Educational Career and Misconduct of Youth in Two Japanese Suburban Communities

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Introduction

Research on delinquency in Japan has paid little attention to field work and delinquency in social settings. Realizing this, field work (completed for my Ph. D. dissertation) focused on the on-going dynamics of youth misbehavior in two suburban neighborhoods. This paper reports on one particular aspect of that research: the effects of residence on educational career and misbehavior.

Method

An ethnographic-ecological approach was adopted to gain some control over situations of misbehavior while at the same time focusing on the relation between the individual and the social context. Two neighborhoods that differed by social class and salient features of misbehavior were selected for observations. Field research took place for more than a year while I resided in a lower-middle and upper-middle class neighborhood both located in Kanagawa prefecture adjacent to Tokyo. The lower-middle class neighborhood will be referred to as Minami and the upper-middle class neighborhood called Kita.

Minami and Kita are considered neighborhoods based on boundaries, community associations and a feeling among the residents that they belong to the neighborhood. Minami is a separate Cho (town, block or
street) within the city and its residents are active participants in the Minami community association (chonaikai). Residents readily identify their neighborhood as Minami and maintain close interpersonal relations with each other.

The zoning map of the city where Kita is located shows that Kita has its own distinct boundaries and name based on a historical mapping of the zone (chiiki) where it is located in. It has its own separate community association and billboards within the neighborhood and residents identify the names and addresses of all households within the neighborhood. Residents are cognizant of belonging to Kita and most residents (in particular housewives) maintain close interpersonal relations only with other residents of Kita.

Relative to educational career a multiple observational strategy included: 1) visits to the local middle schools and talks with the head teacher and student counselor in both areas; 2) interviews with youth from a complete survey of all youth in both neighborhoods (91 of all the 159 youth were interviewed) and case involving many sessions with selected youth.

Cross-validation and reliability checks were made on the data. Field notes made in and near both neighborhoods were matched against what people said in interviews and talks. Information from different persons in the same context were cross-checked to assess perspective differences or knowledge, for example, parallel and contrasting viewpoints of the student counselor and middle school students about student behavior in the school. Consistent or fluctuating patterns of behavior were taken into account by case studies and repeated observations in the same context over time. Interviewer's effect was estimated by comparing youth responses to similar questions posed in interviews and a post-interview check-list and a comparison of interviews done by a Japanese interviewer (13 cases) with a matching sub-sample among the seventy two interviews I did. No major flaws were found in the use of instruments or
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Table 1  Acts of Misbehavior for Minami and Kita Youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age in Years</th>
<th>Mean Number of Acts of Misbehavior</th>
<th>Percentage of Cases Reporting 4 or more Acts</th>
<th>Total Number of Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minami</td>
<td>Kita</td>
<td>Minami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

data sources.

Rates of Misbehavior for Minami and Kita Youth

All youth filled out a misbehavior check-list derived from official acts of misbehavior during interviews; misbehavior acts include such behavior as smoking, drinking, truancy etc. Minami youth reported a significantly higher average number of acts of misbehavior than Kita youth. They averaged about twice as many acts of misbehavior at each age level (14 to 19 or the ages of juvenile status in Japan); and by age group averaged three acts of misbehavior compared to one and a half for Kita youth. Table 1 lists these self-reported rates of misbehavior by area and age group; interviews with the respondents in this table represents the two youth group populations for the remainder of this paper.

Educational Career and Misconduct

Class, Schools Attended and Misconduct

The tremendous importance of education in Japan and, subsequently, its devastating effects on those who fail has been seen as a leading cause of delinquency (Hoshino 1983; Iwai 1974; Wasserman 1965). Previous studies, however, have based their findings on academic achievement disregarding the context of the schools where learning and interpersonal relations takes place. The salience of the school context is particularly important since academic training and the
school atmosphere of Japanese schools vary according to the school’s status and prestige. The status and prestige continuum ranges from elite private college-preparatory schools (most beginning from elementary or middle school) and high ranked public high schools to troubled local middle schools and low ranked private or public high schools. Expectation and preparation for college entrance and the school’s care and nurturance of students are commensurate with the status and prestige of the school (Cummings 1980; Rohlen 1983).

Realizing the difference in quality of schools, I decided to focus on school atmosphere and interpersonal relations at school as indicants of school life and its subsequent relation to misbehavior. And area socio-economic differentials were considered to be connected with school attendance. The local middle schools in Minami and Kita were thought to be reflective of socio-economic aspects of residence for the two youth groups. Furthermore, since high costs (expensive tuition of private schools and/or private tutoring) and much parental supervision is needed to get a child into a good school, family background was included as a major variable in the educational career of Minami and Kita youth.

Middle Schools
Lacking a surplus of income to attend private middle schools away from home, all Minami youth went to a local middle school in a low class area notorious for misbehavior. A school counselor at the Minami middle school complained about student violence (students attacking teachers) and students sniffing paint thinner and smoking cigarettes at the school. In reaction to student conflict the school has exerted tight supervision over student activities and solicited help from the local community and even the police.

The local middle school attended by Minami youth is said to have the worst reputation of all middle schools in the city and students did not hesitate to mention the many troubles that occur there. An insight
into school life at the local middle school is provided by a Minami boy who went there:

[Our] middle school is terrible with students smoking cigarettes and inhaling paint thinner in the classroom. Students run away from the teachers and the teachers often chase after them, and then suddenly the class ends. Finally, the teachers locked the school gates so that students couldn’t leave the school. The teachers have even called in the police and the police have come to our school. It's terrible there.

The middle schools attended by Kita youth contrast remarkably from their counterparts in Minami. Family background privileges account for nearly half of all Kita youth having gone to private elite college-preparatory middle schools. Furthermore, the local middle school, located in an upper class residential area, was relatively troubled free and congenial to academic achievement. In talks with the school principal, head teacher, school counselor and students not one of them mentioned any problems of misbehavior at the school. To the contrary, a warm and open school atmosphere and a trusting relation between teachers and students were given as normative features of the school’s atmosphere.

More Minami youth (nearly twice the number) reported misbehavior as first occurring at a middle school age (13 and 14) than Kita youth. The turmoil at the Minami middle school described above and its effect on attachment to the school may attribute to their earlier age of self-reported misbehavior. Middle school life for Minami and Kita students who were in attendance at the time of interviews shows contrasts of family background and attachment to the school.

The family background of twelve Minami students attending the local middle school is low. Four of them came from a single parent family, ten of the mothers worked (nine in low status jobs) suggesting family income problems and father’s occupations were of a lower-middle class status (four salarymen, a tennis coach, one small shop owner and three worked in manual labor). This contrasts with an upper-middle class
family background of Kita middle school students: all were from intact families, only one mother worked (a part-time tutor), two fathers held upper level occupations (department head of a factory and teacher) and the rest were salarymen.

The stigma attached to the Minami middle school and the many troubles that occur there reflected in most (eight of 12) Minami middle school students saying they were not proud of their school. One boy’s comment was quite typical: “I’m not so proud of my school because it is not a good school. It has many problems.” Many of these students were involved in mischievous activities at school such as hiding the student’s shoes, throwing chalk in the classroom and one girl had a fight with another girl in the girls’ lavatory. They also had troubles with school work. Half of them were doing substandard school work: three of them below average, two reported a low school achievement and one said he was a failure.

All Kita middle school students were proud of their middle school. Students at private college-preparatory middle schools were proud of the tradition and high status associated with the school. Local middle school students mentioned pride in that their school was a good school. Only two Kita students had any problems at school: two boys were scolded in the classroom. Furthermore, none of these students were below average in school work: seven reported an average school achievement and one was a top student.

Middle schools are very influential in determining the chances of students to enter a good high school. Academic achievement and conformity at middle school determine what ranked high school the student will attend. Private college-preparatory middle schools invariably insure passage to higher ranked high schools, and, as pointed out above, the atmosphere of local middle schools differ effecting the student’s orientation toward academics and conformity at school. Thus the less privileged middle school education of Minami youth works to their disadvantage in opportunities to attend higher ranked high schools.
The status and prestige of high schools is indicated by high school rank. While there are fine gradations along the high school rank continuum, a major distinction is made between low and higher (middle and upper) ranked high schools. Attendance at a low ranked high school signifies a student’s failure since obviously she or he was sent there on account of academic and/or behavioral troubles at middle schools. And only these schools do not expect its students to attend college furthering a difference in school life from that of higher ranked high schools.

It was mostly Minami youth from low family backgrounds who had troubles at middle school and ended up at low ranked high schools. Table 2 shows large differentials in self-reported misbehavior by high school rank and the proportionately larger number of Minami youth at low ranked high schools.

The school environment in low and higher ranked high schools and its relation to school attachment for students and identity will be described to account for the comparatively greater average number of acts of misbehavior by students at low ranked high schools. Family background differentials will attribute to the over representation of Minami students at low ranked high schools and their higher rates of misbehavior than Kita students.

Low Ranked High Schools

The family background of ten Minami students who attended low ranked high schools is low: three came from single parent families, 8

Table 2: Self-Reported Acts of Misbehavior by Area and High School Rank

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Minami</th>
<th>Kita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rank of High School</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Middle and Upper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Number of Acts of Misbehavior</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Percent and 
  (no.) | 40 | 60 | 14 | 86 |

Note: Students were asked the name of their high school and its high school rank. Their subjective responses to high school rank were cross-checked with an objective measure of high school rank called the hensachi (a standardized measure of high school rank based on high school entrance points) and matched in almost every case.
of 10 mothers worked most at low status jobs (factory worker, helper at a sushi shop etc.) and most fathers worked in small shops. The six Kita students are from a middle class family background; although of a lower family background than Kita students at higher ranked high schools. All of them are from intact families, half of their mothers worked (two at clerical jobs and one at a laboratory) and father's occupations were mostly salarymen. These youth averaged 5.8 acts of misbehavior with a range of three to seventeen acts.

Strict school control was a major feature of their schools. These students frequently complained about harsh enforcement of strict school regulations (only white socks allowed, alterations of the school uniform not permitted, uniform hair styles mandatory etc.) and most of them had been disciplined for improper behavior. Furthermore, many of them (without being asked) mentioned teacher violence at school and vehemently opposed it.

Most students said they did not like their high school or that it was so-so. Teacher relations were poor largely in objection to strict teacher control. Three comments are representative of these feelings. A girl asked if she liked her high school said:

I liked my middle school but hated my high school.
And a boy asked if he liked his school explained:

It can be said that I like it and I dislike it.
Interviewer: Please explain.
Boy: The teachers. There are teachers who hit students.
And a girl asked if she got along with her teachers:

No. The school is strict which makes it harder to get along with teachers.
Interviewer: Who is strict?
Girl: Most of the teachers are strict, and they even use physical violence on us.

It is most likely that the low prestige and bad reputation of low ranked high schools accounts for the strict school control of students.
Of further consequence, students were well aware of the stigma tacked on to their school and received a negative imprint and a sense of personal debasement from going there. Almost all of them said they were not proud of their school and did not want others to know that they went there. Three such comments will suffice as representative.

Interviewer: Are you proud of your school?
Girl: No.

Interviewer: If someone asks you about your high school, how do you feel?
Girl: At that moment I feel I don't want to say [its name]. I don't care if they think it's a low ranked high school but there is misbehavior at my school and others may think of my school as full of [students] misbehaving. I don't like it.

A Kita student not proud of her school said that if someone asks her about the school she is attending:

At first I don't mention the name of my school. I would say I'm going to school [in a certain city] ... I don't want people to ask me about my school.

And a Minami student:

I don't feel good about my school. Other schools talk bad about us, and there are so many bad students there so I feel rather uneasy [about my school].

Higher Ranked High Schools

A major shift occurs from low to higher ranked high schools: most students are from Kita, family background is more privileged and misbehavior is almost three times lower (an average of 2 misbehavior acts with a range of 0 to 10 acts). The 15 Minami students are of a middle class family background: one from a single parent family, nine of the mothers worked (most in white collar jobs) and almost all fathers were salarymen. The family background of 36 Kita students is high: only one from a single parent family, the percent of working mothers
(20%) was by far less than all other educational sub-groups and their jobs were of the highest status, nearly forty percent of the fathers worked in upper level occupations (professional or managerial) the rest predominantly salarymen and about half of these Kita students attended private college-preparatory middle schools.

In direct contrast to students at low ranked high schools, most of these students mentioned an open school atmosphere and leniency in the enforcement of school regulations as characteristic of their schools; girls’ high schools were said to be strict but they did not object to it. Furthermore, few of these youth had been disciplined at school and they did not complain about the school’s discipline.

Largely because of a congenial school environment, almost all these students said they liked school and that teacher relations were good. Representative comments describe this normative feeling:

The relations with my schoolmates are pleasant and there is nothing there that upsets me. I think because I have many friends at school I like it.

There are hardly any school regulations, we are quite free [at school], and the relations between teachers and students are not bad at all.

Students and teachers trusted each other [at my school]. The students relied on the teachers ... When a student had a problem she would consult the home room teacher immediately [and] the teacher listened and gave advice.

These youth were proud of their school mostly because of its status and good reputation and positively identified themselves with it. There were a great many comments about this but given space limitations three comments will serve as representative.

I’m proud of my school. My high school has traditionally been a high ranked school ... The name of the school is pretty well-known, so I’m not embarrassed to say its name.

I feel proud of saying that I went to [that] high school. I never have felt embarrassed to say the name of my high school.
I am satisfied with my school.
And another similar comment:
I’d be glad to tell [others] about my school. I think it’s a good school and I’m not ashamed of it. So I’d be happy when they ask me.

Educational Attainment and Future Occupational Status

Among older youth who had completed their secondary education, higher educational advantages clearly were in favor of Kita youth. Area socioeconomic differences related to attendance at higher ranked high schools and lead to significant differences in college attendance. All youth who entered college graduated from higher ranked high schools and all but one of these youth were from Kita. Furthermore, as Table 3 shows, most Kita youth went on to higher education after high school graduation while most Minami youth went to work.

The occupations or expected ones of these youth is strongly related to educational attainment suggesting that future occupational status also differs because of socioeconomic aspects of residence. A brief description of educational attainment and occupations follows.

All youth who did not complete high school worked at low menial jobs. Their occupations were: mechanic, factory hand, restaurant helper and bar attendant. Occupations improved somewhat for high school graduates but still were of a low status. They worked as a waitress, cook, bakery worker, department store clerk, salaryman at a small com-
pany and one girl recently quit her job as a model to get married.

The occupations for students at vocational schools and college students can be expected to be of a higher status than youth who did not go on to higher education, especially for college students. The jobs of vocational school students can be inferred from the type of school they attended. These schools were: Hair Styling School, Drafting Design School, Sporting Institute, Business School and Photography Institute. College students will most likely land the most choice jobs since only they will be recruited for jobs leading to managerial positions at large size companies or have the potential opportunity to work in the professions.

Labeling Theory, Social Class and Educational Career

Labeling theory, social class and educational career can be summed up and applied to the pattern of misbehavior observed in two distinct but not inseparable ways. Firstly, labeling theory acknowledges that deviant identity and deviant acts stem out of situations in relation to the individual’s vulnerability to being labeled and propensity toward acceptance of the label (Steinhoff, 1984). Social class and educational career in this study emerged as central to the labeling process signified by stigmatized controls at schools attended primarily by lower class students (in Minami middle school and at low ranked high schools). The turmoil at and stigma attached to the Minami middle school were conducive to an atmosphere resulting in student conflict and poor academic achievement. Subsequently, almost half of Minami compared to few Kita students went on to low ranked high schools.

Students at low ranked high schools were met with fierce school controls and stigma. They objected to these strict school controls and received a debilitated sense of self identity with the school from an awareness of others preconception and treatment of them as trouble-makers. Such was not the situation with their counterparts at higher ranked high schools where rates of misbehavior were almost three
times lower.

In brief, lower class youth found themselves in school situations where they were singled out as delinquency prone and their reactions to this were characterized by rebellion and high rates of misbehavior. Thus, congruent with labeling theory, stigmatized social controls aimed at deviance helped to produce it (see Kassebaum, 1974).

Secondly, labeling as a variant of conflict theory recognizes that definitions and controls of deviance are maintained by dominant group members of society as a safeguard against threats to their power, values etc. And as Lofland, quoted in Steinhoff (1984: 193), states: “It is precisely those actors who have little power and who are not organized toward whom such actions [against deviance] can most successfully be undertaken.” Social class, educational career and misbehavior fits very well with this precept.

Lower class youth are the most vulnerable to finding themselves in labeling situations at schools largely because their parents are deficient in providing them with a good education and have little influence or power to object toward the schools treatment of their child. This resulted in this study to lower class youth being bunched together at schools where students were the least primed toward conformity and treated with suspicion and harsh school controls. Most were eventually cut off from the mainstream of society and ultimately given almost no chance of attaining a socially influential position. Thus, the least likely to succeed were casted off in the dominant groups maintenance of power and the status quo.

REFERENCES
Ⅱ．自由論文


日本の２つの郊外地域における少年たちの
教育歴と不良行為問題

ロバート・S・ヨーダー
（上智大学）

本稿は、神奈川県下の対照的な２つの地域に居住している少年たちにインタビューを行ない、彼らの教育歴を基にして、不良行為のパターンを比較検討したものである。

本稿では、この２つの地域を「南」と「北」と呼ぶことにする。

例えば、社会経済的に中の中の下の階層に属する人々が多くを占める地域（南）に居住している少年たちにおいては、中の上上の階層の人々が住む地域（北）の少年たちに比べ、不良行為の平均行為回数が非常に多い、ということが公式資料によって明らかとされている。

この南と北の少年たちの不良行為経験の差の基部には、環境条件と両親の社会階層的背景が生み出す学歴の質の差が作用していると考えられる。

南と北、２つの少年集団が通学しているそれぞれの中学校は、各地域やその周辺地域の社会経済的水準を反映したものとなっている。南の少年たち全員は、いわゆる荒廃した中学校へ通い、これに対し、北の少年たちは平穏な中学校あるいは私立の付属中学校に通っている。南の少年たちは、北の少年たちに比較し、学業成績は低く、多様で多量な学校問題を抱えている。

結果として、北の少年では、大学進学率の劣る低ランクの高校卒業者は15パーセントでしかないのに対し、南の少年では、これが40パーセントにも達している。

例えば、低ランクの高校の生徒は、多くの者が不良行為を働き、その回数も多い。これら低ランクの高校では、高ランクの学校よりもより生徒を厳しく管理する。そのことがまた、低ランクの高校の多くの少年たちを反抗させ、不良
行為へと走らせる原因ともなっている。
学校のランクはまた、少年たちの最終学歴の到達水準に関連する。高ランクの高校へ通った少年たちの半数が大学に進学したのに対し、低ランクの高校の少年たちでは、わずかしか大学進学者がいなかった。さらにその上、北の少年たちの多くが、大学に進学したのみならず、出身家庭が社会経済的に豊かであることから、非常に授業代の高い職業学校（専門学校）へも同時に通学しているのである。
本稿は、以上の様々な事実に対し、レベルング理論を適用し、結論づける。
日本の社会においては、刻印づけによる社会的統制が、低階層の少年たちの通う学校に対し厳しく作用している。こうした問題な社会的統制が、少年の不良行為のみならず、今日の日本社会を覆う陰鬱な学歴問題を生じさせる主要な原因と成っている、と考察される。