

# Risks and Problems in Multicultural Cyber Space: Cyber Crime and Cyber Suicide

Noriyoshi Takemura

桐蔭横浜大学法学部

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## 1 Introduction

An international comparison of the percentage of mobile phone internet subscribers of all mobile phone subscribers in various countries and territories reveals that Japan's rate of 89.5% is the world's highest followed by the Republic of Korea, China, Singapore and Taiwan. Thus, Asia is a driving force behind the increase in mobile internet use.

This paper examines the risks and problems in multicultural cyber space, especially cyber crimes and cyber suicides.<sup>1</sup>

## 2 Latest Cyber Youth Trends

### 2.1 Changes in Lifestyles resulting from Network Use

According to the White Paper on Information and Communications, the most common use of the internet when accessed from home PCs is "e-mail" used as a means of communication (57.6%), followed by "searching for information on goods and services" (57.4%), "obtaining news and other information" (48.7%), and "purchasing goods and services" (36.8%).

When internet users were asked about changes in their lifestyles, many responded that the "frequency of contact with family and friends" increased, regardless of whether they used broadband. Many broadband users responded that there were decreases in "time spent sleeping", "time spent watching television", and "leisure time", and the decrease in resting and leisure time was particularly prominent.

Internet use by individuals continues to increase and expand each year and is pervading a broad range of user segments. Looking at internet use rates by age group at the end of 2003, internet usage in the 60 years old and over group was 21.6%, substantially lower than the more than 90% rates in the 13 to 19 years old, 20 to 29 years old, and 30 to 39 years old groups.<sup>2</sup>

## 2.2 Issues concerning Network Use: Protection of Personal Information, Security Incidents and Responsibility

The expansion of information and communications networks has resulted in heightened concerns about the accidental leakage of private information such as personal data and data on past conduct as well as improper use of information by third parties. The number of incidents concerning protection of personal information has been increasing each year, reaching 316 incidents including leaks of personal information and improper use of information in 2003.

Among those using the internet from their personal computers, there was a 3.8 point increase from 2002 in people suffering information security incidents in 2003, to 33.6%. The most common problem was infection by a virus.

As we head into a network society, the personal manners of network users are becoming important. At 80.5%, "spam mail" comes at the top of the list of conducts that should be avoided when using information and communications networks and services. Users feel that the most important matter by far to improve information and communications networks and services is "personal awareness and responsibility", at 89.3%.<sup>3</sup>

## 3 Cyber Crimes: Risks and Problems in Cyber Society

### 3.1 Cyber Crimes and the Internet

Based on the research by David S. Wall, the internet has impacted upon criminal and/or harmful activity in three main ways. First, the internet has become a vehicle for communications which sustain existing patterns of harmful activity, such as drug trafficking, hate speech, stalking and so on. Second, the internet has created a transnational environment that provides new opportunities for harmful activities that are currently the subject of existing criminal or civil law. Examples would include paedophile and fraud. Third, the nature of the virtual environment, particularly with regard to the way that it distanciates time and space, has engendered entirely new forms of harmful activity such as the unauthorized appropriation of imagery, software tools and music products, etc.

We can find the four areas of harmful activity which illustrate a range of activities and behaviors: cyber-trespass, cyber-deceptions/thefts, cyber-pornography/obscenity, and cyber-violence.

- 1) Cyber-trespass, or hacking/cracking, is the unauthorized crossing of the boundaries of computer systems into spaces where rights of ownership or title have already been established.
- 2) Cyber-deceptions/thefts describes the different types of acquisitive harm that can take place within cyberspace. At one level lie the more traditional patterns of theft, such as the fraudulent use of credit cards and cyber-cash, and a particular current concern is the increasing potential for the raiding of on-line bank accounts as e-banking becomes more

popular.

3) Cyber-pornography/obscenity is the publication or trading of sexually expressive materials within cyberspace. The cyberporn/obscenity debate is very complex because pornography is not necessarily illegal. In Japan, for example, individuals daily consume images through the various facets of the mass media that might be classed as obscene in some Middle-Eastern countries.

4) Cyber-violence describes the violent impact of the cyberactivities of another upon an individual or a social or political grouping. Whilst such activities do not have to have a direct physical manifestation, the victim nevertheless feels the violence of the act and can bear long-term psychological scars as a consequence.<sup>4</sup>

### 3.2 Perception of Cyber Crime Reality

In Japan, according to National Police Agency, cyber crime consists of three categories: "violation of Unauthorized Computer Access Law", "crime against computer / data" and "internet crimes". The number of arrests by violation of Unauthorized Computer Access Law is increasing every year. The number of arrests of cyber crime in 2003 is 1,849 (approximately 115% of the number in 2002). The number of the internet crime is 1,649 (approximately 89% of the number of cyber crime). Many of internet crime consists of, for example, violation of the Child Prostitution and Child Pornography Law and Juvenile Protection Ordinance, utilizing "internet dating service sites"; fraud, distribution of obscene objects and violation of copyright protection law, utilizing "internet auction sites"; defamation and threat, utilizing "Bulletin Board System (BBS)".

The number of consultations about cyber crime is 41,754 (approximately 220% of the number in 2002). The number about email faking money charge is approximately 43% of the entire consultations. The number of consultations about fraud and sharp business is 20,738, approximately 6.5 times as many as the number of the previous year. The number of 17,838 of 20,738 is related to consultation about email faking money charge. The number of consultations about internet auction is 5,999, approximately 1.5 times as many as the previous year.

Countermeasures promoted by the Police are to hold the Comprehensive Security Meeting in cooperation with Industrial Circles; to promote PR activities by using internet homepage, video and pamphlet, for prevention of cyber crime; to raise public awareness by release of Research & Development report about countermeasures against unauthorised computer access; to provide warning and related information about activities of "slammer worm" and "blaster worm"; to alert internet fraud and sharp business such as email faking money charge.<sup>5</sup>

The number of offences of the Anti-Child Prostitution and Pornography Law increased by 33.9% compared to the previous year to 2,091, and the number of offenders increased by 33.1% to 1,336. Both numbers of offences and offenders went up for two consecutive years. Specifically, the number of offences of child prostitution rose by 34.9% to 1,902, and the number of offenders rose by 33.7% to 1,201.

The number of offences of child prostitution through online dating services went up by 107.7% to 787, and the number of offenders rose by 108% to 493. Both numbers of offences and offenders rose sharply for two consecutive years. The number of victims of child prostitution through online dating services was 726, including junior high school students and 403 high school students.<sup>6</sup>

### 3.3 Problems with Researching Cyber Crimes

Again according to David S. Wall, we witness six problems concerning the research of cyber crimes: lack of statistics, visibility of the victims and the under-reporting of offences, offender profiles, trans-jurisdictionarity, confusing risk assessment with reality—media sensitization shaping public knowledge, and the political economy of cyberspace and the ongoing-power struggle for control over it.

First, concerning lack of statistics, a hindrance to those seeking to study cyber crimes is the lack of any form of officially recorded statistics. There exist a number of reports which purport to estimate the extent of cyber crime, particularly with regard to hacking and commercial activities. However, most of these reports have been produced by commercial organizations which constitute the emerging cyber crime security industry, and they tend to lack not only standardized conceptualization of the crimes but also systematic reporting or recording methodologies.

Second, as for visibility of the victims and the under-reporting of offences, there is frequent confusion over who the victims of cyber crime are and how they are being victimized. Not only can victims vary from individuals to social groups, but the harm done to them can range from the actual to the perceived. In cases involving cyber-stalking or the theft of cybercash, the victimization is very much focused upon an individual. However, in other cases, such as cyber-piracy or cyber-spying, the impact of victimization is usually directed towards the corporate entity. It is likely that many victims of cybercrime may be unwilling to acknowledge that they have been victimized, or it may take them some time to realize it. This could arise because of embarrassment, ignorance of what to do, etc.

Third, hitherto, most debates over the criminology and policing of traditional crimes have tended to be mainly located within the analysis of working class or underclass subculture. Cyber-offenders, on the other hand, are more likely to share a broader range of social characteristics and the cases of hacking and other internet-related offences that have been reported in the media would suggest they are likely to be young, clever and fairly lonely individuals who are of middle-class origin, often without prior criminal records, often possessing expert knowledge and often motivated by a variety of financial and non-financial goals.

Forth, the trans-jurisdictional nature of cyber-crimes creates many problems for the enforcement of law. Typically, policing strategies are often reduced to decisions that are made at a very local level about the most efficient expenditure of finite resources. Such decisions become complicated where different jurisdictions cover the location of the offence committed, the offender, victim and impact of offence. Furthermore, this trans-jurisdictional

issue can be complicated by confusion over whether or not some of the harms fall under civil or criminal laws, which can vary across jurisdictions.

Fifth, as for confusing risk assessment with reality, media sensitization shaping public knowledge, an important factor in the public debate over cyber-crime is the “media sensitization” of internet-related issues, which has heightened their overall newsworthiness, especially with regard to the dark side of internet. Such sensitization is gradually moulding the legal and regulatory responses to harms by inflating public concerns and therefore providing the regulatory bodies with an mandate for taking action, for example, the history of the Communication Decency Act in the USA.

Sixth, as the increasing political and commercial potential of the internet gives rise to a new political economy of information capital, a new set of power relationships is forged. Consequently the definitions of acceptable and unacceptable cyber-behaviour are themselves shaped by this ongoing power play that is currently taking place for control. Of concern is the increasing level of intolerance that is now being demonstrated by the new power players towards certain “risk groups” that they perceive as a threat to their interests. Whilst such intolerance tends to mould broader definitions of deviance, the construction of deviance is not so simply one-sided, because definitions of crime and deviance arise not only from the social activity of elite or power groups, but also from that of common members of society and offenders themselves. The struggle around the definition of crime and deviance is located within the field of action that is constituted by plural and even conflicting efforts at producing control.

In sum, criminologist who seek to understand cyber crimes will not only have to consider the varying degrees to which cyber crimes impact upon victims, they will also have to acknowledge the different and distinct groups of behaviors that also exist. However, criminological efforts will be further frustrated by the varying levels of visibility, victim awareness, media sensitization and overall definitional fluidity that characterize this field of study.<sup>7</sup>

## 4 Cyber Suicides: Control of Cyber Information and Communication

### 4.1 Highest Suicide Rates

An average of 88 people committed suicide every day last year in Japan for a total of 32,325, according to the National Police Agency. The figure was down by 2,000 from the previous year, yet it remained over the 30,000 mark for the seventh consecutive year. Attempted suicides could be five to ten times as high. Health and financial reasons led to two-thirds of all the suicides. The harsh realities of an increasing competitive society may be fanning the flames. Weakening bonds in families and local communities must also be having an effect on these tragic figures.

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare plans to set aside 200 million yen for a five-year research program aimed at reducing suicide triggered by depression by 20 percent. One goal of the research will be to identify community and other programs that has reduced

suicides, and to see if they can work on a large scale in major urban areas. The other objective is to find measures that can prevent a recurrence of depression and thus cut down on the number of suicide attempts.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications has started surveying central and local governments on their policies and measures to reduce suicides.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4.2 Restriction of Illegal and Harmful Information on the Internet

The government will attempt to restrict the flow and access of illegal and harmful information on the internet, including web sites that explain how to build explosives and arrange group suicides. The decision was prompted by internet-related incidents, such as the June 10 attack at a high school in Hikari, Yamaguchi Prefecture. An 18-year-old boy injured dozens of students with a homemade bomb he made based on information provided on the internet. Under the new policies, the government will work out guidelines for police to ask internet service providers (ISPs) to give information on individuals who post such material on the web. The guidelines will also promote filtering software that blocks access to harmful sites.

Police currently have no legal grounds to order ISPs to disclose such information except in cases involving obviously illegal sites, such as those that solicit and support suicides. The countermeasures will allow police to ask the ISPs to offer information on people who have posted messages on suicide sites in order to prevent them from taking their lives. The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications are considering setting up study panels to discuss the circumstances under which ISPs should disclose information on message senders. According to the National Police Agency, 55 people killed themselves in 2004 after exchanging information on suicide-related web site. In 2005 the figure had reached 59 by the end of April.

The industry and communication ministries will also promote the development of filtering software for video and animation programs and for mobile phones. The Cabinet Secretariat and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and other organizations will promote the use of such software. The filtering software blocks access to web sites that are considered illegal or harmful. More than 90 percent of the nation's elementary and junior high schools have downloaded the software. But only one percent of households have done so. Yet, government officials say the effectiveness of the countermeasures remain unclear. The internet is merely a catalyst for suicides and other crimes. The fundamental causes are other factors, such as mental health or financial problems. The education ministry, the NPA and other organizations will teach information-related morality in delinquency-prevention programs and other education activities. The Cabinet secretariat and other government branches will set up consultation facilities for the public concerning illegal and harmful web sites.

It is important that the due consideration is given to matters on the freedom of expression and privacy of communications.<sup>9</sup>

### 4.3 Suicide Prevention Measures

With a high suicide rate, local governments have been responding to the problem. The fact is that national government strategies aimed at reducing the toll have made little difference. That is why local governments have stepped into the breach. An Asahi Shinbun survey found that more than 70 percent of local governments, in 36 prefectures and eight cities, had programs to raise public awareness of this formerly taboo issue.

Japan, with one of the highest suicide rates in the industrialized world, is far behind Western Europe in mapping out prevention strategies. While the former Soviet Union and Eastern bloc countries still have higher suicide rates than Japan, in Western Europe, countries such as Finland and Britain are winning the fight.

Now, at last, the Japanese government is planning coordinated suicide prevention efforts that will cross boundaries at ministries and agencies. The steps aimed at curtailing the high suicide rate will include setting up a liaison council within the Cabinet Secretariat and a suicide prevention center at a health ministry affiliate. The new system will also invite local authorities and nonprofit organizations to join suicide prevention efforts to build nationwide networks.<sup>10</sup>

## 5 Strategies and Best Practices for Youth Development

### 5.1 Youth at Risk in Cyber Society

Rising crime is beginning to affect people in many ways. People have become more mistrustful of one another. Many people are feeling alone and out-of-place because they are no longer capable of forming any relationship of trust. A youth who has just left his hometown and started living in Tokyo, for instance, is likely to feel disconnected more acutely than ever before because he is surrounded by strangers in an alien environment. If this sense should persist, he may well lose his emotional or psychological equilibrium. If such types are desperate for companionship of any kind, they could run the risk of becoming obsessed with some form of human communication that is not grounded in reality. It could be found in the virtual world of the internet or text messages transmitted and received on his cell phone.

But whatever conversations that take place on the Net is with anonymous individuals. Even though this will spare one the hurt or anger that could arise in any "real" relationship, it also means that any deep, heart-to-heart communication is quite unlikely to occur, which must disappoint and frustrate anyone who was looking for true companionship. There are many people like that, and their collective frustration must be building up. More and more such people are now venting their frustration through crime, which in turn perpetuates the vicious circle of people being unable to trust one another.<sup>11</sup>

### 5.2 Strategies and Best Practices

According to the United Nations Congress background paper, the rapid growth of cyber space, coupled with less law and order, insufficient knowledge and the breakdown of traditional family, social and cultural networks, place cyber space, and the high proportions of children and young people living in unstable and poor cyber environment, at high risk of crime and victimization. Cyber youth in many countries experience high levels of crime and behavioral problems. Cyber space provides a ready source of recruitment, clients and support for such activities. This situation presents a major challenge to which international, national, sub-regional and local governments must respond.

Governments should establish comprehensive strategies and policies that enable and support the development of policies relating cyber crime and behavioral problems and youth at risk at the local government level. Developing powers to sub-regional authorities, and providing funding and accountability mechanisms are important ways in which governments can assist in tackling local crime and behavioral problems in cyber space. Local authorities should establish integrated, strategic approaches to crime and problems prevention, paying particular attention to youth at risk. This will require local authorities to take leadership and to work in a multi-sectoral way, involving all sectors of social services and administration, as well as with local community groups, non-governmental organizations, the media, the private sector and civil society. Such strategies should pay attention to the inclusion, rather than the exclusion, of youth at risk, including cultural minorities, young women and young men, and should promote their participation in making decisions that affect them. The participation of youth in the design and implementation of strategies and policies should be actively encouraged.

Interventions should target the most at risk groups and areas, using good practices and evidence-based approaches that are adapted or developed in relation to the context, needs and realities. In doing so, sub-regional, national and local governments should help to strengthen the factors that protect the most vulnerable, including young women and children, and limit the facilitating environment for cyber crime and other behavioral problems. The implementation of strategies and interventions should be monitored and evaluated in terms of their results, in order to facilitate the adaptation and broader application of good practice and evidence-based knowledge. Greater attention should be given to the development of tools such as indicators for evaluation and to aid diagnosis and strategic planning. The international community should work to facilitate and support the development of capacity-building at the local government level, for example, through city-to-city exchanges, and technical assistance and training, both between countries in Asia and between countries in the world.<sup>12</sup>

Notes:

- 1 This paper is based on the Keynote Address titled "Cyber Trends and Concerns in Asia" and presented at the International Conference, "Youth.Net: Developing Cyber Wellness in conjunction with ASEAN + 3 Seminar on Urban Youth Work III," Singapore, 26-27 July, 2005. I'd like to express my gratitude to the National Youth Council of Singapore for inviting me to the conference as one

- of international guest speakers, letting me have an opportunity to make my presentation to the distinguished representatives and giving me a cordial hospitality.
- 2 Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications, Japan, *Information and Communications in Japan: Building a Ubiquitous Network Society That Spreads Throughout the World, White Paper 2004*, pp.12-19.
  - 3 Ibid., pp.30-38.
  - 4 Wall, D.S. (ed.), *Cyberspace Crime, The International Library of Criminology, Criminal Justice and Penology*, Dartmouth: Ashgate, 2003, pp.xviii-xxii.
  - 5 National Police Agency, *Arrests and Consultations of Cybercrime in 2003*.
  - 6 National Police Agency, *Situation of Juvenile Delinquency in Japan in 2002*.
  - 7 Wall, D.S. (ed.), *Crime and Internet*, London: Routledge, 2001.
  - 8 International Herald Tribune/Asahi, June 3, 2005, p.29.
  - 9 Cabinet Office, *White Paper on Youth 2004 in Japan (Abridged Edition)* ; *White Paper on Youth 2003 in Japan (Abridged Edition)*.
  - 10 International Herald Tribune, June 23, 2005, p.21; July 1, 2005, p.25; July 18, 2005, p.16.
  - 11 Eleventh United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Bangkok, 18-25 April 2005, Workshop 3: Strategies and Best Practices for Crime Prevention, in particular in relation to Urban Area and Youth at Risk, Background paper, A/CONF.203/11
  - 12 Ibid.; Eleventh United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Bangkok, 18-25 April 2005, Workshop 6: Measures to Combat Computer-related Crime, Background paper, A/CONF.203/14.

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