

# Student Journal of International Liberal Arts

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Akita International University



**Akita International University**

### Editors' Note

Welcome to the tenth issue of AIU's Student Journal of the International Liberal Arts. We are grateful to AIU students and faculty for submitting and collecting exemplary pieces of writing that represent AIU's unique identity and qualities. The student journal is a student-led editorial board with active student involvement, providing a platform for all AIU students to showcase their skills, passion, and creativity.

This issue has two very different kinds of writing: creative writing and academic essays. After much discrete discussion, the editorial team selected twelve articles. Every piece published in the journal has been deemed outstanding and exemplary by our student editors and instructors who may have submitted them on behalf of their students. In particular, in this issue, many of the academic papers talk about gender issues and environmental problems. As a liberal arts university student, you will have an excellent opportunity to consider how you see the world and think about issues in our societies and the global community by reading those works.

We thank all of you who submitted work to this issue and encourage students at all levels at AIU to submit work to the next issue!

Please let us again thank the content authors, reviewers, editors, designers, and all the many other contributors, as well as instructors at AIU who nominate essays and encourage their students to submit their work. Without all of the time and energy you offered, we could not have published this edition. To all our readers, I hope you enjoy the issue and find it useful.

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# Nanami Igusa



Nanami Igusa is a sophomore student at AIU (17th). She likes reading heartwarming novels, especially, her favorite writer, Ogawa Ito. She's never produced poems or stories before taking Creative Writing at AIU, and she really enjoyed boosting her creativity and imagination. "Fast Fashion" is a persona poem related to a current social issue.



## Fast-Fashion

One season is now over  
and, we died  
Our life is too short

We were so popular, but  
You don't need "Green Ash"  
"Marigold"  
"French Blue" anymore

We lose our luster in no time  
living like mayflies

We wish we could be vintage, but  
It won't come true  
Just live for a moment

We are cheap  
Feel worthless  
Useless  
and, here we are

The unending reclaimed land  
Mountains of abandoned clothes  
Gray smoke covers us  
Smells stench  
The earth is no longer breathing

Our voices are buried under the landfill  
Dying bodies exhaling their final  
screaming  
Don't treat me like that!  
Don't leave us behind!

How dare you

# Daiki Hosumi



Daiki Hosumi is an art lover who adores different sorts of art. He dedicated himself to composing music and writing poems for a long time, mostly in Japanese, but sometimes in Spanish and English as well. Daiki completed his degree at AIU in 2021.



# Devil

Oh, devil,  
Remember your breath, cold as my father's beer  
Dewing on the coaster, Lubricated your eyes were  
Drunk he sat at the rag mat  
With a half-cut moon smile, my dad

You summoned me behind the squeaking door  
Fresh milk teeth brand new hands  
Fingers yet chubby, everywhere I was rubbing  
When blushing dad came,  
He lost his cane  
a tipsy walk, uneasy leans on the door

I saw your tranquil face:  
The longest blink I had shuttered

Fingers were caught, stuck, shout  
No more lager, no more stout

Almost you had an index finger as a souvenir  
Well if come again, we'll remain sober here

## Sigmund

A tall skinny man in a bathrobe is in the kitchen in the early hours of the morning. The city is waking up, as well as the traffic noise gradually increases. Low frequencies of the gasoline combustion engines pass through the condominium windows and reach the kitchen where the man is. The tall man wearing a light orange bathrobe looks like a toy made of wire. Extremely long arms and legs that had almost no fat or muscles. And his arched back; the shoulders placed forward, the head even further forward, a miracle achievable by the chronic back pain, and probably an upcoming hernia operation. Nevertheless, in close-up, Egon's glossy skin and abundant black hair reflected his correct age, fifty-seven. Egon is in the kitchen with the sole objective of preparing a lunch pack. Every step he follows seems to be previously rehearsed in detail. He lights the stove to warm the pan. He stretches his left hand towards the higher shelf to take the bread and finds the cheese and ham in the fridge door, and closes it with his left foot. The fridge door closes, but Egon paralyzes for a second. He closes his eyes, and touches his back. He bites his under lip and deeply regrets the acrobatic moves that hurt his back.

Suddenly he hears his son flushing the toilet. The adolescent son is getting ready for school. Egon, as if he had remembered something he stretches his back. The pan is warmed at the exact right temperature, he places the bread with cheese, and exhales a subtle sigh.

It has been 3 days since his son, Egon Junior has not talked to him. The kid who just turned 14, has declared that he is no longer answering to the name "Junior" which is how Egon had called him since his birth. Egon was shocked to witness his son's sprouting self-will. They had always been together. Egon and Junior. The big one and small one. The strong and weak. Father and son. Nevertheless, Junior had grown. The boy was already taller and stronger than his old wire-made father. The boy was already Egon. Not Junior.

\*

Three days ago, at dinner Junior asked his father not to call him Junior. Egon distraught, responded

"So, can I call you Sigmond?"

The phrase was packed with sarcasm. Egon's right eyebrow was raised as if he were making fun of Junior. He didn't know why he answered like that nor what he was going to say.

"You know, like Sigmund Freud... In Freudian terms, you don't want to be called Junior because you're having an Oedipus complex. You are developing an unconscious infatuation towards your mother and fearing the fath..."

Without waiting for Egon to finish, Junior blushed with anger, left to his room, and slammed the door. Egon knew he did the wrong thing. He touched his back head and exhaled a sigh.

\*

It is fifteen before eight, the usual time Junior leaves home. Egon could hear Junior approaching the kitchen. His back is slowly becoming arched again. Anxious, he flips the crispy Sandwich that is not grilled well yet. When the son reaches the kitchen door, Egon turns slowly to Junior and says

"Your lunch is ready in a second..."

Junior passed in front of Egon with no reaction at all. Egon tried to stop Junior. He opens his mouth and said

"Hey, Juni..."

Egon's lips paralyze for a second. After a beat, the sound of the entrance door being closed resonated in the house.

Left alone in the kitchen, Egon looks at a woman's picture that is on the table next to the entrance with other family pictures. Egon's back is arched as never before. His body feels heavy. Egon takes a deep breath and closes his eyes, then stretches his tight back and exhale. While straightening his back, he opens his eyes and says

"Sigmund, eh"

# Momo Muta



Momo Muta is living in Akita now, and she came from Taiwan! She wants show how she lives in Akita and how she enjoys beautiful days on campus with friends.



# Winter Fireworks

Snow conceal summer deeply  
The night darkle rapidly

She sparkles  
And gave out a dim light  
Sun-set makes her sassy  
Darkness gives confidence to her

She sparkles  
Crowds let out a cheer for her  
Like praising new year  
Red yellow blue shimmer  
Seeing her shoulder start to shake

She sparkles  
Softly steadily  
Fallen down to the ground  
hardly grasp the air  
Never catch anything

She sparkles  
She sparkles  
She sparkled  
Light vanishing  
They swooshed her

Total darkness is coming

# Moe Ogiyama



Moe Ogiyama likes traveling and writes poems about places she visits. She expresses the atmosphere of the places she felt on her trips. She is happy if you can empathize with these feelings.



# My Hometown, Hachioji, Tokyo

Rushing, riding a bike  
and running up the hill  
to my home

Yellowish red sun  
shoots light like a shot  
shutting me away  
in sunshine

Two ice creams  
from the Family Mart  
closest to my home  
are melting

Pedaling like a hamster  
huffing and puffing  
Swollen blue worms  
in my ochre hands  
wiggle and wiggle  
with each pedal stroke

Heartbeats  
flutter faster and faster  
Enough blood flood  
fibers in body

Reaching two-thirds

On the ceiling of the hill  
my home waits me and  
Ice creams

One is bitter green tea  
The other is sweet strawberry  
My home shows its roof  
from the shadow of  
an apartment  
with moss green cement

Dropped in a park with drinking fountain  
Turn the faucet  
vigorously  
Cold water soaks up my heat

I restart riding a bike  
running up the hill  
with two ice creams  
For me and for mom

To my home  
To my home

## Heckler

1  
It was a 40-minute train ride from Takadanobaba, the student town. Koji Kudo decided to walk the distance for two hours to cut down on his train fare. The only things in his backpack were a used computer his mother had bought him and a document from school he'd crumpled up. Unable to stand the noise that was trying to come in from outside his earphones, Koji Kudo pulled them down to one ear. A politician was talking on a traffic island in the middle of a two-lane road. It was a busy place, and the politician was desperate to draw attention to himself by talking loudly. "First, we need to rebuild the Japanese economy that was depressed by Corona! Let's build a strong economy at any cost. Japan still has a lot of high technology and excellent small and medium-sized companies. If we can nurture and support our excellent human resources, Japan will continue to grow!"

Koji Kudo wondered if it was okay to obstruct one lane of traffic with an election campaign car simply because it was a two-lane road. He stuffed his earphones in his ears and turned up the volume, and looked at the politician's face as he murmured "Shut up" along to the lyrics.

2  
It was the face he had seen on TV so many times last year. His name was Daimon Koki. Last year, his title was Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. He was wearing a shiny gray suit. His tie, which looked very sincere, had a gleaming golden tie pin on it. Kudo looked around and noticed that there were people around here and there. Elderly people, housewives, and even a young girl, who looked the same age as Kudo, stopped to listen to Daimon's talk. The girl was wearing a pair of leather pants and an athletic backpack, an incongruous outfit. He took his earphones off to listen to this disgusting man.

"A mother is listening to me over there, holding her baby in her arms. Thank you very much. Children are the future of our country. We will support child rearing and promote it so that we can protect the future of our children."

The mother waved at Daimon with her child, looking happy to be spoken to. Daimon also smiled at them, and a friendly atmosphere prevailed among the people listening to the speech. Daimon seemed to be accepted amicably by the public. With the exception of Kudo and the young girl



beside him.

3

Kudo couldn't take his eyes off Daimon's face. And as he looked at Daimon, he remembered his high school life until last year. Kudo's last year of high school had coincided with the first university examinations that would reflect the government's exam reform, so from his first year of high school, classes in his high school were held to prepare students for the writing questions that were to be part of the new entrance exam. The teachers tried their best to teach appropriately for the new exam, and Kudo studied hard, often asking teachers questions. There were also plans to introduce external English exams. His high school frequently held external exams, so he took them even with an extra part-time job. He earnestly had been preparing for the exams since his first year of high school. His mother, at first, was against his decision to go to a university in Tokyo, but as she saw how serious he was, she eventually supported him. As her mother got more work, Kudo was able to quit her part-time job at a family restaurant. It was her warm wish for Kudo to be able to concentrate on his studies. However, in November, just before the exam, it was suddenly decided that there would be no written exam and no external English exam. Although the students were forced to study with anxiety, there was no sufficient explanation even after the change. The entrance exam reform may be an experiment for people out of his league, but the students involved are not guinea pigs. At present, one of the people living another world who disregard students' efforts is in front of him.

4

It had been a while since I had been out, so sweat was dripping down my worn-out sneakers. When I brought my hands up to my face to wipe off the sweat, I could see clear nail marks on my palms. The moisture in my mask had reached 100%. When I was about to wipe it off with a handkerchief, I noticed a girl standing next to me started fumbling around her backpack. Then she grabbed a loudspeaker tightly from the backpack and pulled it out.

5

The girl looked straight ahead and took a deep breath.  
 "Quit Daimon! Listen to the people!"  
 She continued to shout in a voice that was as loud as the howling of the loudspeaker.  
 "Go away, go away, go away! You're not listening to the voices on the

ground!"

The audience froze instantly, and Daimon looked at her as if he had been splashed with cold water.

"Do you realize that the national government can change the people's, and my life!"

With each step she took, she headed straight for Daimon. The crowd in front of her gave way to her. She took off her hair band and let her long hair flutter in the wind as she went. To Kudo, it seemed like the Ten Commandments of Moses.

6

She went forward and forward, leaving Kudo behind. She threw her hair band, backpack, and outer wear away, and headed against the power of the state by herself. Kudo felt the urge to throw everything away and follow her. The 300yen earphones he bought at a 100-yen store, the worn-out sneakers he had been wearing since his first year of high school, the college expulsion letter in his backpack, and this mask. Over the past two years, the more he struggled, the more restraints got tangled in his legs like the grass vines. He wanted her to cut all fetters with her voice as sharp as a knife. He hoped to get lighter.

7.

As she reached the crosswalk, the traffic light turned red. Then cars started driving between her and Daimon and steel walls drowned out her voice. She still continued to shout, but five policemen surrounding the crowd ran up to her and tried to keep her away from the intersection.  
 "This is what a country that talks about democracy does! Is it okay to deprive the people of their freedom of expression!"

Kudo's eyes met hers for the first time as she was grabbed by policemen with her shoulders and taken away backward from Daimon. She had wrought white skin, thick eyebrows, and emphasized eyes with black lines like a matured snow leopard. The mask and makeup made it impossible to see her real face. But Kudo felt the anguish and hardship in her eyes, still staring at Daimon. Kudo's body continues to accumulate heat that cannot be released by tears and sweat running down his cheeks.

8

What will happen to her? Will she be arrested? Despite Kudo's worries, the crowd was buzzing again. Daimon also resumed his annoying speech.

“I’m sorry for a bit of an uproar. I believe that freedom of expression must be guaranteed to the fullest extent. But at the same time, the freedom for you to listen to my speech is also a right that must be guaranteed. If we misunderstand the meaning of freedom, it will jeopardize the social order.”

Kudo doubted if the appeal from her heart is a small matter for the government. The politician who said he would listen to the voices of people just five minutes ago forgot all about her and relentlessly removed anything that stood in the way of his own glorious future. The housewife left with her child soon after she began to be surrounded by policemen. People in the crowd could only be relieved that her misfortune had not befallen them.

9

Kudo brought the handkerchief in his hand to his face. Soon afterwards his body slowly lost its balance from his arms, waist, and to legs, as if the strings of a marionette were being cut. His vision shook, warped, and fell as if he was sucked into the bottomless swamp. When he saw his dirty brown sneakers on the tips of his eyelashes, suddenly the sun that had been scorching him disappeared. He turned his head back and saw a light green umbrella blocking the sunlight. Then I saw a woman around fifties looking at him with a worried face.

Are you feeling alright? It's okay to get absorbed in the election, but in summer, you have to take care of yourself more.

The woman helped him to a bench in the shade because Kudo was unable to move. He did not know if she was a housewife or an office worker because she was dressed in a gingham check shirt and slacks, and gave him a soft impression. He felt she was somewhat like his mother he had left behind in the countryside.

"Be careful not to forget to hydrate. you're young and healthy, but you cannot be too careful about your health."

The woman placed a dry, pastel flowered handkerchief on the top of Kudo's head as he sat down. And she put a green tea plastic bottle beside him, gave him a kind smile, and walked back into the crowd.

10

When the shade and the green tea had cooled his sweat, he turned his gaze to Daimon again. Daimon was sweating, too and trying hard to talk

to the people.

“I will proceed with concrete and effective measures against coronas that can protect your lives and livelihoods. Let's promote vaccination and expansion of PCR testing, and get back to our normal daily lives as soon as possible.”

Kudo did not feel disgusted so much when he saw Daimon compared with the first time.

In Tokyo, if you go outside, you will always meet someone. However, now that people are hesitant to go outside, they just kept thinking inwardly and did not let anything move their hearts. As he repeatedly asked only himself questions, he couldn't find any solutions, and tried to be distracted from his torment by blaming others who he only knew their faces.

He wondered if she would be saved someday. Kudo drank the rest of the green tea, and put the empty plastic bottle and the 300yen earphones, which he took off from his pocket in the trash. He turned his back to Daimon and walked away.

11

The sound of cicadas, the muggy air, the smell of overgrown grass, and the sound of people laughing. Gradually, the things I hadn't noticed before became vividly clear now. He unexpectedly looked up into the blue sky that was blocked by buildings and telephone poles to some extent and saw beautiful green leaves flying in the wind from the trees planted beside the intersection. No matter how long it takes for a leaf to mature, it only takes a moment to be blown away. Kudo breathed upward so that the leaves flying above him could fly farther. Then he smiled in satisfaction.

# Yumiko Kashiwagi



Yumiko is an avid explorer of thoughts, feelings, love, and hopes: still wandering through the woods of adulthood. She grew up drawing and expanding her imagination through inks, paints, and pencils of color. Now, she is diving into a new medium of art; the art of words. She likes movies and romanticizes over things (or overthink things), making her look deeply at the world. The conflict of ideal and reality is mesmerizing for the author, as they wake her pondering in her bed late at night. What makes this world so simple yet so hard to live? She thinks on the first floor of a small apartment room, looking out the window, where cars, people, and leaves pass by.



## Mirror

I hold on to what you see so tight  
With light inside your eyes  
You look at me looking for eyelashes  
your nose  
your mouth  
I know what you cannot see, eyes closed

I try to check the back of your head as  
you braid  
You stare at me,  
Hoping braids are not lopsided  
I look at you a little longer  
I imitate your leaning eyebrows

I touch the crevasses of your skin  
You take out the gooey  
That's gross, but I get it  
I stare; you never smile  
I copy your fingers gliding the edge of  
your nose

I watch you color your skin.  
Shading and coloring as you desire  
I look to check, no glitter falls  
You finally smile, and I do too

# Shizuku Okimune



Shizuku Okimune is from Onomichi, Hiroshima, Japan. Because of Covid-19, she wasn't able to go home for a year after first coming to AIU campus, and she really missed her family and hometown. She has written poems dreaming about the landscapes of home.



## Summer town

August 6, a hot day  
Build air clinging to my skin  
No way to escape from the summer  
Sigh once, and step out  
Strong light cover my sight  
Small sun bomp emerged in the middle of the sky,  
thrusting rays to us  
When I notice,  
I was put on the burnt asphalt under the blue world  
A large thunderhead swelled to show of the energy  
like a huge empty mushroom

# Chika Takano



Chika Takano loves trips and nature so much and writes poems about nature and travel memories. She writes to express her individual ways of perceiving and feeling nature and the joys of travel.



## Dear my beloved grandfather,

I realized,  
sometimes humans do not die  
all at once  
when the heart  
stops beating  
when the machine  
spits out an assertive beep,  
when the doctor  
speaks his solemn words.

You died,  
like mountains changing  
their clothes in autumn  
like stars fading  
in the faint morning Soleil  
like snow bathing  
a warm air  
with the smell of wet spring soil.

When you were there,  
You let me ride on your back like riding a  
horse.  
You taught me to fish.  
We went mushroom hunting.  
We took a walk around old shrines.  
I talked to you slowly and loudly.  
I'd read all of your favorite comics  
in your large bookshelf  
by the time I turned 18.

Sad.

But not a tragedy.

Leaving your body behind,  
you left this world.

My life goes on.  
Spring comes after winter.  
The sun rises in the east  
sets in the west.  
You lived for 75 years  
passed away one February afternoon.  
Like a baby slips down into this world  
from a comfortable womb,  
you died.

## Repeat

### ~collage of poems~

This repetition  
These “insipid days” will be accumulated  
and will be called my “life”  
and it hurts.

\*

Everything I had in the past  
Creates me who I love.  
Even the scars you made  
Increase the pattern and color of the glitter

\*

Every kind of “now”  
turns into the “past.”  
Tepid now turns into “past.”  
Fresh now turns into “past.”

It’s alright.  
Toughest now turns into “past.”  
And remember,  
Happiest now turns into “past.”

You can’t keep soaking in the same bathtub.

\*

Graduation  
Promotion  
Funeral  
Travel  
Skydive?

It’s once-in-a-lifetime!

Even today is, actually.

# Judy Xin-Ai Wu



I am a junior international student from Taipei, Taiwan. I have Chinese and English names, and I enjoy writing creatively in both languages. My love for literature stems from my high sensibility of my surroundings and my strong tendency to self-reflect. Expressing through precisely-chosen words, to me, is a form of self-healing and a way to connect with the world. Using metaphors to describe feelings or experiences is my habit and strength. I genuinely hope my pieces will resonate with you; if not, at least bring you a new, fun perspective on our lives.



# Fragrance For Me....

Opening notes

Open a conversation  
Along comes a wave of exhilaration  
Or false anticipation  
Of what we ought to be together

Heart notes

Hear what's beyond the small talks  
In between us lies similarities  
Incompatibilities  
And all that structure our intertwined scent

Base notes

Bind my days to you  
Close by the cuffs I seek your comfort  
Your company, firm like a fort, fortunately I  
Yielded my wall and let you in  
At the end of the time I do sense

That you are not here to please  
But here to stay

## The Alarm

Before daybreak, I repent myself  
of my duty, my uses  
Just to do it again

This is it  
Time to go off:  
I repeat, replay, rerun  
though not so much enjoying  
the ringtone of your choice

So it is  
You turn me off:  
I return, restart, resume  
for the eighth time of the morning  
as if I have a choice

to watch  
you roll over,  
accusing me of depriving you  
of the rest you gave  
up last night

Up till five  
I watched you hold onto  
unrequited love  
unamusing fun  
unimportant job

Just undeniably vain

If only I could  
wake you up from  
self-destruction instead

You finally sit up  
with bloodshot eyes and a bleeding core

I repent myself  
of my duty, my uses,  
and all your excuses



# Momoka Ono



Momoka Ono is a senior student at AIU. Her view of the world is a bit...special. Her writing style has been called "evil genius."



# Sleep, food, dream, universal messages, Kabaokun

"Deep sleep"  
Assignments--  
I forgot about assignments  
But I have a guest  
Saying sorry to the professor  
Serving coffee to the friend  
"Umm... about that assignment due today..."

Dream--  
It was just a dream  
Cold wind awakened me  
Then brought some memories  
"What a yummy Kenchin soup!"

"Totally eatable energy"  
Imaginary--  
It was just an imaginary soup  
Never mind about the mistaken soup  
I have more to eat  
Open the fridge  
"I have Ramen and Nattomaki!"

Expired--  
All are expired  
Past the expiration date  
Never mind it's not rotten  
Seems no worry in the tummy  
"I beat the expiration date!"

"Do I Dream of Expiration Dates?"

Whisper--  
I hear a whisper  
The expiration date is here  
I feel its anger  
I am here, with fear  
"You need me; unless you are an android."

Again--  
It was just a dream, again  
I dreamed of expiration dates  
and androids  
Their binary language  
Universal messages  
"01101011 01100001  
01100010 01100001  
01101111"

"Universal messages"  
Universal messages  
It's not only for androids  
But also for kids' TV shows

"The song of Ru Ru Ru"  
Scary, creepy, spooky theme song  
Singing about the food chain, deforestation, global warming  
One episode from "Anpanman"  
Famous and popular anime for kids  
Focuses on the structure of the world organized by time

But still stupid Kabaokun  
He lost his house and cries;  
"When I came back home, I realized that my house had disappeared!"  
This 6 second kills me

# EMI YAMANAKA



Emi Yamakawa is a sophomore whose essay "Greenwashing: Misleading Expressions and Corporate Social Responsibility" was submitted for the Composition 1 course under the supervision of Professor Yuki Togawa. She is interested in environmental problems and questioning the credibility of environmentally-friendly labeling led her to write this essay. She will continue to investigate corporate responsibility for the environment.



## Greenwashing: Misleading Expressions and Corporate Social Responsibility

Green marketing is a widely used promotion strategy today: many companies have conducted marketing under eco-friendly slogans such as "Save and live green" by Walmart, "It's easy being green" by General Motors, and "Beyond Petroleum" by British Petroleum (Biome, 2010). Green marketing is a marketing method that promotes the environmental friendliness of products or corporations (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). This increasing trend reflects the consumers' consciousness toward the environment. However, some green marketing promotions contain misleading or false information. These promote the environmental benefits of products or corporations exaggeratedly compared to the benefits in reality, which is called greenwashing (Dahl, 2010). Greenwashing confuses consumers and takes advantage of their incentives to protect the environment just for marketers to gain profits, and it should not be socially and ethically accepted. Greenwashing, however, is a commonly used method. A representation of greenwashing would be a promotion conducted by FIJI Water since the descriptions in the advertisement contain vague and misleading expressions, which consequently caused distrust.

FIJI Water published an advertisement to improve the brand image by promoting its environmental contribution. FIJI published an advertisement (Monikabuncic, 2014) in 2008 as a series of carbon-negative campaigns. The advertisement has a deep blue background with a picture of a drop of

water and an image of its product, bottled water, with an illustration of hibiscus on the label, allowing the audience to evoke water's pureness. In the advertisement, FIJI Water puts a slogan of "Every drop is green" with modest light blue letters and claims that purchasing FIJI bottled water helps reduce carbon emissions and preserves the rainforest in FIJI. A unique characteristic of this advertisement is that they do not promote the quality of the products to the audience. FIJI Water instead tries to improve its brand image by emphasizing its contribution to the environment. This characteristic implies that the intention behind the advertisement is to appeal to customers' sense of responsibility to protect the environment. As FIJI Water intended, the advertisement seems to give the audience the impression that its products and the corporation itself are environmentally friendly. Voices such as the products are "environmentally friendly" and "natural which do not contain any chemicals" or they expect FIJI Water to "not release any chemicals during the production process" are collected in a questionnaire aiming at five students at Akita International University. With the advertisements appealing to its environmental dedication, FIJI Water attempted to improve its brand image.

However, this advertisement was criticized for greenwashing since it utilizes vague expressions to hide negative environmental aspects following its supply chain and disposal process. A study (Schmuck et al., 2018) indicates that greenwashing adver-

tisements or marketing contains incomplete and misleading information to insist on their environmental benefits, such as green or eco-friendly. This characteristic is detected in an advertisement from FIJI Water. The advertisement contains the slogan “Every drop is green” (Monikabuncic, 2014) without any evidence to support it, and it does not clarify what green refers to. This would lead the consumers to have the false impression that water shipped in plastic bottles can influence the environment positively. In reality, however, FIJI Water’s fundamental business harms the environment. A study (Ballantine et al., 2019) demonstrates that bottled water negatively affects the environment in production, storage, distribution, and disposal phases. It indicates that the production process emits CO<sub>2</sub> since plastic bottles require the use of fossil fuels and are made in factories where massive energy is consumed. The bottles also emit CO<sub>2</sub> in the disposal process and lead to pollution of the ocean (Turner, 2021). Even if it is recyclable plastic bottles, the recycling rate is about 7 % and emits carbon dioxide in its process (Ballantine et al., 2019). No matter how well FIJI Water promotes its greenness, it is undeniable that its fundamental business affects the environment negatively. However, FIJI Water attempts to hide these negative aspects of bottled water by labelling it with hibiscus and using the vague word green.

Another vague expression misleading consumers is the claim that the purchase of bottled water helps decrease CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. FIJI Water argued that it would reduce 120% of its carbon emissions with its rainforest in FIJI; therefore, it consequently offsets and lowers CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (Boime, 2010). Regardless of the claim, at the point of 2008, FIJI water’s products were not carbon negative. FIJI Water instead had just launched a carbon-negative campaign which was planned to last

for 30 years from 2008; This method of promotion is called forward crediting (FIJI Water Becomes First Bottled Water Company to Release Carbon Footprint of Its Products: Unveils FIJIGreen.com to Report Progress on Its Carbon Negative Commitment, 2008). Still, it is unclear if their goal of carbon reduction by 120% has been achieved yet. Even if it has been achieved, data to support the claim cannot be found on the homepage of FIJI Water or that of its campaign partner, Conservation International. Therefore, the insistence on the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emission in the advertisement is considered problematic. Analyzing these two aspects, slogan and vague claim of the contribution of purchase to the environment, the advertisement is seen to be greenwashing. This greenwashing advertisement needs to be criticized as it has negative consequences in terms of the environment and causes a decline in trust between FIJI Water and its consumers.

Contrary to the claim on the advertisement, the advertisement seems to negatively affect the preservation of the environment. Corporations today are commonly operated under corporate social responsibility (CSR), which is an ideology that corporations make decisions based on what social norms expect (Sharma & Song, 2018). CSR includes, for example, conservation of the environment, responsible sourcing, social equity and working conditions (UNIDO, n.d.). CSR plays a vital role in allowing corporations to act ethically and is associated with brand image significantly. Therefore, the activity against CSR is likely to result in a reduction in reputation or trust (Sharma & Song, 2018). However, the advertisement created by FIJI Water seems to be against CSR as this advertisement was likely to be followed by spillover effects. According to a study (Wang et al., 2020), greenwashing promotions are expected to decline the brand image of corporations

that conduct green marketing generally, including those without greenwashing aspects. This implies the corporation tackling environmental issues sincerely can be affected negatively, which can slow the fight back against environmental issues. The spillover effect was likely to have happened in the case of FIJI Water’s advertisement, as it attracted attention. The advertisement and carbon-negative campaign faced criticisms and were widely used as an example of greenwashing. For example, on earth day, it was used to illustrate a typical misleading advertisement that confuses consumers by marketing professor Abhijit Roy from the University of Scranton (Brendan, 2014). Also, it appeared as a case of greenwashing in a study to examine the relationship between the age of the bank and greenwashing (McMaster & Nowak, 2009, as cited in Khalil & O’sullivan, 2017). Those examples demonstrate the significant impact of FIJI Water’s marketing method. Considering the influence of the advertisement, its spillover effect, which negatively affects other green marketing, was likely to be substantial as well. Therefore, FIJI Water consequently had negatively influenced the environment due to the advertisement, which is against CSR.

Moreover, the misleading expression used in the advertisement is against CSR. Since consumers have to make consumption decisions based on information provided by the corporations, marketing with misleading or vague expressions can cause confusion among consumers. This simply is not fair for consumers and is not ethically acceptable under the terms of CSR. In fact, according to the guideline published by the Federal Trade Commission (2012), vague claims on environmental benefits such as green or eco-friendly should be avoided. This would be against CSR in terms of responsible sourcing. This violation would affect the corporation’s reputation nega-

tively. Since FIJI Water violated CSR due to its spillover effects and its use of vague expression, the advertisement consequently confused consumers. For instance, FIJI Water was sued over the claim on reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emission following the purchase of the products was false and misleading in 2010, in the case of Worthington v. Fiji Water Co (2010). According to the record, consumers claimed that forward crediting made them confused in the class action. This case would represent the confusion and distrust that occurred by the unethical marketing against CSR conducted.

The advertisement created by FIJI water represents greenwashing, claiming green by omitting the adverse environmental effects following production. This is not acceptable as it ignores CSR in terms of the protection of the environment and responsible marketing, which results in generating confusion. Even after the criticisms it received and the reduction in trust, FIJI Water still implies that it is part of nature in the advertisement released on Youtube in 2015 (FIJI Water, 2015). This can be seen as greenwashing. It is not only about FIJI Water. In today’s market, greenwashing can be found frequently since the increasing number of consumers have become conscious about the environment or sustainability. Considering the current situation regarding green marketing, each corporation needs to be responsible for its economic activity and marketing in order to sustain its activity and healthy relationship with its consumers.

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# ATSUO TERAISHI



Atsuo Teraishi is a sophomore student majoring in Global Studies. His essay “Veganism vs Intensive Animal Farming: Serve Four Ends” was submitted in Composition I under the supervision of Professor Yuki Togawa. Teraishi has had a keen interest in environmental issues and animal welfare. He became interested in environmental issues during his high school years and continued to study various topics, leading to this paper on intensive animal farming. As for Teraishi’s future, he would like to keep his interest in various topics and be a part of the solution to environmental issues.



## Veganism vs Intensive Animal Farming: Serve Four Ends

The earth is in danger because human beings eat meat. Today, the global demand for meat is growing significantly. According to Ritchie and Roser (2019), total meat production has been more than threefold over the past five years, and humans produce more than 340 million tons of meat each year. The authors also explain that per capita meat consumption has increased approximately 20 kilograms since 1961 as a global average. In order to meet this increased demand for meat, the livestock industry needs to produce large amounts of meat efficiently. Due to this, many livestock farmers are currently adopting intensive animal farming; it is a globally mainstream agricultural system in which large livestock groups are housed in limited indoor spaces such as stalls and cages (FAIRR Initiative, 2019). Intensive animal farming destroys the natural environment and poses serious problems with animal welfare. For this reason, veganism is on the rise in various countries worldwide while the demand for meat is growing. Among several types of vegetarianism, such as Lacto-vegetarian diets allowing dairy products and Pescatarian diets allowing fish, vegan diets exclude all animal products, including meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and dairy products (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2020). However, although veganism could be the solution for the two significant problems above, people do not need to adopt vegan diets and stop eating meat. That is because meats not only have some benefits for human health like high nutritional content, but the livestock industry also provides jobs for millions of rural households, especially poor people in developing countries, and guarantees their

livelihoods (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, n.d.). The real cause is neither the act of eating meat itself nor the whole livestock industry but intensive animal farming. Humans should stop intensive animal farming, adopt range-free methods as an alternative, and reduce meat consumption to cope with declining meat production resulting from changes in farming methods. These will stop the destruction of the natural environment and solve the problem of animal welfare without taking jobs away from many people and stopping meat-eating.

Intensive animal farming causes environmental destruction, such as deforestation and water pollution. It uses large amounts of land to establish farms and other facilities for raising animals. However, as the increasing demand for meat has led to a shortage of land, livestock farmers are trying to secure new land by cutting down forests. According to Sentient Media (2020), huge areas of the Amazon rainforest, a globally important forest likened to the "lungs of the planet" (para.1), are being cut down to create pastures for grazing cattle and soybean fields to feed them in South America. The article explains that 17% of the rainforest was lost by the year 2018, and deforestation increased by 279% in March 2020 compared to last the year prior. Besides, the state of Yucatan in Mexico is facing serious problems with the swine industry and Mariana Garcia Solana (2021) explains the details. Her research found that most of the swine farms there lack wastewater treatment systems and adequate solid waste management, result-

ing in irreversible levels of water pollution. Additionally, she also explains that only 22 operate with an impact assessment manifestation of a total of 257 farms, and although people in Homun village could stop one industrial swine farm by a court case that began in 2016, no action has been taken to remove or relocate the many other farms. As these two cases indicate, intensive animal farming has various problems leading to the destruction of the natural environment. In the case of the Mexican swine industry, it is true that installing the equipment would solve the problem. In the first place, however, these issues would not have happened if the animals had not been raised in intensive animal farming, which is growing large numbers of animals in one place. Considering the current situation of various environmental problems, including the rapid progress of global warming, humans should abolish intensive animal farming since it would be one of the causes.

Intensive animal farming is not only destroying the natural environment but also constitutes animal exploitation. The livestock industry has devised various ways to efficiently produce large amounts of meat. On the one hand, animals are in a miserable situation because of the excessive pursuit of profit for humans. Hens and male chicks in egg farms and sows are representative examples of this problem. In most commercial pig farms, sows are placed in two types of crates for about two months between conception and the weaning of their piglets, in which they cannot turn around or walk though they can stand or lie down (Vandresen & Hötzel, 2021). Similarly, in some egg farms, hens are confined in less space than an A4 piece of paper called the battery cage in which they are unable to spread their wings, walk freely, dust bathe, forage, and lay their egg in a nest which is the natural behaviors for hens, causing pain, injury, and death (Neil,

2016). Although the abolition of battery cages is completed or underway in some countries, such as Switzerland in 1992, the EU in 2012, and New Zealand scheduled for 2022, it remains legal at the national level in most countries, including the United States (The Humane League, 2021). Additionally, egg farmers are doing even more brutal things. Billions of one-day-old male chicks are being killed because farmers cannot know whether eggs will become male or female before hatching (Gremmen, Bruijnis, Blok, & Stassen, 2018). Intensive animal farming is only for the efficiency of meat production and the maximization of human profits and does not consider animals' welfare. Since vegan diets do not contain any meats and other animal products, problems of environmental destruction and animal exploitation would be solved if more people introduced a vegan diet.

However, it does not mean that all people have to be vegan because both the production and the consumption of animal products are necessary for humans. Eating meat provides health benefits to humans. For instance, Red meat contains a high percentage of protein with all eight essential amino acids needed by adults and nine essential amino acids required by children, as well as the minerals magnesium, iron, potassium, and zinc, which are lacking in the diets of some population groups (Wyness, 2015). Additionally, the benefits of chicken are not limited to its high protein content. According to Goswami (2017), the low-fat content of chicken helps people lose weight, the abundance of calcium and phosphorus makes human bones more robust, and chicken consumption also improves immunity and makes people recover from most infections and colds. Despite these health benefits, most vegan people do not stop promoting veganism since humans can take most of the nutrition even from plant-based diets. Indeed, according to

Darcie Fisher (n.d.), even nutrients that are considered to be lacking in vegan diets can be obtained from plant-based diets, such as calcium from orange juice and broccoli, iron from tofu and spinach, protein from beans and nuts, and B12 from fortified soy milk and orange juice. However, as she also mentions, vegan diets could be deficient in essential nutrients if not appropriately planned. Hence, it is difficult for people to fully adopt a vegan diet, except for those who have become vegans with firm beliefs. In addition, those who need appropriate and adequate nutrition, such as growing children and pregnant women, should not be on vegan diets.

As for the necessity of meat production, livestock farming supports the livelihoods of many people all over the world. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (n.d.), livestock farming accounts for 40 percent of agricultural output in developed countries and 20 percent in developing countries, and contributes to the livelihoods of at least 1.3 billion people worldwide. In response, critics say that vegan diets could solve this unemployment problem. Research conducted in Latin America and the Caribbean by the Inter-American Development Bank and the International Labour Organization indicates that 22.5 million jobs were newly created in agriculture, plant-based food production, and renewable electricity, though 7.5 million jobs related to fossil fuels electricity and the production of animal products will be destroyed during the transition to a net-zero carbon economy (Saget, Vogt-Schillb, & Luu, 2020). While this research does not describe the exact change in the number of jobs related to food production, it would be certain that enough new jobs will be created to offset the number of jobs that will be lost. However, although the jobs lost related to the livestock industry can be offset by new

jobs in terms of the number of jobs, not all people who have been engaged in livestock farming can make a smooth transition to agriculture. For instance, if American livestock farmers start growing beans and corn, the initial cost will be as much as \$1.4 million (Williamson, 2017) though they do not have to pay for the land. In addition, those who conduct livestock production on unsuitable land for farming would not be able to shift to agriculture. In short, it is not a wise idea to stop eating meat altogether since the production and consumption of meat products have some advantages for humans.

Humans should stop intensive animal farming in order to prevent environmental destruction and protect animal welfare. Still, they should not stop eating meat considering human health and the livelihoods of many people. There are several ways for humans to cover all these four points. The most significant part is to stop intensive animal farming and shift to conducting the range-free method for livestock production, which allows animals to roam outdoors. Since outdoor runs and grazing provide livestock the opportunity to forage and do other important natural behaviors (Oscar, 2021), range-free livestock farming does not violate animal welfare. What is more, unlike intensive animal farming, where large numbers of animals are raised in factories, range-free animal farming is conducted in a more natural way that causes less environmental destruction such as water pollution. One crucial problem is that production efficiency is significantly decreased. For this reason, humans need to reduce the amount of meat consumption even though they do not have to stop eating meat. A practical activity for this purpose is Meatless Monday. Conzachi (2021) explains that it is a movement that encourages people to reduce their meat consumption by not eating animal products for one

day a week for their own health and the earth's health. According to the author, 133 gallons of water and 8 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions can be reduced even with just one day of activity per week. In addition, utilizing plant-based alternative meats also could lead to the reduction of meat consumption. Humans should gradually reduce meat consumption by taking these methods and shifting from intensive to range-free animal farming.

In conclusion, intensive animal farming should be stopped shortly. Since this method is introduced in order to produce large amounts of meat efficiently, which is only for human profits, it significantly destroys the natural environment and violates animal welfare. In terms of stopping intensive animal farming, vegan diets seem to be an effective solution. However, humans should not stop eating meat because they can

gain various health benefits from meat and because the livestock industry contributes to the livelihoods of many people around the world. In order to cover all four points; stop environmental destruction, protect animal welfare, take nutrition from meats, and sustain the employment of 1.3 billion people worldwide, intensive animal farming should be replaced with range-free animal farming. Although this transition will cause significant problems, like reducing meat production, humans will be able to cope with it by taking the Meatless Monday movements and utilizing plant-based alternative meats. Suppose humans succeed in making a complete transition from intensive animal farming to the range-free method in this way. In that case, they will be able to keep eating meat while not causing environmental destruction, violating animal welfare, and taking jobs away from many people.

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# Rinka Sasaki



Rinka Sakaki is a sophomore student. Her essay "Beneficial or Detrimental: Effects of Veganism on Health, Animals, and the Environment" was written when she was a freshman in Composition I under the supervision of Professor Yuki Togawa. Rinka has had an interest in sustainability and environmental issues and would like to major in Global Connectivity to learn about interrelationships between various fields, such as psychology, culture, technology, and sustainability.



## Beneficial or Detrimental: Effects of Veganism on Health, Animals, and the Environment

Veganism, "a strict plant-based diet," is a popular, yet controversial lifestyle to follow today. According to The Vegan Society (n.d.), over 56,000 products from more than 2,500 companies are registered to the Vegan Trademark, including 18,000 food and drink items and 24,000 cosmetics and toiletries. The Vegan Trademark was introduced to help businesses exhibit that their products meet the authentic international vegan standard. Products from companies such as Lush, Mars, and Nestle carry the Vegan Trademark. Veganism can be defined as a way of living that seeks to exclude all forms of animal exploitation, such as foods, clothing, and cosmetics. Vegans exclude not only meat and fish, but also dairy and eggs from their diets. Furthermore, they avoid purchasing fur and leather products, as well as cosmetics tested on animals. Jakše et al. (2021) explain that people mainly choose to become vegans for three reasons, that are health benefits, animal welfare, and environmental protection. However, non-vegans are concerned about the risk of the vegan diet, which is a deficiency in calcium, protein, and vitamin B12. Despite the belief of non-vegans, vegan diets can prevent metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular disease, decrease the number of animals killed for food and other commodities, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from food production, as long as the meals are carefully planned to compensate for missing nutrients.

Vegan diets can provide promised health benefits. According to Marrone et al.

(2021) and Jakše et al. (2021), vegan diets lower the risk of metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular disease. Although vegans are restricted from the consumption of animal products, they can still eat a variety of foods. For example, a vegan diet often consists of many fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, and seeds. Since veganism has been recognized and accepted by many people in recent years, there are many vegan options in supermarkets and restaurants, such as soy meat and soy milk. Among those products, fruits and vegetables, which comprise a large part of a vegan diet, are low in calories and fat, contain a considerable amount of fibers, and provide vitamins and minerals. Since metabolic syndrome is associated with the intake of processed meats and fried food, avoiding animal products and instead eating fruits and vegetables can prevent the disease. Research by Marrone et al. (2021) found that vegans had a significantly lower body mass index and body fat than non-vegans. Vegan diets are more likely to assist people to achieve and maintain a healthy weight and low cholesterol level. Furthermore, low cholesterol level is associated with the health of blood vessels. Cardiovascular disease is caused by a buildup of fatty plaques in arteries. The study by Jakše et al. (2021) found that vegans had significantly lower lipids, which are molecules that create plaques. These plaques are comprised of cholesterol and fat, and can narrow or completely block arteries, resulting in high blood pressure and the blockage of blood supply to organs. Unhealthy lifestyle habits

such as poor diet and being overweight can lead to cardiovascular disease. Jakše et al. also discuss that vegans generally smoke less, drink less alcohol, and exercise more. The fact that vegans are more health-conscious than non-vegans seems to contribute to a more healthy, favorable condition of the body. It became evident that vegan diets have a lower risk of suffering from cardiovascular diseases and metabolic syndrome. Vegan diets are beneficial not only for human health, but also for animal welfare.

Since vegans avoid eating and using animal products, they contribute to decreasing the number of animals killed for food and other commodities such as fur, leather, and ivory. Kato (2019) argues that the number of African elephants has declined to 420,000 due to illegal hunting, which is only one-third of the population of about 1.34 million in 1979. Ivories from elephants are exploited for jewelry, musical instruments, and Japanese signature stamps. In addition, it is estimated that about one billion animals are slaughtered for creating leather products every year (Animals Australia, 2021). Animal leather is used in various products such as handbags, coats, shoes, car seats, and furniture. Cows are not the only victims of the leather industry; sheep, goats, snakes, crocodiles, dogs, cats, and many other animals are killed for their skin. Among them, kangaroos, tigers, and deer are registered as endangered species. Exploiting animals for ivory and leather can accelerate extinction. Animals Australia also discusses that the process to preserve animal skins called “tanning” is toxic for people and the environment. The tanning process requires strong chemicals to prevent decomposing. Anthracene can cause problems in the kidneys and liver, and Formaldehyde can damage the eyes and lungs (Animals Australia, 2021). These chemicals can be harmful to the environ-

ment by contaminating rivers and seas. Vegans no longer contribute to factory farming in any form, such as purchasing fur, leather, wool, and silk, where animals are kept out of their natural surroundings and exploited for the mass production of goods. Many people are learning more about the cruel treatment of animals in factory farming due to the rising awareness of veganism. As they become more empathic towards animals, they can not imagine consuming animal products. Although preventing the exploitation of animals is not the only reason to become a vegan, animal welfare remains the key factor for going and staying vegan. Veganism can contribute to decelerating animal extinction as well as reducing the sacrifices for foods and goods. Veganism is an animal-conscious way of living, which also contributes to protecting the environment.

While consumption of meat and dairy products accelerates the climate crisis, vegan diets can reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the process of food production. According to Scarborough et al. (2014), eating 75 grams of beef daily for a year emits greenhouse gas equivalent to driving a car 7,196 miles, while eating 150 grams of beans for a year emits greenhouse gas equivalent to driving a car 93 miles. This is because producing meat and dairy products is responsible for releasing methane. Livestock emits methane in the process of enteric fermentation. Enteric fermentation is a natural part of digestion for ruminant animals such as cattle, sheep, and goats. Scarborough et al. (2014) discuss that methane released by enteric fermentation comprises almost five percent of global emissions, which is the second contributor to global warming. Since eating less meat and dairy products leads to reduced emission of greenhouse gasses, it can be clarified that vegan diets can contribute to protecting the environment. In addition,

raising animals for food requires a vast amount of feed crops. Just like deforestation for agriculture is a problem in South America, native prairies and grasslands are lost due to farming in North America (Clean Water Action, n.d.). Converting the natural environment to farmlands can result in depriving animals of their habitat. If the number of animals in their own habitat is decreased, the balance of the ecosystem is likely to be disturbed. Certain animals and insects might increase or decrease in numbers, leading to extinction. Furthermore, the chemicals in fertilizers and pesticides can pollute the fields and waterways. Chemicals like acid are sprayed on the ground, released in the air, or leaked into rivers. This will affect the surrounding environment by killing animals, plants, and fish. The manure, animal waste used for fertilizing land in an organic way, is also detrimental to the environment because it releases carbon dioxide in the process of decomposing. Vegan diets contribute to protecting the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. However, while vegan diets can improve human health, animal welfare, and the environment, there are some concerns about the lack of certain nutrients.

In fact, some non-vegans argue that vegan diets are detrimental to bone health, endurance, and muscle strength. According to Menzel et al. (2021), a vegan diet can be the cause of osteoporosis due to the lack of calcium. Osteoporosis is a health condition that makes bones fragile by lowering the bone density. Since vegans avoid dairy products such as cow’s milk, yogurt, cheese, and butter, calcium intake is more likely to be lower than non-vegans. Bone strength is one of the most significant factors for staying healthy for a long time because fragile bones can be broken more easily, and people become unable to walk at a younger age. Furthermore, Boutros et al.

(2020) discuss that vegans might have lower endurance and muscle strength compared to non-vegans. This is because vegan diets lack protein and vitamin B12. Protein is abundant in meat and dairy products and plays a large role in forming muscle, skin, and hair. Vitamin B12 assists in preventing nerve damage but can only be found in meat, fish, eggs, and dairy. It is necessary for humans to take calcium, protein, and vitamin B12, yet vegan diets seem to be deficient in these nutrients. However, such issues can be overcome as long as vegans carefully plan their meals to compensate for missing nutrients.

In order to receive health benefits from vegan diets, vegans must be aware of which nutrients are lacking in their diets and make an effort to compensate for them. Torborg (2019) reports that dairy milk contains about 300 milligrams of calcium per cup, and soy milk is fortified to match the amount of calcium in dairy milk. Although vegans have less opportunity to take calcium, it is not a serious problem because soy milk contains roughly the same amount of protein as cow’s milk. Vegans can take almost the same amount of calcium from soy milk to keep their bones healthy. In terms of protein, Torborg (2019) discusses that while cow’s milk has eight grams of protein per cup, soy milk contains seven grams per cup. The lack of protein is not significant as the difference is only one gram. In addition, beans are also high in protein. Recently, replacing meat with beans has attracted people’s attention due to lower calories, and there are many vegan options available in supermarkets. Vegans can easily purchase soy milk and soy meat to replace dairy products and animal meat. However, they must check the label of nutritional facts to confirm that soy milk and meat contain enough amount of calcium and protein. According to the research by Boutros et al. (2020), there was

no significant difference in physical activity levels and muscle strength among vegans and non-vegans. In fact, the study found that VO<sub>2</sub> max, the maximum amount of oxygen a person can utilize during intense exercise, was slightly higher for vegans. Since higher VO<sub>2</sub> max means better endurance, it was revealed that vegan diets could be more beneficial for human health than non-vegan diets. In terms of vitamin B12, vegans can take it from nutritional yeast, fortified food, and supplements (Boutros et al., 2020). Despite the general belief that vegan diets lead to poor bone health, muscle strength, and endurance, these health conditions will not be a problem if vegans consume soy milk, soy meat, and other products with vitamin B12. It is important for vegans to learn about the diet and carefully choose what they eat.

In conclusion, veganism can be beneficial for human health, animal welfare, and the environment. Avoiding eating meat and dairy products can reduce the risk of metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular disease. In addition, veganism contributes

to protecting animals from being exploited for foods and other commodities, as well as from extinction. Finally, veganism can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prevent soils and waterways from chemical pollution. Some might argue that vegan diets are deficient in calcium, protein, and vitamin B12, and can be the cause of osteoporosis, lower endurance, and weaker muscle strength. However, researchers found no significant differences in health conditions between vegans and non-vegans. Soy milk contains an almost equivalent amount of calcium and protein to dairy milk, and beans can be the alternative for meat. Vitamin B12 can be compensated by nutritional yeast, fortified food, and supplements. What vegans must understand is the nutritional difference between a vegan diet and a non-vegan diet. They have to learn which nutrients are deficient in the vegan diet and plan the meals to fill in the gaps. Veganism can be beneficial for the health, animals, and environment, as long as vegans are aware of the risks and know how to prevent them.

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# MASHIHO TAKAHASHI



Mashiho Takahashi is a sophomore student majoring in Global Business. Her essay “Sustainable Methods Have the Potential to Make Living Things Happy” was submitted in Composition I under the supervision of Professor Yuki Togawa. Takahashi is interested in the business field, especially in marketing. She would like to study abroad to learn about product development that is not only attractive to customers but also takes SDGs into account. A news article about the problem of factory farming in a mass consumption society inspired her to write this essay. As for future research, she would like to seek out how to produce food with the least burden on animals and the environment.



## Sustainable Methods Have the Potential to Make Living Things Happy

The food people eat in their daily lives goes through a variety of production processes before it reaches their mouths. Unlike ancient times, not all people engage in the food production process, hence, many people do not know how the food they are eating is created. Today’s food production is in pursuit of efficiency and profit, which often has a negative impact on the environment and other factors. Especially, the food served in many fast-food restaurants is manufactured in a way that seeks benefits rather than its quality to achieve speed and cheapness. However, due to global warming and the resulting increase in various climate changes and disasters, people’s environmental awareness is rising today. In addition, the concept of sustainability, which aims for continuable development not only for humans but also for the entire planet, is gradually spreading. Following this trend, one of the Mexican fast-food restaurant companies called Chipotle tried to change the negative impression about its ingredients by the commercial. Chipotle’s commercial could get the attention of viewers by using various techniques such as simple structure and the use of animation. Chipotle also succeeded in improving the brand image by showing the ethical and environmental problems of factory farming and highlighting the company’s sustainable farming methods.

Chipotle’s advertisement, titled “Back to the start,” was first released to the public as a film online, then later in movie theaters (Olson, 2012). After that, it was shown as

a TV commercial in the United States and won the Clio Award, which is an international competition for advertising, in 2012 (Clio awards, n.d.). Chipotle did not have an advertising agency, and this was the first time to produce an advertisement to be aired on a national television program, but the company attempted to create a video with a strong message based on an original survey it conducted of its customers (Olson, 2012). This commercial starts with the scene of a family farmer changing the way of farming from the original way to factory farming. Factory farming is a method of animal husbandry in which livestock are crammed into a small cage, managed, and artificially fattened with chemical fertilizers to raise livestock more efficiently and profitably (The Humane League, 2020). However, the farmer realizes that factory farming is not a sustainable and moral way, and finally returns to sustainable methods. As a result, animals are reared in a free space that does not make them feel stressed. Moreover, in the last part of this advertisement, Chipotle promotes viewers to download the music, “The Scientist” by Willie Nelson, used in the commercial via iTunes. The revenue generated by this download will be donated to the “Chipotle Cultivate Foundation,” a foundation that supports sustainable farming and family farming (Olson, 2012). By airing this commercial, Chipotle is showing viewers how it is different from many other fast-food restaurants that use food produced by factory farming and is working to improve the company’s overall brand image.

Through this commercial, Chipotle is not promoting a specific product, but is using various techniques to make viewers understand what the company wants to tell them. First of all, even though the commercial is over two minutes long, it succeeds in keeping the viewer's attention. There are mainly two possible innovations that would be considered behind the success of maintaining the viewers engaged on the screen. The first feature is that the structure of the commercial is simple without complex information such as narration and a lot of text. It prevents viewers from getting fed up with a big amount of information and quitting watching halfway through. According to the collected data from five students in the class, the audience could concentrate on the commercial for more than two minutes without getting bored because the entire advertisement is like one story with only background music. In addition, no text is used except the only one phrase in the last part of the film, "CULTIVATE A BETTER WORLD," which successfully emphasizes the message the company wants to tell. The second innovation is the use of stop-motion animation. It is the technique that creates images that appear to be moving by stitching together still pictures. This film that uses stop-motion animation is more likely to give people the impression that it is unique and fresh, and can emotionally appeal to viewers about the concept of the advertisement and the image of the company (Xiong, 2017). In addition, the use of animation instead of actual animals and the environment is also significant when considering the viewers' impressions. Televising actual animals being locked in cages, administering large chemicals to real animals, and so on is too extreme for some viewers and may make them take the issue too seriously (Olson, 2012). The survey which I conducted with my five classmates revealed that the animation video made the

issue on the commercial more familiar and made viewers think about it more easily. By animating the film, not only does it allow people to watch the commercial calmly, but also does clearly show what the company wants to tell in the advertisement. Moreover, it is proven by a study that animated advertisements can easily add emotional stimulation to viewers and increase their purchase motivation (Manaf & Allan, 2017). As described, the company effectively attracts viewers' attention, which enables the company to send its important message following by using the above techniques.

Chipotle successfully makes customers want to come to the stores by using pathos to convince them that the ingredients for food used in Chipotle's restaurants are produced in a sustainable way. In Chipotle's advertisement, there are several scenes that evoke an emotional impression on viewers. Moreover, there is not only one type of emotion that is brought out by watching this commercial, but two types of emotions, negative and positive, are also elicited. The scene of animals being confined in a small cage, for example, might arouse the feeling of painfulness, cruelty, and sadness of being inhumane. In Particular, Chipotle wants to show viewers the fact that the meat used in many fast-food restaurants is produced using a method called "factory farming," as seen in the video by clarifying its issues. Factory farming has many disadvantages to animals, environments, and even humans. First of all, since livestock is fostered in an artificial place such as cages, animals are stressed out and vulnerable to diseases (Anomaly, 2014). In addition, in factory farming, viruses are more likely to spread because animals are raised in densely packed environments (Anomaly, 2014). Breeding animals just for manufacturing products is immoral too. In terms of the environmental and human impacts, waste from the plant contaminates the air and

water around the facility and even poses a health risk to people living in the vicinity (The Humane League, 2020). After making viewers realize the problems of factory farming in the former part of the advertisement, the commercial depicts the following scene. The family farmer finds that factory farming is not a reasonable way due to the above disadvantages and goes back to the original method that the farmer used to do. In those scenes, the animation leads up viewers' feelings of pleasure. In this way, Chipotle clearly reveals to viewers that Chipotle's food is favorable for their health and environmentally friendly. In other words, Chipotle is showing the difference between itself and other fast-food companies. In this manner, Chipotle has succeeded in gaining the trust of consumers by declaring in its commercials that it will source food ingredients sustainably (Dey et al., 2011). Chipotle has made good use of pathos by creating negative emotions in the first half of the advertisement, but inducing positive emotions in the second half, thereby increasing the customers' favorability rating for Chipotle.

In conclusion, Chipotle has succeeded in improving its brand image and differentiating itself from other fast-food restaurants through the use of a simple and clear structure, stop animation, and pathos in its commercial. At the core of this adver-

tisement, Chipotle expresses concern over factory farming, a common modern method of animal husbandry used in many fast-food companies. Through the utilization of clever animation, the film shows the various problems behind factory farming that affect animals, the environment, and humans. Consumers rarely know this problem because they have less opportunity to learn how the food they eat is produced. Therefore, this advertisement is valuable not only because it raised the company's impression, but also because it made viewers aware of the major problem of factory farming. Chipotle is one of the first among the many fast-food chains to focus on sustainability and succeeds in gaining the expectation of its customers. Today, as consumers are becoming more and more aware of sustainability, other fast-food restaurants are expected to follow Chipotle's lead. Efforts on the part of companies alone are, however, insufficient. Even though the consciousness of consumers for sustainability is gradually increasing, quickly prepared and inexpensive food is attractive and still motivates consumers to buy. Since companies are built on customers' demands, unless consumers' attitudes change, companies might not be able to take the initiative to change. If both sides deepen their thinking about sustainable production methods, it will lead to more companies like Chipotle.

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## Achieving Sustainable Well-Being through Education: Spirituality Education as a Key

# YUUKI FUJISAWA



Yuuki Fujisawa is a senior student at AIU majoring in Global Studies. Her essay "Achieving 'Sustainable Well-Being' through Education - Spirituality Education as a Key" is a short version of her bachelor thesis submitted in the Global Studies Capstone Seminar under the supervision of Professor Yoji Natori. Fujisawa has had a keen interest in how to achieve the well-being of all, including both living and non-living beings. She believes that everything can co-exist in harmony as they all are ultimately connected. In her essay, Fujisawa explores how "connectedness" can be nurtured through education and how it possibly contributes to achieving well-being for all. As for her future research endeavors, she would like to continue studying the nature of connectedness by incorporating a spiritual perspective.



### Introduction

“Sustainable Well-being” is a newly developed framework by Ronen and Kerret that recognizes the synergy between sustainability and well-being. Sustainable well-being is achieved when the improvement of individual well-being correlates with the enhancement of the well-being for others, society, and the environment (Ronen & Kerret, 2020). Here, sustainability refers to a well-known definition of sustainable development, which is the development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). According to the Well-being Theory by Seligman, well-being is considered to comprise five constructs: positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (The PERMA Model) (Seligman, 2011). Despite the prevailing notion that conservation for sustainability and development that seeks human well-being are incompatible, some studies support the idea of sustainable well-being by showing that sustainability leads to human well-being and that well-being instigates sustainability (Corral Verdugo, 2012; Corral-Verdugo et al., 2011).

Although sustainability and well-being are simultaneously achievable, the synergetic relationship between sustainability and well-being is not necessarily ensured. It can also be a trade-off such that economic development raises the level of standard

of living while it can cause serious damage to the environment. In the worst case, a vicious cycle is created in which unsustainability and decreased well-being exacerbate each other. For instance, intensive economic activities lead to environmental pollution that causes human health issues. In such a case, neither sustainability nor well-being is achieved. This is the limitation to the idea of sustainable well-being. Therefore, finding a key to ensure synergy is required to achieve sustainable well-being.

Berejnoi and her colleagues argue that spirituality is the key that links sustainability and well-being. Spirituality is about the awareness and experience of connectedness to all living and non-living beings (Berejnoi et al., 2019). In this study, spirituality is defined as the connectedness to oneself, others, the environment, and transcendence (de Jager Meezenbroek et al., 2012). Berejnoi et al. argue that spirituality can be the source of both sustainability and well-being (2019). Realization of oneness leads to the motivation to seek the well-being of all, including fellow human beings and the natural environment, which leads to sustainable behaviors (Ulluwishewa, 2019). Also, self-connection, social connection, and connectedness to nature are all important predictors of well-being (Ermer & Proulx, 2019; Jose et al., 2012; Klussman et al., 2020; Nisbet et al., 2020). Based on their idea of spirituality as a missing link between sustainability and well-being, Berejnoi and her colleagues developed the holistic development model that integrates

spirituality to well-being and sustainability (Berejnoi et al., 2019) (see Figure 1). This model is to overcome the above-mentioned limitation of sustainable well-being.

As a way to achieve sustainable well-being, Ronen and Kerret argue that school education can be a starting point. They suggest positive sustainability education that integrates both environmental education for sustainability and positive education for well-being (Ronen & Kerret, 2020). The idea is that if well-being and sustainability can produce synergy, positive education and sustainability education can enhance each other to achieve sustainable well-being. The idea has been implemented in actual schools such as Cape Breton University in Canada and a primary school in Chile (Ampuero et al., 2015; O'Brien, 2010). However, the number of cases is limited, and the link between these two different educations has not been studied sufficiently. The synergy between positive education and sustainability education is yet to be confirmed. Therefore, by applying the holistic development model to education, I propose the holistic education model (see Figure 1). Based on the idea of the holistic

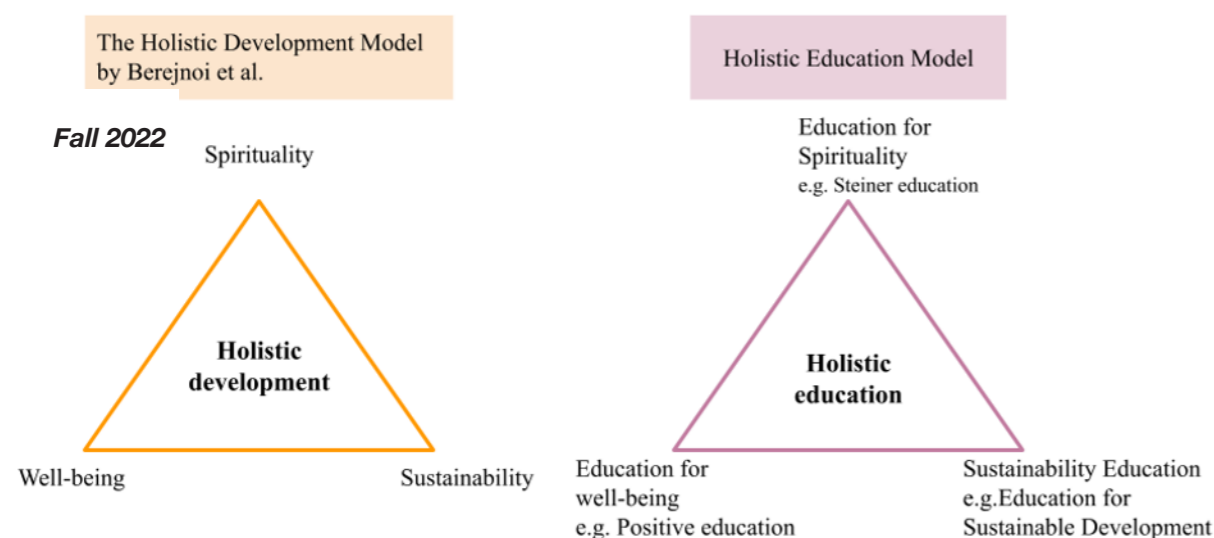
development model, the holistic education model suggests integrating spirituality education into positive education and sustainability education to achieve sustainable well-being through education.

To validate the holistic education model, it should first be confirmed that spirituality can be nurtured through school education, and thus it is the primary aim of this research. The study focuses on Steiner Education developed by Rudolf Steiner based on his philosophy called Anthroposophy. Anthroposophy means “the wisdom of a human being” and is often explained as spiritual science (Steiner, 2002). It deals with an essential question of what it means to be human, which is understood as three-fold: body, soul, and spirit. Since Steiner (2004) emphasizes incorporating spirituality into education, developing spirituality occupies an important part at Steiner schools. Research questions of the present study are the following: 1) Is Steiner Education effective to nurture spirituality? and if yes, 2) How does Steiner education contribute to the spiritual growth of the students?

**Methods**

*Definition of Spirituality*

**Figure 1. The Holistic Development Model and the Holistic Education Model**



Spiritual Health And Life-Orientation Measure (SHALOM) developed by Gomez and Fisher is employed to measure spirituality as it identifies the connectedness in personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental domains (see Table. 1). SHALOM recognizes the multi-dimension of spirituality while ensuring that the questionnaire applies to both religious and non-religious people. The reliability and validity of the scale are also tested (Gomez

& Fisher, 2003). Items of the SHALOM are considered the component of spirituality. To measure the level of spirituality, a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree) for each item is used. Respondents score each item based on how strongly they agree or disagree that they have the quality of each item. Scoring high on this questionnaire indicates the state of being highly spiritual.

**Table 1. Items of Spirituality in SHALOM (Gomez & Fisher, 2003)**

Personal	Communal
Sense of identity	Love of other people
Self-awareness	Forgiveness toward others
Joy in life	Trust between individuals
Inner peace	Respect for others
Meaning in life	Kindness toward other people
Environmental	Transcendental
Connection with nature	Personal relationship with the Devine/God
Awe at a breathtaking view	Worship of the Creator
Oneness with nature	Oneness with God
Harmony with the environment	Peace with God
Sense of ‘magic’ in the environment	Prayer life

**Research Design**

The research site was Izumi Steiner School in Hokkaido that integrates kindergarten, elementary, junior high, and high schools. According to one of the participants, the school comprises about 140 students. The number of participants was six in total. Three were the teachers who have served as Steiner Educators for more than ten years and currently teaching at Izumi Steiner School. Participant A is versed in Steiner education as she completed the specialized courses to become a Steiner educator and has experience teaching for 19 years. Participant B is in charge of outdoor activities in which students intensively engage with nature. Participant C is from kindergarten, which has special importance in Steiner education. Participants D, E, and F were the students who have received

a minimum of 12 years of education at Izumi Steiner School and have graduated within ten years.

The research had two steps: a preliminary survey and an interview. The preliminary survey was conducted to understand the rough picture of participants’ perceptions and students’ states of spirituality, which helped to structure the interviews. In addition to the basic information about the participants, participants were asked to score SHALOM. Teachers scored each item of SHALOM using the five-point Likert scale based on how strongly they agree or disagree that each element are nurtured at Izumi Steiner School, and students scored based on their agreement level of if they have each quality of spirituality or if Izumi Steiner School helped them to nurture



each item of SHALOM. The survey used Google Form and the main language was Japanese. Original items of the SHALOM in English were presented with the Japanese translation. The result of the preliminary survey was expected to suggest that Steiner educators aim to nurture many of the spirituality components and that students find Steiner education effective in growing spirituality elements.

Interviews were to confirm if Steiner education grows students' spirituality and, if so, what elements of Steiner education contribute to it. The concept of spirituality was explained, and the participants' consent to record the video was taken at the beginning of the interviews. All interviews were conducted on ZOOM except for one conducted face-to-face as it was more convenient. The language was Japanese, and each interview lasted between 30 and 40 minutes. Interviews were semi-structured. The main question was about how spirituality, the connectedness of a domain or each component under the domains, is actually nurtured at Izumi Steiner school. Teachers were asked to describe how the school or they themselves try to nurture students' spirituality, and students were

asked to share their perceptions on what elements of the school helped them develop spirituality. Lastly, participants answered the question asking if spirituality, in other words, connectedness, contribute to students' or their own well-being and motivation for sustainability. The last question was to see if there is a possibility that spirituality leads to well-being and sustainability. The coding method was applied to identify and classify the elements of Izumi Steiner School that contribute to spirituality into four categories: goal, curriculum, teachers' approach, and physical learning environment (see Appendix).

**Results: Preliminary Survey**

Participants' answers to the preliminary survey based on SHALOM are summarized in Table 2. Rows are for the Domains of SHALOM, participants from A to F (indicated as P), the average scores of 5 items of each participant in each domain (1\*), the average scores of the teachers and students in each domain (2\*), and the average of the entire scores (teachers and students respectively) (3\*). The total average score (all integrated) (4\*) is written at the bottom of the table. Calculated numbers are rounded off to one decimal place.

**Table 2. Summary of the participants' score of SHALOM in the preliminary survey**

Teachers					Students				
Domains	P	1*	2*	3*	Domains	P	1*	2*	3*
Personal	A	4.4	4.5	4.5	Personal	D	3.8	4.0	3.9
	B	4.8				E	4		
	C	4.4				F	4.2		
Communal	A	4.4	4.4		Communal	D	4	4.5	
	B	4.4				E	4.6		
	C	4.4				F	5		
Environmental	A	4.2	4.6		Environmental	D	3.4	3.9	
	B	5				E	3.8		
	C	4.6				F	4.6		
Transcendental	A	4	4.4		Transcendental	D	2.6	3.0	
	B	5				E	3		
	C	4.2				F	3.4		
<b>4* Total average score: 4.2</b>									

The total average score was 4.2. This indicates that overall, the participants think spirituality is nurtured at Izumi Steiner school because the score of 4 is "agree." The average of the entire scores for teachers and students respectively shows that the teachers agreed more strongly that the school has a capacity to develop spirituality than the students. The average score of the teachers was 4.5 with all the scores marked higher than 4. On the other hand, students' average score was 3.9. The main difference between teachers and students was found in the domain of transcendence in which teachers' average score was 4.4 whereas that of students was 3. This means that while teachers think Izumi Steiner School develops the connectedness to transcendence, students are not confident. However, in all the other domains, the average scores were close to 4 or above 4. Thus, it can be said that Izumi Steiner School is effective in developing connectedness except for the transcendental domain.

**Results of the Interview**

In the following section, major contributing elements and factors are described. Due to the space limitation, only a few of the found contributors will be described in this section, and the summary table of the interview results is attached in the appendix. Personal information on gender was not obtained in this research. Thus, the personal pronoun "she" is used for the teachers, and "he" is applied for the students. However, these pronouns do not indicate the actual gender of the participants.

Through the interview, a primary goal at Izumi Steiner School was found to be the development and integration of three elements, thinking (head), feeling (heart), and willing (hands). School curriculums that the participants described aligned with the goals. According to a teacher, the bottom-up approach is applied to achieve

the development and integration of three parts, head, heart, and hands, that is, thinking, feeling, and willing. The following explanation is based on her explanation. A top-down approach, which most modern education takes, focuses on the head (thinking), leaving little room for feeling and willing. This was due to the prevailing assumption that acquiring as much intellect as possible leads to a better life. However, the bottom-up approach takes the opposite direction, starting with the hands, or the heart, which then leads to the activation of the head. The learning process of the bottom-up approach starts with experiencing, which touches students' hearts and cultivates feelings such as a sense of wonder. In the bottom-up approach, teachers do not rush to give an answer. Therefore, students start thinking for themselves. According to the teacher, the bottom-up approach is effective for developing connectedness. This is because intellect (head, thinking) has to do with separation as thinking requires objectivity that requires separation of self from the objects in question. On the other hand, the will is about the motivation to act, including the motivation to reach out to the objects and the outer world. In her words, willing is empathic whereas thinking is objective and antipathic. The heart serves as a bridge between thinking and willing. Thus, by ignoring will and feelings, the process of separation will be accelerated. She further stated that the integration of thinking, feeling, and willing within oneself is the connectedness to oneself, which then builds the connectedness to others. Therefore, integration of thinking, feeling, and willing is the key.

The factors from the categories of teachers' approach, physical learning environments, and other contributing factors are equally important. In short, the participants described that the teachers at Izumi Steiner school serve as a guide for students to learn

in the bottom-up approach and as role models for connected beings who can perform high in SHALOM. Also, they stated that all the learning environments at the school are designed to facilitate students' learning that aligns with the bottom-up approach. Aside from the contributing factors of connectedness, teachers remarked that the school is not only for building the connection but also for protecting or helping children to regain what they originally had. Regarding the connectedness to transcendence, participants A and C stated that humans were already connected to transcendence when they were born. Participant C said that humans are also connected to nature ultimately. However, through modern top-down education or social life, humans gradually lose their connectedness to transcendence. Steiner education is for supporting children to retain the connectedness they naturally had from the time they were born.

### **Spirituality for Students' Well-Being and Sustainability**

All the participants answered yes to the question of whether developing connectedness at Izumi Steiner School leads to their or their students' well-being. As for the question about if connectedness leads to sustainability, all the teachers answered yes. They mentioned that developing connectedness allows students to expand their definition of "I." Classmates, the entire school, nature and even the world can be integrated into their perception of "I" as they grow the sense of connectedness. Also, the desire to stay in harmony with others or nature was mentioned. If everything is ultimately one, it is natural for one to wish for others and nature to be in a good state. Answers from the students were less straightforward. One said he thinks Izumi Steiner school contributes to sustainability to some extent but is not quite sure. Another said that he had opportunities at the school to get fa-

miliar with sustainability topics but did not actively take sustainable actions. However, regarding if connectedness leads to sustainability, participant F stated that it contributes to sustainability because connectedness leads to respect and care for the entity they are connected to.

### **Discussion**

#### *Connectedness to Transcendence*

The findings suggest that spirituality is nurtured at Izumi Steiner School. Only the development of the connectedness to transcendence was not confirmed. In the interview, one of the students stated that he does not believe in things that have no scientific basis saying that it might be the backlash to the education he received. The other two had more open attitudes towards transcendence as well as non-scientific entities and phenomena, although they had no strong belief. There is a possibility that the students do have the connectedness to transcendence but do not consciously recognize it. It might be explained by the difficulty in comprehending the concept of transcendence. It seemed that the students' impressions of transcendence are related to unscientific or religious beliefs rather than the sense of belonging to the larger ecosystem. Also, Steiner education does not directly teach about transcendence, although it is based on such a belief. In any case, the sample of three students is inadequate to conclude whether Izumi Steiner School nurtures the connectedness to transcendence.

#### **The Bottom-up Approach and the Development of Spirituality**

According to the participants, the bottom-up approach was the essential element of Izumi Steiner School. The interviews revealed that the bottom-up approach was the primary contributor to the development of spirituality or connectedness. Almost all the other contributing factors were

related to the bottom-up approach. Therefore, this section will consider if other studies support the idea that the bottom-up approach is effective for students' spiritual growth.

In the following discussion, the bottom-up approach is defined as an approach to integrating hands (willing), heart (feeling), and head (thinking) through experiences that touch students' hearts and motivate their thinking activities, as explained by participant A. Science shows the importance of the coherence between the brain, heart, and body. Studies have shown that there is bi-directional communication between the brain and heart/body (Elbers & McCraty, 2020). Contrary to the prevailing understanding that the brain is in control of other parts of the body including the heart, Tuček has argued that the heart is a sensory organ that can act independently of the brain to process information and make decisions (Tuček, 2002, as cited in Childre, 2001). Therefore, the heart also has an impact on the brain. The coherent state of the heart, described as the "physiological coherence," refers to the harmonious, orderly, and stable rhythmic activities in the body such as respiration, blood pressure rhythms, digestive or hormonal rhythms (Childre, 2001; Elbers & McCraty, 2020). It is specially measured by heart rate variability (HRV), which is the variation of interval time between each heartbeat. It has revealed that a specific pattern of heart rhythm reflects specific emotional states. Positive emotions reflect the coherent heart-rhythm pattern, and negative emotions indicate incoherence.

Moreover, studies have demonstrated that heart-rhythm coherence enhances cognitive performance, improves emotional self-regulation, and leads to social connectedness (Elbers & McCraty, 2020). Heart rhythm coherence correlates with positive

emotions, and conversely, positive psychological states lead to physiological coherence, a state known as "psychophysiological coherence" (Childre, 2001). Researchers describe this mode as the state of optimal functioning in which physical, mental and emotional functions are collaboratively enhanced. Furthermore, subjective reports from the individuals found that those who practice psychophysiological coherence are likely to have spiritual experiences such as the increased connectedness or sense of unity with God and other people or a deeper connection to one's spirit as well as higher self (Childre, 2001). Hence, Izumi Steiner School aims to integrate the head, heart, and hands based on Steiner's philosophy, and science supports their idea. The teachers described the bottom-up approach as an effective means to nurture spirituality. Scientific studies have revealed that the coherence of the brain, heart, and body leads to a positive psychological state, physical health, cognitive performance, social connectedness, and spiritual experiences that include various connectedness. Therefore, it can also be said that nurturing spirituality leads to students' well-being and sustainability.

#### **Spirituality Education for Well-Being and Sustainability**

The participants' responses to the last question in the interview show the possibility that the developed connectedness at Steiner schools leads to students' well-being and sustainability. In addition, essential features of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and positive education were identified at Izumi Steiner School. Holistic, whole-school, students-centered, experience-based, and place-based approaches are considered vital for the successful implementation of ESD, and whole-school approach, positive teacher-student relationships, and focus on signature strength are important features of positive education.

Izumi Steiner School has all those characteristics, indicating its potential to serve as education for sustainability and well-being.

### Conclusion

Based on the participants' perceptions, the present study confirmed that spirituality was nurtured at Steiner school. Not a single element of Izumi Steiner School, but the school as a whole was designed to foster the development of the whole child, which then leads to their spiritual growth. The bottom-up approach was the main contributing factor, with many other supporting factors. In addition, the study confirmed that both teachers and students feel that developing spirituality leads to the students' well-being and sustainability. Based on these findings, it is suggested that spirituality can be nurtured through school education, and it has the potential

capacity to enhance students' well-being and sustainability. Therefore, it is worth investigating how spirituality education can be integrated into education for well-being and sustainability. The present study has its value in setting the ground for the validation of the holistic education model.

To improve the study, it is encouraged to provide clearer definitions of the concept such as well-being, sustainability, spirituality, and transcendence so that the participants can comprehend the concepts and have a shared understanding. An empirical study with a larger sample size can also enhance the reliability of the study. Also, the validity of the holistic education model is yet to be confirmed, leaving room for future research. The holistic education model, when validated, contributes to achieving sustainable well-being.

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# Yuia HIROTA



Yuia Hirota is a freshman. Her essay “Single-Gender Education for Girls: Suitable Learning Environments with Fewer Gender Stereotypes and More Equality” was submitted in Composition I under the supervision of Professor Yuki Togawa. Hirota has had a keen interest in environmental, gender, and economic issues.



## Single-Gender Education for Girls: Suitable Learning Environments with Fewer Gender Stereotypes and More Equality

Gender stereotypes are deeply rooted anywhere in society. Schools that are supposed to educate children in an unbiased way may educate them on gender stereotypes. UNESCO (2021) insists that the world is full of gender inequalities that derive from harmful gender norms and stereotypes. It has been discussed that many companies use gender stereotypes in advertisements to promote their products, and these commercials can even strengthen gender stereotypes. For example, an advertisement for baby milk formula showed girls growing up to be ballerinas and boys becoming engineers, suggesting ballerinas are for girls and engineers are for boys (“Advertising watchdog to,” 2017). In addition to advertising, gender stereotypes are seen in educational fields, which is a huge problem. BBC News reported that calling girls "sweetie" or boys "mate" in primary school enhances gender stereotypes (“Advertising watchdog to,” 2017). The same article also stated that one school examined the curriculum and decided to add more female scientists and composers while increasing the number of male dancers introduced in classes. As these changes indicate, society has started to see gender stereotypes in educational fields as a problem. Gender stereotypes limit children's aspirations and create inequalities that lead to gender-based violence (Smith, 2021). Thus, it is crucial to think about how schools should be in order to avoid educating children on gender stereotypes. One effective solution to the issue is to promote single-gender education, especially for girls. According to Novotney (2011), single-sex education

has been growing in popularity since the No Child Left Behind Act was passed in 2002 because this legislation allows local educational agencies to use funds to reinforce single-gender education. According to the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (n.d.), the primary focus of this legislation is to close student achievement gaps by providing all students with a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to receive a high-quality education. With the increase of support from the government, single-gender education has been recognized as one of the educational opportunities. Single-sex education for girls lessens gender stereotypes and bullying in educational fields and creates suitable learning environments with the consideration of characteristics of girls, and contributes to boosting students’ satisfaction and engagement levels.

With a sense of safety and belonging which single-gender classes create, girls are free from peer and social pressures and satisfied with school and learning. Hart (2015) pointed out that girls in single-gender classes showed a higher level of satisfaction with school compared to those in coeducational classes. He explained that is because single-gender classes provide girls with safe and comfortable learning environments. Without the opposite sex in the same classroom, girls are free to speak up their opinions without being afraid of what boys will think about them. In single-gender classes, they do not have to act, pretend, or say something to attract boys, meaning girls are free from peer pressure

to be sexually attractive to the opposite sex. In addition to peer pressure, students can be negatively affected by social pressure. In this society where there are still gender stereotypes, children are likely exposed to biases about how they should act regardless of which school they attend, coeducational or single-gender. Thus, even in a small classroom, there can be gender stereotypes. For example, girls are weak, and boys are energetic. These stereotypes can threaten individuals' fundamental freedom and limit their ability to grow (United Nations Human Right, 2014). Being free from stereotypes, in other words, pressure from society, girls can fully utilize their abilities to pursue their interests and curiosity. Safe and comfortable learning environments single-gender education creates enable children to have more freedom to express themselves without peer pressure to be attractive to the opposite sex and social pressure to follow conventional gender stereotypes.

Besides peer pressure and gender stereotypes, single-gender education decreases the rate of bullying at schools, making learning environments even safer and more comfortable. Johnson and Gastic (2014) concluded that there are differences in the rate of bullying among students in single-gender and coeducational schools. The authors stated that girls who attend coeducational schools experience bullying more than girls who attend single-gender schools, and among participants in the experiment they conducted, twenty-one percent of girls who attend coeducational schools experience bullying; meanwhile, less than 1 % of girls who attend single-sex schools experience bullying at school. This difference in the number is crucial and indicates the effectiveness of single-gender education to prevent students from being bullied. The authors also revealed that gender-nonconforming students are likely bullied compared to gender-conforming students;

nevertheless, gender-nonconforming female students were significantly less likely to experience bullying if they attended a single-gender school. This means that single-gender education lets students choose whether they follow gender stereotypes or not, and even if they choose not to, there is a low risk of them being bullied at school. Although the ratio of gender-nonconforming students in single-gender schools is low (Johnson & Gastric, 2014), this data shows that single-gender education provides safe learning environments not only for the majority, in this case, gender-conforming students, but also for minority students, in this case, gender-nonconforming students. As bullying hurts children badly and could be a potential trigger for students to stop attending schools, bullying-free environments single-gender education can create are essential.

Furthermore, single-gender education likely offers equal opportunities for girls to engage in school activities, including physical activities with the consideration of biological differences between boys and girls. Pritchard et al. (2014) illustrated in their experiment about the correlation between sports game engagement and gender that girls in the single-gender environment had the highest game involvement while those in the coeducational environment had the lowest. They described that these results attribute to different physiques between boys and girls, and they emphasized that boys tend to be dominant in the sport. With inequality in physiques, it can be challenging for girls to actively join sports games with boys because some girls with small bodies may be scared to play sports with boys who have strong power. For the reason that boys tend to have bigger and stronger physiques, in many cases, they play better than girls. As girls experience losses to boys in the games, they likely feel they are inferior in the sports even if the criteria were not fair.

Low self-esteem deprives girls of confidence in performance, and they are likely afraid of participating in sports. Perera et al. (2019) concluded in the essay that the two most significant factors which motivate children for sports participation are being part of a team and friends. Thus, if girls do not participate in sports due to a lack of confidence, they do not feel part of the team while playing. This lack of a sense of belonging will lose their motivation. Lower motivation disturbs students from fully engaging in sports activities which takes away chances to enjoy the sport before thinking about the next phase, such as improving their skills. Single-gender education removes these inequalities and unfairness that lessen girls' motivation, and in single-gender environments, girls can actively join sports.

Some people argue that single-gender schools deprive girls of the ability to interact smoothly with the opposite sex, which negatively affects girls after graduation. Sharma (2013) reported that girls from single-gender schools likely find the presence of boys very distracting; meanwhile, girls from coeducational schools can develop equal relationships with boys while interacting with the opposite sex daily throughout school lives. The author continued that in the research, girls in single-gender schools were more outspoken and competitive when boys were not around and felt more comfortable participating in sports and subjects which are traditionally male-dominated, such as math and science. Single-gender education encourages this tendency, and girls in single-gender education tend to socialize and interact only with the same sex inside and outside schools. After graduation, girls from single-gender education have a lot of opportunities to interact with and cooperate with not only the same sex but also the opposite one. Due to inadequate experience at the student stage,

it is possible that the existence of boys can be distracting, and girls do not know how to speak up in front of them. This is considered problematic because anxiety towards the opposite sex may reduce students' interest and motivation in pursuing their future studies and career in areas dominated by the other gender (Wong et al., 2018). Anxiety toward boys could discourage girls on various occasions. Girls from single-gender education need extra effort to be socialized after graduation because single-gender education disadvantages girls with insufficient opportunities to interact with the opposite sex.

Although it is hard to deny that single-gender education increase girls' anxiety toward the opposite sex after graduation, it is possible that girls overcome discomfort in communication with boys with their unique talent, which is an excellent capacity for language and communication skill acquisitions. Adani and Cepanec (2019) reported that girls generally have more outstanding capabilities for language acquisition than boys, and this favor was seen at any age level, namely toddlers, children, and adolescents. The authors continued that differences between boys and girls in the process of early communication development and language acquisition are discovered not only in the fundamental development of language systems, such as speaking, listening, and gaining new vocabulary but also in the development of overall social and new communication skills such as creating good relationships with others. This indicates that girls have an ability to smoothly build up their communication skills with boys even after graduating from single-gender schools. Struggling to interact with the opposite sex is a matter only in school situations. In a society where girls from single-gender education have equal opportunities to interact with both boys and girls, they will eventually learn how to

communicate effectively with others regardless of gender differences. The authors also mentioned that one of the most absorbing facts about the failures in communication, language, and speech skills is that the male sex is a decisive risk factor for the mentioned failures, while the female sex is a protective factor. They emphasized that this finding has been observed by many other researchers, over many decades, and across various regions and nations around the world. This means that being a woman can be a substantial advantage to acquire overall communication skills successfully. A congenital feature unique to females, which is the ability to develop communication skills successfully, can offset the disadvantage of inadequate opportunities to interact with the opposite sex single-gender education create.

Yet to some extent, single-gender education damages students' ability to be socialized smoothly, it significantly decreases the gender stereotypes and bullying cases in educational fields and creates suitable learning environments for girls for a higher level of satisfaction and engagement. A number of studies revealed that single-gender schools for girls effectively contribute to students' non-academic achievements, such as being satisfied with their learning environment and being fully engaged in school activities,

including both physical and non-physical ones. Recently, individuality has been respected with the spread of the concept of LGBTQ and it can be predicted that more children will suffer in determining their identity. One person confessed in the interview with BBC News that they were always frightened of even exploring their gender at school ("Altrincham girls' school's," 2018). As schools are the places where children spend most of their time, it is significant that they can enjoy being in schools, being themselves, and being accepted as they are. Simović et al. (2014) argue that education styles such as coeducational or single-gender cannot be simply evaluated as good or bad, because their appropriateness and quality depend on the learning situation and the individual students. They continued that teaching methods should be chosen considering both the subject taught in schools and the students who learn. Thus, even though single-gender education for girls seems advantageous, it does not fit every single student, meaning that there should be various schools with various policies, systems, rules, and subjects students can learn. Various options will increase the possible choices for children. To let them enjoy learning without being afraid of any other things, schools should provide education that fits individuals without making new stereotypes.

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# Sex Trafficking in the United States: Analysis of Impacts of Sex Trafficking on Victims and Their Challenges after Fleeing

## RIKA HAMAYAMA



Rika Hamayama is a senior student majoring in Global Studies. Her essay "Analysis of Impacts of Sex Trafficking on Victims and Their Challenges after Fleeing" was submitted in the Global Studies Capstone Seminar under the supervision of Professor Satoko Horii. Hamayama researched sexual violence during study abroad at the University of South Florida in the US, where she was a member of an organization called SAYNO! (SAYNO! Is an organization that investigates sexual violence against students studying abroad and supports victims regardless of their gender.) After learning about issues related to the underrepresented group of people, such as sexism towards women of colour, she began to investigate gendered violence which victimizes Asian women. This academic experience led her to write this paper on sex offenders, as well as "Sexual Violence within Japanese Communities against Students Studying Overseas: Analysis of Sex Offenders," published in the Fall 2021 AIU student journal. She hopes this paper will contribute to raising awareness of sexual violence against vulnerable groups of people.



### 1. Introduction

"[S]he was never the same again," Mariano Serrano, the father of Letty Serrano who took her own life after being trafficked, says in an interview (Palmer, 2019). When Letty was 13 years old, she was victimized by sex trafficking in her neighbourhood in Houston, Texas (Palmer, 2019). Although her family finally rescued her after two years of being abused and exposed to drugs in a sex trafficking ring, she attempted to return to the trafficker twice by running away from her home (Palmer, 2019). During the two years of trafficking, what had happened to her? What made her want to get back to someone who abused her?

The scale of the illegal commercial sex industry related to sex trafficking is enormous. According to the estimation of the International Labor Organization, the illegal profit generated through sex trafficking reaches 99 billion dollars annually and globally (2014). The United States is "one of the top four countries leading the commercial sex markets" (Marti, Fowler, Landers, Cohen & Orjuela, 2021, p. 2). In 2016, National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline reported 26,727 trafficking cases (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2017, p. 1). Most of the reported cases, approximately 73 percent of them, were sex trafficking (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2017, p. 1). Therefore, it is also essential to research sex trafficking cases, including those cases occurring, without

forcing the victims to cross the borders.

Considering the case of Letty and the fact that illegal markets which produce a massive number of victims exist in the United States, the author will discuss the following questions in this paper. What types of psychological and physical harms do experiences of sex trafficking exert on victims? What challenges do survivors face after fleeing from traffickers? By exploring the concept of vulnerability of a targeted group of people and struggles during and after the trafficking, the author argues that the victims in the United States are forced to work as prostitutes by being controlled by traffickers through violence, alcohol, or illegal substances, which results in having the victims relentlessly face challenges afterwards.

The outline of this paper is as follows: the next section examines the definition of key terms, including sex trafficking, traffickers, and victims, and discusses how previous studies researched the traffickers and the significant damages the victims receive. Section 3 explains the significance of this research, the main arguments considering findings from the previous studies and hypothesis, and two methodologies employed for this research. Sections 4 and 5 explore narratives of international and domestic sex trafficking victims. Section 6 introduces who are more susceptible to sex trafficking than others. Section 7 investigates problems that survivors continuously struggle with

after fleeing. Finally, section 8 concludes this research with findings, implications, and limitations.

## 2. Literature Review

First, the definition of sex trafficking, traffickers, and victims is discussed. According to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 of the United States, sex trafficking is defined to be an action. Then, as for the definition of traffickers, the U.S. Department of State defines them as any persons who exploit their victims and make profits by performing coercive and deceptive practices (n.d.). The U.S. Department of State further denotes that victims of sex trafficking could be “of any age, race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, immigration status, cultural background, religion, socio-economic class, and education attainment level” (n.d.). This definition implies that any individual in the United in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age” (U.S. Department of State, 2020, p. 10). It is also stated that “[a] victim need not be physically transported from one location to another for the crime to fall within this definition” (U.S. Department of State, 2020, p. 10). Therefore, as it occurred to Letty (Palmer, 2019), a person could be trafficked in their place of residence without forced migration. Additionally, states could get involved in sex trafficking. To distinguish between victims who migrated to the United States and those born and raised in the United States, the author uses the following terms, international sex trafficking, and domestic sex trafficking, as mentioned in several scholarly works (Polaris, 2015; Nichols, 2016; Raymond & Hughes, 2001).

Next, the author explores scholarly works that researched how a group of traffickers

victimized migrants and the significant challenges that trafficking survivors suffer.

Research conducted by Siddharth Kara (2008) focuses on the experiences of victims in a sex trafficking ring by highlighting a group of traffickers called the Cadena Family who are initially from Vera Cruz, Mexico. More than 20 female Mexicans, including a girl who was 14 years old, were trafficked by the Cadena Family in Texas and were taken to migrant workers’ camps in Florida (Kara, 2008, p. 186). Those victims engaged in sex work for the migrant workers in trailers or brothels and could not easily escape; otherwise, the traffickers would threaten them with guns, threaten their families, or rape them (Kara, 2008, p. 186). According to one of the victims, she entered the United States illegally by smugglers who promised her jobs such as waitress and landscaper (Kara, 2008, p. 186). The research also mentioned that the victims were controlled their actions by the traffickers through violence, isolation, drugs, and alcohol (Kara, 2008, p. 187). Therefore, the victims were exposed to an abusive environment until rescued because of their economic vulnerability.

A study by Rachel Shigekane (2007) explains that many trafficking victims suffer from psychological trauma due to the prolonged captivity of traffickers (Shigekane, 2007, p. 117). During the term of trafficking, victims experience a sense of terror, helplessness, and loss of sense of self because of threats of death and unpredictable violence against the victims and their families in their home countries by traffickers (Shigekane, 2007, pp. 117-118). Furthermore, traffickers dominate victims by preventing access to information, necessities, and external support (Shigekane, 2007, p. 118). These traumatic experiences during trafficking lead victims, especially women and girls, to be tormented further

sufferings including depression, sleeping disorders, and self-injury such as overdoses of drugs and strangulation (Shigekane, 2007, p. 118).

These previous research show that traffickers victimize those who seek a new career and jeopardize them in multiple ways, including threatening them with guns, exposing them to drugs, and physically and mentally abusing them. These experiences result in causing psychological trauma to the victims. In the following sections, the author will highlight cases of sex trafficking when victims are citizens of the United States as well.

## 3. Significance of Investigating this Research Question

Considering previous studies on experiences of the international trafficking victims, the author investigates the adverse effects and challenges that torment both international and domestic sex trafficking victims as the research question. In the first place, sex trafficking, one of the worldwide humanitarian crises, is regarded to be “modern slavery,” where victims are merchandised, enslaved, and controlled by traffickers against the victims’ wills (Brooks & Heaslip, 2019, p. 1105). Nevertheless, massive numbers of individuals are victimised due to its market, which profits traffickers and those involved in trafficking (International Labor Office, 2014). Furthermore, it is hard to picture what the victims and survivors go through in the sites, though many organisations seek understanding, cooperation, and donations to rescue and support the victims (Polaris, 2021; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2021).

Many studies on sex trafficking often focus on cases where victims are forced to migrate from one country to another and work as prostitutes and face difficulty escaping or integrating into new commu-

nities after fleeing (Kara, 2008; Shigekane, 2007). Nonetheless, it is essential to note that most trafficking victims are born and raised in the United States (Institute for Women’s Policy Research, 2017, p. 2). Therefore, it is possible that those victims also suffer from similar harm to those of the victims who are from foreign countries despite their advantages in terms of being the citizens of the country who need not fear deportations, and their language ability and familiarity with the society and cultures, as the case of Letty Serrano indicates (Palmer, 2019).

Considering the hypothesis and literature review above, the author argues that all the sex trafficking victims in the United States are manipulated to commit sex work and assaulted by traffickers through violence, alcohol, or illegal substances, and these experiences traumatise the victims and develop several types of disorders which sustain to hurt them.

Based on the above sections, the current paper will conduct a mix of primary and secondary research. The two following methods are employed: documentary research and narrative analysis. Firstly, documentary research is conducted for several purposes, including defining the terms such as sex trafficking, traffickers, and trafficking victims, and exploring the fundamental concepts such as challenges for the victims in a trafficking ring. For instance, the annual report of the U.S. Department of State on trafficking in person is referred to. Secondly, narratives of sex trafficking survivors will be analysed and discussed in the following sections. There are two sources where the author cites the narratives, including Shandra Woworuntu: My life as a sex-trafficking victim, an interview article by BBC, and Surviving sex trafficking, which is a documentary film published by BBC News. These narratives are from the



survivors' perspectives to reduce the biases of the third parties as much as possible.

### 3. Case Study: Exploitation of an Immigrant Looking for Job Opportunities

#### 4. Case Study: Exploitation of an Immigrant Looking for Job Opportunities

This section discusses a narrative of an international sex trafficking survivor who was victimized in the United States. Shandra Woworuntu, who used to work as a financial analyst until losing her job due to the financial crisis in her home country, Indonesia, in 1998, and migrated to the United States (BBC, 2016). The narrative below depicts her experiences and covers the following components: how she got trafficked, the damages received, and continuing struggles to the present time.

Narrative of Shandra who was trafficked in New York

*So to support my three-year-old daughter, I started to look for work overseas. That was when I saw an ad in a newspaper for work in the hospitality industry in big hotels in the US, Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore. I picked the US and applied. I passed all the tests and took the job. The plan was that my mother and sister would look after my little girl while I worked abroad for six months, earning \$5,000 a month.*

*In the arrivals hall, I heard my name and turned to see a man holding a sign with my picture. His name was Johnny, and I was expecting him to drive me to the hotel I would be working in. Johnny took all my documents, including my passport, and led me to his car with two of the other women. And just a few hours after my arrival in the US, I was forced to have sex. I was scared, and I didn't know anyone in America, so I was reluctant to leave the other two Indonesian girls. I was taken away by car, not to Chicago, but to a place where my traffickers forced me to perform sex acts. They told me I owed them \$30,000, and I would pay off the*

*debt \$100 at a time by serving men. I was rarely two days in the same place, and I never knew where I was or where I was going. The traffickers made me take drugs at gunpoint, and maybe it helped make it all bearable. Day and night, I just drank beer and whisky because that's all that was on offer. Twenty-four hours a day, we girls would sit around, completely naked, waiting for customers to come in. If no one came then, we might sleep a little, though never in a bed. But the quiet times were also when the traffickers themselves would rape us. Nothing was predictable. Overwhelmed with sadness, anger, disappointment, I just went through the motions, doing what I was told and trying hard to survive. What I endured was difficult and painful. Physically, I was weak.*

*[After being trafficked by another trafficker] I managed to escape from my new trafficker, and I took off down the street, wearing only slippers and carrying nothing but my pocketbook. I found a police station and told an officer my whole story. He didn't believe me and turned me away. So I went to the Indonesian consulate to seek help getting documents such as a passport and some support. But they didn't help me either. I slept on the Staten Island Ferry, the NYC subway and in Times Square. [The FBI] helped me to stay in the United States legally, provided me with shelter and connected me with resources to get a job. In Indonesia, the traffickers came looking for me at my mother's house, and she and my daughter had to go into hiding. A couple of years after my escape, I began getting severe pain and numbness in my joints. I developed skin problems and found I was suffering from terrible migraines. It's been 15 years now, but I still have sleepless nights. My relationships with men are still far from normal. I still see a therapist every week, and I still go, once a fortnight, to a psychiatrist to pick up a prescription for antidepressants. I still get flashbacks all the time. The smell of whisky makes me retch, and if I hear certain ringtones - the ones my traffickers had - my body stiffens with fear. Faces in a crowd terrify me - they jump out, familiar for an instant, and I go to pieces. (BBC, 2016)*

Thus, Shandra, who migrated to the United States looking for a job, ended up having vulnerability due to the debt bondage and desertion from the police and Indonesian consulate and frequent exposure to drugs, alcohol, unpredictable violence, threats with guns, and regulation in sleep. Even after receiving a legal residency in the United States, she had to protect her family in Indonesia from the chase of the traffickers and continues to suffer from various mental and physical issues caused by the trafficking experiences.

#### 5. Case Studies: From Domestic Violence to Sex Trafficking

This section explores the narratives of sex trafficking survivors who are citizens of the United States. Two survivors illustrated their experiences, including Melissa in Nebraska and Hollie in Ohio (Jung, 2020). This section underlines the following factors: their experiences before being trafficked, how they got tangled in a trafficking ring, and the damages they received.

Narrative 1: Detrimental family background of the victims

Melissa's explanation about her childhood before sex trafficking is as follows:

*My stepdad was an alcoholic, and [I] kind of grew up in like a violent home. My mother had a lot of health problems and she was prescribed a lot of pain medication. I woke up getting ready for school one day and found her dead, and she had shot herself due to this disease. Losing my mother was kind of like where things took a turn for the worst and I started using drugs you know. I started experimenting with marijuana and ecstasy. And I still didn't even realize that I was going down like the same path as my mother. Being addicted to pain medication by the age of 19, I was using heroin and I didn't know nothing what it was about. (Jung, 2020)*

As Melissa depicts, the issues within her family drove her to get addicted to drugs. Hollie describes her experiences as a child as follows:

*My mother gave birth to me when she was 16 years old. She gave me to my grandparents who were also alcoholics and smoked marijuana. I can remember being verbally and physically abused by my grandparents, sexually abused by other members of my family all before the age of five. I remember being called like a hooker, a [inappropriate w-word] things like that, saying I was hopeless and just like my mother before I even knew any of these things meant.*

*About age 15, I got in trouble at the group home and I decided I was going to come up here and live with my real mother. I moved to Columbus to live with my real mother which is like one of the worst decisions of my life because, within two weeks of being here in Columbus with my real mother, we were using drugs together. Within a month of being here in Columbus, we were prostituting together. (Jung, 2020)*

Once again, it should be noted that she suffered from child abuse by her relatives before getting trafficked. Her wholesome childhood was deprived through physical and verbal abuses, exposure to drugs, and the loss of her mother. Hollie reunited with her mother and then got tangled into prostitution before being trafficked.

Narrative 2: Physical and mental damages to sex trafficking victims

The two survivors got trafficked with different triggers; however, the following narratives indicate similarities in the psychological and physical harms they endured. Melissa's experience during sex trafficking is illustrated as follows:

*[Her trafficker] would beat me till my face turned blue. But if he told me he was sorry and he told*

me that he loved me. Every morning when I would wake up, there would be somebody else in the bed with me and I couldn't tell you what happened the night before. Every single family member [of traffickers] had did whatever they wanted to do. Like I said because I would get so drunk, I would black out but that was another way of me trying to escape reality, escape my feelings, escaped the lives that I was living. Just being in survival mode. Living in Nebraska and continuously to hang around that family, it's not like they held my hand down to do that but I felt like I belonged and like I was somebody. And at the time, I had no self-worth or self-love for myself so that was okay. (Jung, 2020)

Melissa was trafficked and abused by her 'boyfriend' in exchange for what she wanted and was driven into a corner to the extent that she had to get drunk frequently. Hollie illustrates her experiences as follows:

*My mother was benefiting from my exploitation. So there was this guy who kept saying like "come join my team. "It looked like he took care of them like they all had nice clothes, a place to stay, and I entered into hell. I remember walking into another drug house and spending twenty dollars there, and him finding out and him beating me up. Like they beat me with a crock pot lid and broke over my head, and then he told me to go upstairs and take a shower and get cleaned up and go get some money. And that's exactly what I did because I feared for my life. He would take me to the brink of thinking he was going to kill me and then he would make it all better with drugs or affection or telling me he was sorry. By the time I was 17 or 18, I had been raped more times than I can count. I had been kidnapped. I had been held hostage. I had been stabbed. I had been shot at. I felt like he took care of me even though he would beat me, and then I would go upstairs to sleep and I would wake up to him raping me. I felt attached to him because I felt like he cared for me. (Jung, 2020)*

Hollie's case also highlights how traffickers took advantage of her weakness derived from her childhood experiences, robbed

her freedom, repeatedly sexually assaulted her, and manipulated her to follow their orders by pretending to care about her.

Thus, some victims born and raised in the United States went through abuses and violence before trafficking. Therefore, there are two layers of victimization in the cases of Melissa and Hollie. Besides the damages caused by the traffickers, including physical, psychological, and sexual abuses, Melissa suffered from domestic violence from her 'boyfriend,' whereas Hollie was also a victim of child abuse.

#### 6. Who is More Vulnerable than Others?

Next, who is more likely to be trafficked? The definition of sex trafficking victims by the U.S. Department of State states that 'anyone could be victimized' regardless of variables, including ages, races, and immigration status (n.d.). Nevertheless, particular groups of people are at higher risk of getting victimized in the United States. This section discusses how people of specific ages, sex, races and ethnicities, immigration status, or particular issues are more susceptible to sex trafficking than others.

Concerning the ages of sex trafficking victims, teenagers are at higher risk of getting trafficked than those older because the teenagers are more profitable to the traffickers due to their potential to be resold (Yaklin & Rolin, 2020 p. 22). Also, the victims first get victimized when they are between 11 and 14 on average (Kotrla, 2010, p. 182). As for sexes, approximately 84 percent of the victims reported are women and girls (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2017, p. 2). Compared with people of other sexes and genders, LGBTQ youth are also more vulnerable because of the homelessness they experience due to rejections from their parents (Boukli & Renz, 2019, p. 81). About the

races and ethnicities of the victims, marginalized populations, who endure socioeconomic disadvantages such as economic marginalization and unequal access to education, including African Americans, Native Americans, and Native Alaskans, are more likely to suffer from victimization in sex trafficking (Nichols, 2016, p. 90). For instance, 40 per cent of the victims are African American women and girls, which is disproportionate to the fact that they represent only 7.2 percent of the U.S. population (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2017, p. 2). Regardless of the status being legal or illegal, immigrants with economic instability and poverty are more likely to be trafficked (Shigekane, 2007, p. 116). Debt bondage is a common tactic among traffickers to manipulate and 'own' the victims by incurring debts such as transportation fees and forcing them to prostitute to make a profit for them (Nichols, 2016, p. 93). This debt bondage was employed by the traffickers in the case of Shandra as well. Lastly, it is proven that women who were physically and sexually abused before are more vulnerable to sex trafficking (Marti, Fowler, Landers, Cohen & Orjuela, 2021, p. 2). Moreover, physical, verbal, sexual, or psychological abuse, family members with alcoholism or drug addictions, and parental neglect within households increase the risk (Nichols, 2016, p. 96). Indeed, 21 percent of minor victims previously underwent familial molestation in Las Vegas, Nevada, between 2004 and 2006, as an example (Nichols, 2016, p. 96). Many victims also misunderstand what a healthy intimate relationship is and kindness and safety, which leads them to be susceptible and get exploited by adult traffickers (Nichols, 2016, p. 96). These vulnerabilities are illustrated in the cases of the domestic survivors, Melissa and Hollie, who felt attached to their traffickers. Hence, the risk to be victimized increases depending on the age, sex, race and ethnicity, economic status, and family

background of the sex trafficking victims in the United States.

#### 7. Continuous Problems that Survivors Have to Bear

In previous sections, including literature review and case studies, survivors could develop and suffer for a long term such as depression, insomnia, flashbacks, and lack of self-love. In this section, the author digs further into problems that sex trafficking survivors continuously need to tackle after fleeing. Subsequently, the author will introduce mainly three problems: health problems, mistreatment of survivors, and re-victimization.

Firstly, the continued mental and physical health issues are explained. Along with the mental health issues previously mentioned, various symptoms, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), panic attacks, and acute stress disorder, are frequently reported by sex trafficking survivors (Hoefinger, Musto, Macioti, Fehrenbacher, Mai, Bennachie & Giametta, 2020, p. 10). As for physical health problems, there are numerous tremendous numbers of symptoms afflicting the survivors. For instance, the survivors could be tormented with headaches, poor nutrition, and also infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, urinary tract infection, and Hepatitis (Hoefinger, Musto, Macioti, Fehrenbacher, Mai, Bennachie & Giametta, 2020, p. 10; Fedina, Williamson & Perdue, 2019, p. 2655). Moreover, tattoos on victims' bodies could develop health problems. In the first place, a tattoo is one of the marks that traffickers commonly ink on victims' bodies to demonstrate that they are merchandise by putting the traffickers' names and other humiliating signs (University of Nebraska Medical Center, 2019). According to research conducted by Klügl, Hiller, Landthaler, and Bäumler, 60 percent of the research participants with tattoos experienced health-related problems such

as bleeding, bacterial skin infection, dizziness, headache, nausea, and fever (2010, pp. 45-46). Hence, the harmful and abusive experiences frequently induce sex trafficking survivors' numerous health issues.

Secondly, sex trafficking survivors, who manage to run away from the traffickers and need assistance to heal, could get mistreated by society and criminalized. Due to their involvement in prostitution, robberies, use of illegal substances, and other criminal activities forced by the traffickers, sex trafficking victims are often prosecuted as criminals (Ferkenhoff & Joens, 2021). According to the National Survivor Network research in 2016, more than 90 percent of the survivors who participated in the research were criminalized at least once (Polaris, 2019). For example, New York state, which has the fifth most human trafficking cases in the whole country, criminalizes people in prostitution, including sex trafficking victims, despite a recently introduced bill called the Gottfried-Salazar bill to decriminalize them (Rigal, 2021, pp. 490-491). Under the current situation, international sex trafficking survivors could be arrested or detained, and deported without being recognized as victims (Polaris, 2019). After being incarcerated, some survivors suffer from violence and harassment from police officers and guards. Especially, transgender women are more likely to be sexually assaulted and suffer from PTSD because of it (Hoefinger, Musto, Macioti, Fehrenbacher, Mai, Bennachie & Giametta, 2020, p. 12). The current legal system to criminalizes the survivors and sexual assaults during detention also cause re-victimization of the victims, which is the third challenge after fleeing traffickers. In order to make a living and pay for the fines for involvement in prostitution, some of the survivors engage in so-called survival sex work (Hoefinger, Musto, Macioti, Fehrenbacher, Mai, Bennachie & Giametta, 2020,

p. 12).

Furthermore, it is not uncommon for the survivors to return to the traffickers who victimized them due to trauma bonds between the survivors and the traffickers. Trauma bonds are established with a combination of threats and isolation from the society, and affection, kindness, or material supplies from the traffickers (Nichols, 2016, p. 226). There were trauma and emotional bonds with the traffickers in the cases of Melissa and Hollie as well (Jung, 2020). The trauma bonds are more likely to make the survivors return, especially when the traffickers are victims' spouses, intimate partners, or children the survivors depend on (Nichols, 2016, p. 182). Consequently, these challenges criminalize the victims and induce re-victimization to make it even harder for them to heal their damages and rehabilitate.

Thus, sex trafficking survivors in the United States have to suffer from continued and newly developed health problems and difficulty obtaining necessary protection and establishing safe and healthy lifestyles.

## 8. Conclusion

The author investigated the negative impacts of sex trafficking experiences on the victims' lives in the United States. As findings, it turned out that the survivors face health problems including depression, sleep disorders, PTSD, and infectious diseases due to damages and abuses caused by the traffickers threatening mainly with violence, drugs, and alcohol. This circumstance could occur to the victims regardless of their resident status in the United States. Nonetheless, some experiences with the traffickers are distinctive to particular victims' groups. For instance, international sex trafficking victims often suffer from debt bondage imposed by the traffickers who exploit the victims' fragile socio-economic

status. In cases of domestic sex trafficking survivors, it has been found out that many of them were previously victimized by their kins or intimate partners through child abuse or domestic violence, which made them more vulnerable to sex trafficking. Furthermore, the author discovered that specific populations, including teenagers, women, and girls as well as transgender women, African Americans and indigenous populations, and those who migrate to the United States seeking a better job, are more susceptible to sex trafficking than others.

In this paper, the author argued that all the sex trafficking victims in the United States regardless of crossing the borders or not are controlled to sell their sex and traumatized by their traffickers through exposure to violence, alcohol, and drugs. Moreover, these abusive experiences develop health problems among the victims. Hence, the main arguments derived by the author are persuasive considering the findings that prove both international and domestic sex trafficking victims undergo similar hardships. Nevertheless, it tuned out

through this research that the victims suffer from more challenges than predicted after managing to escape from the traffickers. As explained in section 7, numerous sex trafficking victims are frequently criminalized rather than protected by law enforcement. Some victims face secondary victimization through sexual assaults by the police and guards to make matters worse. Besides, trauma bonds could encourage the victims to return to the traffickers who abuse them, especially when the traffickers are victims' family members or intimate partners.

The author acknowledges mainly two limitations in this research. Firstly, the paper did not cover how sex trafficking survivors could practically and possibly recover from the damages caused by the traffickers. Secondly, the paper did not reveal why the traffickers engaged in sex trafficking and victimized people from inside and outside of the United States and who were more likely to commit to it. Hence, further work should address these points to deepen understanding of sex trafficking in the United States.

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# AYAME FUKUTOMI



Ayame Fukutomi is a junior student majoring in Global Business. Her essay “Gender-Specific Expressions in Advertisements: The Influence on People, Marketing, and the Whole Society” was submitted in Advanced Research Writing under the supervision of Professor Lee Friedrich. Fukutomi is interested in the field of gender studies and believes in women’s usefulness in society. This essay was also written because of her interests in marketing. She will study abroad in the Netherlands to learn more about international business and marketing to help her become an active member of society as a woman by gaining knowledge about these fields.



## Gender-Specific Expressions in Advertisements: The Influence on People, Marketing, and the Whole Society

### Abstract

Advertisements portray sexualized, objectified, and idealized women that respond to social expectations. Against this situation, currently, online movements that promote portraying the reality of women in advertisements have become active. On the other hand, advertisements can play a role to show social norms and role models of women. While in Japan, there are no regulations, other western countries like France and the UK try to eliminate the negative effects of gender-specific expressions, using regulations. This essay examines people’s notions toward gender-specific expressions and also whether regulations might contribute to reducing gender biases. In addition, this essay aims to find a relationship between gender-specific expressions and marketing profits. To consider the question, an online survey about Japanese advertisements was conducted. The result of it reveals that people feel both negative and positive influence of women-portrayal in advertisements: whereas some kinds of gender-specific expressions are likely to endanger women’s mental and physical health, they can also motivate women to become their own ideal women. Therefore, though regulating gender-specific expressions completely is an effective way to reduce people’s bias, the restriction can reduce the benefits of advertisements. As for marketing effects, especially advertisements that make women uncomfortable are likely to reduce the marketing profits. Especially, in terms of the portrayal of sexualized women and unhealthy-looking

women, people are less attracted to looking at those advertisements; therefore, such advertisements can be considered as targets of regulation.

*Keywords:* Gender-specific expressions, Marketing Profits, Sexualized, Objectified, Idealized

### Introduction

Since 2016, ANA (American National Advertisers) has led the #SeeHer movement to change the current situation of how the media portrays women: media, including advertising, do not or only partly show the real images of women and girls, containing their appearance, roles in society, and their characters, so women cannot realize their potential (ANA, n.d.). That is, ANA analyzes women and girls who are trying to be a woman society expects them to be and, in the process, giving up what they really want to be, such as their appearance, career, and character. As for the reason why current gender expressions should be altered, experts assume that there is a connection between portrayal in advertisements and the whole society’s recognition. Guy Parker, the chief executive of Advertisement Standards Authority (ASA), which is the independent regulator of advertising in the UK, told the BBC, "Our evidence shows how harmful gender stereotypes in ads can contribute to inequality in society" (BBC.com, 2019). Jakštienė et al. (2008) explain this connection, writing that media “shapes the attitudes of society and the individuals” (p. 50). Therefore, advertising is a key

factor to change society's attitude toward women's roles. According to the textbook, Principles of Microeconomics, advertisements have a huge impact on markets, and they are the most powerful tools for marketing (Mankiw, 2016). Thus, advertising is a key factor of marketing and there must be marketing reasons why biased advertisements are still used frequently. In a lecture of Introduction to Gender Studies, opened by Kaeko Chiba at Akita International University, we invited a writer of the Akita Sakigake Newspaper, and discussed a famous advertising by Akita Tourism & Convention Association, the Akita Bijin (Akita Beauty) poster (image 1 below), in which 5-6 young women with good appearance open their mouth and say something. Some people in Akita are for it, saying that it catches the eyes of people and contributes to inviting tourists to Akita. However, others argued that this method of promotion implied that youth and beauty in appearance were the values of Akita women, and promoted biased images of women among people (Souma, 2019). To see more of the pros and cons of such advertisements that may limit women's potential, this paper will firstly pick up official regulations about advertising which have already been introduced in other countries, along with their intentions. Then this paper will examine the advertisements' economic effects and their social significance. Afterward, the subsequent primary research section will reveal young Japanese people's notion of gender expression in advertisements.

Image 1: Akita Bijin Poster



Akita Convention & Visitors Bureau, (2019). Akita Bijin Poster. [Photograph]. <https://www.akita-yulala.jp/akitacity-bijin>

### Literature Review: The Way of Looking at Gender-Specific Advertisements: Different Insights, Different Analysis

Today, whereas in Japan, in which there is no clear rule to restrict 'harmful' gender expression in advertisements, other countries such as the UK and France have already set rules and restrictions about advertisements. To think about the relationship between gender expression in advertisements and society's attitude as a whole, one clear indicator is the ranking of the gender gap index, presented by the World Economic Forum (WEF). WEF creates this ranking, referring to the gender disparity in these four areas: politics, economics, education, and health, and Japan is ranked 120th out of 156 countries, which is the worst in G7 countries (The World Economic Forum, 2021; Kyodo News, 2021). On the other hand, the UK, which introduced a restriction about gender-stereotypical expression, ranks 23rd, and France, which banned extremely thin models from appearing in advertisements, ranks 16th. To consider this ranking of those two countries and Japan, there may be a relationship between the situation of media restriction and gender equality rate.

The UK is a representative country that regulates 'harmful' gender expressions in advertisements through an official organization. In 2019, ASA and CAP (Committee of Advertising Practice) showed guidelines, which indicate what kinds of advertisements are considered unacceptable. These advertisements are subject to regulations, one including attributes or behavior which are associated with a particular gender and one implying that idealized body shape or physical features have a strong connection with individual emotional well-being and happiness (Advertisement Standards Authority, 2021). For instance, advertisements

in which all executives are men and their secretaries are women apply to the former regulation, which disallows the idea that women should be depicted only as men's supporters. In fact, we can see the latter case of advertisements anywhere in Japan. For example, when watching videos on YouTube, people often see advertisements that imply that if women remove their body hair at the hair removal clinic, they are likely to be liked by men, which is expressed as women's happiness. These advertisements without regulations force women to devalue their ability and fit into the mold of what society expects of them.

To restrict the latter kinds of advertisements that show the figure of ideal body shape as women and to prevent women from connecting the body shape and their emotional well-being, France banned extremely thin models officially (Marcus, 2017). Models are required to submit a medical certificate clarifying their Body Mass Index (BMI) is not extremely low; otherwise, employers of the models face about up to 75,000 euros fines and up to six months in jail (Marcus, 2017). When this rule was enforced, France's minister of social affairs and health, Marisol Touraine said that "Exposing young people to normative and unrealistic images of bodies leads to a sense of self-depression and poor self-esteem that can impact health-related behavior" (BBC.com., 2017, para.8). Chou (2018) introduces the concept of WCBS: "women's cognitive bias toward slimness" (para. 1) to help us understand what she meant. Chou explains that media, including marketing, tends to appoint thin models and instill the notion that slimness is ideal or what women should seek. In fact, BBC (2017) reported, at the time when this law was enacted, about 400,000 people in France were suffering from an eating disorder and about 90 % of them were young women, which was considered as one result

of 'harmful' advertisements. As this shows, there seems to be a connection between advertisements that have the possibility to create socially expected or stereotypes of idealized figures of women and women's unhealthy physical and mental states.

Some researchers pay attention to marketing profits to analyze the reason for using gender-problematic advertisements, such as ones in which women are idealized or sexualized, though some advertisements have negative effects on women. Nagi (2014) concludes that these advertisements "arouse subconscious desire", which leads to the purchase of goods and services (p. 87). That is, both men and women are unintentionally attracted by the goods and services when advertisements portray women with ideal or attractive bodies; heterosexual men tend to be attracted by sexualized women's figures and women tend to be attracted by idealized women's figures for psychological reasons. In fact, research by business professors at Villanova University reveals that although women feel uncomfortable with their own bodies when they see super-thin models in advertisements, they are more likely to buy the product advertised with thin models than one that is not (Neff, 2008). On the other hand, the Chief of a large company, the official association, and the researcher state that stopping such advertisements rather reduces economic profits. Mark Pritchard, Chief Brand Officer of Procter & Gamble (P&G), the world's largest advertiser and a major player in the daily goods industry affirmed that brands that show equality in their advertising are more likely to be trusted by consumers and will grow, at the Sustainable Brands International Conference 2019 Tokyo (Ikeda, 2019). Actually, the Association of National Advertisers (ANA) reveals that advertising that promotes gender equality raises the company's credibility by 10 %, and its sales by 26 % (ANA,

2020). To consider the fact, in the long run, companies may gain more marketing profits by showing gender equality than by using biased advertisements. Another report shows that not only in the long run, but also in the short run, eliminating biased advertisements related to gender expression contributes to marketing profits. According to Kantar (2018), people are likely to skip advertisements when they feel uncomfortable with the portrayal of women in advertisements. Current SNS advertisements can be skipped by the audience and if they are not seen, there are no effects on advertising of the products. Hence, as this research reveals, advertisements with gender-specific expressions have both positive and negative effects on marketers.

Although there is a fact that advertisements showing stereotyped figures of women are harmful to women's mental health, one research has found they can be useful if they become positive "social norms" (Lin & McFerran, 2016, p.6). Nowadays, because of the trend that shows the reality of women's bodies, rather than an ideal of women in advertisements, the number of models with larger bodies is increasing. To relate to this trend, Lin and McFerran (2016) conducted research that examines its effects on the audiences. Ironically, the authors found negative effects of the advertisements which seem to promote human's emotional and physical well-being: When larger bodies appear more often in advertising, people lose motivation to pursue their health and become less careful about what they eat and how they behave. Only from this study, media, including advertisements show "social norms" (Lin & McFerran, 2016, p.6) that can be a positive driver for people to pursue their ideal figure. To sum up, Lin and McFerran's study shows that portraying women that look like standard or ideal has positive effects on women when they can be role models of women.

Thus, various research mentions both positive and negative sides of portraying biased and idealized women's figures. The reason for the difference in their perspective is that some consider such advertisements as biased and objectified, while others consider them as "social norms" (Lin & McFerran, 2016, p.6) that give people motivation for keeping their health. Though official committees regulate advertisements that show gender-specific expression in some countries, it is still difficult to set a boundary between biased and motivating advertisements for genders. In the primary research, I will conduct a survey helping to answer my research question, which asks whether the advertising innovations that countries such as France and England are making to the way in which women are portrayed are helping to positively change people's recognition of gender and whether the change finally solves gender inequality in the whole society.

### Methodology

#### Guiding Question

In order to understand people's notions toward women-expression in advertisements and the effects that such advertisements have on people in terms of marketing, well-being, and gender recognition I conducted an online survey. This survey will help to find answers for the guiding question of my primary research: whether restricting biased gender-specific expressions in France and England positively changes people's recognition of gender. In addition, this survey also helps to explore how the innovation of advertisement might finally solve gender inequality in the whole society.

#### Setting and Participants

In the Literature review, this paper mentioned some situations and regulations of advertisements with biased women-expressions, but the main aim of this paper is to consider the Japanese situation. Therefore,

I targeted people who see Japanese advertisements on a daily basis: there were 36 participants in total, which includes 35 people whose nationality is Japanese and a single person whose nationality is not. All participants are under 25 years old, and are composed of 30 females, 4 males, one whose gender is neither female nor male, and one who selected "prefer not to say". All surveys conducted were totally voluntary and anonymous through Google Forms.

#### Data collection

The survey was shared with people on a Facebook group in which a number of students and graduated students of Akita International University join. Additionally, to collect responses from students of other universities, this survey was shared via stories in my personal Instagram account. The survey period was one week, from 12 November to 19 November. There were 12 questions composed of 4 multiple choice questions, 2 questions allowing participants to select more than 2 choices, and 6 open-ended questions. The form starts with the question asking respondents for their overall image of women's appearance in Japanese advertisements, which is followed by the question asking respondents about their ideal characteristics of women's

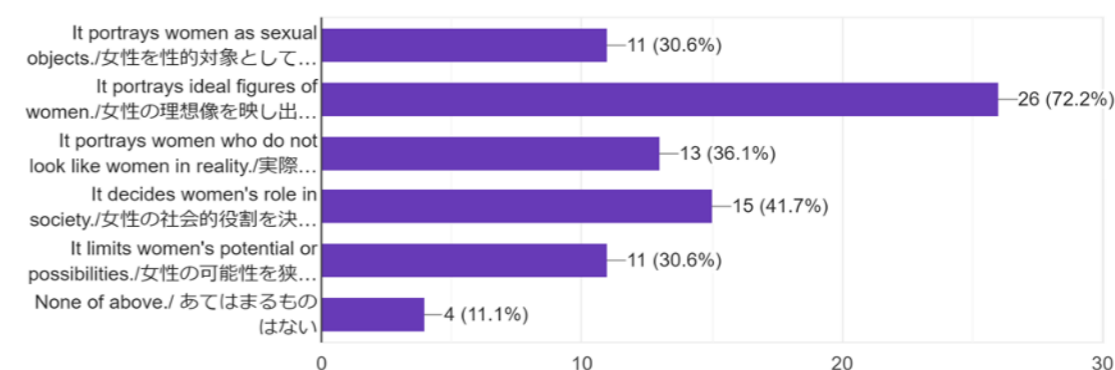
appearance. Then the latter half of the form asks questions helping to examine the relationship between advertisements with biased gender expression and marketing aspects, like people's purchase intentions and the company's credibility.

### Findings

The 5th question, which asked participants' images about women in advertisements, reveals that 72.2 % of participants feel that Japanese advertising portrays ideal figures of women and 36.1 % of them feel that women in Japanese advertisements do not look like women in reality (Figure 1). The 6th question, targeted only women, asked about the effects of women-portrayal in advertisements on them by providing 7 options and allowing them to select zero to seven provided options. The result was that when they see women-portrayal in advertisements, 22 out of 30 females answered they have lost confidence in their appearance, and 23 of them answered they have lost confidence in their body shape. Considering the result of the 1st question and 6th question, advertisements that only portray ideal figures of women, not the reality of women, have negative effects on the female audience in terms of the reduction of their self-confidence.

(Figure 1)

5. Please choose ones that you agree with about the way of portraying women in Japanese advertising, such as SNS ads an... 出し方についてあなたが同意するものすべてを選んでください。  
36 responses



### Uncomfortable Gender-Specific Expressions Reduce Marketing Profits

The 7th and 8th questions, which aimed to reveal the relationship between gender expression and marketing profits, reveal that gender-specific expression in advertisements would have negative effects on marketing. The 7th question asked participants to tell what behavior they encounter on advertisements on SNS that makes their portrayal of men or women uncomfortable. This question collected remarkable data: 75 % of participants skip such advertisements. This result shows that even if owners created advertisements when they do not care about gender expressions, the advertisements have no effects. In the 8th question, I first showed one advertisement for a drink in which there were women wearing a short dress made by the liquid and the sentence (Image 2 below), "DRINK WHAT SHE'S WEARING".

(Image 2)



I expect this advertisement to be considered as an advertisement with sexualized women. Then the question asked how negative/positive the image people have toward the owner of the advertisement by selecting the number from 1(positive) to 10 (negative). On average, people selected 8.02, which means that the owner may worsen their brand image. These two ques-

tions lead to the answer that gender-specific expressions which make people uncomfortable reduce the companies' marketing profits, in terms of advertising opportunity and the company's credibility.

### Argument / Discussion: The Overall Perception of Women's Portrayal in Advertisements

The main purposes of the online survey were mainly three: to know what effects women in Japanese advertisements have on women, to analyze whether there is a relationship between marketing profits and gender-specific expression in advertisements, and to make assumptions about how Japanese advertisements should be and what kinds of women's figures they should portray. Overall, among female respondents, the reaction of respondents is divided into half and half: 53.3 % of respondents answered they receive positive effects from women in Japanese advertisements, while 46.7 % of respondents answered that they have negative effects of them. At the first glance, this data does not show any tendency and characteristics, but the following question asking about the reasons provides some analysis about the people's recognition of how women portrayed advertisements.

### How People Perceive Women in Japanese Advertisements Divides Positive or Negative Reactions

There is a tendency that the female respondents who answered that the advertisements have negative effects said that they feel that the advertisements imply women should be like women in advertisements, contrary to their intentions. Notably, 10 out of 13 females, who answered both either positive or negative effects and the reasons for it, wrote similar reasons. They are forced by advertisements to become ideal

and socially expected figures of women, which is different from what they really want to be or cannot be like (Example of answers 1). In fact, 9 out of 11 females that answered "women in ads do not look like women in reality" in question 5 feel negative effects of women in Japanese advertisements. Also, the other question reveals when they see women-portrayed in advertisements, 22 out of 30 females answered they have lost confidence in their appearance, and 23 of them answered they have lost confidence in their body shape. That is, since some people recognize women in advertisements as out-of-reality, they feel uncomfortable with them deciding women's ideal figures and lose confidence in themselves, who cannot look like the women in advertisements.

(Example of answers 1)

- 女性はこうあるべきだ、と強制されているように感じ、矯正しなければならないといったような強迫観念にかられる (I feel as if I'm being forced to be this way as a woman, and I have this obsessive need to correct myself.) - a female of age 21-25
- 広告の女性が女性として目指すべき姿なんだと無意識に思いこませられていると思う (I think I am subconsciously made to believe that this is what women in advertising should aspire to be as women.) - a female of age 16-20
- こんな風になりたいけどこんなに頑張れない、とマイナスな考えになってしまう ("I want to be this way, but I can't work this hard," I think negatively.) - a female of age 16-20

(Example answers 2)

- 自分の美容の目標を定めることができた。 (I was able to set my own beauty goals.) - a female age of 16-20
- 運動をして健康的な痩せ型体型を目指したいと思った。 (I wanted to exercise to achieve a healthy and slim body shape.) - a female age of 16-20
- になりたい容姿がクリアになる。メイクや髪型などを参考にしたくなる。 (I have a clearer idea of what I want to look like. It makes me want to use makeup, hairstyle, etc. as a reference.) - a female age of 21-25

These results show that most women feel that women in advertisements show what they should become. However, the difference that decides if they perceive either positive or negative effect is whether they recognize the women as what they can become or not.

On the other hand, female respondents who perceive positive effects of women in advertisements recognize the women as motivating and real role models for them. Thus, for them, the advertisements play as their incentive. The result of question 11 shows, 9 out of 11 females who also answer the reason for the positive effects, consider that such women in advertisements motivate them to improve their appearance or inner beauty like the portrayed women (Example answers 2).



Then, another question is that how much women in advertisements and women's ideal figures of women are related to each other. Based on the analysis above, women's thinking about their ideal figures are affected by women in advertisements strongly, but the result did not reveal a clear connection between them. Statistically, 16 out of 30 females wrote similar points in both blanks of their image of women's characteristics in advertisements and their ideal figures of women and the ratio is 53.3%. Thus, about a half of female respondents seem to admire women in advertisements directly, while others are not affected by how the women are portrayed. Yet, there is one aspect that especially influences women: body shape. As for question two, 10 females that say their ideal women have thin bodies write about thinness also in the first question: What are your ideal/expected characteristics of a woman's appearance? Also in the research conducted by Silvy et, al (2019), shows that women tend to "enjoy identifying" (p.336) with extremely thin models, even if they understand they show unrealistic figures of women. Hence, based on the result, though we can say that it's hard to find the connection between women in advertisements and people's ideal figures, they are likely to be affected in terms of the body shape of women in advertisements.

### The Marketing Profits of Biased Women's Figures

The results so far imply that advertisements tend to show ideal or socially expected women's figures, but we still do not know if there are marketing profits. Then, the essay analyzes whether gender-biased advertisements should remain even if they make about a half of women feel uncomfortable. In question 1 that the survey asks respondents to write the characteristics of women's appearance in Japanese advertisements, 23 out of 36 responders answered that women in advertisements are thin or

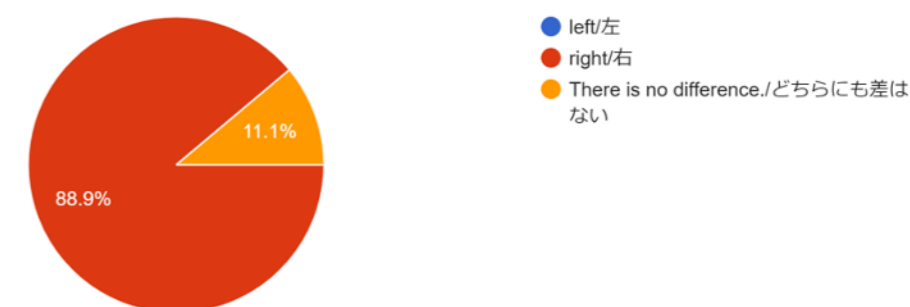
extremely thin; it's about 63.9%. From the results, we can assume that marketers intentionally use thin models and there are certain marketing profits. Yet, when I show two kinds of advertisements (Image 3), one uses an extremely thin model and the other uses a standard body model, 88.9% of respondents answered that they are attracted by the former products and the owner (Figure 2). Therefore, extremely thin models would not contribute to marketing profits.

(Image3)



As for sexualized women in advertisements, the result of the survey tells remarkable reactions by the audience. Question 8 asked how negative or positive the image people have toward the owner of the advertisement that uses sexualized women by selecting the number from 1(positive) to 10 (negative). As a result, people selected 8.02 on average, which means that the owner may worsen their brand image due to the portrayal of women. Moreover, the results show that people not only have negative feelings, they even quit seeing the advertisements. Currently, more and more advertisements appear on SNS such as Youtube, and Instagram and people can choose to

9: Please look at these two kinds of advertisement. Which goods/service/company are you attracted by? / 2種類の広告をご覧ください。どちらの商品/サービス/企業により魅力を感じますか。  
36 responses



(Figure 2)

skip or stop viewing such advertisements. In terms of such advertisements, the survey asks their reaction when they encounter SNS (YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and so on) advertisements that they feel uncomfortable with their way of portraying men or women. The result is that 75% of participants skip uncomfortable advertisements that show strong gender expressions.

From these results, we can analyze that though many advertisements show gender-biased expressions, there is no or rather a negative relationship with marketing profits.

### Conclusion: Suggestion for Portraying People without Gender Biases

While other countries like the UK and France started to regulate gender-specific expression in advertisements, Japan still does not set rules for them. Certainly, though gender-specific expressions can reinforce stereotypes based on gender and harm people's mental and physical health, they also have positive effects on women. Women are motivated by people in advertisements and make efforts to improve themselves. In addition, as for marketing aspects, advertisers use gender-biased expressions, aiming to attract consumers by stimulating their subconscious desires, though they may reduce marketing opportunities. Therefore, I conducted an online survey targeting 36 respondents to reveal

Japanese people's real perceptions toward gender-specific expressions in advertisements. Overall, the result of the survey reveals that though people are equipped with gender-specific images by advertisements, half of the respondents perceive their effects as a positive driver to improve their health and appearance. Hence, to answer the research question, regulating and eliminating gender-specific expressions may contribute to changing people's biases on gender and realizing gender equality. The regulations can reduce women's motivation to improve themselves. Yet, it is sure that sexualized women or women who are so thin that their health is at risk make the audience uncomfortable. Then, when people feel uncomfortable with gender-specific expressions, it reduces companies' marketing profits or credit toward the owners. Therefore, the suggestion is to eliminate gender-specific expressions only portraying sexualized or objectified women and having possibilities to harm people's health through eating disorders, for example. Although this project tells the difficulties of setting regulations about advertisements, it would be better to categorize gender-specific expressions into each category like sexualized, objectified, and idealized expression, and examine each more deeply. Hence, as for further studies, to examine what kinds of advertisements contribute to improving people's inner and outer health and appearance might help to make advertisements fit today's diverse society.

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# ERIKO YAMAMOTO



Eriko Yamamoto is a sophomore student. Her essay "The Hybridization of Gender: Inspiration from Korea" was submitted in ENG100 Composition I under the supervision of Professor Yuki Togawa. Yamamoto has an interest in gender studies, especially in gender androgyny. Last year, a male K-pop idol got global attention since he wore a skirt. His action let Yamamoto consider the potential of K-pop to diminish the gap between two genders when expressing their originality because the recent K-pop trend is not swayed by gender. For Yamamoto's future research, she would like to further develop her research by connecting the androgynous characteristics of K-pop and marketing.



## The Hybridization of Gender: Inspiration from Korea

Male K-pop idols smile on the advertisement for Korean cosmetics. This trend of casting males for cosmetic advertisements is boosted by an aspect of Korean pop culture which is not swayed by gender stereotypes. Since society has largely considered the wearing of makeup as an activity reserved for the female gender, the males who wear makeup have been considered gay (Sarwono & Fayardi, 2018). In Korea, however, thanks to K-pop culture, men putting on makeup is more accepted and some males do that without hesitation ("Flowerboys and the appeal," 2018). Other male K-pop idols' attitudes, such as growing out their hair or wearing skirts, have subverted many gender stereotypes. One photo unveiled on June 28 this year sparked global attention because Jimin from BTS, a Korean male idol group, wore a skirt that originally catered for female consumers ("BTS's Jimin wears", 2021). His gender-neutral approach spread in an instant and gained favor from around the world as breaking gender norms. Kim Hyo-jung, an adjunct professor at the Fashion Institute of Technology at the State University of New York, states in the interview that this genderless phenomenon has a positive influence on young people who attempt to express their individuality via fashion without being too obsessed with stereotypes (Dong, 2021). Although the traditional dichotomy of gender creates a crisis of identity for individuals who prefer gender fluidity, this issue is potentially addressed by the advent of K-pop, a genre which propagates gender androgyny.

Eliminating gaps between gender aids individuals in shaping their identity. According to Doyle et al. (2021), for those who have a feeling that something is wrong with their biological gender or do not want to conceptualize their gender as dichotomous, the environment where they are supported and can feel affirmative acceptance is a crucial element. There are still prevailing gender stereotypes of fashion, behavior, language, and so on. Individuals act unintentionally by following those stereotypes because they are frightened of supervision and hate comments from other people (Dietrich et al., 2021). Based on this background, an absence of gender stereotypes which restrict their behaviors gives a boost for individuals to establish their identity freely. Gender fusion lets individuals form their personalities while free from being divided into just two categories.

The idea of gender fusion is promoted by K-pop, a new pop culture genre from South Korea, which has spread worldwide. Before the current boom of K-pop culture, the music industry in Korea was so small that Korean entertainment companies have promoted K-pop idols in foreign countries, such as the United States and Japan, which have the first and second largest music industries (IFPI, 2021). In the process of the promotion, K-pop has expanded its influence by following the innovation of information technology (IT). According to Kim (2015), the term "Hallyu" is used to describe the phenomenon of the popularity of K-pop culture and it is largely divided

into four steps: Hallyu 1.0, 2.0, 3.0, and 4.0. K-pop is included in Hallyu 2.0. Kim indicates this step is driven by IT, which enables the vogue of Hallyu 2.0 to reach the entire world. In contrast to physical products, such as albums or CDs, people can more easily access free music and visual images on the Internet beyond their national borders (Oh, 2013). Social media maximizes this advantage of the Internet. Oh states that entertainment companies promote their artists with visual images on Twitter or Facebook and fans can communicate with other fans via fan activities there. Moreover, since the music videos of K-pop idols are released to the public on YouTube, everyone can see them for free. The number of YouTube users are 1.86 billion in 2021 (Ceci, 2021). K-pop handles such a huge community for its marketplace. New technology enables K-pop to utilize those huge communities and expand its influence around the world.

The prevailing K-pop culture accompanied by the revolution of the Internet has a considerable impact on society. K-pop songs are ranked at the top of music charts in many countries. The period where “Butter”, a BTS song, kept the first place



Bighit Music. (2018, August 14). [Photograph of Jungkook]. Love Yourself □ ‘Answer.’ [Love Yourself yui ‘Answer] [https://ibighit.com/bts/jpn/discography/detail/love\\_yourself-answer.html](https://ibighit.com/bts/jpn/discography/detail/love_yourself-answer.html)

on the Billboard Hot 100 is the longest in 2021 (Billboard Staff, 2021). YouTube announced this year that BLACKPINK, a Korean girl group, has become the most subscribed artist on the video channel, surpassing Justin Bieber, an American artist who had the largest number of subscribers, by reaching 65.5 million subscribers (Chan, 2021). These incidents represent the existence of a huge fan base for them. Their influences go beyond the music industry. For example, BTS delivered a speech at the United Nations (UNICEF, n.d.) and BLACKPINK called for action to prevent climate change on YouTube (“K-pop superstars Blackpink”, 2021). Under the COVID-19 situation characterized by lockdowns and stay-at-home appeals, K-pop has also extended its influence among households (Kim, 2021). As soon as people around the world were forced to stay at home, K-pop entertainment companies immediately created a new style of concerts, online concerts. Even in the pandemic era, K-pop culture has retained fans’ interests. K-pop has succeeded in gaining enormous popularity and has a sufficient impact on society to promote a new sense of value.

Given its global popularity, K-pop propagates androgyny around the world. Androgyny refers to “a combination of masculine and feminine attributes, traits, and/or characteristics” in gender-ambiguous form (Atwood & Axt, 2021, para1). There is an advent of gender neutrality in the K-pop industry that is changing the way gender is viewed. The costume, looks, and choreography of K-pop idols are fused with both the aspects of masculinity and femininity (Shin & Koh, 2020). This gender fusion breaks gender norms and promotes a gender-neutral sense of values. For example, the man appearing in the above photo is Jungkook from BTS. He is biologically a man and the black clothes and his short

hair leave him masculine. Simultaneously, his costume includes feminine elements. It consists of laces and frills, which are mainly utilized for female clothes, and he dyed his hair pink. Bonnardel et al. (2017) reveal that pink is associated with femininity due to the childhood custom which distinguishes genders by colors. Overall, this photo has both the aspects of masculinity and femininity and is not specific to a particular sex, thus, his looks succeed in mixing both characteristics of genders. In addition to gender-neutral appearance, Taemin from Shinee, a Korean boy group, tried to break stereotypes in the field of dance. The choreography for his song “Move” includes both masculine and feminine movements and he tried to stop separating the style of dance by gender (Herman, 2017). He synthesized masculinity and femininity to a new form and brought the K-pop industry a new androgynous trend. By approaching androgynous aspects, K-pop idols challenge the gender stigma that male makeup and mixing femininity are unmanly. Since the characteristics of K-pop facilitate moderating the difference between males and females, it has the potential to initiate androgyny.

Some female K-pop idols have challenged the gender obstacles prevailing in the K-pop industry by becoming the pioneer in androgyny to promote senses unnoticeable to sexes. According to Saeji (2013), female idols have been at the center of controversy because they are sexually objectified by TV program or their fans. Their outfits are extremely tight or overexposed their skins, which forces them to keep their thin features. Saeji has a concern that sexual objectification causes women to struggle against conventional beauty standards, such as thinness, promoted by female K-pop idols. Amber Liu, a former member of f(x), a Korean female group, has challenged this

issue. Liu has very short hair and always wore pants as a costume, which contradicts the original image of female K-pop idols who wear short skirts. Liu categorizes their gender as androgynous and wears the clothes Liu wants to show their individual identity (MTV News, 2019, 8:34). Their action extends to YouTube. The video Liu replies to hate comments toward their non-feminine actions and features, called Where is my chest?, has more than 87 million views as of December 12, 2021 (Amber Liu, 2015). One hater sent Liu a message “She’s tall but has a dainty body... thin legs and long hair make her look feminine and innocent” (5:13). Such a hate comment implies that there is still gender stigma which resists a new sense of value about gender. In spite of such an obstacle, Liu has continued to express her own styles which are not slanted toward particular sexes. Liu’s action to counter gender stigma toward female K-pop idols is admired and the movement to change the norms has been promoted (Stevenson, 2018). Thus, the acceleration of gender-neutral concepts will occur when the androgynous K-pop idols are more widely accepted and supported as an initiative.

The androgynous aspects of K-pop, however, have the potential to cause a crisis of masculinity, which leads to prejudice toward homosexuality. According to Tunstall (2014), male K-pop idols embody soft masculinity, which is linked with beauty and gentleness. This masculinity is opposite from the hard masculinity which is associated with heterosexual conceptions in western countries (Ayuningtyas, 2017). Tunstall asserts that because of the difference in perspective toward masculinity, some western people criticize this sensitive culture as the feminization of Asian men. The past research suggests that males’ feminization has the potential to cause negative attitudes

towards homosexuality, especially from heterosexual men (Bosson & Michniewicz, 2013, as cited in Falomir-Pichastor et al., 2019). Those who believe in heterosexual ideology consider that there are only two sexes and people should act by following the assigned roles based on their genders (Toorn et al., 2020). Therefore, Falomir-Pichastor et al. estimate that heterosexual men are concerned that feminization eliminates the distinction between men and women and causes a crisis of masculinity. According to Wojnicka (2021), a crisis of masculinity is the phenomenon where males lose sight of what masculinity is and the position of men in society. Under those circumstances, heterosexual men try to affirm their masculinity to react to feminization. To prove their masculinity, heterosexual men avoid feminine behavior, which has the potential to cause anti-femininity norms. Due to those actions, homosexual men, who are prone to be associated with femininity, receive prejudice from heterosexual men who want to make sure that they are “real men”.

While a crisis of masculinity is a concern, it is probable that such a crisis aids in reshaping problematic gender norms that propel men as a hegemon in society. A crisis of masculinity accompanied by a gender-ambiguous approach corrects gender inequality and helps men search for a place where they belong in today’s changing context. According to Ayuningtyas (2017), heterosexual masculinity is closely related to hegemonic masculinity, which justifies male domination over women. Therefore, it is possible for a crisis of masculinity, which conflicts with heterosexuality, to eliminate gender inequality caused by heterosexual ideology. Ayuningtyas notes that a crisis of masculinity leads to the destabilization of stereotypical conceptions of gender thus creating a space for society to rethink and

restructure problematic masculine values. The research conducted by Wojnicka (2021) reveals that a transition towards a less hegemonic atmosphere of males has already occurred. The 20th century experienced the rise of women, the two world wars, the rise of the gay movement and changing views on masculinity. The 21st century also consists of complicated and changing societies. Heterosexual perspectives which produce sexual binarism separating masculinity and femininity are outdated in contemporary society (Throne et al., 2019). Men have found themselves in the process of the revision of their behaviors and adopted a new sense of values in the changing society. A crisis of masculinity accompanied by gender ambiguity realizes a gender-equal society and aids men in searching for their place in the current context.

In conclusion, K-pop is an appropriate tool to promote gender fusion. K-pop moderates the difference between males and females and merges them through adopting both masculinity and femininity. The popularity of K-pop around the world accompanied by the development of the Internet enables it to have a significant impact on society. With the assistance of its enormous influence, K-pop becomes a trigger to raise the movement to create controversy over the conventional sense of values based on prevailing gender stereotypes. It can realize an environment where the gaps between genders are eliminated and people are not worried to adopt ways of behaving which are considered as opposite to their sex. Given the impact of K-pop’s promotion of gender fusion, further research on other pop cultures and how they promote societal betterment is warranted. Pop cultures might be a new vehicle through which to create a better society.

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limited to determining norms and expectations, the discussions have been entailed as to how people of gender diversity can live in Japan. BL manga that explicitly directs gender preference initiates societal understanding and acceptance. McCombs (2014) claims that media is the primary instrument to frame public opinion but also construct new values. The phenomenon that the popularity of BL manga is increasing in the media can be the vehicle for bringing about gender diversity in Japan. Therefore, the popularity of the so-called gay boom creates the acceptance of sexual minorities even in a society that is relatively unwilling to accept homosexuality. According to McLelland (2000), the gay boom in Japanese mass media has led to the formation of gay-rights activist organizations. Some populations in Japan, having been influenced by the manga that requires a new way of thinking regarding the different sexuality, have started to advocate gay rights. Zsila et al. (2018) suggest that the readers are motivated to consume BL manga with a pro-gay attitude. Pro-gay attitude helps society move on to the phase in which gay people have equal rights in their life. Since many people classified as LGBTQ still suffer discrimination in modern society, the consumers have an understanding of homosexuality. This movement made by the BL manga industry is a fundamental concept that Japan is set into motion to broaden the new perspective on sexuality (Hori, 2013). Not only does the gay romance in the manga introduce a new idea, but it also challenges gender oppression in Japan.

In addition, BL manga empowers female consumers in a gender-biased society. The world in the BL manga enables women to defy the judgments of men (Kawano, 2019). Within the concept of homonormativity that brings out no non-binary gender preference, women are inspired by the characters who fall in love with their

same-sex counterpart, because they are not fit into the heteronormative norms which contemporary society upholds. The reason that most of the women who find delight in reading manga is also attributed to the respect for the individuals who challenge the determined convention (Kawano, 2019). Moreover, females in the patriarchally restrictive culture and their sexuality are constrained to only reproductive roles (Aoyama, 1988; Behr, 2003; Kinsella, 2000; McLelland, 2000b, as cited in, Wood, 2006). Therefore, the manga in which the queer same-sex romance is depicted as if it were common sense enables the readers to develop subversive behavior that counteracts the male-dominated authority which subjects females to specific female-gendered roles such as reproduction or ideal feminine appearance. On top of that, female characters play the role of the third party or non-existent; thus, females are able to enjoy the stories from the objective view; the females enjoy the boys-love world, a place where men's and society's eyes do not exist. (Hori, 2013). Zsila et al. (2018) elaborate on the female's motivation for the consumption that the gay partners have an equal partnership without consideration of gender roles. Regarding most of the women in the family, they are treated less fairly as they stay home and do all the chores. Therefore, the relationships that allocate equal parts to each other in the BL manga cause the popularity of female consumers. Beyond reality's confining societal conventions of unfair gender roles and societal expectations, BL manga embraces liberations for females who constantly face oppression. Consequently, BL manga is said to have a positive impact on the reader and society.

On the other hand, when it comes to focusing on how BL manga portrays, BL frames gay relationships as purely sexual connections and not meaningful interpersonal connections. A romantic relationship be-

tween two parties does not only take place as sexual activities. This principle does not only apply to heterosexual couples but also to any form of sexuality including gay individuals. Opposing this understanding, the purpose of BL writer is mainly focused on providing sexual pleasure to female consumers (Ishida, 2015). For illustration, BL manga with the sexual portrayal arouses the desire embedded in female consumers. In addition to the idea, BL media promotes the fetishization of gay men (Dobbins, 2000, as cited in Hall, 2003, p. 23). However, the fetishization of gay romance could be a dangerous pattern of thoughts. The particular sexual preference will make the gay individual in reality perceive a sense of dehumanization and invalidation since the female readers fail to recognize the actual issue the gay people face in sexual intercourse (Anzani et al., 2021; Rickert, 2019). Often than not, female consumers tend to project the fictitious characters onto the real gay individual and see themselves as the dominant. This psychological effect of escapism, the evasion from reality into fantasy, is a serious issue to be addressed when it comes to conveying the story through visual presentation (Ishida, 2015). The dissociation of fantasy from reality makes gay people shunned; their wish is an understanding by society, (Ishida, 2015). Hence, the targets of fetish perceive a sense of unpleasantness when their sexual identity is wrongfully misrepresented. Moreover, the acknowledgment of the sexual relationship can contain the potential hazard, which is the normalization that gay people only advance their sexual relationships.

Misrepresentation of gay romance in only a sexually suggestive way can lead to the normalization of sexual violence against gay people. "The homonormative dynamics" allows the BL manga to incite the reader's sexual views and behaviors (Zsila & Demetrovics, 2017, p. 49). Homonormative

consolidates the world where homosexuality prevails. To be specific, BL manga plays a vital role in pushing the moral decadence of society by exclusively emphasizing the pornographic depiction. The stories aiming at sexually titillating the readers instill the wrongful value of objectifying gay individuals. In BL manga, sexual intercourse without consent is a widespread concern. This means that submissive, or feminized, characters are featured with victimization by sexual assault by the predominant love interest. Frequently enough, attempted rape and other types of non-consensual sexual abuse are all too common in the manga. Some readers will be desensitized to such violence by the storyline where the victim turns out to fall in love with the perpetrator (Pagan, 2019) and such assault is depicted as "an expression of love" (Mizoguchi, 2000, p. 56, as cited in, Zsila & Demetrovics, 2017, p.39). The justification of rape crime makes the issue unsighted yet pervasive. By adding to this phenomenon, rape culture is perpetual in Japan where a sexual victim's rejection is considered to interpret as "yes" for she is too shy and reflects the dominance of the assault (Cade, 2018). In Japan, other than BL manga, rape is seen as acceptable, only if confined to fiction, especially when the target is the one who cannot defy the irresistible force; there is a phrase "イヤよイヤよも好きのうち [Iya yo iya yo mo suki no uchi]" which means saying no is an expression of affection. This view makes violence against the vulnerable person condoned and ignored. On the ground of this rape culture, as a result, gay individuals can be victimized by either female or male sexual violence; especially those uke figures are portrayed as feminine and powerless. The inaccurate depiction attributes to an increasing case of rape as the sexual violation performs in reality.

While there is female consumer's fetishi-



zation that fosters marginalization of the gay individuals and normalization of sexual violence against them highlights the importance for BL manga portrayal to be reconsidered. These two concerns are significantly caused by the companies which produce a misleading image of the sexual minority. In particular, BL manga does not deepen the understanding of gay people but rather is intensely promoted to make benefits for specific companies (Torrens-Soto, 2021). The current commercial marketing that takes the form of media as conveyance has been criticized that they take advantage of the LGBTQ community. As the economic success of the manga industry demonstrated, the more influential the BL manga is, the easier it creates the fallacious conception of homosexuality. As Zsila et al. (2018) point out the substantially profitable growth of BL manga companies, companies will continue to open more extensive markets if there is a demand from consumers. Thus, it is difficult to eradicate the BL manga industry that receives ongoing profits and deliver the positive effect of social activism and empowerment on gay people and female consumers. Instead, the creators and the product corporations are mandated to indicate the difference between fantasy and reality (Ishida, 2015). It goes without saying that manga is not an educational tool but rather entertainment that fulfills the satisfaction and the delight of the audience. Nonetheless, the responsibility of production companies to clarify that BL manga is fiction nonetheless should be taken into consideration for preventing the misconception. Although Zsila and Demetrovics (2017) assert that gay romance media is adolescent entertainment due to pornographic portrayal, demographics prove that young females and even minors can pick up the manga (“The reality,” 2017). Especially, we should find it precarious when young female people are exposed

to inaccuracy as the current Internet boosts the accessibility for them to attain sexual content at ease. At a young age, they can be influenced by the portrayal of BL manga (Wood, 2006). BL manga spreads the idea of homosexuality, but the BL manga companies including writers seek more advantages than the facts of their romantic relationship. For this reason, the manga production should be limited to a certain age, the adults, for those who are able to dissociate reality from fantasy as the production companies convince the readers of the unrealistic depictions.

In conclusion, BL manga production has a positive effect on consumers when people have become more aware of homosexuality, which needs more understanding from society. Furthermore, certain population supports and stand up against gay rights which have not been established in Japanese society. As for the female consumers, they are given profits by reading BL manga. The BL manga enables them to challenge the male-dominated and heteronormative society that bolsters the restrictive female gender roles because the gay people in the manga only pursue their romance without fixed ideas. Moreover, the equal relationship between partners in the manga is one of the factors for them to continue buying the BL manga while females in modern society are the target of exploitation. However, the manga links the connection exclusively to sexual intimacy and increases the misunderstanding of homosexual relationships only in a sexually suggestive manner. Fetishization that acknowledges gay people as a bizarre sexual partnership can provoke a sense of discomfort for gay individuals. For the depiction of rapes, it improperly disregards that sexual assaults and other forms of molestation against gay individuals are violating the gay individuals; hence, the images are

ingrained in people that sexual violation is justified. These issues can be identified through pornographic content. It is difficult for the readers, especially young teenage students who are susceptible to values and beliefs, to distinguish between reality and

fantasy since it visually presents gay people. The manga industry should be only targeted to adults, not young people while the manga continues informing people that reality is separate from what is depicted.

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# AYANO FUJIWARA



Ayano Fujiwara is a Sophomore student planning to major in Global Business. Her essay “Scheme Spreading Unfairness: The Effect of the Increase of the Retirement Age” was submitted in a Composition 1 class under the supervision of Professor Joel Friederich. She has had an interest in economics and how economic schemes can solve social issues. Having heard about the serious aging society in Japan and hearing how the government is currently trying to tackle the problem by raising the retirement age, she became interested in the possible impacts of the scheme to society. This interest led her to write this paper about the impacts of the increasing retirement age.



## Scheme Spreading Unfairness: The Effect of the Increase of the Retirement Age

Human life expectancy has been increasing rapidly due to advancements in health care, sufficient food, improved medical care, and a reduced child mortality rate. In Japan, the average life expectancy in 2020 was 81.64 for men and 87.74 for women, both representing a six-year increase from 30 years ago (Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, 2020). One of the changes that the governments in many countries have made to adapt to the demographic change is the increase in the retirement age. For example, the Japanese Cabinet has recently approved bills requiring companies to let their employees work until 70 and raise the mandatory retirement age from 60 to 65 (Chau, 2021). Moreover, according to Axerland and Mahoney, between 2002 to 2016, 19 countries out of 34 OECD countries have increased the retirement age (2017). By postponing the retirement age, the countries are aiming to deal with the pension crisis that they face, as well as to secure a sufficient working force population that has been decreasing due to the aging population. Despite the fact that the extension of working years seems to be necessary to ensure the stability of the nation's economy, there are some significant issues that the government may have been overlooking. I would like to contend, as a university student who will start working in a few years, that the current ways of raising the retirement age bring serious problems to individual workers. The issue can be explained from the following four perspectives: economic effects on the country,

economic effects on individuals, workers' mental health, and employees' physical health.

The idea of retirement has a long history, and the age of retirement has been discussed over time. The first proposed retirement plan in the world was made by Otto von Bismarck of Germany in 1881, claiming that “those who are disabled from work by age and invalidity have a well-grounded claim to care from the state.” (Social Security Administration, n.d.). From Bismarck's words, it can be inferred that the intention of the retirement system was to promote the well-being of elderly workers. Following Germany, many other countries started to adopt the idea of retirement, setting their own standard of the retirement age. In many countries, the first retirement age was higher than the average life expectancy in the country. In Japan, for example, it was 55, while the average life expectancy was 43 (Managy, 2018). With the increase in life expectancy, more people started to live past the age where they had permission to quit their job (Laskow, 2014). As the number of retired people increased, the governments started to see economical disadvantages, making them decide to raise the retirement age. While the original intention of setting the retirement age was to support healthy living among the elderly, contemporary policy aimed at increasing the retirement age seems to focus only on the benefits of a country.

The main intention of the increase of the retirement age in many countries is to boost the economy. There are two ways in which extended working years stimulate the economy (Kim, 2020). The first is by dealing with the pension crisis. Because people live longer than ever before, a pension is required to be provided to people for longer periods. According to the World Economic Forum, the world will face a 400 trillion dollar shortage in retirement savings by 2050 (Yik, 2019). In Japan, in particular, the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare states that social security estimated to be used in 2021 is about 12.9 billion yen, about a 5.4 billion yen increase from 2010 (2021). If the population that supports social security decreases but the number of people who receive it keeps increasing, it would be difficult to manage the social security system in the future. By raising the retirement age and shortening the number of years that the government pays pensions to people, Templin, a professor of at a law school in the United States, claims that the long-term social security deficit can be reduced from 18% to 33% (2010). His statement shows how the increase in the retirement age can help relieve the current pension crisis.

Secondly, extending working lives can deal with the problem of decreasing the workforce population. Due to the decreasing birth rate and longer life expectancy, the working force population has been decreasing in some countries. For example, the working force population in Japan was about 59 million in 2020, which is a 340 thousand decrease from the previous year (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2020). The rapid decline of the working population can directly affect productivity, damaging the economy of a country. By encouraging the population above the current retirement age, which accounts for 28.7% of the whole popula-

tion in Japan (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2020), to work, the working population would increase, and the economy would be stimulated at the same time. From the viewpoint of a country's economy as a whole, the increase in of the retirement age is a robust scheme that solves the current economic problems.

While it seems that the increase of the retirement age brings benefits to the economy of a country, individuals in the country receive negative economic effects. Firstly, from the perspective of the young people, there would be fewer job opportunities. Economists in the Centre for Economic Policy Research have noted that "the increase in retirement age had a sizable negative impact on youth labor demand" (p. 17) and it creates the "odd 'old in-young out'" (p. 17) trend in the society (Boeri, Garibaldi, & Moen, 2016). Their point is that when companies have many experienced workers remaining in the workforce, there would be less demand for the new and young labor force, making the society more friendly to the old than the young. To support their argument, they used the data in Italy that was collected when the retirement age was being raised and posited that among the 150,000 youth job losses, 36,000 losses could be attributed to the reform of the increase in the retirement age. It shows how significant the negative effects that the young people would get by the rise of the retirement age.

It is not only young people that would be negatively affected economically by the rising of the retirement age, but older generations also receive negative effects. A group of economists in the United States alluded that "Workers with higher levels of education have better paying and more enjoyable jobs, and they tend to remain in the workforce longer than those with less schooling." (Bosworth, Burtless, & Zhang,

2016, p.13). What they intended to say here is that the increase of the retirement age would benefit those workers with high-paying jobs, while others with relatively low wages would choose to or be forced to leave the workplace earlier, receiving less or no money from the government. The result would be a wider economic gap among the elderly. Burtless, an American economist, similarly claims that "Less productive workers tend to drop out of the labor force at younger ages, leaving more productive workers employed at older ages" (2013, p. 23). In other words, less productive, or often workers with lower wages would be kicked out of the workplace regardless of the increase of the retirement age, receiving income for shorter years compared to those of high-skilled or high-income workers. Ironically, Burtless states that productivity increases because of this trend (2013). However, seeing from the viewpoint of the economy of the older generation, the rise of the retirement age would have serious negative effects by widening the economic gap among them.

Another important viewpoint to see the trend of increase of the retirement age is the health of the elderly since concerns for health usually become larger as people get older. Psychologically, it has both positive and negative effects on people. Wu and other professors in the health department claim that employment "is a key component of individuals' identity that provides them with substantial financial, psychosocial and cognitive resources" (Wu, Odden, & Fisher, 2016, p. 5). In other words, they believe that jobs and the state of being employed play an important role for people in identifying themselves and realizing their mental stability. They also added that this tendency is particularly true for individuals in work-oriented countries, where "work is highly valued and considered a necessary part of life" (page 5). Japan may be one

of the work-oriented countries. According to the research conducted by the Japanese Trade Union Confederation (RENGO, 2020), about 27% of 1000 workers said that they want to work past the current retirement age because their work has become one of their motivations to live. It can be inferred that extending the working lives of people makes more people feel their life as satisfied and meaningful, especially in a country like Japan.

In contrast, for those people who could find meaning in their jobs, the increase in the retirement age helps them to ensure their mental health, but for others, it may be a scheme that has negative impacts on their mental health. According to Eibich, a health economist, retirement improves an individual's mental health partially due to the "Relief from work-related stress and strain" (2015, p. 1). Work involves a lot of responsibility, which causes stress, especially for older workers who are more likely to have been promoted over time. For them, extending their working lives means that they have to deal with that stress for longer years. Actually, according to a survey conducted by a general incorporated association in Japan that studies the effect of retirement on individuals, 57.4% of 516 Japanese workers said that they do not accept the idea of increasing the retirement age to 70 (Teinen go kenkyujyo, 2019). One of the major reasons that 65.7% of those who opposed the idea of retiring at age 70 gave was that they want to enjoy their life rather than feeling stressed working for a company for long years. Overall, the psychological effect seems to vary greatly among workers, and both voices are so significant that they should not be neglected by the government policies.

Raising the retirement age also has both positive and negative effects on physical health, while it seems that harmfulness

compensates for the positiveness of the scheme. A group of researchers in the field of labor economics claim that “reforms aimed at promoting labor force participation at an older age may not only ensure the sustainability of social security systems but may also create positive health externalities” (p. 1) by looking at the cognitive functioning of people after retirement (Bonsang, Adam, & Perelman, 2012). According to their research, regardless of the age workers retire, their cognitive function significantly drops after retirement and it stabilizes afterward. Therefore, their statement earlier reveals their claim that working for longer years can increase the number of years workers can live with high cognitive function, or with the brain working actively. Moreover, some other professors studying health claim that delay in physical and cognitive functioning can reduce the risk of morbidities, resulting in a reduction in the mortality rate (Wu, Odden, & Fisher, 2016).

While the positive effects on physical health seem to be significant, it is important to remember that the arguments for the increase of the retirement age stand on the assumption that elderly people are healthier than before. However, the reality is that not all people are living healthier and longer. Axelrad, a labor economist, and Mahoney, a lawyer, claim that “those with historically shorter life expectancies, for example, the poor, the less educated, and blue-collar workers—are affected disproportionately by an increase in the retirement age because they stand to reap fewer benefits” (2017, p. 65). What they mean is that some people would see adverse health conditions earlier than other people, preventing them from working for extended periods. As a result, they would

receive fewer benefits for the increase in the retirement age. Moreover, Mazzonna and Peracci, professors of economics, similarly argue that “the negative effect of retirement disappears when we focus on people who worked in more physically demanding occupations” (2017, p. 18). They additionally stated that retirement has a beneficial effect on their health. In other words, they believe that people who engage in physical labor would be physically damaged by working for longer years despite the benefits that workers in other occupations may receive. When looking specifically at the physical health of the workers, the increase in the retirement age seems to be an unfair scheme.

In conclusion, the young generation should not support the idea of raising the retirement age by just listening to the politician’s words that say it would boost the economy of the country. Although the scheme may have positive effects on the entire economy of a country, it would lead to unfairness among elderly workers from the perspectives of economy, psychological health, and physical health. However, this is not to say that increasing the retirement age should not be encouraged at all, since the benefits that it brings to a country and some workers are so vast that it cannot be neglected. Rather, I believe that the way to increase the retirement age should be reconsidered. For example, like Johnson, an expert on income and health security at older ages, states, the government can exempt some workers who cannot work for longer years by providing them with cash benefits before they reach the extended retirement age (2018). With such a scheme that deals with workers who receive few benefits from the increased retirement age, more equity can be achieved while boosting the economy of the country.

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# YOKO MORITA



Yoko Morita is a sophomore student. Her essay “The Card Loan Business: The Superficiality of Promotion and its Possible Consequences” was submitted in the Composition I class under the supervision of Professor Togawa. Morita is interested in the regional economy and the role of banks, especially about their financial struggles and their service expansion to increase their competitiveness toward mega-banks. Such interest motivated her to analyze the video commercial of a regional bank to understand the efforts and advertising strategies of the banks.



## The Card Loan Business: The Superficiality of Promotion and Its Possible Consequences

The card loan business can be a trump card to overcome the predicament that Japanese banks have been facing. For the past few years, regional banks have been confronting unprecedented challenges. The minus interest rate policy adopted by the Bank of Japan on the top of the list, the shrinkage of the local economy, the minus interest rate policy, different industries’ entries into the financial business— all of those economic situations have forced the management of numerous regional banks to the brink of survival (The Nikkei, 2018). Under such circumstances, since the profitability of financing domestic corporate bodies has been in the doldrums, banks are driven to diversify their range of services and target customers to resolve this difficulty (Study Society of Financial Investigation, 2020). This financial trend is illustrated by this video commercial called “Nogizaka 46 × Chiba Bank Card Loan / 24 hours and 365 days open diner” created by a regional bank in Chiba prefecture (Chiba Bank, 2021). With the emphasis on ethos provided by the appearance of a famous idol from Nogizaka 46, who is enthusiastically supported by a wide range of generations, this advertisement effectively grabs the audience’s attention. Moreover, it appears to have succeeded in informing the numerical benefits of the service, as well as in bestowing the friendliness of the banks to the potential customers. However, the audience should not be deceived by the superficiality of the commercial. It is essential to detect the fundamental flaws in this advertisement in terms of the hidden nature of the

service since the misdelivered information possibly leads to the devastation of customers’ economic life.

This 30-second commercial video was created by Chiba Bank in 2021. With a unique story setting, Chiba bank appeals to the accessibility of its card loan service and the bank’s image as customer-centered. The only character in this commercial is Asuka Saito, a leading member of Nogizaka 46, the most popular female idol group in Japan (LINE Research, 2020). This commercial begins with the scene where Asuka runs into an American-like diner, apologizing for her lateness in the appointment with his boyfriend. Then, she starts a casual conversation with her boyfriend about how long he had waited for her. Once she is told that she came late 24 hours and her boyfriend can wait even 24 hours 365 days for her, she gives a surprised and shy reaction. Through their conversation, the phrase “nenju mukyu (24/7)” repeatedly appears to describe Asuka’s boyfriend’s willingness to wait for her anytime. This implication is associated with the card loan’s application accessibility of 24 hours and 365 days in the slide shown directly after the conversation scene. After the conversational part of Asuka, the slides that explain the service’s characteristics, application requirements, and caution for the customers follow. Finally, toward the end of the commercial, the catchphrase “the bank is on your side” is stated with the convinced reaction of Asuka.

The combination of the advertising techniques in the commercial -ethos, logos, and pathos- play crucial roles to promote the target service and the sincere attitude of its provider. Through the commercial, the appearance of Asuka Saito seems to function markedly as ethos because her status as a member of Nogizaka 46, the most popular female idol group in Japan, is substantial enough to draw the audience's attention. Moreover, since Nogizaka 46 is highly regarded as a neat and clean group among fans, Asuka's appearance seems to significantly underscore the credibility of the service and the bank (LINE research, 2020). In addition, Asuka is depicted as a clumsy character, which can be observed as the bold-faced usage of ethos. In fact, in a small-scale survey conducted for this analysis essay, four out of five participants answered that the ethos aspect in this commercial is striking due to the presence of Asuka. As the reason for this, one respondent stated that her popularity is influential enough to draw the attention of those -especially young people- who do not have a great interest in loans. Next, considering the effect of logos, repeated statements of services' availability hours and days effectively convince the audience with numerical facts. The repetition of a specific term in the advertisement arouses consumers' appetite for purchasing and effectively distinguishes it from other promotions (Majeed & Razzak, 2011). In fact, one of the participants explained in the survey that the emphasized advantage of opening 24 hours and 365 days for the loan application system is persuasive to appeal to the convenience. Overall, accompanied by the joyous music and colorful set of the background, instant humor and entertainment by the acting of a newsworthy idol evoke positivity and closeness to the service in the audience's mind, which is the implication of the pathos. However, pondering the double-edged characteristics of card loan

service and the social impact of this advertisement, there are two deleterious aspects that cannot be ignored.

The first critical issue that requires deliberation is the false provision of the card loan image to the audience through the presence of Asuka and her character description in the commercial. It can be asserted that the commercial puts excessive emphasis on the services' positive aspects by the unrealistic depiction of the character. The failure to convey the inherent characteristics of card loans to the audience may provoke unfavorable consequences for borrowers: self-bankruptcy. Indeed, Czarnecka and Mogaji (2020) indicate that "loans that carried the most risk were advertised with positive emotional appeals the most frequently" (p.1). In this commercial, there are mainly two aspects that falsely convey the nature of card loans: the appearance of Asuka Saito and the illustration of her character. To begin with, using an idol supported by a wide range of generations — especially the one who is broadly recognized by young people — can be unfavorable because it might cause the adverse implication: the loan default. According to LINE Research (2020), Asuka's idol group, Nogizaka 46, ranked as the top idol group recognized by people in their twenties in 2020. From this background, the bank appears to expand the scope of customers by appealing to the bank's familiarity with the appearance of Asuka. However, the exposure of card loan services' closeness to younger people in commercials could negatively affect their economic status. This is because people under the age of 30 are more inclined to face repayment delinquency than the older generation (Kim et al., 2018). Compared with the older generation, many younger people conceivably do not possess the stable basis of their livelihood due to the lack of social and economic background as independent

citizens. Therefore, they seem to be more prone to face poor financial management, which possibly leads to loan default. Hence, the use of Asuka in the commercial is unsuitable to describe the accurate picture of the service and the requirement for the customers.

Furthermore, the depiction of Asuka's character poses doubt regarding the responsibility of consumers who apply for the loan. Apparently, along with its financial helpfulness for people, it is necessary to acknowledge that poor management of card loans potentially jeopardizes the life of the customers. Indeed, the blind reliance on loans could provoke the negative cycle of debts: default of repayment, or in the extreme case, the situation of multiple debts in which the borrower contracts different loan services for the original reimbursement (The Central Council for Financial Services Information, 2018). In this advertisement, however, Asuka is depicted as an irresponsible and forgetful character, which is clearly illustrated in the scene where she arrives 24 hours late for the appointment with her boyfriend. In this scene, she apologized lightly for her lateness, and his boyfriend accepted her excuse because he told her his will that he would be willing to wait for her even 24/7. By depicting this scene, the bank seems to convey the message that it is always available to welcome and support the customers. However, in contrast to the bank's intention, it can be perceived by the audience that even a careless person, like Asuka, who evidently lacks punctuality, is qualified for using the card loan service. Moreover, in contrast to reality, such an illustration might leave the impression to the audience that the bank also sets the repayment due flexibly, as illustrated in the commercial. Therefore, this commercial entails the risks of misleading the audience regarding the essential attitude as loan users by the inappropriate representation

of Asuka.

The second aspect that remains to be elucidated in this commercial is the way it takes advantage of the Japanese language system. The commercial stresses the catchphrase "Ginko ha mikata da /The bank is on your side)." Considering the advertising technique applied in the phrase, it is noteworthy that it uses katakana, ミカタ, instead of kanji, 味方. In contrast to kanji, katakana brings ambiguity to the meanings and stylishness of words, its utilization in advertisements can stimulate consumers' desire for purchase (Okugakiuchi, 2010). It seems impossible to assert that the difference between kanji and katakana directly affects consumer behavior. However, this expression would leave a positive impression on the audience because a katakana expression is easily recognized and does not possess a solid and formal image as kanji.

Furthermore, pondering the impact of this catchphrase, there seems to be the bank's intention to overcome the entrenched negative image toward themselves in society. As illustrated by the famous quote, "Banks take up umbrellas on rainy days and lend umbrellas on sunny days" (The Nikkei xTECH, 2021, para. 4), people's resentment toward banks' profit-centered image is still common today. By showing this phrase accompanied by the nodding reaction of Asuka, the bank attempts to explicitly convey its core business principle of the customer-first and persuade customers of its liability (Chiba Bank, n.d.). In reality, however, it cannot be concluded that banks are taking the customer-first stance. Particularly, in the field of card loan business, banks' past commitment cannot be observed as the full respect of the customer-centered policy. In 2017, banks' overdone problem in card loan service was revealed and drew intense criticism in Japanese society. According to Kimura



(2017), banks had a detrimental inclination to make a loan more than the capability of debtor's repayment, which led to an increased rate of self-bankruptcy. Indeed, The Nikkei (2017) reported that over half of card loan users borrowed more than one-third of their annual income. These pieces of evidence indicate that rather than being "mikata" for the customers, the banks had negatively affected customers through the card loan service for the sake of profitability. Also, Kimura argues that banks had been appealing the simplicity of contracting the service through advertisement and gained the number of debtors to maximize the profitability before the disclosure of this issue. Today, due to the enforcement of the self-restraint policy in 2017, the contents of card loan advertisements are regulated, and it became mandatory for the commercials to state the caution for the contraction. However, the propensity of the card loan advertisement to emphasize the advantages of the service does not seem to have changed as the commercial of Chiba Bank illustrates. Therefore, the catchphrase, "銀行はミカタだ (The bank is on your side)," should not be entirely accepted because there is an apparent lack of credibility considering such customer-unfriendly history of banks.

In conclusion, this commercial produced by Chiba Bank fails to convey the essential nature of the card loan service, which potentially jeopardizes the economic status of the customers. Despite the bank's intention to promote the favorable aspect of the card loan service, the depiction of Asuka Saito in the commercial could possess the adverse effect of provoking an inappropriate image of the loan service in the audience's mind. Moreover, this analysis made it clear that the validity of the commercial's catchphrase to underscore Chiba Bank's customer-first policy is still open to question. This is attributed to the domestic banks' background of causing the over-done problem, which triggered the destructive consequence in customers' economic conditions. It is highly demanded for potential customers to foster their critical mind in screening the information — both positive features and possible risks related to the card loan service — from the advertisement. At the same time, banks are required to fulfill their responsibility to be customer-centered with honesty. Instead of engaging in excessive profiteering by superficial promotions, banks ought to prioritize customer protection by offering appropriate benefits through their service to establish sustainable credibility.

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# YOKO MORITA



Yoko Morita is a sophomore student. Her essay “The Technical Intern Training Program: The Necessity of its Reconstruction” was submitted in the Composition I class under the supervision of Professor Togawa. Morita has a keen interest in immigration policy and forced migration, and she will major in Global Studies to pursue her academic interest. Since she pays strong attention to the Japanese immigration framework, she was motivated to write about the controversial topic of the technical training program to analyze its socio-legal framework and its efficacy.



## The Technical Intern Training Program: The Necessity of its Reconstruction

In 2020, ten Vietnamese technical intern trainees were arrested on a charge of committing extensive livestock theft from farms in the Kanto region, Japan (Kikuchi et al., 2020a). The media coverage of this news not only aroused social indignation but also spotlighted the critical aspect of the technical training program, which drove trainees to commit such a crime. The technical intern training program is a national scheme that welcomes people from emerging countries to Japan to transfer their skills and knowledge for further development of trainees-sending nations (Japan International Trainee & Skilled Worker Cooperation Organization [JITCO], n.d.). Despite its original objective and growing recognition in society, the program has drawn controversy both domestically and internationally in regard to the program’s deviated operation and the treatment of trainees. According to Kikuchi et al. (2020b), the gap between the presented image of the program and the unfair reality that trainees face in Japan triggers detrimental consequences, such as chronic poverty and committing crimes, as illustrated by the livestock thefts case of trainees. Thus, the reconsideration of the program’s core component and the rights of foreign trainees is a pressing matter for Japanese society to fulfill its responsibility as the implementer of this scheme. Because the existing framework incompatibly functions with its original principle and provokes the infringement of trainees’ rights, the Japanese government should comprehensively restructure the technical intern training

program.

Before discussing the necessity of the radical revision of the program, it is essential to clarify the policy and formation of the technical intern training program. This framework was initially launched in 1993 with the aim of Japan’s international contribution through the human resources development of underdeveloped regions by enlightening technical skills and knowledge cultivated in Japan (JITCO, n.d.). Granted the Japanese residents’ status as trainees, they are allowed to proceed with the program for up to five years. Throughout the program, trainees are provided with a Japanese language course, as well as employment relationships with Japanese local enterprises or organizations for practical skill acquisition. In addition, they are required to undergo periodical examinations to certify their skill achievement levels. Under the principle of the program, “technical training shall not be conducted as a means of adjusting labor supply and demand” (JITCO, n.d., para. 5). Trainees are mainly accepted by small-and-medium-sized enterprises across a wide range of the business field, such as manufacturing, construction, and nursing care industries. The scale of the program has expanded with the increasing number of technical trainees, mostly from Asian regions such as Vietnam and China. In 2020, the number of trainees surpassed 400,000, accounting for 20 % of total foreign workers in Japan (Piyada, 2021). Along with the program’s expansion, the legal structure of this pro-

gram has been amended to ensure the functional training process and the protection of trainees' rights by providing welfare services and strengthening the supervision of host enterprises. However, this program still entails contradictory flaws in the system, and those adverse effects on trainees call for the deliberation for restructuring this program.

The first critical issue that draws the argument for reconstructing the technical trainee program is its function's divergence from the original purpose. In contrast to its principle of Japan's international cooperation, the program serves as a tool for hiring a cheap labor force to alleviate the severe labor shortage in Japan. According to Piyada (2021), the technical intern training program has served as the "side door" (p. 35) of Japan's labor force recruitment, connecting foreign low-skilled workers and low-paid jobs mainly at small-medium-sized enterprises in Japan. The employment relationship between Japanese companies and trainees is positioned as the core part of the skill acquisition process. Nonetheless, the Japanese economy takes advantage of the status of trainees to make the foreign workforce engage in labor in Japan. Consequently, this situation triggers Japan's workforce dependency on trainees. Even though only temporary contracts are applicable through the technical intern program, Japanese enterprises are driven to accept trainees from overseas because maintaining workers within the Japanese labor market is formidable due to the decline of the labor population (Tong, 2019). In particular, the outcome of excessive reliance on trainees' labor force has been underscored over the COVID-19 pandemic in many small and medium-sized business fields. For instance, Matsui and Asakura (2020) report a case in the agriculture field which had accepted technical trainees from overseas before the outbreak of COVID-19. The article states

that the agriculture field suffered from the deficit due to the trainees' shortage caused by the national border restriction amid the pandemic; the limited arrival of trainees disabled them from harvesting their crops. As this case illustrates, Japan has been dependent on the trainees as an essential labor force despite the original purpose of providing education. COVID-19 became one indicator to demonstrate that the Japanese economy cannot be sustained without them. Therefore, pondering Japan's economic reliance on trainees, the significance of continuing this program under the name of international contribution remains highly questionable.

Furthermore, turning on the trainees' perspective, the dominant view toward the technical training program also diverges from the program's original purpose: the skill development for the further prosperity of their home region. Piyada (2021) points out that many technical interns regard this program as an opportunity to work in an advanced nation with a higher wage standard than their country of origin. Today, 80 % of trainees wish to continue working in Japan even after the contract's expiration as trainees (Yuyama & Shitara, 2018, as cited in Piyada, 2021). As a result, some former trainees continue staying and working in Japan even after completing the program, either legally or illegally, for economic purposes. Indeed, there were cases where intern trainees of Vietnamese nationals illegally left their contracted companies in Japan to maintain employment (Nguyen et al., 2017). In addition, Piyada shows that there is an increasing rate of trainees' unpermitted disappearance from their assigned workplace or residents before the completion of the program; in 2020, it recorded 12,000 cases. While the reasons behind the disappearance vary from person to person, many of those people are supposed to engage in economic activities in

Japan while violating the immigration laws and facing the overstay of their visas. Consequently, those former trainees are likely to become illegal migrants in Japanese society. As Piyada points out, both Japan and its trainees exploit the technical intern training program merely to pursue their own interests, not for international cooperation. Therefore, it is no longer important to maintain the program for the sake of international contribution. Rather than following superficial diplomatic values, the framework needs to be more compatible with the reality of foreign workers' acceptance while officially acknowledging both Japan's and trainees' intentions.

Second, the technical trainee program fosters a harmful situation where trainees' basic rights are violated as a consequence of the inconsistency between the superficiality of the program and its actual function. This is the most concerning problem with the technical intern program. Under the status quo, while a number of Japanese host enterprises regard the trainees as the necessary labor force, their status as trainees, not genuine workers, hinders them from receiving appropriate treatment (Hosogaya, 2020). This circumstance seems to create a negative cycle for trainees where they endure abuse and deception at the workplace or by employers. In terms of financial difficulty, trainees suffer from low income. The average income of a trainee is around 130,000-150,000 yen per month excluding taxes and housing, which is far lower than the income of the average Japanese worker of 318,405 yen (Bao, 2020; Statistics Bureaus of Japan, 2021). This low payment may be justified if the program possesses full educational purposes and if employers facilitate their skill development properly. Yet, since trainees intensively engage in blue-collar labor, rather than focusing on their skill acquisition, this average wage can be analyzed as the exploitation

of trainees as a cheap labor force. Additionally, Bao states that most trainees need to remit a large portion of their income to their families in their home country and repay a debt they owe to come to Japan. This severe financial circumstance not only drives trainees to work overtime but also to live in meager conditions in Japanese society while facing diverse problems.

Considering non-financial issues, many trainees are vulnerable to unfair treatment by their employers under the present system. Immoral employers, who regard the program as a tool to obtain a cheap labor force, seem to take advantage of trainees' poor social and economic status. Bao (2020) argues that this leads to persisting misconduct reports such as the illegal operation of training, presentation of false documents to supervising authorities, and the absence of technical trainees protection. Such infringement of trainees' rights happens due to the program's defects, which systematically enable employers to capitalize on trainees for the sake of education. Based on this background, the combination of the financial difficulties and the abuse from employers forces their life in Japan to be increasingly harsh, which in the worst case, drives them to commit crimes. Thus, reconstructing the technical intern trainee program and accepting foreign workers with legitimate status is a pressing task for the Japanese government.

Despite the trainees' tribulation providing the need for the program's reconstruction, the proponents of the program may argue that the Japanese government is sufficiently serving to protect trainees by laws. Particularly, in 2017, the Technical Intern Training Act was implemented (Immigration Services Agency et al., n.d.). Aiming to tackle the malpractice of Japanese employers, this amendment enforced more restrictive measures to prevent the infringe-

ment of trainees' rights by strengthening the surveillance of host enterprises. As a novelty of this legislative revision, a licensing framework that screens host companies and reporting systems that trainees can use to accuse their employers' derelict acts to monitoring institutions were introduced. With respect to that, criminal penalties started to be enforced on those who breach the right of trainees for the first time. For instance, for the employers' act which unfairly restricts trainees' freedom in their personal lives, the defendant is sentenced to imprisonment of up to six months or a fine of up to 300,000 yen. Moreover, the legal institution called the Organization for Technical Intern Training was founded under this act. Through the constant field investigations of trainees' workplaces, this organization imposes administrative sanctions if the violations are detected. This improved framework of the trainees' protection is considered to promote the proper function of the program. Verité (2018) states that this new act increased the surveillance and accountability of trainees-accepting organizations. The former Justice Minister Katsutoshi Kaneda claimed that this enactment enables the administration to protect trainees by directly restricting malpractice at host enterprises (The Mainichi, 2016). He also stated that this amendment could reduce the mistreatment of trainees by revising the social misunderstanding of the program's principle as international cooperation and contribution. Based on such a concept, the advocates of the technical training program stand for the validity of the program's continuation.

However, the previous viewpoints can be legitimately refuted by considering the current circumstance and the essential role of the government. Even after enacting the trainee protection act, the situation still puts trainees in a weak position. Pi-yada (2021) argues the outcome of such

tightened policies possesses little effect because abuse and contract violation at the workplace still happen daily due to the existence of loopholes and the hurdles in detecting employers' misbehavior. Also, the inadequate function of this program's supervising organizations is a critical problem. Even though they are legally assigned to investigate the cases at host enterprises where the deleterious labor environment is suspected, the number of target cases far exceeds the capability of those managerial institutions. According to Yamasaki (2021), the Organization for Technical Intern Training, the core monitoring sector, failed to investigate 20 % of assigned cases related to trainees' disappearance in fiscal 2019, possibly because of their lack of capacity. As this case illustrates, the incompleteness of the structure to protect trainees has still been entrenched as a detrimental problem. In addition, the low recognition of legal protection for trainees can be regarded as problematic because the government's political and legal measures are not reached by all trainees (Bao, 2020). The government's role is not only to establish the laws but also to properly exercise them for people in need. Then, the government is not fulfilling its responsibilities in protecting foreign trainees' rights. Despite the repeated enactment of regulations, the situation surrounding trainees does not seem to be alleviated because their legal status as trainees would systematically hinder the Japanese industries from treating and regarding them equally as regular workers. Therefore, granting a legitimate status as a worker, rather than giving non-labor-purpose resident status, would be the first step Japan must take to ensure justice and inclusiveness in the Japanese workplaces.

In conclusion, the technical trainee program should be fundamentally changed since the existing framework clearly deviates from the original principle and ad-

versely affects inbound trainees. Japan has welcomed foreign workers from underdeveloped regions for educational purposes as a part of Japan's international contribution. Ironically, Japanese society takes advantage of the status of trainees and exploits them as an essential cheap, temporary, and blue-collar labor force. Simultaneously, participants from developing countries expect this program as an opportunity to increase their income by working in Japan. As a result, trainees are vulnerable to unfairness and abuse at their workplace; this is hardly ameliorated by a number of political and legislative measures. It is valid to claim that trainees' current situation is the detrimental consequence of Japan's ambiguous attitude towards accepting immigrants or foreign workers. Despite the fact that Japan

has long been dependent on foreign labor forces due to the chronic human resources shortage, Japan has avoided welcoming foreign workers openly and persisted in accepting foreign workers under the name of international cooperation. However, it is time for Japan to admit the necessity of a foreign workforce and welcome them as genuine workers while ensuring their solid socio-legal status. Unless the technical training program is drastically revised, Japanese society will continue to regard trainees as a convenient workforce because the present framework allows employers to hire them with small salaries and inadequate treatment. Given this, it is safe to posit that the restructure of this program is an urgent need for Japan to ensure fairness and justice in society.

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