuke's teacher who had initiated the ijime by singling out a certain student for the

others to pick on. It was disclosed that, "Mori's teacher, who ranked students by using the classification of strawberries: 'first class', 'second class', and so on, labeled Keisuke as a strawberry 'unfit to dispatch'." This clearly set a precedent within the class that Keisuke was abnormal, and should be treated as such.

In America, this kind of behavior would never be tolerated. One of the girls I spoke with told me that when she was in elementary school, her homeroom teacher had been both mentally and physically abusive. Apparently, this teacher would call her students by rude names ("Question Mark" and "Four-eyes" were two of the more unfortunate) and occasionally would throw chalk erasers at the students if she thought they were asking stupid questions. However, as soon as the parents found out about this behavior, they spoke to the principal of the school who had the teacher immediately suspended and eventually fired. To Mori Keisuke's teacher, whose constant berating lead not only to the class picking on him but also to his hopeless desperation and eventually his suicide, no such punishment was given (Yoneyama, 2009). In fact, no punishment was given aside from a "stern" reprimand that boiled down to nothing more than a smack on the wrist and a vicious finger-wagging.

Through my research, I also found that the punishment for student bullies differs between the American and Japanese cultures. In America, there are a series of consequences for bullying (detention, suspension, expulsion, etc.) that teachers dole out when they see students being victimized that simply are not practiced in Japan. Although the Japanese Ministry of Education has recently incited many reforms in guidelines for dealing with ijime in schools, many Japanese teachers ignore peer-to-peer abuse (verbal and physical) of which they are clearly aware. To quote a JET teacher who worked in multiple Japanese schools during his time abroad, "it would also seem that most bullying is passively encouraged by teachers (who) intentionally ignore

bullying and fail to discipline bullies" (JapanProbe.com, 2006). Furthermore, he explains that as an assistant teacher, he was never allowed to discipline students himself. If any of the students acted out against their peers, all he could do was alert the actual teacher and hope for the best. Unfortunately, he remarks that his comments never panned out. In short, none of the Japanese English teachers he worked with did anything to stop the very obvious physical and verbal ijime that he observed in every classroom he visited.

This leniency in punishing bullies in Japan was one of the main reasons that an unnamed junior high school student killed himself in 2006 (Yoneyama, 2009). In his suicide note, which was shipped in a "package" to be delivered to Ibuki Bunmei, then the Minister of MEXT, he expressed feelings of extreme hopelessness and emptiness. Like many others, he claimed to fear that his voice would go unheard; that his life and death would be meaningless, and that nothing would be done to stop the students who had become his abusers. He warned that if his teacher did not reprimand and stop the bullies in two days time, he would commit suicide. Although his name and school were never released to the press, it was confirmed that because no action was taken he did indeed commit suicide.

Similarly, it seems that parents of Japanese students often feign unawareness of ijime that so plagues their children's lives. In one particularly startling case, the parents of a 14 year old boy who committed suicide after his classroom bullies had been extorting him for amounts between $400 and $500 dollars a month (for a grand total near $8,000 USD at the time of his death) claimed that they had had no idea that their son was a victim of ijime (Morita et. al., 2009). Shockingly, the parents shared that they had actually thought that the most abusive group of bullies was their son's group of closest friends.

In America, the opposite seems to be true. One of the girls I interviewed commented, "My parents always knew (when I was being bullied). I would walk into the kitchen and my mom would just make this face, like, 'Well, what's up?' and I would just break down and tell her everything." And in America, when children tell their parents that they are being bullied, they often respond by reminding their children that they are still wonderful individuals and telling them that others are just mean, petty, or jealous. Contrastingly, when Japanese children go to their parents to talk about their feelings of desperation and hopelessness as relating to ijime, parents often respond by telling them that they should conform (if possible) or get used to the fact that they will always be different and therefore will always be picked on. The differences that are highlighted by these Japanese and American parent-child interactions are startling, and, as do many of the difference I noted, highlight a very traditional Japanese belief: that harmony must be maintained at any cost.

Further Research: Cross-Gender & Cultural Views on Suicide

The falsification of evidence about school bullying and suicide cases explained above is in itself indicative of a major disparity between Japanese and American ideals. As a student and tutor of the American Educational system with experience in both public and private schools, I have witnessed the ways in which our system highly regards teachers who are able to deal with problems in their classrooms. We assume that difficulties (school refusal, bullying, violence, disrespect, etc.) must arise within any classroom, regardless of the teacher's ability to quell them. In contrast, many people who have had comparable experiences in the Japanese Educational system assert that this system punishes teachers for reporting any negative incidents within their classrooms, regardless of whether or not they have been dealt with effectively (Ishikida, 2005).

Thus many teachers are implicitly (and in some rare cases, explicitly) required to falsify their records to show that no negative incidents have occurred (Morita et. al., 2009).

Around the proverbial American water cooler, teachers are often found talking about their conquests in the classroom as though they are generals in a long-standing, irreconcilable war. These stories shape the way teachers view themselves in a positive way, and often garner the respect of other teachers, parents, and the school district in which they work. Contrastingly, in Japan, teachers are often chastised for bringing up these issues. School officials make it clear that they do not look favorably upon teachers who "allow" unrest to occur in their classrooms at any point in time or for any reason. Thus teachers are often forced to turn a blind eye to the events going on in their classrooms and simply hope for the best.

As to the discrepancy between the male and female adolescent suicide rates in Japan and the U.S., many factors seem to even the playing field between boys and girls with suicidal intent in Japan. In addition, these factors also mediate Japan's perilously heightened adolescent suicide rate. Four of the main factors my research has unearthed are the methods of suicide that are most commonly used by each gender, the historically Japanese views on suicide, the existence of "suicide clubs" and "suicide pacts," and the historical and modern views of homosexuality.

One of the main causes cited to explain this discrepancy is the simple fact that although suicide attempts are similar in frequency across genders, males in America tend to use more fatal methods when committing suicide (e.g. hanging or shooting themselves, etc.) whereas females are more apt to use less fatal methods (e.g. slitting their wrists, overdosing on medicine, etc.) (Olweus, 2009). Contrastingly, researchers in Japan have found that methods of suicide in Japanese adolescents tend to be extremely fatal and more similar in proportion across genders (jumping off of buildings, jumping in front of trains, hanging themselves, etc.) (Ishikida, 2005).

This helps to explain the fact that while Japanese adolescent boys are almost twice as likely to successfully commit suicide than adolescent girls, in America boys are 4.6 times more likely than girls to successfully commit suicide.

Japan's Historical Relationship with Suicide

Japan's native religion, Shinto, is neither monotheistic nor morally strict. Rather than a religion based on strict moral codes or deity worship (Chamberlain, 2005). Shinto is actually an amalgamation of indigenous beliefs about creation, the afterlife, and ancestral worship that are still strongly upheld in Japanese society today (Mullins et al., 2003). In addition, Buddhism was adopted alongside the Shinto faith during the 6th Century, so many scholars posit that Buddhism also played a large role on shaping cultural norms and beliefs. Although Christianity was introduced to Japan on a number of occasions, only a paltry 1% of the population of modern Japan considers themselves to be Christian, so Christianity's influence on culture is practically nonexistent. Furthermore, recent studies suggest that 70-80% of Japanese people do not believe in any one religion, but rather participate in traditional Shinto and Buddhist ceremonies and holidays simply because they are traditional (磯村, 2010).

Unlike Christianity, neither Shinto nor Buddhism encompasses particular beliefs about the morality of suicide or sexuality. In fact, in many historical eras throughout Japan's history, suicide has been commonly viewed as a respectable way to deal with problems, inadequacies, or crimes. Moreover, for centuries falling upon one's own blade in a ritualistic manner was considered one of the best ways to save face from dishonor in a number of circumstances (Mullins et al., 2003). Although those who were apt to commit

suicide in this way were mostly upper class warriors (samurai, etc.), government officials, or royalty, death by one's own hand was actually romanticized in plays, novels, and other artistic work created in ancient Japan. This romanticized idea of suicide is still visible today in many works of popular culture set both in more historical times and also more recently.

Only after Japan's "modernization" during its Meiji Restoration at the tail end of the Meiji era (September 1868 through July 1912) was the concept of the nuclear family introduced into Japan (井上 et al., 2003). Before then, records of death rates among children are difficult to find, and those pertaining to child suicide are nonexistent. However, given that the Japanese culture and religion had no qualms about suicide, adolescent suicides may have occurred. Only since World War Two has this phenomena been recorded, and the rates have been rising steadily in the past two decades (Morita et al., 2003).

Related is Japan's social concept of what the West would term loose sexual morality; Japan's oldest religious documents (there are no Shinto scriptures, only stories) detail homosexual relationships between many of the deities said to have created the islands of Japan (Chamberlain, 2005). History suggests that warlords often had both male and female concubines (Pflugfelder, 2001). Although this was not necessarily permitted, it certainly was not prohibited. Moreover, priests of the Buddhist faith in Japan took strict chastity vows yet often partook in male-male relationships within their monasteries. Contrastingly, Christianity deems homosexual acts immoral, and thus the oppression and victimization of members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transexual (LGBT) community are not uncommon in nations founded upon decidedly Christian beliefs, such as the United States. Cases of intense bullying and harassment leading to adolescent suicide among LGBT youths have been prevalent since America's

founding days, and many such cases are being discussed in the public sphere via the internet and televised broadcasting.

However, discrimination in this way is a recent phenomenon in Japan; only with the more total Westernization of Japan after World War Two did this prejudice appear in the public sphere (Pflugfelder, 2001). In the U.S., LGBT youths who are persecuted for their sexual preferences are more likely to commit suicide than those who are persecuted for other reasons. This is due to the fact that sexuality is such a morally-loaded topic that when it is an object of common, negative discussion victims are often made to feel hopeless and depressed, which leads to suicide (Siegler et al., 2011). In Japan, where there are no ties between morality and sexual preference, this type of bullying does not seem to lead to suicide more or less than bullying about other topics (height, academic ability, etc.) (Morita et al., 2005).

Impact of the Media and Other Factors:

That adolescents in Japan are under ridiculous amounts of pressure to perform academically does not come as a surprise to most scholars. The Japanese educational system is set up such that students must take comprehensive "entrance exams" to determine which middle and high schools they will be able to enter, with the higher quality schools having more difficult exams. In fact, this is also true of colleges and universities; to gain acceptance into the most prestigious universities (which also tend to have the lowest tuition rates) students must first pass an extremely difficult exam. Thus in an effort to be accepted into the highest caliber schools, students in Japan undergo hours upon hours of rigorous studying outside of the classroom.

The preparation for these exams, in which students attend cram schools, private tutoring sessions, and sacrifice sleep to studying, starts in late elementary school and continues until the

student is accepted into their college or university of choice. This training period, called *juken jigoku* (lit. "examination hell"), often extends at least an extra year of studying after high school. The Japanese educational system holds classes six days a week (Monday through Saturday) with the only break being Sunday. However, Sunday is hardly a holiday for most students; they spend their time (Morita et al., 1999) either at cram schools or cramming at home.

Thus during *juken jigoku*, students' psyches are literally worn thin. Any extra stressors (such as bullying or not fitting in) are often enough to make children snap (Morita et al., 1999). Unfortunately, not many students are able to attain spots in the "best" schools, and so the system includes some measure of failure for the average student. That being the case, rather than acting out when stressed, students are even more likely to place the blame on themselves and want to take their own lives because they feel that they have failed themselves or their parents and that their hours of training were for naught (Morita et al., 1999). This sort of system does not exist in the United States, and so extra stressors that the average student faces do not usually become psychological breaking points.

The media's view on adolescent suicide (and suicide in general) also differs by country. My research has lead me to the conclusion that in the U.S. we are quick to title deaths "suicides" whereas in Japan this is not considered polite. For example, according to New Yorkers, when someone commits suicide by jumping in front of a subway train in New York City, passengers on the subsequently delayed trains are told by the public announcement system or the police that there has been a jumper which is necessitating a change in normal transit scheduling.

Contrastingly, when this happens in Japan, trains display a series of messages that read, "trains are delayed due to a problem on the tracks," then "a problem area on the tracks are being cleared," and finally "the tracks have been cleared." This appears to be a frequent phenomenon,

as I witnessed it on many occasions during my time studying abroad in Japan. In this way, they are able to show that *something* has gotten onto the track and has halted normal progress while keeping the nature of the event a secret. Thus it can be said that in Japan, it simply is not socially polite to talk informally about personal issues such as suicide or bullying.

This difference in the media's depiction of unfortunate, personal issues is also visible within the realm of popular media. In the U.S., we do not include many incidents of bullying and suicide in relevant areas of the popular media. Furthermore, when we do depict these less than favorable events, they almost always end with a solution to the problem. For example, American cartoons geared towards adolescents usually include one or two "bullies" who are confronted by the protagonist of the series. In shows such as "Recess" and "Hey Arnold!" the protagonist deduces the reason behind episodic bullies' actions (rough family lives, usually). Over the course of the episode, the bullies are swayed by acts of friendliness or kindness from the protagonist to cease their bullying ways.

In contrast, incidents of bullying and suicide play large roles in almost all Japanese school dramas, be they *anime* (animated cartoons), *manga* (Japanese comics), or televised. However, although these depictions are commonplace, they are not often presented with a feasible solution. For example, there is a manga series titled "Confessions" that is penned by an anonymous author who wants to promote the fact that problems such as bullying and adolescent suicide do exist in abundance in the modern Japanese. She writes stories that appeal to today's youth so that adolescents can identify with the fictional characters and situations she creates.

In this way, she hopes to alert depressed adolescents to the fact that they are not alone. However, while this is certainly positive, she does not pose ways through which the problems can be solved. In one particularly dark story, a young girl commits suicide by jumping in front of

a subway train because she is being bullied (physically, verbally, and through extortion). Her

best friend tries to explain to the police that the girl who committed suicide did so due to

bullying from most of the members of their class (including the teacher), but they refuse to listen

to her or punish the bullying ringleaders. Because of this, the friend becomes the new target of

bullying in her school. The story ends with the best friend of the girl who committed suicide

contemplating her own suicide in front of the same train in front of which her friend had already

committed suicide.

Similar stories can also be seen in television drama series such as *"Watashitachi no

Kyokasho"* and "Great Teacher Onizuka;" although bullying and suicide are discussed at length,

the issues are never resolved by the students in a manner that could foster emulation in the lives

of the troubled adolescents who watch the series.

Japanese and American video games targeting adolescent demographics also sometimes

include instances of adolescent bullying and suicide, although the circumstances are usually very

different. In the American company Rockstar's hit 2006 game titled "Bully," the player controls

a young, rebellious teenaged boy named Jimmy. After being sent to a new boarding school,

Jimmy becomes the target of the school's most notorious bully. Through a series of mini-games

and missions, the player fights back and ultimately outsmarts the bully.

Contrastingly, issues of bullying and suicide are prevalent in many Japanese video

games, but the bullied individual never fights back. Both the Yakuza and Persona game series

include incidences of bullying that mirror this. In Yakuza 3, the protagonist runs a small

orphanage, and one of the boys becomes the target of bullies in his classroom, including the

teacher. The young boy tries to drown himself when the protagonist saves him, confronts the

teacher, and stops the bullying. However, the protagonist does not talk about the issue with the bullied boy; he simply deals with the problem by himself and "saves" the bullied boy.

Similarly, a character in Persona 3 is the target of bullying within her class at her boarding school, and when she goes missing a teacher (who had also bullied her) refuses to report her absence to the police although he knows that the other female students in the class had been physically bullying the girl and had threatened to kill her. Eventually the protagonist finds the missing girl and confronts the teacher, who promises to never do anything of that sort ever again. However, no action is taken against the bullies or the teacher, and the incident is quickly forgotten. In this way, issues like bullying and suicide are prevalent within the realm of Japanese popular media but actually do little to help bullied individuals feel like their situation is less hopeless or that they can do anything to change their depressed states.

The internet media boom has also lead to new venues and pressures regarding suicidal behaviors in Japan that are not viewable in other countries. Specifically, internet forums relating to suicide have begun cropping up over the past decade. More than providing information for people who are looking for ways in which to commit suicide, "Suicide Clubs" and "Suicide Pacts" have become common (Japan Times Online, 2007). Recently, more and more Japanese people are using the internet to make "suicide pacts" with others anonymously. To fulfill these pacts, they then meet up with in real life and commit anywhere between double to quadruple suicides.

These are actually similar to the recent phenomena of anorexia forums that are popular among American youths. In these forums, members provide tips and "support" for others who are suffering from the same psychological problems. However, this "support" is actually not healthy support at all; on these forums, members offer advice about how to congratulate others

for maintaining unhealthy psyches and reaching depressing goals (e.g. losing pounds when already underweight, self-mutilation, etc.).

I believe that one of the main reasons that these types of online forums and clubs have become so popular in Japan is that they play to the Japanese ideal of conformity. That is to say, the sheer fact of knowing that there are others who feel the way that depressed Japanese individuals feel makes them more likely to commit depressive acts or wallow in their depression. In this way, online suicide forums and pacts have boomed in popularity in Japan, making suicide a more salient and plausible resource for depressed adolescents.

Discussion: Beyond Research Questions

Culturally, it seems that Japan has positioned itself in such a way that its higher-than-average adolescent suicide rate is unfortunate, but not surprising. Throughout my research, I kept being drawn back to the fact that the Japanese cultural ideals of conformity, group membership, and fostering harmony seem to underlie many of the cultural differences in bullying that lead to its severity and unfortunately fatal consequences in Japan. The emphasis that is placed upon conformity creates a vicious cycle in which students who are different in any way become easy targets for ijime. When their "flaws" (i.e. "differences") are constantly pointed out, they lose group membership, which calls their identity and self-worth into question. Furthermore, the strive towards conformity leaves victims of ijime without anyone to stick up for them or come to their rescue; their friends and peers fear that if they fail to conform by bullying the chosen scapegoat they will themselves become victims. Because bullying of this type hits Japanese children so close to home, they may be more likely to feel completely helpless and to eventually take their own lives.

The Japanese value placed on fostering harmony in many ways actually strengthens the severity of the hopelessness victims of ijime face. Most obviously, teachers are actually rewarded for claiming that harmony is not being disturbed in their classrooms, even if their reports are clearly less than truthful. Children who face the helplessness associated with victimization may feel that they have no one to turn to; for bringing up the issue of ijime to their parents or teachers would certainly be breaking the delicate harmony of their daily situations at school and at home.

Although the frequency and characteristics of ijime have not changed much since the overhaul of the Japanese educational system following World War II, much has been done recently to bring the unsettling issues of ijime and bullycides to the public eye (Ishikida, 2005). With Japan's ever-falling birth rate and slowly rising suicide rate, it is imperative that measures be put in place to keep children and adolescents from feeling so helpless and lost that they take their own lives or decide to live in seclusion. Victims and parents of deceased victims alike are working to change the way in which teachers and schools deal with ijime; however, although new rules have been set in place by MEXT, they are still not often followed.

Furthermore, Japanese teacher's reports continue to mysteriously fail to include incidences of violence and ijime in their classrooms that their students (and sometimes even other teachers) claim are prevalent. This shows that the educational system still values and rewards harmony in the classroom, and that teachers feel pressured to lie about the social atmosphere of their classrooms to maintain their jobs or positions within their schools.

Analysis of individual cases and interviews regarding bullycides in Japan also highlight the startling fact that parents, teachers, and other children often place blame upon the bullied children rather than the bullies themselves. In fact, newspaper and television commentators

usually blame both the victim and the perpetrator of bullying when the topic is raised. There appears to be an unspoken but widely followed belief that, "if your children are normal, they are neither bullied or bullies... but if they are, they are probably not normal" (Morita et al., 1999). In claiming that the victims were "different" or "abnormal" in any way, they are actually fostering the idea that the victims deserved the bullying. In fact, research shows that many parents and teachers of victims of bullying are more likely to blame the victim than the perpetrator (Ishikida, 2005).

This is similar to the ridiculous idea that rape victims are in some way at fault for acts made against them; phrases such as "she/he was asking for it" or "she/he should not have been wearing such provocative clothing/so much makeup" are still commonly heard across the globe today, although activists have been working to help people understand the harm inherent in these thoughtless phrases. The fact of the matter is that no person deserves to be bullied, raped, or victimized in any way, regardless of the circumstances. This idea is becoming more mainstream in the U.S., but Japan has as of yet made no large strides towards placing the blame for atrocious acts solely on the perpetrator.

Although this concept is difficult for many Westerners to grasp, these teachers and parents often have only the best interest of the victimized children in mind when they say these things to children. They are often simply noticing a pattern and trying to relate it to the children so that they will understand that this is an issue that they are going to have to face. For example, if a parent notices that his or her child is constantly being picked on because they are shorter than average, they extrapolate and assume that the child will continue to be shorter than average for the rest of their life, which will most likely result in bullying throughout their years in formal education extending into harassment in the workplace (Morita et al., 1999). In this way, they

hope to warn the children to buck up in the face of these struggles. Unfortunately, in the eyes of the victims, this apparent lack of support may send them into spiraling depression that leads to their choosing to end their own lives.

Researchers spend a great deal of time discussing both the potential negatives and benefits of conformity, group identification, and the drive to foster harmony in the Japanese culture. In the U.S., classes on Japanese education highlight these issues with meaningful discussion. Additionally, teachers are taught that bullying incidents will occur and are required to develop ideas about how to stop abusive actions in their classrooms. However, this does not seem to be the case in Japan. Furthermore, the simple fact that Americans are actually discussing these issues instead of just listening lectures about them highlights that individual talents and thoughts are so stressed as being important in America, whereas individualism in Japan is frowned upon and often leads to victimization.

We must also discuss the Japanese educational system and its practices; many innate qualities of this system actually serve to foster segregation and intense, pervasive bullying that leads so often to suicide. Specifically, most Japanese schoolchildren walk to and from school without adult supervision, whereas American students either ride buses or are driven by their family members. Ishikida provides statistics that claim Japanese students often reported being bullied by peers outside of school, whereas most American students report being bullied by school bullies on school grounds (2005). That is not to say that bullying never occurs outside of the school in America; many of the American students I interviewed reported being bullied by older children while riding the bus to and from school. However, three of the six who had mentioned being bullied on the bus did say that although the driver had not been particularly

involved in the situations between the children on the bus, the adult presence did seem to dissuade some of the more violent (especially physically violent) instances of bullying.

Beyond Suicide: The Broken Lives of Victimized Children

In Japan as well as the United States, suicide is not the only answer for children who are victimized by bullies. Along with the rising adolescent suicide rate Japan has faced in the past few decades, rates of school refusal and social hermitism are also skyrocketing. These students often have a secure base (usually their parents) who do not belittle them or assert that their victimization is their fault (Ishikida, 2005). Rather, they understand that other students can often be cruel, and want to protect their children. Thus they allow their children to become truants and may even enable lifestyles in which their teenaged children never have to leave their homes. These social hermits, called *hikikomori* (lit. "pulling away, being confined"), shun "normal" social interaction and often have acute fears of the outside world, although many find solace on the internet where they feel they can remain anonymous and not suffer from normal societal victimization or pressures (Doi, 2002).

The Japanese psychologist who coined the phrase hikikomori, Tamaki Saitou, estimates that at least 1% of the entire Japanese population are hikikomori. Although there is no hard statistical evidence, these estimates were based upon the number of people who suffer from major depression and schizophrenia in the Japanese society, and are generally regarded as factual. The factors that lead people to extreme hermitism from social life are still greatly contended, but many recently self-proclaimed hikikomori and their families claim intense social victimization (bullying in school, harassment at work, etc.) to be a leading cause of their physical withdrawal from the Japanese society (Doi, 2002).

Recently, popular Japanese media has been trying to highlight ways in which children can "break free" from bullying so that they do not need to take extreme measures such as hermitism or suicide. However, all of the fixes they suggest are entirely topical and do not actually work to change people's views about bullying in the educational system (e.g. "I am bullied because I am different" and "(victims) are bullied because they are abnormal"). For example, the Japanese school-centric drama *Great Teacher Onizuka* includes a story-arc in which an overzealous teacher comes to the rescue of a male student, Noboru, who is being bullied by a group of females. The bullying goes so far that the female students tie Noboru up, strip him, beat him, and take pictures for blackmail. At this point, Onizuka rescues Noboru from a suicide attempt, and vows that the main perpetrator of bullying will be punished. However, her mother is on the board of the PTA, so Onizuka is punished by school officials for scolding the bully. Eventually he does bring irrefutable evidence to the PTA which proves the girl is guilty and she is made to apologize to Noboru.

This "solution" is entirely dependent upon a charismatic teacher who will put his job on the line to protect his students. If not for Onizuka, Noboru would have killed himself because of his victimization. Unfortunately, those cases are extremely rare in the real world; when students go to teachers with these problems, teachers usually ignore them or tell them that their victimization is due to some fault or defect within themselves. Although this media is targeted both at students and at young teachers, when victimized students are faced with media outlets glorifying the help of enigmatic teachers that they themselves do not have access to, their feelings of hopelessness may actually increase. Thus these types of depictions of solutions to bullying and suicide in the Japanese educational system are actually so far from the norm that they may hurt victimized students psyches' more than they raise awareness of the issues at hand.

Furthermore, child and adolescent psychology and psychotherapy has only recently been gaining ground in the Japanese culture (Siegler et al., 2011). Taking a child to a psychiatrist for therapeutic treatments targeting the feelings of hopelessness and depression bullied students take in is still considered strange and unnecessarily extravagant by many Japanese individuals. Thus the main courses of action for students who are victimized in their schools are to either drop out prematurely or transfer to another school. Unfortunately, however, if the psychological scarring the victims of constant bullying face is not addressed, these issues may simply repeat themselves in the future as the bullied students easily fall back into the role of the victim at the new schools or future jobs.

Implications of this Research & Final Reflections

In summation, my research has allowed me to succinctly answer the questions posed at the beginning of this thesis essay. The leading causes of child and adolescent suicide in Japan are, undoubtedly, feelings of intense depression and hopelessness caused most often by ostracization and victimization, as is the case with victims of ijime. By studying numerous cases of adolescent suicide in Japan and the U.S., I was able to identify the traditionally Japanese ideals of conformity and harmony as those factors that most strongly contribute to the fatality of bullying in Japanese adolescents. Finally, these factors are highlighted through the lenses of gender, history, and different cultural and societal views in a number of ways.

First, gender appears to have less of an impact on adolescent suicide in Japan than it does in the U.S.; although Japanese males are two times more likely to successfully commit suicide than Japanese females, the number of attempts seems to be almost equal across genders (Morita et al., 1999). In the U.S., the male to female success ratio is almost 4:1, and adolescent males are

almost twice as likely than females to attempt suicide (Olweus, 2009). Second, Japan's historical view of suicide is actually quite positive; suicide holds no immoral meaning within Japan's native religion and has historically been regarded as an honorable form of death in many situations. Finally, although issues surrounding adolescent suicide are visible in both the American and Japanese media, it is not a polite topic in Japan and so is rarely brought up in society and is almost never accompanied by emulatable ways in which adolescents facing feelings of depression can reduce their feelings of hopelessness.

When looking at the differences between ijime and bullying on multiple levels, we can gain a better understanding of Japanese and American cultural values. Furthermore, in highlighting these differences in conjunction with the fact that the adolescent suicide rate is far higher in Japan than in the U.S., solutions to the epidemic of ijime and bullycides in Japan begin to form. For example, perhaps adult supervision of Japanese children walking to and from school could curtail much of the ijime that happens outside of the school itself.

Although many of the possible solutions would require changes be made not only in the backbone of the Japanese educational system but also in some of the core cultural values and beliefs, simply bringing these ideas to light may be enough to stop some instances of ijime. While these issues are prevalent in Japanese popular culture and media, they are not depicted as being solvable or having proverbially happy endings. In the end, depicting these issues in a more hopeful light could ultimately save the lives of hopelessly depressed victims of both bullying and ijime in both America and Japan.

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That language is inextricably tied to culture is a proven fact. I personally believe that it is important for people to be conscious of other cultures and languages, and that this is extremely pertinent for Americans. As a whole, we tend to be atrocious tourists; even Americans who are learning second languages often fail to realize the importance of understanding cultural intricacies on successful bilingualism. As a student who has studied Japanese for a number of years, I feel that this project has helped me gain a lot of cultural understanding that has also carried over to broaden my understanding of the Japanese language itself. I hope it will do the same for others!

That being said, I would like to thank all of the professors, faculty, and people that I interviewed who contributed to my research in such an amazing way. Specifically, I would like to thank Professor Yasufumi Iwasaki, my Thesis Advisor, for supporting the progress of my study over the span of the past year and for guiding my undertaking of a translation of a large, politically charged issue paper to go along with this component of my thesis. Without the help and guidance I received from these wonderful people in the Carnegie Mellon University Modern Languages Department, I doubt that I would have been able to research this sensitive topic from the breadth of viewpoints and ideas that I was able to achieve.

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カーネギーメロン大学

日本に増えている若者自殺

いじめの致命的なエフェクト

ピーズリー・エリカ

シニア卒業論文

30日4月2011年

始めに

　　私のカーネギーメロン大学の学生の間に、日本の教育体制についてよく知るようになった。それについて勉強すると、いじめのことがよく描かれているようだ。確かに日本の学校関係者はそういうことについて話したくないはずがあるけれど、日本のとても競争的な教育体制にいる学生にはいじめをすることがよく見られるに違いない。アメリカの教育体制でもいじめやハラスメントなどのことがあるが、日本の若者自殺率は最も高くて最近増えているそうだ。さらに、自殺した若者の自殺ノートで９１％が学校の人間関係問題について書いてありそうだ（Japan Times Online, 2007）。

　　日本のいじめの方が、アメリカのいじめより多くて過酷な問題があるし、アメリカのいじめ被害者は少しだけ自殺をされているようだ。だから、どうして日本の学校のいじめはもっと致命的になったかと考えた。そして、いじめは日本だけの問題ではないので、どんな日本的な社会のファクターがいじめの被害者を自殺へと誘発するかについて研究した。しかも、どんな国の違う社会的なファクターによっていじめの形がシェープされるがも研究した。例えば、教室でいじめを見る時、アメリカの先生は早く干渉するべきだという考え方が多いけれど、日本ではそういうことがあまりないそうだ。どうしてそのような違いが見られるのか研究した。

　　アメリカ人は中学や高校であるいじめ(英語で「ブリーイング」)を考えると、ロッカーに入れさせられることとか悪口をすることとか失礼な名前を呼ぶことについてよく考えられる。実は、アメリカではブリーイングの最も正しい意味があまりないけれど、オルウェウス・ダン（オルウェウスいじめ予防プログラムを作った医者）によると、

「いじめの被害者はたびたび他の人のネガチブなアクションの目に遭う」という意味が
ある（Olweus, 2009）。

　　それに対して、日本人の学者によると、いじめという意味は「グループの中で支
配的立場に立っているメンバーが意図的にアグレッシブな行いで他のメンバーに精神的
または肉体的な害を及ぼすこと」だそうだ（Morita et al., 1999）。実は、辞書でブ
リーイングといじめは同義語のような言葉みたいだけれど、本物の意味で違いが見られ
るようだ。その違いを分析すると、どうして日本のいじめだけは世界中で最も致命的に
なったか分かるようになるはずだ。

　　例えば、その言語の中の違いを分析すると、アメリカのブリーイングをすること
と日本のいじめをすることの違いが描かれるようになった。　さらに、私の仮説では、
その違いがいじめの致命的な役割の主要因ということがある。特に、日本社会で調和と
グループアイデンティティは最も必要なことも、日本社会は適合的な社会とアメリカの
個人的な社会を比べたら違いが見られることも若者自殺を分かるために重要だと思って
いる。例えば、日本人の若者がグループに所属することについてよく考えて、　所属で
きなかったら自薦やセルフエスティームが持てないから、いじめの被害者はグループか
ら出させられた感じがあるので、希望が持てないで自殺をする若者が多いそうだ。しか
し、アメリカ人の若者はそういうことについてあまり考えないので、いじめがほとんど
致命的ではないと言いそうだ。

　　その上で、最近増えている自殺する日本人の若者の考え方では日本の自殺につい
ての社会的な考え方も歴史的な考え方も影響を受け入れるに違いない。さらに、若者自
殺は日本だけの問題ではないことを忘れない方がいいようだ。世界中のメディアによる

と、そういう論争的な若者自殺のケースは最近いじめやハラスメントの迫害との関係があるに違いない。だから、私はそういう質問に答えるために研究した：（１）日本の若者自殺の主要因は何か、（２）日本のいじめに日本社会的なことはどんな致命的な影響を与えるか、（３）その主要因はジェンダ的、歴史的、文化的なレンズで分析するとどのように若者自殺が描かれているかという三つの質問だ。
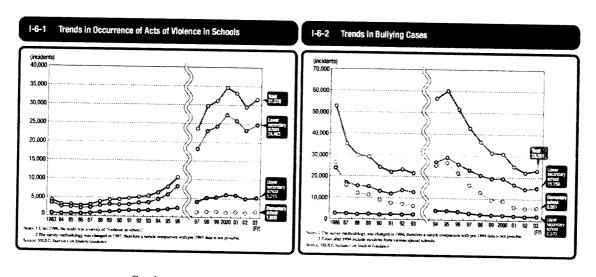
さらに、いじめなどの迫害することのスタイルも国によって違うので、その違いの中で日本的な致命的ないじめが描かれていると想定した。そういう仮説を検証するために、比較文化のいじめも若者自殺についてデータをよく集めて、読んで、分析してした。その分析は歴史的なテキスとか統計とかウェブサイトとかインタビューとかポピュラーメディアとかをよく使った。

背景情報

研究を始めるために、１９９７年に作ったいじめについての調査の成果を分析した。その調査は七千人ぐらいの五年生から九年生までの日本人が受けた　(Ishikida, 2005)。学者によると、１９９６年の九月から十二月までに調査を受けた若者の１４％ぐらいはいじめの被害者になったそうだ。その一千人の中で、８７％ぐらいは悪口の被害者になったし、５５％ぐらいはグループから追放できたことがあったし、３６％ぐらいは暴力行為の被害者になったし、１６－１７％ぐらいは強要が目にあったそうだ。その若者によると、その事件は大抵教室の中であったし、校庭でも帰宅ルートでもいじめの事件があったそうだ。

そのような２０００年にアメリカで使った調査によると、六年生から十年生まで
の学生の１１％はいじめの被害者になったそうだ（Safeyouth.org, 2009）。そのいじ
めの事件の中で悪口がもっと多くて、暴力が少なかったようだ。そして、グループから
追放と強要がなかったそうだ。そして、その事件は全部校庭であったそうだ。

文部科学省のレポートによると、学校で暴力行為が増えているが（下のチャート
１−６−１）、いじめの事件が減っている（下のチャート１−６−２）そうだ。しかし、日
本人の中学や高校の先生はいじめの事件のレポートをしたら、最近は減給や解雇される
ことがありそうだ。だから、日本にいる先生は時々レポートを作り上げるから、文部科
学省のデータが多分間違えたようだ（Ishikida, 2005）。実は、文部科学省のレポート
されたデータは現実より少ないに違いないし、学者によると最近の日本ではいじめ的な
事件が増えている（Morita et al., 1999）。さらに、２０００年の前に文部科学省は
私立的な学校からデータが集めなかった。

Graphs courtesy of MEXT: http://www.mext.go.jp/english/statist/05101901.htm

このデータを見ると、こういうレポートをした事件は現実より多くなかったけれど、暴
力行為もいじめの事件も中学の方が多いそうだ。

２００５年のレポートでは、文部科学省によると１９９９年から２００５年まで、いじめと関係ある若者自殺事件が絶対になかったそうだ（Yoneyama, 2009）。しかし、そのレポートをしてから、メディアと国民から文部科学省は悪評をたくさんもらったので、誤りを認めて、「無作為に」選んだ四十の若者自殺ケースからのデータをもう一度分析した。学者によると、その四十のケースは無作為ではないけれど、その四十の中で十四のいじめは自殺の主因だし、全体で学校の問題（いじめやハラスメントなど）と関係ありそうだ。

　その他にも、２００５年に日本の自殺率は一年間に十万人の間で二十四・四の自殺した人がいたそうだ（World Health Organization, 2009）。アメリカでは、その２００５年の自殺率は十万人の間で十一の自殺した人がいたそうだ。十五歳から二十四歳までの若者なら、日本人の自殺率は十万人から十四の自殺した人がいたが、アメリカ人の自殺率は十万人から九の自殺した人がいたそうだ。さらに、男性の若者だけなら、日本人の十万人から十八・四人が自殺したし、アメリカ人の十万人から十六・一人が自殺した。確かに日本の男性の若者の方が自殺したけれど、両方の国でもその割合はクロスジェンダー平均に比べてもっと多いようだ。それに対して、女性の若者なら、日本人の十万人の中で九・三人が自殺したが、アメリカ人の十万人の中で三・五人しか自殺しなかったそうだ。

　そういえば、２００５年に自殺した日本人の女性の若者はアメリカ人の自殺した女性の若者に比べて三倍ぐらい多かったのは悲しいけれど、分析すると面白い点が見られる。この違いといじめをすることと国によって違うやり方と関係あるに違いない。例えば、アメリカでは女性的ないじめは大体悪口だけがあるが、男性的ないじめは大体暴

力的だそうだけれど、日本では女性も男性も悪口と暴力の被害者になったそうだ

（Morita et al., 1999）。心理学者によると、暴力の方が悪口より若者の精神に悪い

影響を与えられるので、それはその国によって違いと関係あるに違いない（Siegler et

al., 2011）。

　　最近の増えているいじめトレンドの上で、日本文化的な歴史を見ると、いじめの

タイプも致命的な結果も分かるようになりそうだ。まず、日本では社会で調和を守るこ

とと適合性に向かってドライブとグループ現象という考え方が多いそうだ（Reader,

1991）。さらに、伝統的な日本の政府の意見では最も小さい個人的なユニットは家族だ

ったし、日本社会は序列的な社会に違いない。こういうふうに、日本は本当に個人的で

はなかったそうだ。実は、日本人の若者は本当に普通の人のように見られたいので、

若者は普通と違ったら、いじめの被害者になりやすいそうだ（Morita et al., 1999）。

その違いは顔立ちやアカデミック知性やアスレチックタレントなどの形とも関係がなり、

若者は普通と違ったらいじめの被害者になるそうだ。

　　日本の歴史的な民族の考え方と自殺も関係が深いそうだ。アメリカ人は大体キリ

スト教を信じているし、キリスト教のスクリプチャーでは絶対に自殺をしてはいけない

と書いてあったから、普通のアメリカ人の意見では、自殺はインモラルだと考えている。

それに対して、日本の神道という元の宗教は自殺について価値観や考え方があまりない

そうだ（Chamberlain, 2005）。確かに昔にキリスト教も取り入れたけれど、最近の日

本では１％しかキリスト教を信じていないのでキリスト教の影響があまり取り入れなか

ったようだ（Mullins et al., 2003）。さらに、最近の日本では無神論は７〜８割に増

えていたので、特に宗教の価値観や考え方を信じていない日本人が多いそうだ（磯村、

２０１０）。そして、伝統的な日本社会では問題がある時や間違えた時に自殺はもっと全うと考えていた人が多かったので、問題があったら自殺をした人も多かったそうだ（Mullins et al.，2003）。実は、こういう自殺は伝統的な日本の演技と歌と本の中でロマンチック的に描かれたので、最近にも日本のポップカルチャー（アニメやマンガなど）でそのロマンチックな自殺が見られる。

終わりに

　　　結論として、最初で書いた研究の質問を答えるようになった。 まず、日本の若者自殺の主要因はいじめの被害者になる時の絶望的な感じもディプレッションのようだ。そして、アメリカ人も日本人の若者自殺のケースをよく見ると、日本社会でいじめの致命的な影響が与える考え方は調和を守ることと適合性に向かにドライブとグループ現象ということだ。さらに、アメリカの方が日本よりいじめや自殺のやり方がジェンダによって違うので、日本での方がアメリカより若者自殺された男性と女性の数はより等しいようだ。そして、アメリカに対して、日本人の歴史的な自殺についての考え方はほとんどポジティブだったし、日本の元の宗教では自殺はタブーではないそうだ。そういう国によって違うことを分析してから、どうして日本の若者自殺率は世界中で最も高くて、最近も増えているか分かるようになるから、その率を減るために将来に日本人の考え方の中の変化しなくてはいけないことも分かるようになるかもしれない。確かにそのことは大きいけれど、皆さんもいじめも若者自殺についてよく考えて、話し合ったら、若者の将来は段々もっと明るくなるに違いない。

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