gether various members of the local community for educational engagement.

Anne Metzler supplements the contributions on prevention with an article on reintegration practices for juvenile delinquents through re-education. She describes the reintegration procedures as harsh and rigid, but she makes clear that the efficiency of the system is undeniable: the number of those youngsters who return to delinquency after re-education is remarkably low.

In the final article, M. Metzler and Foljanty-Jost present partial results of the Halle research project on deviancy and conformity among Japanese junior high school students. They point out that the intense and broad scope of control over and correction measures for juvenile behavior are typical of prevention activities at Japanese schools, and this is largely unrelated to the degree of deviancy that takes place. They argue that the high sensitivity towards any kind of rule-breaking in Japanese society paves the way for legitimizing all sorts of control at a very early stage, that is, long before violence or other forms of severe deviancy take place. High sensitivity therefore might be considered a kind of prevention strategy in itself and could explain low rates of delinquency.

All contributions to the volume were subject to a broad German-Japanese debate during the third symposium on juvenile delinquency in both countries held from June 7 to 9, 2001 at the Institute for Japanese Studies at Martin Luther University in Halle. The symposium and the preparation of this volume have both been generously supported by the Volkswagen Foundation, to which we feel deeply indebted.

Annette Erbe helped with the editing work, and Simone Barth did a lot of coordinating. Thanks to both of them.

Japanese terms have been transcribed using the Hepburn system with lengthened vowels indicated by a circumflex. Japanese personal names have been given in the Japanese order of family name followed by personal name. In order to make this more clearly; the family names of all contributors to this volume have been rendered in uppercase letters.

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN JAPAN:
RECONSIDERING THE "CRISIS"

Gesine Foljanty-Jost and Manuel Metzler

Since the mid-1990s Japanese society has become deeply concerned about the situation at schools, namely deviancy and delinquency among students following a number of horrific cases of violence against teachers and classmates. The mass media, social scientists and state officials have cited these tendencies:

1. A dramatic increase in juvenile crime
2. An increase in homicide and other forms of violence including bullying both inside and outside of schools
3. An increase in juveniles who explosively become violent without clear motivation (kirenu)
4. An increase in juvenile drug abuse

In order to describe the general situation at schools the term *gakkyū hōkai* or the "disruption of classes" has been created, indicating that juvenile deviancy has developed a new feature compared with previous years. The term implies that beyond violence and crime, a general breakdown of class discipline, a loss of values, and a lack of social competence are ruling daily life in schools.

The description of the situation indicates that we have to deal with two areas of problem behavior that are usually discussed separately: juvenile crime, which we will refer to as delinquency, and problem behavior at schools without juridical consequences, which we will refer to as deviancy. Both are integrated in public discourse because the increasing problem behavior at schools may indicate rising juvenile criminal offenses in the future.

The Japanese discussion of the matter indicates that in the case of juvenile crime, a significant relationship can be drawn between low academic performance, low socio-economic background and problem behavior (see Yonekawa in this volume). In the cases of juveniles becoming deviant at school, it has been stressed that most of them have a "sound" family background, which means that they live with
both parents, of whom at least one earns money (Hayami 1989: 109–128, Mori 1999: 60–64).

Taki has furthermore stressed that since the 1970s, problem behavior and delinquency of young students has become an individual act that is no longer integrated with group activism. In contrast to previous years, no specific motivation for becoming violent can be identified; students are mostly reacting spontaneously and only in their own individual interest. Becoming violent is no longer in any case related to low academic performance, as students with high scores become violent as well (Taki 1998). In cases of frustration, they react explosively (kiseru) without any sensitivity towards other people and without any signs of warning. Taki argues that kids reach a point where they cannot tolerate frustration, and they lack the social competence to deal with conflicts or frustration (Taki in this volume).

The mainstream argument in literature concerning juvenile delinquency is that in the 1990s, unlike in past decades, any child could become deviant and deviancy appears in various forms such as bullying, absence from school, sexual misconduct, drug abuse, violence, and so forth. The Ministry of Justice uses the term “generalization” (ippanka) to emphasize this dramatic situation according to which today every child without regard of social background or educational performance could or even will become deviant (Hōmushō Hōmu Sōgō Kenkyūshō 1998: 421).

As for reasons for the new phenomenon of deviancy, we can differentiate between three basic approaches. The first approach focuses on general changes in society such as the “privatization” of society (Morita 1997), according to which young people today care only about themselves and neglect the needs of other people and society. The second approach concentrates on the family, stressing that the educational competence of today’s family is diminishing and fails to instill a proper value consciousness in children (Fukaya 1997). The third approach claims that the school system, namely the organization of Japanese junior high schools, is the cause of students deviancy, since schools exert high pressure on students through examinations, excessive regulations and control. While the second approach is dominant in research on juvenile crime, the critics of schools as responsible for deviancy can mainly be found among sociologists and experts in the field of education.

In summary, the issue of violence, bullying, and problem behavior is regarded with pessimism among mass media commentators, academics, educators and public institutions such as the police and schools in Japan. They share deep concerns about their “children in crisis” (kodomo ga abunai), claiming that the control of juvenile behavior has broken down and that a whole generation regardless of age, gender, social background or academic performance is in danger of disintegration due to failures in teaching the values of society.

1. What is the Nature of the Problem? Reconsidering Delinquency in Japan

From the perspective of a foreigner, the Japanese debate on the crisis of juveniles merits examination in at least in two respects:

1. The first question is whether the high level of awareness of the problem reflects the actual situation. The mass media tend to dramatize and generalize particular cases of delinquency, but there is no empirical research available concerning the decline of conformity among school children with the exception of data on violence and bullying.

2. The second question focuses on what the consequences of problem perception are. Japan is known as gakureki shakai or an “meritocratic society” in which educational success is of extreme relevance to further career opportunities; the commitment of parents, teachers, and the general public to educating children is extremely high. Because of the high sensitivity with regard to all issues concerning child rearing and education, we expect a correlation between a high degree of concern towards children in general and major efforts to prevent deviancy and dense control mechanisms.

The public sense of crisis should therefore not be assumed to be accurate. Since the understanding of perception of the problem depends deeply both on an understanding of the definitions of deviancy in a given society and on reliable data, this paper will explore the preconditions of the pessimistic view on juveniles in Japan. We will first examine exactly how deviancy is defined in Japan and what the respective juridical formulas mean. Second, we will explore the actual

---

1 The term has been coined by the journal Aera published by Asahi in November 1997.
2 The paper presents parts of the findings of the research project mentioned in the introduction of this volume.
situation of juvenile problem behavior by reviewing data from public institutions, distinguishing between juvenile crime and deviant behavior at schools.

Our findings will demonstrate a discrepancy between the real situation of student deviant behavior in junior high schools and the public debate on it. The intensity of the feeling of crisis in the Japanese public does not suit the low level of problem behavior. The consequences of this discrepancy for the conceptualization of social control in schools and their preventative activities will be discussed in the Metzler and Fojanty-Jost chapter ("Problem Behavior and Social Control in Japan’s Junior High Schools") in this volume.

2. How to Define Delinquency: Reconsidering Definitions

As far as definitions are concerned, we have to take into account that deviancy is not a universal category, but depends on factors such as culture, time, gender, age, and so forth. This means that children are not deviant per se but are labeled as deviant according to the definitions of what is regarded as deviant in their society. Definitions influence problem perception, data collecting, and counter-measures for prevention.

We may distinguish between various levels in society where norms and deviancy are defined. Besides the general norms being defined by the family, the neighborhood and the social environment, juveniles are confronted with legal norms, formulated in the Juvenile Law (shônenhô) and norms as defined by schools. Since almost all Japanese between six and eighteen attend school nearly all day, we expect the influence of schools in inducing conformity is especially high. Rules of what is right and what is wrong as defined by schools represent the concentration of norms, which are commonly shared by society and those which are involved in education. Due to a highly centralized education system and a strong middle-class orientation among the majority in Japanese society, we may expect that the norms juveniles are taught are uniform and homogenous for all children of the same age group. Reconsideration of the norms as defined by law and by schools shows the following results:

With regard to norms defined by the Juvenile Law of 1949, there is a high level of conformity between Germany and Japan. This can be explained by the strong influence German law had on the formulation of Japanese Juvenile Law (Kühne/Miyazawa 1979).

In both countries delinquent juveniles are defined as those who are suspected of having violated criminal stipulations. These include homicide, rape, drug abuse, theft and so on. The definitions do not not differ significantly between the two countries. The Japanese special law against the reckless driving of motorcycle gangs (bôsôzoku) is a formal exception.

Japanese as well as German or American law reserves a specific category for juveniles who have not yet become delinquent, but show a tendency towards it. This behavior is called guhan in Japan, being similar to the "status offenses" in the US. These include missing school, hanging around in public or with friends who might lead them into delinquency and so on (Metzler/Metzler 2000: 134–139).

Below this surface, differences begin to appear. In Japan, police regulations exist which define the furyô kôi ("bad behavior"). The usage of terms such as furyô (bad) in official sources along with terms such as "unhealthy fun", and "immoral contact with others" do not exist in official German sources and indicate a moralistic approach towards juvenile behavior, while in Germany terms such as "harmful tendencies" (schädliche Neigungen) in legal or sociological sources have been strongly criticized because of their moralistic connotations. (Brunner/Dölling 1996, Albrecht 1993). According to these regulations, Japanese youth should not hang around in bars, game centers or pachinko parlors, should avoid "dangerous" friends, should not watch pornographic movies or videos, and should not drink alcohol or smoke tobacco. All young people under the age of twenty are targets of these regulations. This basically corresponds to the German "Juvenile Public Protection Law" of 1985 (Gesetz zum Schutze der Jugend in der Öffentlichkeit). In Japan, however, the definitions are clearly stricter. To offer the most explicit example: German juveniles may drink distilled alcohol such as whisky at eighteen years of age. They may drink beer or wine at 16. They may drink beer or wine even when they are not yet sixteen if their parents or a guardian accompany them (section 4). They may smoke tobacco at sixteen (section 9). The Japanese police simplify things: alcohol and tobacco are forbidden until twenty years of age. We therefore may conclude that the responsibility for oneself among juveniles is expected to start later in Japan, where juveniles up to the age of twenty are regarded more or less as children who have to be protected.
This logic continues as we follow the definitions under the legal stipulations. School is the most important institution defining norms for all children. On the most formal level, schools follow the Ministry of Education in distinguishing between three types of deviancy at school: according to legal definitions, schools should report violence (bōryoku kōi), bullying (jīme) and absence from school (futōkō) to the local boards of education. The ministry defines bullying as various forms of continuous aggressive behavior of a group of students towards a single one (see Morita 1997: 85). For absence from school, the definition implies not attending school for more than thirty days during compulsory education. Until 1990, more than fifty days were taken into account.

Below this level of official definitions, schools may define their specific rules in school regulations (kōsoku). Regulations usually include rules concerning hairstyle, how time is spent after school, “junior high school student” behavior, along with more school-related rules. The power of definition granted to the schools is much broader than in Germany; the school is entrusted with the definition and the control of behavior even in those fields that are typically left in the hands of the family or the individual in Germany (Toyama-Bialke 1998).

To sum up, at the most formal level of legal definitions we can not find any differences between Japan and Germany. In semi-juridical regulations and stipulations, definitions tend to be stricter in Japan. And below this level, the Japanese reaction to juvenile deviancy is clearly more restrictive than the German one.

3. Reconsidering the Crisis of Japanese Youth: a Review of Data

In terms of available empirical data, we have to distinguish between official data provided by public agencies on the one hand and academic research on the other (Morita 1994, Taki 1996, Metzler, A. 1999). Most detailed data concerning the delinquency and deviant behavior of juveniles are collected and published annually by the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education and related public institutions. The data draw on identical definitions and are available for all public schools, unlike in Germany. We therefore have a broad database for criminal offenses as well as for problem behavior at public schools. But even though there is no lack of data, it remains difficult to qualify the situation.

Generally speaking, the reliability of data concerning problem behavior at schools and especially violent incidents is crucial, not only in Japan but in other countries as well. Data are available only for criminal offenses, which include violence and bullying at schools as well as absence from school, but not for breaking informal or moral norms, and it is these informal or moral norms that seem to influence the public’s current pessimistic view of junior high school students as heavily involved in violence and bullying.

Data depend on the willingness of schools to cooperate with the administration and to report bad news about the school. It can be expected that schools are highly reluctant to call the police. But we do not have any reason to believe that the Japanese figures are less reliable than those of other countries (see Uchiyama 1985: 40–41).

Like in every criminological research study in the world, figures not only vary according to the reporting behavior of teachers, citizens, and shopkeepers and so on (see Mori 1998: 72; for Germany see Albrecht, G. 1993: 502; Scholten/Siethoff 1986: 584–585), they also vary according to registration and calculation methods that are used.
3. In contrast to what the Japanese debate on juvenile problem behavior suggests, juveniles have not become more and more brutal during the 1990s. Arguments that young people have become more violent than ever neglect to note that the rate of homicide, the most serious crime conducted by juveniles during the sixties, was three times higher than today. After high numbers of violent incidents at schools between 1982 and 1985, numbers decreased until 1991, only to increase again thereafter. In 1996 the highest level of the 1980s was surpassed, but since 1998 bullying in particular has again been on the decline.

Figure 3: Arrests of 10–19-Year-Olds in the Category of Simple Assault (Physical Injury, Act of Violence, Blackmail, Threatening Behavior) Per 100,000 Youths of the Same Age, 1960–1999


4. The majority of criminal offenses committed by students are minor cases of shoplifting and the illegal use of bicycles. Nearly 80% of the offenses are handled without proceeding to Family Court (see Metzler, A. 1999a).

Figure 4: Juvenile Delinquency 1998 (Ratio of Type of Delinquency Among the Arrests of 14–19-Year-Olds in Percent; Total = 157,385 Arrests)

Source: Compiled after Keisatsuchō: Keisatsu hakusho, 1999: 12.

5. Data about deviancy at schools exist for violence, bullying and absence from school, of which only the last has been increasing for more than ten years continuously. The numbers of violent incidents are increasing at a low level, even though the most frequent offenses are verbal attacks against classmates, followed by minor cases of violence and vandalism (Sōmuchō Seishōnen Taisaku Honbu 1997: 138).
Table 1: Problem Behavior in Japanese Public Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1985 (in %)</th>
<th>1990 (in %)</th>
<th>1997 (in %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inner-school violence senior high schools</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner-school violence junior high schools</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>0.091</td>
<td>0.364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner-school violence elementary schools</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence from school junior high schools</td>
<td>0.483</td>
<td>0.784</td>
<td>1.690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence from school elementary schools</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td>0.209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop-outs</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior high school students arrested by police</td>
<td>1.215</td>
<td>1.055</td>
<td>1.571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior high school students arrested by police</td>
<td>1.999</td>
<td>1.376</td>
<td>1.419</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentage of all students of the given type of school who have been reported by schools to the Ministry of Education
a) Since 1997 numbers include violence outside of schools
b) More than 50 days per year
c) Senior high school students only
d) According to the data of the Ministry of Justice


Figure 5: Ratio of Juvenile Delinquency, 1987-1996 (Suspects/Arrests per 100,000 of the Same Age)

Note: The term “juvenile” is defined as the age group of 10-17 years (France, Japan, South Korea, USA), 10-17 years (10-18 years before 1993) (Great Britain), 14-17 years (Germany). In the case of Germany, the crime rate appears to be higher because the age group of 10-13-year-olds is excluded.


International comparison shows that besides South Korea, Japan has the lowest numbers of criminal offenses in juvenile delinquency, including violence and homicide. In 1996 the ratio of juvenile delinquents in Germany was six times higher than in Japan. Unlike in other countries, the numbers have not risen over the years.

In comparison to other countries, Japanese juvenile offenses are minor cases, typical for their age group. With regard to the ages of juvenile delinquents, it is remarkable to note that in Japan, unlike in the USA, Great Britain and South Korea, delinquency decreases with increasing age, that is delinquency during the school period does not constitute the beginning of a criminal career. This view is supported by research that demonstrates that the majority of deviant juveniles in Japan return to conformity after leaving school (Metzler, A. 1999b).
Table 2: Violence Among 13–15-Year-Old Students in Germany and Japan, 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Japan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>2,721,602</td>
<td>4,481,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(reference figure)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolute number of victims</td>
<td>55,027</td>
<td>9,542 (14,765)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(projection based on random sample of 3% of all reported victims)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of violent cases among all students</td>
<td>2.02%</td>
<td>0.21% (0.33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


With regard to bullying and violence at school, an international comparison is extremely difficult since at least in Germany no nationwide data are available, and the data that do exist are based on definitions different from those used by the Japanese. Therefore, we can only calculate on the basis of supplementary materials. As table 2 demonstrates, in the case of violence, we may estimate that in Japan approximately 0.3% of junior high school students become violent while in Germany we may expect approximately 2 to 3%.

5. Conclusion

Our findings do not support the pessimistic view we have found in public discourse on deviancy in Japan. We cannot ignore the fact that problem behavior exists, and we even can confirm that there was an increase of violence at junior high schools in the mid-1990s. But to call this phenomenon part of the “disruption of classes” is not appropriate. The efficiency of the Japanese education system has not come to an end. Becoming deviant or even delinquent is not a general trend but as the data show, is limited to a small minority of students. The proportion of Japanese students who become violent is low in comparison with students of other countries, and the number of severe cases handled by police is sharply decreasing—from a level that is already one of the lowest among industrialized countries. Compared with former waves of problem behavior in the 1980s and compared with the situation in other countries, the situation at Japanese schools in the second part of the 1990s seems to be less dramatic than expected. There are problems at schools, but the overwhelming majority of students is well integrated, a higher proportion than in any other developed country. Therefore we have to conclude that there is a discrepancy between the high public concern about juvenile deviancy and the figures.

These findings provoke further questions. Unlike Japanese colleagues, who argue that uniform, coercive school organization and stress are responsible for the crisis in schools (Taki 1998), we would argue that the low rates of deviancy at schools, as well as the fact that the majority of deviant juveniles return to conformity at latest when leaving school, indicate that Japanese schools are still able to integrate and reintegrate the overwhelming majority of students.

We would therefore argue (see Metzler and Foljanty-Jost in this volume) that the overestimation of the problem of deviancy, or what Tokuoka (in this volume) has called “moral panic” may be part of prevention itself, since dramatization of the situation at schools may work as a permanent warning for all those involved in education.

6. References


Taki, Mitsuru (1996): *'Jiyume' o sodateru gakkōyū tokussi—Gakkō ga tsukuru kodomo no sutoretsu (Characteristics of Classes that Generate ‘Bullying’—Children’s Stress Created by the School).* Tōkyō: Meiji Tosho.