

研究動向

A Sketch of Sexual Minority Youth in the UK and Japan

Akihiko KOMIYA (Research Fellow)

0. Introduction

Gay (and lesbian) identity is globalizing. An increasing number of children and youth have homosexual identities. Sexual minority youth has started to gain visibility in the field of education and youth studies in both the UK, an occidental country, and Japan, an oriental country. In the UK, the British Educational Research Association has had a special interest group focusing on issues of sexualities including gay and lesbian issues since 2001. In Japan, research on sexual minority youth in/outside schools in the field of education has been appearing in recent years (Sugiyama: 2001, Watanabe: 2001).

In this paper, I aim to sum up and introduce what has been clarified concerning sexual minority youth, particularly gay youth, mainly in the field of education in both the UK and Japan.

In order to attain the aims above, I outline how sexual minority youth have been doing in/outside school. On the basis of that, in closing, I position the difficulties homosexual youth face as one of the important issues to be tackled in the field of education in the 21st Century.

1. Gay (and Lesbian) youth in the UK

In the UK, organizing to support homosexual youth dates back to as early as the 1970s. In 1976, the London Gay Teenage Group, a peer support group of lesbian and gay youth, was born. They issued *Something to tell you*, a booklet which contained the findings based on the survey they had done, and included commentaries on homophobic schools and society. They found that 242 homosexual youth (60%) said that the topic of homosexuality was not mentioned in any lesson at school (London Gay Teenage Group: 1984). They also clarified the sorts of the problems these youth had at school shown in the table below. The largest problem is isolation. Homosexual youth could not disclose their sexuality to their peers. Youth in general are shown to be much interested in sexuality, and sharing talk on sexual matters can cement their relationships. But homosexual youth could not do this, and hence it was supposed that they felt isolated. They also suffered from verbal abuse and teasing. As many as 16% of homosexual boys were beaten up, which should be noted.

Table: Problems at school

Problem	Female	Male	Overall Frequency
Isolation/Nothing in Common with classmates	10(27%)	28(24%)	38(25%)
Verbal abuse	3(7.7%)	29(25%)	32(21%)
Teasing	5(13%)	15(13%)	20(13%)
Beaten up	1(2.6%)	18(16%)	19(12%)
Ostracised	4(10%)	7(6.1%)	11(7.1%)
Pressure to conform	6(15%)	5(4.3%)	11(7.1%)
Other	10(26%)	13(11%)	23(15%)
Total	39(100%) 115(100%)		154(100%)

Source: Warren (1984) p.12

In *Talking about school*, Warren (1984) points out that young people are in fact constantly exposed to uninformed and derogatory images of homosexuality through the media, playground talk and anti-homosexual jokes, and criticizes “the neglect of homosexuality in the curriculum.” In 1986, the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education issued a booklet titled *Sexual Orientation: An Equal Opportunities Discussion Paper*, which tackled discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. In 1988, Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 prohibiting local authorities from “promoting” homosexuality in state-maintained schools was enacted, which hampered many teachers from helping lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students during the fifteen years it was in effect (Sears: 2005).

2. Gay (and Lesbian) youth in Japan

In the field of education in Japan, issues of homosexuality have been tackled

since 1987 by some teachers who have pioneered Japanese sex education with the radical teaching practice and theory of sex education (“ Ningen-to-Sei ” Kyouiku-kenkyuu-Kyougikai=The Council for Education and Study on Human Sexuality: 1991) They attended lectures on human sexuality in the USA and learned about issues to do with the human rights of homosexuals. After coming back to Japan, they began to deal with homosexual issues in classrooms.

In 1997, in the field of sociology, *Gei Sutadiizu* (Kazama *et al.* 1997), the first theoretical work in Japan based on the authors’ practice of advocating the human rights of homosexuals, was published, which affected some other academic fields including education. Sugiyama (2001) clarified the plights of gay youth and showed some possibilities for support for gay youth at school. Watanabe (2001) explored how [hetero] sexism permeated school settings through his life history. Watanabe (2005) analyzed how gay youth built relationships with their (heterosexual) friends inside and

outside school in a heterosexist society.

3. Closing Comment

I have reviewed (the findings of) homosexual youths in Britain and Japan. The homosexual identity, stemming from the concept of homosexuality created in the late 19th Century in Europe, has spread almost throughout the world during the 20th Century. Though in Japan homosexuality had hardly been criminalized, it had been criminalized in some European countries. Then it was decriminalized and/but medicalized. At last, it was demedicalized and liberated in many industrialized countries. Still, however, many lesbian and gay men suffer from ostracism and persecution in/outside schools. At present, gay (and lesbian) studies in the field of education are still in embryo particularly in Japan. How to tackle the human rights issues of sexual minority youth is one of the major issues in the field of education and youth studies in the 21st Century.

References

- The Council for Education and Study on Human Sexuality. 1991 *Atarashii-huukei: Seikyouikuto-douseiai*.
- Kazama, Takashi et al. 1997 *Geisutadiizu*. Seido-sha (Publishing).
- London Gay Teenage Group. 1984 *Something to tell you*. pp.56-59.
- Sears, James. 2005 *Youth, Education and Sexualities-An International Encyclopedia*. Greenwood Press. pp.100-102.
- Sugiyama, Takashi. 2001 *Possibilities for Support and Help for Gay youth-Educational Environments of Gay Students in High Schools*. Kyoto-seika University.
- Warren, Hugh et al. 1984 *Talking About School*. London Teenage Group. p.14
- Watanabe, Daisuke. 2001 "Otoko-wo-tou" -Okamateki-jibunshi-kara-. *Kyouiku*. 671. Kokudo-sha (Publishing). pp.61-68.
- Watanabe, Daisuke. 2005 On Gay Youth's Relationship-building Inside and Outside School: Towards an Examination of the Politics of Alienation and Division in School. *The Japanese Journal of Educational Research*. 72(2)