

A Sociology of Japanese Youth

From returnees to NEETs

Edited by Roger Goodman,
Yuki Imoto and Tuukka Toivonen

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CONTENTS

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Contributors</i>	<i>xiv</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>xvi</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xviii</i>
<i>A Note to the Reader</i>	<i>xx</i>
1 Making Sense of Youth Problems <i>Tuukka Toivonen and Yuki Imoto</i>	1
2 From Pitiful to Privileged? The Fifty-Year Story of the Changing Perception and Status of Japan's Returnee Children (<i>kikokushijo</i>) <i>Roger Goodman</i>	30
3 Narratives and Statistics: How Compensated Dating (<i>enjo kōsai</i>) was Sold <i>Sharon Kinsella</i>	54
4 <i>Taibatsu</i> : From Educational Solution to Social Problem to Marginalized Non-Issue <i>Aaron L. Miller</i>	81
5 The 'Discovery' and 'Rediscovery' of Child Abuse (<i>jidō gyakutai</i>) in Japan <i>Roger Goodman</i>	98

6	<i>Hikikomori: How Private Isolation Caught the Public Eye</i> <i>Sachiko Horiguchi</i>	122
7	<i>NEETs: The Strategy within the Category</i> <i>Tuukka Toivonen</i>	139
8	<i>Shifting Landscapes: The Social Context of Youth Problems in an Ageing Nation</i> <i>Roger Goodman</i>	159
	<i>Glossary</i>	174
	<i>Index</i>	185

ILLUSTRATIONS

Photographs

3.1	Illuminated sign for a drop-in telephone club (<i>terekura</i>).	55
3.2	Television news crews meet schoolgirls on Center Gai pedestrian street in Shibuya, 2003.	56
3.3	Fashionable teenage girls squatting in Kichijoji.	60
3.4	<i>Kogyaru</i> types on a sofa by a print club machine in <i>Cawaii!</i> editorial office in 1997.	66
3.5	Girls with up-to-the-minute caramel-coloured hair and platform boots (<i>atsuzoku</i>) posing in Shibuya in 2003.	66
4.1	One of the Totsuka's books insists that he can 'fix' problem children.	87
7.1	'Princes and NEETs', the cover of the magazine <i>Nikkei Business</i> , August 2007.	140

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4

TAIBATSU

From educational solution to social problem to marginalized non-issue

Aaron L. Miller

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

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

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

History and sociocultural context

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

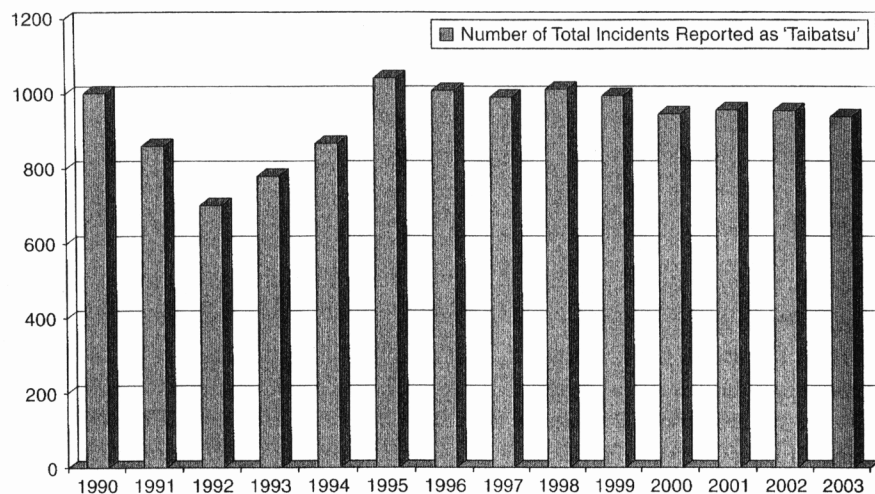
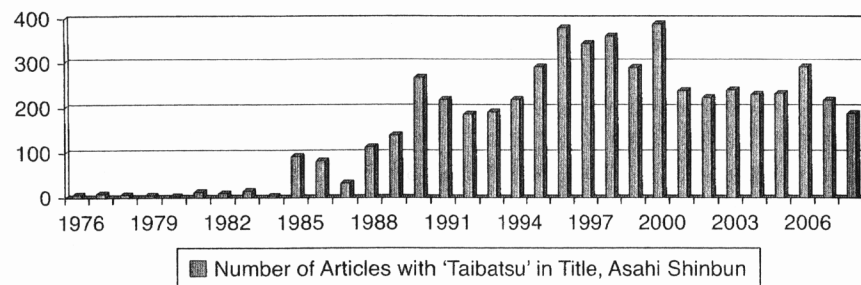
and more on individual, socioculturally contextualized incidents. They rightly note that *taibatsu* means different things to different people. This multivocality helps to explain why *taibatsu* has been seen as both an 'educational solution' by some and a 'social problem' by others.

Statistics

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

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

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

FIGURE 4.1 Government statistics on *taibatsu*.(Source: MOE Statistics, www.mext.go.jp, accessed August 4, 2007)FIGURE 4.2 Transitions in *taibatsu* discourse.(Source: *Asahi Shinbun* Kikuzō II Database (all editions but excluding *AERA* or *Shūkan Asahi*))

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

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

Taibatsu as 'solution': School violence and managed education

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

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

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

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

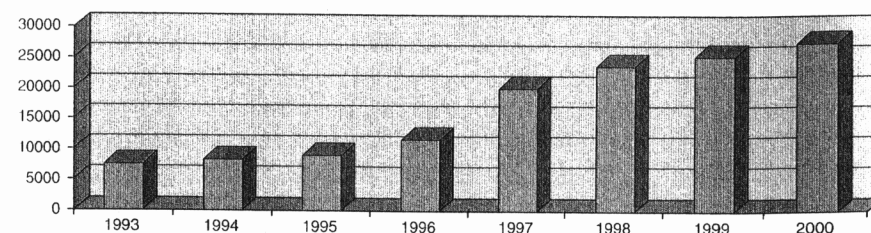


FIGURE 4.3 Incidents of 'school violence' in elementary and junior high schools.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

TABLE 4.2. Key 'extreme' *taibatsu* incidents.

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

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

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

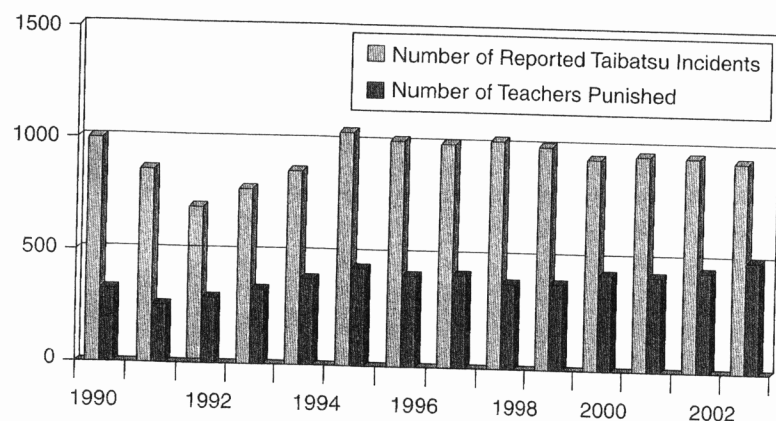


FIGURE 4.4 Number of teachers punished for *taibatsu* compared to number of incidents reported.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

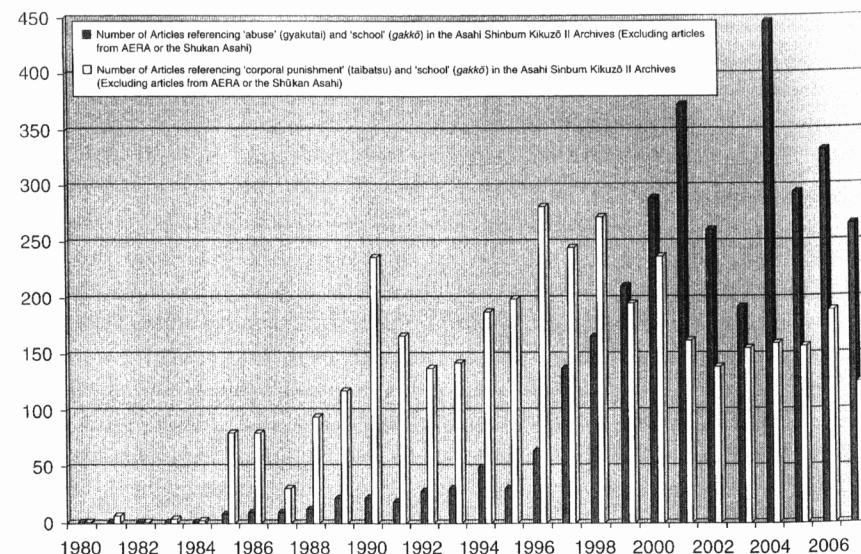


FIGURE 4.5 'Abuse' vs. 'corporal punishment' (Search results with 'school'). (Source: *Asahi Shinbun Kikuzō II Database* (all editions but excluding *AERA* or *Shukan Asahi*))

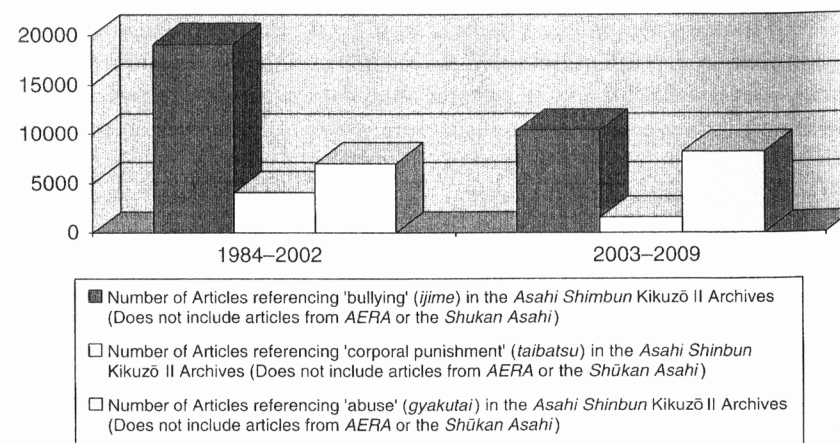


FIGURE 4.6 Articles referencing 'bullying', 'abuse' and 'corporal punishment'.

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Notes

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

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

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Over the past thirty years, whilst Japan has produced a diverse set of youth cultures which have had a major impact on popular culture across the globe, it has also developed a succession of youth problems which have led to major concerns within the country itself. Drawing on detailed empirical fieldwork, the authors of this volume set these issues in a clearly articulated 'social constructionist' framework, and put forth a sociology of Japanese youth problems which argues that there is a certain predictability about the way in which these problems are discovered, defined and dealt with.

The chapters include case studies covering issues such as:

- Returnee children (*kikokushijo*)
- Compensated dating (*enjo kōsai*)
- Corporal punishment (*taibatsu*)
- Bullying (*ijime*)
- Child abuse (*jidō gyakutai*)
- The withdrawn youth (*hikikomori*) and
- NEETs (not in education, employment or training)

By examining these various social problems collectively, *A Sociology of Japanese Youth* explains why particular youth problems appeared when they did and what lessons they can provide for the study of youth problems in other societies.

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

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