

Learning Masculinity Through Japanese University Rowing

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This article is based on a larger ethnographic project that examines the construction of gendered identity within a Japanese men's rowing club. For members, notions of masculinity and Japanese identity converge to the point of naturalization. The embodied experience of being a rower is underpinned by the cultural artifacts of hierarchy, social positioning, and group membership. Membership in university rowing clubs somatizes and naturalizes the valued characteristics associated with salary-man identity (duty, loyalty, self-sacrifice, mental and physical endurance) to the point of common sense. The resultant masculine identity is congruent with forms of hegemonic masculinity that are critical for successful employment in company-centered Japan.

Cet article est fondé sur un projet ethnographique plus large qui examine la construction de l'identité de genre au sein d'un club d'aviron masculin au Japon. Pour les membres, les notions de masculinité et d'identité japonaise convergent jusqu'à la naturalisation. L'expérience corporelle et « incorporée » d'être un rameur est étayée par les éléments culturels de la hiérarchie, du positionnement social et de l'appartenance au groupe. L'adhésion à un club universitaire d'aviron somatise et naturalise les caractéristiques associées à l'identité d'un salarié (le devoir, la loyauté, le sacrifice de soi, l'endurance physique et mentale) au point d'en arriver au sens commun. L'identité masculine résultante est en harmonie avec des formes de masculinité hégémonique qui sont essentielles pour la réussite occupationnelle dans un pays centré sur les compagnies.

The salary man, the devoted, white-collar employee, is one of the common stereotypes of Japanese masculinity (Roberson & Suzuki, 2003). Although this "socially sanctioned" ideal for Japanese men still holds its position of dominance, it is "increasingly difficult to attain" and increasingly challenged (Gill, 2003, p. 145). Roberson & Suzuki (2003) explore a multitude of "masculinities" at play in Japan today that offer alternatives to this traditional view. According to Connell (1995, p. 35) gender is "not fixed in advance of social interaction, but is constructed in interaction." Further, "masculinity and femininity are inherently relational concepts" (Connell, 1995, p. 44), not just between each other but also within

each other. As such, a relational understanding of masculinity sees masculinities that are hegemonic, subordinate, complicit, and marginalized (Connell, 1995, pp. 76–81).

Although the salary man may be a stereotype, it is nonetheless a manifestation of a culturally privileged hegemonic masculinity. As a gendered construct the salary man is created and recreated through socioeconomic and cultural institutions and practices (Dasgupta, 2003). Central to the salary man's identity is the ability to understand and function inside a hierarchical workplace based on *jōge kankei*, literally up and down relationships. In this article I draw on Connell's (1995) ideas about gender and Bourdieu's (1977) theoretical tools of habitus, field, and practice. In particular, I use the concept of habitus, one's embodied history, to understand how collectively similar habitus produce a "commonsense world endowed with the objectivity secured by consensus on the meaning of practices" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 80). The article aims to describe what and how such masculine identities are created through sporting clubs (in this case a rowing club) at Japanese Universities. Specifically, I explore the construction of masculinities as shaped through the social positioning, hierarchies, training regimes, and other bodily practices of the institutional sports program at Biwa University Rowing Club (BURC).

Masculinity and Japanese Educational Sport

The "culture of sports" as delivered through the education system can be seen as the "critical player" in the formation of the gendered body in modern Japan (after the Meiji restoration of 1868) (Matsuda, 2006, p. 119). As Whitson (1990, p. 19) suggests, sport is one of the "central sites in the social production of masculinity in societies characterised by longer schooling and by a decline in the social currency attached to other ways of demonstrating physical prowess". However, not all sports produce the same type of masculinity because sporting cultures "express different and frequently competing masculinities" (Kidd, 1990, p. 37). The masculine identities that develop are something of an intersection between the nature and history of the sport within a specific cultural context and the individual histories of the participants.

In contrast to the Western Cartesian separation of mind and body, the Japanese notion of mind and body is a one unified whole (see: Horne, 2000; Ozawa-DeSilva, 2002; Yuasa, 1987; 1993). Such an approach to the body has implications regarding embodied learning. Learning "through the body" effects more than physiology. It extends to a holistic understanding of the person, including a spiritual side (McDonald & Hallinan, 2005). In the context of sport, the physical capital that resides in bodies is developed in ways that are recognized as possessing value in social fields (Shilling, 1993). I would contend in the context of the "Japanese" body (as "different" to the Western body) that physical capital possesses even great salience. Butler (1993, p. 12), suggests that gender is based on performativity. Masculine identity in Japan is performed, as we shall see, through the holistic body. *Jōge kankei*, training, drinking, and living at BURC are all performative actions that accrue in individuals' greater and more recognizable physical capital.

Educationally based sport in Japan is one of the major sites where hegemonic masculinity is learned and perpetuated (Dalla Chiesa, 2002; Light, 2003; Robertson, 2005). Many sports in Japanese high schools (baseball, rugby, Japanese martial arts) operate as “forms of cultural discourse that subconsciously confirm and reinforce a conservative, culture specific and hegemonic form of masculinity” (Light, 2003, p. 103). The body is central to this cultural discourse. The body in this context must be understood not as an object that is solely acted on but as an agent that is capable of acting. In social practices such as sport, bodies are “substantially in play” (Connell, 1995, p. 58) resulting in individual masculinities that are often “translated into . . . postures, positions, and the feels and textures of human bodies in concrete place, time and occasion” (Hamada, 1996, p. 162). As with most sporting cultures (Connell, 1995; Messner, 1990), the masculinity found therein tends to be of the culturally dominant and valued nature.

Connell (1995, p. 77) contends that hegemonic masculinity is the “configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy.” Importantly, hegemonic and other forms of masculinity are not fixed character types, rather they are “configurations of practice generated in particular situations” (Connell, 1995, p. 81). The “culturally valued aspects of masculinity” (Messner, 1990, p. 99) are those that are sought after or hold the most social and cultural capital. Japanese popular culture has emphasized a particular brand of masculinity based on a mythologized Samurai identity. Eiji Yoshikawa’s 1971 novel *Musashi* (based on a real-life master swordsman) provides an example of such Japanese masculinity. This image is seen replicated many times over, particularly in Samurai and Yakuza movies and literature (Buruma, 1984; McDonald, 2006; Sato, 1991; Standish, 2000). To paraphrase Connell (1995, p. 70),¹ that few men “actually match the blueprint” of *Musashi* has no bearing on the power of such a blueprint on gendered identity. This romanticized version of traditional manliness values actions and no words; it is taciturn and anti-intellectual. As such, it is the embodiment of hard masculinity.

Light (2000a, p. 98) examined the type of masculinity developed from the practice of rugby in Japanese high schools and universities over the past century and suggested that this form of masculinity is one that holds qualities such as “*ganbaru* (do your absolute best), *issō kenmei* (give everything), *konjō* (guts/courage), and *gaman* (endurance, perseverance)” as admired and dominant. Even though some players believe this identity to be outdated, they still consent to it through their practice. Light (2000b) points out that this form of samurai masculinity is specific to particular groups (in this case rugby), to particular locations, and might indeed be considered “unfashionable” in modern Japan.

Modern Japanese universities are often considered “leisure land” (Hayes, 1997; Singleton, 1991; Van Wolferen, 1989) because they provide a break between the “exam hell” of high school and entrance into the work force. University time, however, is assumed to play a significant role in enabling young Japanese to grow up and become adults. As Dasgupta suggests;

The need to inculcate the values underpinning salary man masculinity becomes particularly urgent once the individual male makes the transition from (non-productive) student to productive responsible adult (*shakaijin*) upon entering the workforce. (Dasgupta, 2003, p. 120)

The members of BURC embark on a four year project concerned as much with preparing for such a transition as with actual rowing.

Body reflexive practices such as rowing, and indeed all sports, involve “social relations and symbolism” that, in this case, are institutionally based. Through these practices “particular versions of masculinity are constituted” in the form of “meaningful bodies and embodied meanings. Through bodily reflexive practices, more than individual lives are formed: a social world is formed” (Connell, 1995, p. 64). The social world at BURC is constructed by the meanings inscribed in the bodily practice of rowing and the interaction of these bodies through daily social practice. Conversely, Bourdieu observes:

The social world constructs the body as a sexually defined reality and as the depository of sexually defining principles of vision and division. This embodied social programme of perception is applied to all things of the world and firstly to the body itself, in its biological reality. (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 11)

In particular, the “strength of the masculine order is seen in the fact that it dispenses with justification.” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 9)

Methods

The research presented in this article is part of a larger project motivated by my own personal experience between 1994 and 1996 as a rugby player in Japan. Initially motivated by a desire to “make sense” of my own experience, the research developed into an investigation of the various cultural curricula delivered by educational sports in Japan. As such the method used throughout is best described as emergent.

BURC is a pseudonym for a university rowing club in the Kansai region of Japan. BURC is a midsize rowing program consisting a yearly membership of approximately 20–25 men and 10–15 women. The membership spans 4 years, from freshman to senior, with roughly equal numbers at each level. Approximately a third of the members had gained special entry (*suisen*) to the university based on their rowing ability. The rest of the female members had rowed during high school as had most of the men. The male members who had not come from a rowing background had been involved in other club sports during their high school years.

I chose rowing for two reasons. First, it is considered (along with the martial arts, rugby, and baseball) to be one of the most conservative and oldest sports in the Japanese education system. This is important because of the connection between conservative sports and hegemonic masculinity. Second, rowing was the most easily accessible university sport for me to enter. The symbolic and physical capital I embodied as a rower and rowing coach with over 15 years experience held its currency in the field of Japanese rowing. The fact that I knew how to row and understood what “being a rower” required in a bodily sense is important because it gave me access to places (for example the boat) that would have been off limits to most others.

Having gained initial entry to the field in 1999 as a guest, I returned as a rower in 2001, as a live-in technical advisor in 2002, as a coach in 2004, as an

advisor in the later part of 2004, and finally again as a coach in 2006. For most of these periods, ranging from one week to two months, I lived at the boathouse with the other rowers and, as much as possible, adhered to their daily routines and rituals. Opportunities such as attending drinking parties or completing hard training sessions allowed me to develop a close rapport with members and confirmed my position at the club.

The methodology used emerged over the duration of the research period and consisted of various techniques including: field notes; participant observation; questionnaires; informal conversations; and in-depth, semistructured interviews (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). To protect the identity of my informants I fictionalized identities and amalgamated data as recommended by Grenfell and Rinehart (2003). The questionnaires were administered to all members in 2002 and 2004 and included questions relating to family, academic and sporting histories, aspirations for career and the future, motivations for rowing, and perceptions of the benefits of rowing and characteristics (both physical and cultural) required for successful rowing. The in-depth interviews were translated in Japan and later in Australia to ensure accuracy. Interviews were conducted in 2002, 2004, and 2006. Interviewees were chosen based on their position in the club hierarchy and represented the men's and women's club, as well as the managers' club and Old Boys (OBs). I conducted a total of 20 in-depth interviews.

The longitudinal nature of the research provided several opportunities. Firstly, I was able to "follow" individuals as they moved through the hierarchy of the club from freshmen to graduation and beyond. Secondly, it allowed me to constantly check and reconfirm my data with those providing it. This reflexivity proved invaluable because it allowed for a deeper reading of the field and a greater understanding of my position in it. Finally, as the research continued over an eight year period, it highlights some of the consistent practices and themes embedded in the day to day of being a member of BURC.

Rowing at BURC

Being a member of a university rowing club in Japan is part of a lifelong cultural education process (McDonald, 2004; McDonald & Komuku, 2008). Sports club activities throughout junior high school and high school have already imbued members with the necessary perception and appreciation to "play the game" of being a BURC member. Entry into BURC marks the beginning of an intense, 4-year experience. Membership involves 10 months of training per year, 6 days per week, and often twice a day. The training regimen at BURC is time consuming and mentally and physically exhausting. Suffering, sacrifice (in terms of time and enduring pain for the good of the crew), and extremely hard work are the basis of the training philosophy. Whereas this philosophy is common in Japanese sport, the constant adherence to it is often to the detriment of performance and against physiological periodization patterns.²

Rowers live at the boathouse in cramped dormitory bunk rooms and spend the majority of their university lives in this environment. In keeping with the notion of Japanese universities being considered "leisure land," progress and attendance often takes second place to rowing and recovering from training. As first-year rower Taka attests,

My high school teacher recommended that I go to BURC. I didn't know much about the teaching here, but I was aware of their rowing program. I came to BURC to become a member of the rowing club, not to be a BU student. I don't care about university, only rowing. (Interview, June 2002)

Rowers regularly returned to bed after the morning session instead of attending their classes. There is predictability to the BURC calendar that is punctuated with important events throughout the year. Regattas, welcome parties, graduation parties, training camps, and the like all serve to reinforce and give meaning to membership. Perhaps one of the unique aspects of university rowing is members' autonomy. There is a noticeable absence of any direct action by authority figures from the university or coaches. As Dalla Chiesa (2002) observes, coaches at university are more like "ethical guides" than technical or program directors. The entire operation of the club is in the hands of rowers, particularly the seniors and the captain. The captain is responsible for order and discipline, training regimes, operational budgets, and crew selection during his 12 months of leadership. Because the captaincy changes each year, and there is little external influence, leadership is learned directly by the *kōhai* (junior) from the *sempai* (senior). The result is a type of closed circuit of practice for the future captain. Kobe suggests:

For the program I will consult with the coxswains, other senior members, and training diary from the previous year. I think we should change some routines. For example, we can improve winter training to become more effective and improve everyone's skill level, but many things will stay the same. (Interview, May 2004)

Indeed things do stay the same because the rowing club provides a site for the delivery of a form of cultural curriculum (Dalla Chiesa, 2002; McDonald, 2004; McDonald & Komuku 2008) in which valued forms of "Japaneseness" can be embodied. "Japaneseness" refers to a taken-for-granted sense of unique cultural homogeneity. The members of BURC perceived the development of *ningenkankei* (human relationships) as one of the major outcomes of belonging to the club. *Ningenkankei*, as discussed by the rowers, refers to one's ability to communicate and coexist with other people. Inside the nexus of identity that is BURC, individuals develop their sense of *ningenkankei* grounded in the Confucian understanding of hierarchy or *jōge kankei*. The form of *jōge kankei* practiced at BURC provides the structural blueprint of relationships depending on whether one is *kōhai*, *sempai*, or *dōkyūsei* (the same rank). In the *jōge kankei* practiced in educational sport in Japan, rank is based on year level. Talent has no bearing on relationships of power. Therefore, although some younger members gained entry to higher ranked crews based on their ability, this does not translate into elevation in the *jōge kankei*.

The blueprint of *jōge kankei* is equally applicable in the club and in the company (Dalla Chiesa, 2002). Although both these concepts will be examined in more detail later, it is important to establish that both *ningenkankei* and *jōge kankei* should be seen as gendered. As Ogasawara (1998) highlights, the highly gendered and demarcated nature of employment in Japanese companies relies on exclusive vertical hierarchies that exist between men and other men, women and other women. As such the gendered *jōge kankei* of BURC socializes the appropri-

ate masculinity to exist in a hierarchically homosocial workplace. This is not to say that men and women do not work together or that men and women do not interact at BURC. Indeed, as we shall see, the way in which they do serves to further reinforce dominant notions of masculinity and femininity.

Although the men's club is the focus of this article, it is positioned among three other groups: the women's club, the managers' club, and the OBs. Each has its own internal hierarchies, roles, responsibilities, and functions that create the social nexus of BURC.

Positioning the Men: The Women's Club

Despite significantly smaller numbers, the women's club has usurped the men's club in recent years in regards to success and championship victories. They are extremely dedicated and most come from exceptionally strong rowing backgrounds. The entire boathouse is essentially the domain of the male rowers with the exception of a single eight-mat *tatami* room that serves as the women's change room and meeting place. The women live away from the boathouse and travel in for every session. The managers, who provide meals for the male rowers, do not cater for the women. When asked whether she thinks this is a fair and acceptable agreement, the women's captain, Nana, explains;

It's fine with us really. We all live close by, and I think we eat much better than the men because we cook for ourselves. Our fees are only 1,200Yen per month (men pay 18,000), which is really cheap when you consider our equipment. The men live here so they need more space and I guess most of them can't cook. (Interview, May 2004)

Even though they do not live at the boathouse, the women's club operates on the same schedule as the men. Their routines of training and their decision-making processes are almost identical to those of the men. There are, however, some differences in approach. The women have outsourced aspects of the program, writing to professional coaches at Toray company club on the other side of the river. Further, the women take proportionally less time with their briefing and de-briefing during training sessions and, therefore, spend less time at training (even though their on-water time might be considerably longer than that of the men). One reason for this is likely a result of living away from the boathouse. The women rowers, however, appear much more organized and disciplined on the whole. Their sense of *jōge kankei* is more obvious and less relaxed than that of the men's club.

Most of the women's club members expressed an understanding of normative gender roles when asked to consider their plans post graduation. Although some were keen to establish a career, many were more interested in short-term work and long-term relationships. The women's coxswain, Tsugano, is 21 and is in her final year at BURC.

I'm looking forward to getting married next year. I'm engaged to a former BURC rower who graduated 2 years ago. He's 23 years old now and is a fireman. I'm definitely not planning on working (when I graduate). . . . I just can't wait to get married. (Interview, April 2002)

The responses from Nana and Tsugano highlight naturalization of a gendered identity. This naturalization allows them to position BURC feminine identity in a relational sense to BURC masculine identity. For the women rowers at BURC, access to the boathouse (limited to the eight-mat room), prospects for the future (work or marriage), the intense discipline and sense of order (Confucianism), willingness to outsource the program (the men across the river will know more), and (unequal) relationships with the male members are all indicative of a gendered identity based on experience with “a sexually ordered social order” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 95). Bourdieu conceptualizes gender as internalization, below the level of consciousness of various schemes of appreciation and perception that leads women to find “social order such as it is, normal or even natural and in a sense anticipate their destiny” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 95).

This sense of “destiny” is expressed through a habitus that perpetuates such a commonsense approach to identity. The women’s rowing team serves to create a heteronormative cathexis. That is, the sexual social relationships that are organized around member’s emotional attachments to other members are based on “binary, hierarchical sexual difference and heterosexual coupledness” (McKay, 1997, p. 18). As evidenced by Tsugano, the heterosexual coupling between female and male rowers was apparent at the *nomihodai* (drinking parties) and other social events. Fraternalization between the two groups and several “blossoming” relationships anchor BURC masculinity as heterosexual.

Behind the Scenes: The Managers

The behind-the-scenes support network is made up of the Managers’ Club and OBs. The most hands on and important in the day to day operation of BURC are the managers. Managers are BU students, all female, with no rowing background. The total number of managers fluctuates each year but is usually between 10 and 15.

Midori is a 4th year Social Welfare student

I joined the rowing club because I saw a TV program (when at high school) about university rowing. I wasn’t allowed to be a rower because I didn’t row at high school, but I still wanted to be involved so I became a manager. We are a very strong group. I help with making food, supporting at regattas, carrying oars, and other things like that. (Interview, May 2002)

The major role of the managers is preparing dinner and breakfast on days when the rowers have a residential night. The managers are a group within a group, rotating the workload depending on the position of the manager within the hierarchy of the group. As with the rowers, the senior managers are the leaders of the group. They decide on the menus for the evening meal and breakfast and are responsible for the overall result. The junior managers assist with preparation and cleaning. The managers operate under a understanding of *jōge kankei* similar to the men’s and women’s club.

Ordinarily, the head manager of the day arrives at approximately 3:00 pm to begin preparing the evening meal and breakfast. As the afternoon progresses, other managers arrive to assist. Great care and effort go into the presentation of

the meals, and they tend to look like pictures out of a cooking magazine. In fact, the recipes usually come from such magazines and the daily meal is advertised on notices posted throughout the boathouse. The managers also prepare breakfast for the next day. The head manager for the day rarely leaves the boathouse before 9:00 pm.

During the time the managers are at the boathouse there is a subtle shift in the balance of power. The kitchen becomes almost a no-go area for the rowers, and any that do enter the area are exceptionally quick to get out again. Though subtle, this observation is important in demonstrating that the power relationships between men and women at BURC are dynamic. Ogasawara (1998) observes this in her analysis of the gender politics of white-collar employment and the power women possess in the office despite their subordinate employment positions. Similarly, the BURC managers, though occupying “traditional” roles, have power to influence the BURC men. Behavior and actions from men that is deemed unacceptable (rudeness, lack of gratitude, arrogance, being sleazy) can be met through reduction of meal sizes, rejection of flirtatious advances, belittling gossip, and avoidance. Because heteronormativity is central to BURC masculinity, solid “working” relationships with the managers are important.

The result of this potential power dynamic is the production of harmonious and complimentary relations. The managers are held in very high respect by the rowers, particularly the older members. As Taka explains,

They (managers) do a fantastic job. Yuri (head manager) is a very good cook. She cooks like my mother. Tonight’s meal was delicious. Did you like it? It’s a very traditional Japanese meal. (Interview, September 2002)

Taka’s statement that Yuri’s cooking reminds him of his mother anchors both male and female in a familiar gender appropriate environment. It is a traditional concept of femininity and matches well with a more traditional concept of masculinity.

BURC provides social interaction that incorporates all the elements, longitudinal and latitudinal hierarchy (*jōge kankei*), and hierarchically determined roles that define the traditional Japanese understanding of group. As with the female rowers, the managers also create a heteronormative social network. Several of the OBs had married or were in relationships with managers from their rowing days, and during events such as the freshman’s party, there was a fair amount of flirting between the rowers and managers, far more, in fact, than between the male and female rowers. The presence of the managers in the boathouse and the social organization of the club undoubtedly have a strong effect on the gendered roles ascribed to the various groups. Indeed, notions of masculinity held by BURC rowers are reinforced and legitimated by the presence of women who function as homemakers.

Behind the Scenes: The Old Boys

The OBs includes graduates who have been out of the club for a year to members who finished rowing 40 or 50 years ago. As the years pass, the OBs’ roles change. Those such as Fuji (a graduate student and therefore ineligible to continue

competing), operate as a link between the final-year students and the employment process. Fuji as *sempai* to all current members validates their experience by giving it credence (it is a game worth playing). He comes down to the river often to do some coaching because he is at a bit of a loss as to what to do with his time and clearly misses his rowing days. Being in between rowing and employment, Fuji is in a type of limbo. Although still part of the social nexus of BURC, he is no longer an effective member of a group (once he gains employment, his effectiveness will be restored in the social nexus that operates in the workplace). This is the first time since he began rowing at junior high school that Fuji has not been involved daily, in a meaningful way, in the particular *jōge kankei* of a rowing club. Fuji is important to BURC. He attends the *nomihodai*, provides support at regattas, sometimes coaches, and offers advice and, more often than not, just hangs around. There are some other OBs who do the same, to varying degrees, as Fuji. The OBs role shifts once they leave university for the work force. As they become income earners, their purpose shifts to financial supporter and social conductor. Kobe notes:

Because BURC is very relaxed in terms of *kōhai/sempai*, the alumni don't put pressure on us. The best thing of this rowing team is the relaxed atmosphere. The OBs understand the system, so they give us a lot of freedom. If we buy a new boat, they assist with funding. They are good supporters because they don't tell us what to do. They are very kind and generous. (Interview, September 2004)

The OBs' support must be unconditional, no strings attached. For example, when Matsuhiro (OB who graduated in the 1970s) visits the boathouse, he always brings some form of gift, like fruit or cake, and is met with great respect by the members. He's not interested in their program (that is, he keeps any opinions to himself and doesn't suggest various techniques with current members unless directly asked), only that the members are continuing the BURC way. Matsuhiro also attends the important regattas and the freshmen's *nomihodai* as a key functionary, making an important speech and subsidizing some of the costs. Finally, Matsuhiro, through his involvement in manufacturing, provides useful employment connections to graduates. The OB network ensures that being a member is never just a 4-year experience but can continue on throughout one's life. Any OB of BURC will always have a place, that is, a social position relative to the rest of the OBs and membership. In many ways the OBs provide a blueprint for how a BURC man becomes a man in society.

The women's club, managers, and OBs provide a broad social structure in which to position the men's club and, therefore, in which to position masculinity. Whether through gender oppositions, naturalization of gendered roles, or modeling of masculinity, it is a social nexus that ensures an embodiment of masculinity that has a perception of and appreciation for hard work, suffering, and self-sacrifice balanced with a particular form of *ningenkankei* based on a strong understanding of *jōge kankei*.

It would be incorrect, however, to see this social nexus as a reflection of all Japanese social interaction, or BURC masculinity as Japanese masculinity. Rather, the field that is BURC reflects a very particular social organization with a very particular habitus. Commonsense (that which goes without saying) and the closeness of the group allow the guaranteed accrual of capital, especially symbolic

masculine capital, and conversion of this capital into other forms without internal resistance. The natural and commonsense approach that operates regarding group activity such as that of BURC is indicative of a highly successful hegemonic process. There is no doubt various groups indeed seek to be different from other student groups, that is, demonstrate distinction from others (McDonald & Hallinan, 2005). The men at BURC see themselves living in a “proper, disciplined way” and very much involved in a project of self-cultivation that will be advantageous for future employment (McDonald & Hallinan, 2005). Students who do not live in a “proper, disciplined way” are looked down upon. The rowers are imbued with a tough masculinity that is perceived as superior to “soft” masculinity. To be a “real” Japanese man for BURC men is something that can only be embodied through direct experience. Presumably (according to BURC men), employers will have a similar appreciation.

BURC masculinity is achieved by reaffirming an identity constructed through very “Japanese” concepts. By “Japanese” concepts I refer to the ideologies of harmony, hierarchy, and collectivity. The collective “we Japanese” is often used to express a sense of homogeneity and cultural uniqueness in a way that provides a type of cultural determinism. Regardless of the list of apparently “invented tradition” (Inoue, 1998; Light & Kinnaid, 2002; Vlastos, 1998) that makes up many aspects of Japanese cultural experience and group life, such “tradition” is an indication of the strength and structure of apparatuses of power (e.g., the education system) and their effectiveness at naturalizing to an embodied level even the most recent concept of “Japaneseness,” including masculinity.

The naturalization of gender is also seen in the dynamics, choices, and language of BURC members (both male and female). Japanese folk ideologies naturalize gender roles and attributes (Roberson & Suzuki, 2003, p. 8), and it is significant, therefore, that members see life at BURC as “traditional” and “proper” in regards to relationships operating there. This connection with traditional identity is enhanced even further through member’s belief in *seishin* (spirit) and elements of *bushidō* (warrior code) (McDonald & Hallinan, 2005). According to Roberson and Suzuki (2003), linkages made with occupations, whether the salary man, artisan, or rower, and the Samurai serve to legitimize the position and prestige of those occupations by using Japanese tradition. Even though BURC members are far from samurai, the fact they directly and indirectly adopt elements of this identity serves not only to legitimize their choice to be rowers but also the construction of their masculinity. As Bourdieu offers:

It is through the training of the body that the most fundamental dispositions are imposed, those which make a person both inclined and able to enter into the social games most favourable to the development of manliness—politics, business, science, etc. (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 56)

Learning Masculinity

The pedagogic nature of the *kōhai/ sempai* relationship at BURC ensures that what has been taught and what you teach occurs on a totally “man-to-man” basis. As such, each *kōhai* models themselves on their *sempai*. Understanding *jōge kankei* becomes central to each member’s appreciation and perception of what it is to be

a BURC man. Final-year-student Musashi reflects on his experience of *jōge kankei* in his first year at BURC:

I had a sempai, Matsuda, who, when I was a freshman, was very good to me. In the boat he trained so hard it was amazing, and during parties and things like that, Matsuda was a crazy man, you know, he would get very drunk and he was a lot of fun, but during private time he was very different. He was considerate and caring to all *kōhai*. He made me feel very comfortable around him. He encouraged me to speak and express my opinion. His idea of *jōge kankei* was very relaxed, and he treated me like we were *dōkyūsei*. (Interview, April 2006)

Indeed, Musashi is an exemplar of BURC masculinity. He is a big drinker in the appropriate setting, and his dedication to training and level of effort are second to none. Unfortunately, Musashi is not very talented and fails to gain selection in any of the major boats. However, his response to the disappointment of not making the top crews is indicative of the internalization of BURC masculinity:

I was disappointed not to make the quad scull. Initially very disappointed! To have *kōhai* selected before me was hard to take. But after a while I realized that this was probably for the best. Now I'm in the double scull and have Koichi to look after and teach. Even though I have been writing the program, I have asked Koichi's opinions so that he feels comfortable and that our *jōge kankei* is relaxed. Now I have a job to ensure that Koichi learns the BURC way. (Interview, April 2006)

Musashi demonstrates his appreciation of group harmony and the need for self-sacrifice. His ability to row becomes secondary to what is needed to be a rower at BURC—hard work and *jōge kankei*. His masculine identity is not diminished by his failure to make the boat. In fact, his willingness to endure and commitment to his role with Koichi enhances this identity. Musashi adds:

I think that BURC needs to have relaxed *jōge kankei*. This way it encourages all members to speak and express their point of view without fear. This is the only way for everyone to feel comfortable and for us as *sempai* to know what people really want and expect. If we allow good communication then everyone will feel good with any final decisions that are made. (Interview, April 2006)

The *kōhai/sempai* relationship at BURC is noticeably more relaxed than those existing at high school sports clubs, where there is often a strict enforcement of hierarchical relationships (Shimahara, 1991; Yoneyama, 1999). As Taka expresses, not only does he have “greater fondness” for his *sempai*, he also thinks the *jōge kankei* is “stronger” than at high school. By “stronger,” Taka is referring to the level of guidance and direction (and not the level of discipline) shown from his *sempai*. In understanding *jōge kankei*, it is important to note that rather than being contradictory, affection and hierarchy should be seen as “mutually reinforcing” (Rohlen, 1991, p. 23). In some ways this is reminiscent of the “traditional” Japanese management style that Gordon (1998, p. 21) describes as warm hearted, sympathetic, and paternal on one hand and obedient and loyal on the other. Taka

provides the following as admiration for current captain Hiro, a man he looks up to and indeed hopes to one day emulate:

Hiro has the ability to talk to people, and when they talk to him, he can listen, and think, and then give advice. I was captain at high school, and so I know what is required to lead. Hiro is dignified and can present his strong opinion to the other members. (Interview, May 2002)

Hiro also describes the “type” of man he is. As a leader he understands he must be balanced between decisiveness and allowing others to have a say. As he says:

I have the final decision, but whether I’m strong and direct depends on the situation. I will ask for others opinion, and if I’m happy with that, then that is the way we will go. However, if I disagree, I have the final decision so I will override the decision if I think it is necessary. Tonight in the boat I yelled at the crew. I was trying to re-energize them. The other members were not concentrating, so I encouraged them to try hard and concentrate harder. Sometimes I have to get into the other members, other times I want them to feel comfortable and stay quiet. How I act depends on what we need on the day. (Interview, April 2002)

Leadership at BURC is afforded to those men who possess the necessary physical and cultural capital and have the greatest appreciation of “how to play the game.” The captain is not necessarily the best rower or the most empathetic person. He is chosen by his *sempai* as the one best endowed to combine soft and hard masculinity to maintain the model of the “BURC way.” It is important, however, to recognize that all *sempai* are expected to lead and act as guides to their *kōhai*. This is demonstrated above in the example from Musashi.

In discussing Japan’s success in business as hinging on the high degree of commitment Japanese managers can get from their workers, Kotloff (1996, p. 73) suggests this is because of the practice of routinely extending the “decision making processes to their workers, enabling them to feel a sense of participation and personal investment in their work.” Indeed, this approach can be seen in the attitudes of Hiro toward his role as captain. At the end of every training session he gathers the crew in a circle and de-briefs the good and bad points of the session and makes suggestions for the next session. All crew members are expected to be involved in this process and are encouraged to speak. As the interviewees mention above, these collective processes produce a sense of belonging to BURC that reinforces this particular model of *jōge kankei*.

The collective empathetic masculine identity at BURC is only powerful if it is grounded in a man who is also tough. Demonstration of “hard” masculinity is found in bodily performance at BURC. Through training rowers demonstrate toughness, pain tolerance, and endurance. Their performance is enhanced by visible displays of suffering. Screaming out in pain, collapse at the completion of sessions, changes in physique as musculature builds, and collective verbal affirmations (“give it your all!” “together,” “keep going, do your best”) from members in the boat during a tough workout are all examples of performative masculinity. At major regattas the BURC (and all universities’) crews race to the line on the brink of collapse and exhaustion. After the event (regardless if they win or lose)

there is an outpouring of emotion in the form of anguished tears. This demonstration is significant because such meaningful events become “sanctioned” for expression of emotions that would ordinarily be inappropriate. Crying, rather than being seen as a weakness, enhances both the aesthetic of the event and the physical and cultural capital of the competitors, because it demonstrates the participants’ level of commitment and effort.

Learning how to drink is important for members of BURC. Each year is punctuated with many formal and informal drinking parties. To be able to hold one’s drink is an indication of maturity and growing up. By their final year of university, members have transformed from nondrinking freshmen to heavy drinking seniors. The scene of a freshman sculling several beers at the insistence of his *sempai* and then vomiting is very common. Invariably the freshman returns after vomiting for more alcohol, much to the approval of his *sempai*. The freshmen who continue drinking after being sick are thereafter afforded greater respect from the other members. Such efforts are demonstrative of toughness and willingness to endure and suffer and are central to masculine identity. Indeed, being a strong drinker can compensate for being a weak rower. Members are conscious that, just as being a big drinker can offer status, being a teetotaler might be frowned upon or held in suspicion. Drinking parties give freshman members an opportunity to learn either how to drink or to manage their impression. Several members who cannot or do not like drinking handle the situation by pretending to be drunk. By using the façade of appearing drunk, these members can negate any stigma that might arise from abstaining. Further, they perform important functions at such events including cleaning up and paying the bills. As such they demonstrate a form of complicit masculinity that reinforces the hegemonic position of the “heavy drinking, crazy man.”

The ability to drink is highly valued not only at BURC but in broader society (Ben-Ari, 2002; Hendry, 1994; Moeran, 1989). As third-year student Tana said during one drinking session, “Real men drink! Real men drink sake (Japanese rice wine) like water!” For the salary man, the ability to finish a long period of work and engage in a drinking party with colleagues is necessary in maintaining the normal hierarchical dynamics of the office, because it provides an opportunity to express oneself more freely. As Ben-Ari (2002, p. 130) notes, drinking can be seen as “directly contributing to the smooth operation of various aspects of the social order to which the drinkers belong.” In the case of BURC, drinking parties become important experiences not only for group dynamics but also in preparing members for similar events in their working lives.

Conclusion: Disciplined Bodies

The masculinization of bodies is accomplished through training. Repetitious, intense training reshapes bodies in a way that emphasizes masculinity. Musculature, which is highly valued, is increased. Such bodies are not just valued at BURC but indeed have become hegemonic in Japanese (and Western) culture (Miller, 2003). In this situation the results of training through rowing (i.e., the muscular body) meet the same demands as those of popular culture for the beautification of the body. Because the body becomes hard, however, it comes to represent more than shape. Its development infers recognition of a broader cultural process. The

body becomes a demonstration of discipline, dedication, pain tolerance, and self control. The bodily project is not accidental; rather it is with purposeful application that bodies are given up to the pedagogical apparatus of BURC. As Wacquant observes

The self-regulated pedagogical machinery constituted (by the gym) resides in the indivisible system of material and symbolic relations that obtain among the different participants, and particularly in the arrangement of their bodies in the physical space of the gym and in its specific time. (Wacquant, 2004, p. 127)

Every stance of the BURC body is “pregnant with meaning” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 11). At BURC bodies are constantly on display, not only in training but also in the shower block, changing for bed, sleeping, seminaked at meal times, at drinking parties. These bodies are immersed further in the symbolic and material relations of the boat house: the sense of belonging, the *jōge kankei*, the boats and oars, memorabilia, traditional meals, the close bunked living, the out-of-bounds *tatami* room of the women’s club and kitchen. The pedagogical process produces the culturally homogenous body of the BURC man. A physique homogenized through training is underpinned by an identity that expresses “Japaneseness”; that is, values and characteristics that members believe are important in becoming a Japanese man. In such an environment the development of particular forms of masculinity is essentially a *fait accompli*. The bodily (and therefore cultural) project dispenses with the need to justify the fundamentals of this identity; the identity is constructed as part of common-sense process. The (re)developed body is displayed through performance involving far more than racing in a boat. Imbued with a “feel for the game,” members are constantly playing and performing a game in which the outcomes are assured.

The “total” experience of club sports, such as rowing, at Japanese universities provides a blueprint for the reproduction of a particular masculine identity that will maintain its capital in the field of salary-man employment after graduation. The characteristics of hard work and endurance, long hours and commitment, collective identity and group harmony, and hierarchical relationships that are so valued in salary men are equally valued by BURC men. This identity is internalized at an individual level through the intersection of the structural pedagogical apparatus of the club and the embodied experience of rowing and being a member of the club. In spite of the many challenges to salary-man identity, university rowing clubs would appear to be bastions for the reproduction of this specifically Japanese notion of being a man.

Notes

1. Connell (1995, p. 70), using Western examples, mentions Bogart, John Wayne, and Clint Eastwood.
2. For example, leading into a major regatta, all crews did a maximal sprint overload session that resulted in enormous fatigue at exactly the time they should (according to rowing physiology) have been tapering workload and focusing on recovery. This type of “antiscientific character building” training was very much normal practice.

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