

4 Positive use of visual media to understand and prevent bullying

The popularity and possibility of manga

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This chapter focuses on the impact of manga on children. Visual media such as manga, anime, and games are very popular among children not only in Japan, but also in other countries. Although such pop cultures have achieved widespread popularity worldwide, little is known about their impact on children. In particular, positive aspects are not well discussed. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the significance of their popularity and possible impact on children. This chapter discusses the following three points: 1) the reason children are devoted to manga, 2) impact of manga on children, and 3) positive use of manga to prevent traditional/cyber bullying and other Internet-related problems. Although the most popular view of manga tends to be negative regarding the impact on child readers, we challenge this view by investigating the potential of using manga to positively influence children's well-being. This chapter discusses the recent history of manga, its current situation, and the possibility of introducing a new usage of manga to positively impact children.

Why are children devoted to visual media?

Impact of visual media on child development

Scholars' perceptions of the impact of comics on child development have changed considerably since the 1950s, when psychiatrist Frederic Wertham decried their influence in his seminal but now discredited study *Seduction of the Innocent*. In this work, Wertham (1954) argues that violence and sexuality in comics lead to juvenile delinquency and mental disorders among child readers. However, Wertham's study conflated several children's cases and exaggerated or omitted certain contextual information (Tilley, 2012). The study's impact was so great that public pressure almost forced the US Congress to regulate comics. However, the comics industry pre-empted such a move through self-censorship of sexuality and violence via its Comics Code Authority (Hajdu, 2008). Unsurprisingly, educators, scholars, and the public only entertained the idea that comics could have pedagogical or social

value decades later (Berkowitz, 2011; Frey and Fisher, 2008; Gossin, 2009; Griffith, 2011; Hutchinson, 2009). Nevertheless, the idea of including comics or popular visual media in formal education is often challenged.

Note that visual media industries are not without their problems, including being sites of bullying themselves. Manga artists must often sharply curtail their artistic vision under pressure from their editors. Moreover, the Japanese animation industry is notorious for the long working hours endured by underpaid staff, a phenomenon that afflicts even those in middle management in anime studios (Morisawa, 2015). Bullying is a symptom of and contributor to embedded economic, gendered, racial, and handicapist systems of inequity. Thus, it would be a mistake to conceptualize anime and manga as an instrumental and piecemeal salve to reduce bullying while ignoring it among anime and manga creators and in deeper systems of oppression that engender the practice.

Use of comics and animation in education

In education, using comics and animation may help children realize a more robust moral vision to enact in their communities; however, this requires that educators avoid approaching it as a narrow modelling exercise that exemplifies “do and do not” behaviours. Educators often eschew didacticism (at least philosophically) for academic instruction, but are more willing to accept it as a method for teaching character education (Kohn, 1997). Fortunately, some researchers have described a range of alternative activities that incorporate animation and comics that vary widely in ways that suit most teachers’ goals and pedagogical approaches.

More conservative non-didactic approaches may involve using cartoon examples of ambiguous situations of moral culpability that spur students to discuss how they (as individuals and hypothetically as peers) may respond (Leff et al., 2011). This can be especially helpful for black students in North America, who while their dissemination and receipt of overt physical bullying is acknowledged by the dominant culture, also experience less overt forms of social bullying that are not as widely recognized (Leff et al., 2011). Using more complex cartoons such as graphic novels can encourage students to more systematically conceptualize how peers from immigrant families come to know themselves as not quite fitting into the world of their families or the dominant culture (Helsel, 2018). By examining the gruelling, frustrating, and conflicted process of identity consciousness and formation of immigrant-heritage protagonists (a process not unlike the adolescence of dominant culture youth), the “otherness” of their ethnic group is more likely to dissipate. Similarly, graphic novels that lack this detailed exploration of the experiences of the marginalized within systems of power (vis-à-vis gender) (Ripley, 2012; Taber and Wolshyn, 2011) may also be critically interrogated. The teacher does not need to explicitly state the implications of bullying, as this can be explored independently by the class.

Instructional methods that involve students' creation of art that mimics the conventions of visual media more readily lend themselves to the ideal of constructivist learning. They also provide instructors with a more concrete indicator of the current parameters of students' moral reasoning. Comics created by children that address interpersonal conflict are a medium through which students develop their language facilities and draw objects, sound effects, and movement to better illustrate their conceptions of justice or care (Johansson and Hannula, 2014). We recommend caution in interpretation, as physical and social bullying can be doled out in the name of justice or care (such as bullying motivated by revenge). Moreover, a student drawing of graphically violent justice meted out to evildoers or characters coming to peaceful consensus is a poor indicator of whether or not a child is likely to bully others. However, student-created comics can be an even more powerful initiator of a conversation on where morality comes from; who decides what is "moral" and why; and where the line is between justice, care, and different forms of bullying.

The popularity of manga among children

Comics in the Japanese context have been written for both entertainment and educational purposes. Japanese comics, known as *manga*, are popular among children worldwide. In Japan, manga are generally published first via comic magazines such as *Weekly Shounen Jump*, *Big Comic Original*, and *Ciao*, which publish several serial manga titles, releasing one chapter of each title in a single issue. Each manga chapter is roughly 20 to 40 pages, and the magazine comprises approximately 200 to 800 pages in total. Comic magazines are usually published every week, with exceptions such as *Big Comic Original*, which is published twice a month. The three largest publishing companies in the manga market, Kodansha, Shueisha, and Shogakukan, are almost wholly responsible for the top 50 manga magazines in circulation in Japan (Japanese Magazine Publishers Association, 2018). After being serialized through a magazine, the comics are then published in stand-alone volumes known as *tankoubon*.

Some say that the origin of manga is *Chōjū-giga*, a national treasure owned by the Kōzan-ji temple in Kyoto. *Chōjū-giga* is a Japanese illustrated narrative called *emakimono*, which is Japanese for rolling picture. *Chōjū-giga* is composed of four *emakimono*. In *Chōjū-giga*, birds and beasts are drawn like people.

Manga has changed and developed over the centuries, and has a long and complicated history. Manga has various market niches because of their various categories in terms of genres, art styles, and marketable age demographics. Furthermore, some sophisticated and informative manga address topics such as politics, religion, social economics, education, and medical issues.

Manga has the following particular features: 1) manga is a visual and literary medium that significantly reduces the time it takes to read a page compared to reading a novel. However, it is not as passive as watching TV, anime, or movies. 2) the success and content of serialized manga depends on readers' response via online commenting and manga purchasing. If one manga loses popularity with readers, it is discontinued. If a sub-character becomes more popular than a main character, then they may become important characters. This differs from other media, in which viewers can evaluate the movie after they see it, but cannot affect the story. 3) manga's penchant for unrealistic, stylized, and expressive images (e.g., big eyes, long legs, physics-defying hairstyles) is known even to non-readers. However, today, some foreign comic artists also adopt the style found in manga. Because of this globalization of manga, it may be difficult to distinguish Japanese manga from foreign works in the future.

In Japan, manga is very popular and read by various people including white collar workers reading it on commuter trains, students reading during school breaks, and homebound parents reading it in the household. Manga is a big business. In 2006, the total circulation of comics and comic magazines was about 1.3 billion copies with gross sales of around USD 4.4 billion.

Because of the extensive popularity of manga, manga titles in general reflect Japanese social trends. However, little attention has been given to why people love manga so much. This phenomenon invites psychological examination based on a possible relationship between the mentality of young people and manga.

How manga became popular overseas

As a popular cultural text, manga has attracted polarized views outside Japan. In addition to the stereotype of comics as non-serious literature with a low literacy value, manga is burdened by criticisms principally directed toward its representations of violence and sex (Barker, 1989; Allen and Ingulsrud, 2005; Gibson, 2012). In 2004, the Reading Agency, a charity funded by the UK government, ran a project called Manga Mania to promote reading for leisure. They selected 150 titles to send to libraries and schools, targeting youth aged 13 to 16 years (Curzon, 2004a). The project fuelled debate on the legitimacy of introducing manga to schoolchildren. For example, British News Paper, *The Mail on Sunday*, published an article titled "Child murder, incest, and rape ... is this really how our schools should be encouraging boys to read?" (Curzon, 2004b). The author of this article argued that the project might lead teenagers to seek out pornographic titles once they become hooked on the text form. Although manga are created for wide demographic groups varying by gender and age, concerns about children reading the "wrong" manga and ignorance of the demographic variety in its targeted readership have resulted in calls to ban it from schools.

Regardless of the controversial nature of manga and comics in general, some scholars have tried to redirect attention from the infamous stereotypes of these texts toward a fuller awareness of their potential. For example, Meek (1988) notes that the literary competence needed to read comics is neglected. Comics demand the skill to interpret and integrate two modes of text. For example, the reader is required to comprehend the time flow of sequential panels because the linear narrative in the panels combines words and pictures to produce a type of (e)motion. Versaci (2001) highlights at least three advantages of using comic books in the classroom. First, students can explore literature in various forms. Second, students may be more forthcoming with their ideas and opinions about comic books than about traditional literary works, as the latter may be considered as occupying a space above their level of thought. Third, introducing comics in the classroom teaches students to avoid making assumptions based on the appearance or popular conceptions of certain works and genres too quickly. Gibson (2009) adds that comics can stimulate students' interest in reading and build emergent readers' confidence. Moreover, Gibson (2007) contends that a manga reader's community can enable young people to form their personal identities in relation to a subculture. Similarly, Bitz (2009) points out that achievements in the creation of comics allow fans to build up self-esteem, which while personally meaningful and rewarding to fans, is often overlooked by the dominant culture. These scholars try to point out the positive educational and social values in manga and comics that should not be overlooked.

Current situation of overseas manga

Despite dichotomous opinions in the popular discourse, manga has become a significant cultural phenomenon alongside the popularity of its side-by-side products, namely anime and games in the neighbouring countries of Japan and in the Western world. In 2012, HakuHodo (2013) conducted a global habit survey of consumers' lifestyles and media preferences in 36 major cities worldwide. The report claims that consumers in most of the cities studied prefer manga and anime to local alternatives. The phenomenon is most prominent in Hong Kong and Taipei, where 76.3% and 65.4% of comics and animations consumed were from Japan. This cultural phenomenon has also been observed in Malaysia. For example, Comic Fiesta is a convention organized by a student club, SAY Youth Society, which started with only a few hundred visitors in 2002 and expanded to nearly 40,000 visitors over a decade (Yamato, 2016). A study indicates that the market for English-translated manga grew by 350% from 2002 to 2007, peaking at an estimated USD 210 million (Brienza, 2009). Moreover, a recent publication by the Association of Japanese Animations (Masuda et al., 2018) reported that the Japanese anime market has expanded continuously since 2010 for seven consecutive years, with 110% growth on a yearly basis. In particular, the summary of the industry in 2017 shows that overseas sales continue to be the leading channel of the Japanese anime industry

since the previous year, with a 131.6% increase from 2016. It concludes that overseas sales supported the overall growth of the industry (p. 3).

In Western countries, the popularity of manga and anime is particularly notable in the US and Europe. According to Goldberg (2010), manga dominated the US graphic novel market in 2007. However, the industry soon suffered a huge setback in the following years as a result of the economic recession in North America (Brienza, 2014). In Europe, the success of manga in France is particularly prominent. According to Briel (2010), manga led the sales charts for comics in France in 2007. Since the 2010s, Japanese titles have been ranked the second most translated foreign titles (following English) into French (Katelan, 2018). In 2016, 13.6 million copies of manga were sold in France, equating to one copy per five persons nationwide (Pellitteri, 2019). In 2017, 15 million volumes of manga were sold, reflecting an increase of about 9%. This was reportedly the highest sales in eight years, accounting for about 35% of the global comics sector in France (Kubo, 2018). In the UK, manga and anime have also created a transnational popular culture. They have been part of the main features in the largest comics conventions organized by MCM Comic Con held twice yearly in London and Birmingham, and annually in Manchester and Glasgow. In total, 240,000 people visited the 2018 MCM comic convention in these four cities according to the organizer's website ("Shows – MCM Central," n.d.). The popularity of manga inspired the British publisher SelfMadeHero to launch the company with a series of Shakespeare's plays in manga style under the collective title *Manga Shakespeare* (Tsai, 2016). This series endeavours to attract young readers who find it hard to read classical literature in its original form and educators who teach Shakespearian literature. The free teaching resources on the company's website clarify that these re-appropriated manga serve the purposes of entertainment and education. Underlying the decision to represent one of the greatest cultural exports of the UK in a manga style is an acknowledgment of the cultural influence that Japan has successfully wielded worldwide through this form of literature (Keener, 2015). The triumph of manga as a cultural ambassador of Japan is evident through what is claimed to be "the largest exhibition of manga ever to take place outside of Japan" (Stevens, 2018) in the British Museum at the time this chapter was written.

Reasons why manga and anime became popular in Western countries

Scholars attribute the overseas success of manga and anime to numerous factors. First, the recognition of the soft power of manga, anime, and their spinoffs has led to a series of actions by the Japanese government to legitimize the cultural status of these popular texts. A White Paper published by the Japanese government in 2000 acknowledged manga and anime as a national treasure and expressed a commitment to promote a positive image of Japan through these cultural products (Suter, 2016). This has led to the establishment of international manga awards (Schodt, 2014), the Kyoto International

Manga Museum, and implementation of the *Cool Japan* campaign (Suter, 2016). Despite criticism that manga's soft power has little impact on the ability of the Japanese government to realize policy aims (Groot, 2017), one of the unacknowledged benefits of its cultural influence is its ability to enable readers to imagine different realities and thereby inspire curiosity about Japan (Leheny, 2015).

Second, technology has greatly lifted geographic constraints. While early attempts to introduce manga to the US were set back by the opposite reading direction of the book to American readers, the success of anime through broadcasting and videotape distribution eventually eased access to it (Gravett, 2004). A similar pattern was observed in other Western countries. For example, the success of anime titles such as *Akira* and *Spirited Away* in the UK increased the success of manga, and sometimes vice versa (Hayley, 2010). As reading habits and human communications become more digitized, the Internet has become one of the main distribution channels of manga and anime. A survey revealed that sales of digital manga volumes have overtaken sales of physical copies in Japan (Pineda, 2018). However, the lagged supply of English-translated titles and immediacy of the Internet have also led to a culture of "scanlation"—a collective effort among fans to scan, translate, edit, and circulate manga or anime without a license through online channels. While this long-standing practice has positive effects on promoting manga and anime overseas through digital sharing, its damage to the overall industry is repeatedly reported (Brenner, 2007; Freedman, 2017; Kamei, 2018; Kelts, 2018).

Third, scholars have debated whether "otherness" or "Japaneseness" have drawn Western readers to manga and anime (Fennell et al., 2013; Napier, 2001). However, manga and anime are first created for the Japanese audience by Japanese artists, making Japanese cultural elements traceable from the story settings, themes, names, and characterizations (Pellitteri, 2011). This is on top of the reading direction and unique grammar of visual symbols (Brenner, 2007). In fact, foreign consumers' attraction to the unique art forms of manga and anime has led to the appearance of "how to draw manga" guides in the market and consequent growth of original English-language (OEL) manga. The appropriation and indigenization of manga-inspired art is one example of Japanese soft power and its socio-cultural impacts in Western societies. We continue discussing this popular cultural phenomenon among young readers in the UK in the next section.

What is the impact of manga on children?

Studies on manga in the UK

Based on the popularity of manga among young people in the UK, local bookstores and public libraries have set up an independent section for manga. A few schools that welcome it as an alternative reading option for children

have also introduced manga to school libraries. During 2013 and 2014, one of the authors visited two schools in London where the librarians were very supportive of students' interest in non-mainstream reading including manga (Tsai, 2015). These two school libraries housed a substantial collection of manga, and clubs were held regularly for keen readers to get together and discuss or draw manga. In these libraries, excellent works from "manga drawing competitions" were hung on the walls. One of the authors spoke to 16 keen manga readers aged between 10 and 15 years about their reading experience. The participants were divided into groups by gender in each school, which resulted in a total of four groups. Each of the groups received three interviews to talk about three pre-selected manga (Naruto volume 6, Vampire Knight Volume 4, and one title of each participant's own choice). Each participant received an individual interview subsequently to talk about their overall experience as a manga fan. Some of the participants received a follow-up interview on themes that emerged during the process of data analysis. The names of the participants have been replaced by pseudonyms in this article. The results of the interviews show that these young readers engaged with manga in at least four dimensions: textual, social, emotional, and cognitive.

In the textual dimension, the interplay between words and images requires readers to actively piece together clues carefully arranged by manga artists. The fragmented nature of manga based on its sequential storytelling style and excessive use of close-up images (Tsai, 2018) further demands readers to draw "closures" (McCloud, 2001) to the undetermined meanings between panels. Moreover, the skilful interchanges between the perspectives of images figuratively stitch viewers into the narrative. In the social dimension, these readers engaged in conversations and activities such as drawing and cosplay with others sharing the same passion for manga. Furthermore, these young readers found a unique identity in the fan community, constituted by their expertise in manga, passion for it, and defines against external criticism (Tsai, 2016). Finally, these young readers engaged with manga characters emotionally and cognitively by immersing themselves in the fictional world, and negotiated meanings by connecting a character's experience to their own in real life. We elaborate this dimension to explain how manga could be used as a means to initiate conversations with young readers regarding their views of certain social issues.

Immersion in a book is generally described as a pleasurable experience. Csikszentmihalyi (2002) uses the analogy "flow" to describe an optimal experience of a state in which "people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter" (p. 4). The readers in this study highlighted this experience as part of the reason they enjoyed manga. In addition, to shelter themselves temporarily from worries and pressures in life and experience a sense of empowerment through a character's achievements, they gained a better understanding of the real world and insights into reality. For example, Olaf explained how he satisfied his curiosity about the world from a proximate reality in manga:

I always want to understand how the world is, what happens in this world we live in, like how countries are, what might happen, or “Why is this happen[ing]?” “How should we react and stuff?” ... The challenges they [characters] face are similar to the challenges [that] we face.

According to Olaf, the mixture of realism and fantasy in manga enabled him to enjoy the super power and learn from a character’s experiences and situations that might parallel those in the real world.

Another reader, Elsa, also indicated that character development in manga taught her lessons about possible ways to react to adversities in reality:

Say the story I read is about a girl who was raped by her friend’s boyfriend ... [I think about] how I can react to this, and see what they do to finish this situation.

The two examples show that young readers constantly draw on their understanding of people in reality to make sense of characters’ actions. In return, the characters may bring new insights into their perception of the wider world. Cocks (2004) points out that readers weigh their prejudices, beliefs, and knowledge of what seems normal or correct in the story to decide whether the character’s representation is convincing or if the development of events in the story makes sense. In this way, the proximate reality in manga provides a safe space for readers to imagine themselves in a situation that would otherwise be too difficult and harsh to deal with in reality. On the other hand, young people’s engagement with manga is tied to the personal relevance they find in the story. Manga provides a set of models that allow readers to reflect on what happens in their own lives, at least to a certain extent. The elements of relevance connect the fictional to the real, enabling manga to speak to its readers in a way more entertaining than didactic.

These keen readers expressed that adults’ respect for their interest in manga would help children open themselves to sharing what matters to them and how they perceive the world. When conversations about manga are scaffolded with the teacher’s guidance, children can develop critical reading skills and learn about themselves. For example, Olaf reflected on his experience of participating in this manga study:

I think the idea of talking with someone else about the way we see manga is a good idea, because normally with my friends, we talk about a certain manga or about how it is similar. We do not talk about the effect of manga and/or how it is really important, how it changes certain things about us, and how life is. I think it is really important, but I think we normally do not talk about that.

Elsa, on the other hand, was surprised by herself as a complex reader during group conversations:

When it came out of my mouth, I was just thinking, “Really? I actually think about it like that?”

The experience of talking to children about manga raises questions about whether by barring manga from the classroom based on our concerns, we have missed a precious opportunity to let children explain to us the significance of their own reading choice. Fiona and Arthur reflected on the experience in this study:

It is not usual that I am able to express my feelings and tell other people about [why] manga is actually important to me, and why people could relate to it.

—Fiona

It [the research project] makes me feel my hobby is not useless. Like, at least I can socialize with people about manga.

—Arthur

The feedback from these young readers should prompt us to re-examine the fundamental purposes of reading. As Smith (1988) contends, “Literacy is a matter not of honing skills but of increasing confidence, familiarity, and understanding, all consequences of meaningful use” (p. 103). Despite being a non-mainstream reading material, the literary, social, and cultural value of manga, as demonstrated in this chapter, refuses the label of “inferior literature” in the populist discourse.

Studies on manga in Japan

In Japan, many studies on manga have been conducted by quasi-academics and sociologists. Some psychological studies related to manga also exist, although only in a few fields of psychology (Ieshima, 2007). In this section, we introduce some studies and provide meaningful results.

Investigating manga as a form of visual narrative, one of the authors conducted in-depth interviews, questionnaires, and used other methodologies to explore why young people like manga. The research was conducted over a period of more than 15 years. We found that the visual image unique to manga is one of the reasons young people like it. A further discovery is that young people feel that they learn more from fictitious manga characters than from their immediate environment, similar to the observation of British readers’ engagement with manga mentioned in the previous section. We explain the impact of manga on young people, with reference to the survey findings.

The first survey was conducted on the web (Ieshima, 2008a). The purpose was to explore what people learn from manga in general. Research was conducted on “mixi,” the biggest social network service in Japan. The name of the Internet community we focused on was: “We learned important things

from manga.” More than 93,000 people have participated thus far. First, we negotiated with the owner of the community and began to collect narratives. We extracted 992 narratives related to the influence of manga and analysed them following the KJ method (Kawakita, 1967), a popular and well-known methodology used to analyse qualitative data. The main themes people learned from manga were classified into five categories: 1) what LOVE is, 2) the importance of true FRIENDSHIP, 3) EFFORT, 4) LIFE, and 5) useful/practical INFORMATION. Each has a sub-category. The psychological effects of reading manga were classified into three groups: (motivation) during the introductory phase of education, using manga will be effective in increasing students’ interest and learning motivation. In addition, relaxation will help produce manga, which is fun and comfortable to read, not serious bullying. Finally, (self-reflection) if you can provide students with something to think about in relation to bullying through manga, it will help raise their awareness of bullying by increasing their self-reflection.

The second was a questionnaire survey to explore how young people read manga (Ieshima, 2008b). The participants were 300 university students in Japan (mean age = 19.3 years). Participants were required to fill out a questionnaire, which was designed to explore their personal experiences with manga. We asked them: “What is the most important thing for you when you read manga?” The responses mentioned the storyline as being most important when reading manga. Other important factors were visual image, genre, character, and general evaluation. Since more than half the participants regarded visual image as the most important factor when reading manga, it seems that both the storyline and visual image are important elements thereof.

The third was an interview study (Ieshima, 2009). The purpose was to explore what young people learn from manga. The participants were 28 university students in Japan (M = 15, F = 13, mean age = 21.4 years) and 16 university students in Chicago (M = 10, F = 5, mean age = 21.5 years) who had grown up with manga. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants. The interview questions were designed to explore their personal experience with manga. Examples of the questions are as follows: “Please think about your favorite manga. Which manga is the most influential for you?” “How and why do you think manga influenced you?” Each interview lasted around one hour on average. The participants compared manga with other media, and indicated that both visual appearance and characterization were key to reader identification. This was a common finding among the American and Japanese participants. However, only the former mentioned that the Japanese culture embedded in manga was attractive.

Another finding of these studies was that some Japanese readers, especially those exposed to manga since their youth, learn more about their ideal self, moral sense, knowledge, and behaviour from fictitious characters (e.g., heroes and heroines) than from people in their immediate environment (e.g., parents, teachers, friends). It could be that the fictitious characters in manga become

role models not only for children, but also for the youth and adults in Japan (Ieshima, 2006).

In conclusion, we emphasize the following two points. First, manga is popular in Japan and the US, and young people learn many things from them. However, we do not understand the mechanism through which this occurs. Here, the phenomenon that Japanese manga is spread beyond national borders and cultural differences needs further consideration. Their peculiar visual image may be important. Second, manga is informative and useful in the development of young people. For example, young people can narrate about themselves using manga stories and characters, which helps them better understand themselves (Ieshima, 2008c). However, the mechanism of positive influence remains a matter for further examination.

How can we use manga to support the well-being of children?

To understand and prevent bullying, *ijime* is one of the most popular themes addressed in *ijime*-manga. The purpose of *ijime*-manga is to improve understanding of bullying and prevent such behaviour. The inclusion of *ijime*-manga in some Japanese textbooks shows that manga has come to be used as an educational tool in formal education.

In the 2010s, the Japanese government began emphasizing “moral education” in school, noting the need to effectively tackle bullying. Therefore, bullying prevention education is mandatory in moral education courses at every school level. Some textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) include manga works that aim to prevent bullying.

A Japanese government-authorized textbook on moral education for junior high school students, namely *New Moral Education 1* (Watanabe et al., 2019) published by TOKYO SHOSEKI CO., LTD., uses manga as a teaching material in all grades for bullying prevention education. Each manga is approximately four to six pages long.

The manga in the TOKYO SHOSEKI textbook used as a teaching material for seventh-grade students depicts stories of perpetrating girls who ignore a certain girl in the class. The manga introduces a provocative girl who spreads social conversation. Her way of talking triggered bullying. However, in the following part of the manga, one of the perpetrators imagined how the victim was hurt, and regretted her wrongdoings. The manga describes the perpetrator’s inner conflict between regret and justification.

In this manga used as teaching material, the story centres on the description of emotions and the characters are not portrayed in binary roles, in other words, as absolutely right or wrong in the moral sense. Rather than instilling objective justice, it aims to let readers empathize with various roles in an actual bullying situation. Learning to project the self onto the characters of the story and understand the sentiments and judgments regarding morals has

long been emphasized in moral education in Japan. However, a brief description using 15 frames does not seem to fully depict complicated bullying situations and the justifying/denying logic around it, especially victims' sorrow.

Considering the story content and length of the manga in the textbook, the level of immersion is low, representing level 1 (audience mode) of the LIME model (cf. Chapter 3). Thus, manga seems appropriate as a textbook for junior high school students, because of a safer level of immersion.

Other ijime-manga not in the textbook

In Japan, many manga—in addition to those in textbooks—feature the theme of bullying, for example, “Life” (Suenobu, 2002–2009) (Figure 4.1). And there are many manga containing *ijime* scenes, such as “A Silent Voice” (Ooima, 2013–2014).

At the time of its publication, Yoshitoki Ooima’s “A Silent Voice” was not included in manga magazines for boys because it portrayed the harsh bullying



Figure 4.1 “Life” (Suenobu, 2002–2009) Kodansha Ltd.

of deaf girls. Later, in consultation with the Japanese Federation of the Deaf, when it was published, it was read by various generations and became a huge hit (with great commercial success). The work begins when a deaf girl transfers to a sixth-grade elementary school class. She became a target of bullying after her class failed to win the chorus competition. In particular, male students, who are at the centre of the offense, make malicious insults such as making fun of her reading a textbook aloud or breaking her hearing aids. In this work, the character and psychology of the assailants are detailed over 40 pages before the scene with the victim's encounter, and non-linguistic expressions such as other people's facial expressions and gestures are richly detailed. Many readers immerse themselves in the inner world of children involved in bullying, in the world in which they live, and where the bullying takes place.

Recently, SEEK-HELP Project which is led by Prof. Mizuno at Osaka Kyoiku University launched a website (<https://seek-help.net/>) to introduce helpful manga for children suffering from *ijime* or for children who want to help their friends but don't know how to do (Figure 4.2). As such, manga is considered to be useful as a media which is reachable and useful for children.

As a textbook of moral education, manga are likely to be selected based on risk avoidance in stories and illustrations. On the other hand, commercial manga is more sensational in terms of content and illustration, and usually preferred by children. Since most publishers create manga for commercial rather than educational purposes, the stories and illustrations in the publications are likely to be more sensational.

Using commercial *ijime*-manga could lead children to deeper immersion, even at level 1 in the LIME model. However, there is also the risk that students who have been bullied in the past may feel distressed when recalling their past experiences, and some children will be more susceptible to violent material. These risks may be reduced if teachers have a deeper understanding and the skills needed to manage classes when using such material.

Moreover, as certain types of manga such as "A Silent Voice" attract both child and adult readers, the contents focus more on human emotions and relationships than moral doctrines. Therefore, learning design is crucial when using such materials in bullying prevention education. For example, teachers should be prepared for diverse responses from students when prompted to reflect on a character's situation, as every student has different personal experiences. These differences could be turned into teaching opportunities if carefully planned.

Final remarks

Manga in textbooks is likely at level 1 of the LIME model in terms of immersion in reading. While using commercial manga will increase the level of immersion, this is alongside non-negligible risks. We need *ijime*-manga with high effects and low risk. How can we maximize the effects and minimize the risks in delivering manga with bullying scenes for children? This



Figure 4.2 One of the manga on "seek-help.net".

may be possible if we avoid drawing violent scenes in the manga, for example. By changing the setting, for example, replacing characters with non-human animals—that is, setting the story in a fantasy world—we may be able to make it safer. However, research on and practice for achieving such goals is scarce, and efforts are needed to improve knowledge in this regard.

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