Body In Masculine Identity Construction Among Young Japanese Salarymen
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In the strict sense: "full-time, white-collar, permanent employees of organizations offering benefits such as lifetime employment guarantee, salaries and promotions tied to length of service, and an ideology of corporate paternalism characterizing relations between the (permanent, male) employee and the organization". (Dasgupta 2013: 24)

Here: full-time, white-collar male employee in a private sector organization (based on Hidaka 2010)
Why salarymen and physical appearance?

...there is a tendency for the body to be seen as an entity in the process of becoming: a project to be worked at and accomplished as part of an individual’s self-identity. (Shilling 2012:6)

- Contradictive social requirements for men’s physical appearance considering men’s social status change from a young student status (pre-shakaijin) to mature man’s status achieved through full-time employment and creation of family (shakaijin, ichininmae no shakaijin)

- Discrepancy of appearance and manners among contemporary young Japanese men (delicate appearance and stereotypical sexist views of masculinity) (Ito 2006)


Figure I-5  Prioritized and Considered Criteria of Their Potential Spouses by Survey

[Men]

- Prioritized
- Considered

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>95.1</td>
<td>91.8</td>
<td>76.6</td>
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<td>Economic resources</td>
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<td>37.3</td>
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<td>40.1</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>26.0</td>
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<td>Academic background</td>
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<td>28.4</td>
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<td>8.2</td>
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<td>Housework skills</td>
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<td>18.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>8.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding of career</td>
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<td>42.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>41.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shared interests</td>
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<td>92.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>52.4</td>
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GeSt Gender Studies
Research problem

How do men feel about their bodies and sense of being a man in the contradictory context of social requirements about men’s physical attractiveness that they lived with before crossing a line between young and mature man’s status, and requirements for responsibilities as workers, husbands and fathers, followed by negative prospects and attitudes regarding their physical appearance?

Failure to assert one’s masculinity through body might lead to the problems of individual self-esteem (Mishkind et al 1988, Jackson 2006, Taga 2003), or body may serve as means of resistance to unattractive social responsibilities attached to mature masculinity, by putting efforts in retaining youthful or immature appearance (Frühstück & Walthall 2011, Kinsella 1995), which leads to delayed marriages and parenthood.
Aim and object of the research

- **Research object:** construction of masculinity through bodily appearance
- **Aim of the research:** to analyze how body serves as means of masculine identity construction for young Japanese salarymen.
Theoretical framework

• P. Blau’s (1964) theory of social exchange
  Individuals seek for social rewards:
  - social acceptance (integration);
  - social approval (support);
  - social exchange (services); (physical, behavior, skills)
  - power.

• Ch. Schilling’s (2005) theoretical approach to body as a lifelong project
  Body as a project to achieve social rewards by constructing physical attractiveness through different body techniques (Frank 1993; Miller 2003, 2006; Crossley 2007; Sassatelli 1999; Light 2011; Parker 1996, and others)

  Successful communication about what appearance is accepted as ‘attractive’ and worth of social rewards is defined by a culturally assigned set of signs.
• Qualitative visual analysis (semiotic approach) of three Japanese men’s esthetic salon websites: Dandy House, La Parler, Men’s TBC. **Method:** based on Dyer’s (1996) scheme of nonverbal means (visual signs) for communication about human subjects, 4 categories of indexical signs (skin, body complexion, age and hair) are analyzed as visual signifiers of masculinity.

• **Qualitative interviews:**
  - **Specialist interviews. Method:** semi-structured interviews
  - **Individual interviews with salarymen** (25-35 years old) **Method:** semi-structured interviews
Body, gender identity and individual identity in Japanese context

- Prevalence of social identity against individual identity
- Body and mind duality for the sake of harmony in social relations

In Japanese socio-cultural context the connection among gender identity, individual identity and social identity is very tight.
Individuality in ‘inter-person’ relation

Gender identity

Position in society

Social stability/security
Key concepts explaining Japanese principles of social relations

- AMAE (interdependence)
- BA (social location)
- HAJI (shame)
- GIRI (duty)

ANSHINKAN (sense of safety/security)
Findings from esthetic salon website analysis

- **The constructed image of masculine body** can be briefly characterised as soft, smooth, slender and hairless, these attributes carrying connotations of cuteness (*kawaii*), youthfulness, coolness (*kakkoii*) and stylishness (corresponding to the category of *wakashu* (Pflugfelder 2012)

- **The social rewards** men can expect for their efforts to achieve the smooth and slender body are *increased self-confidence in public and private life, admiration by women, approval by colleagues and psychological satisfaction* by being able to both fulfil the prescribed social norms regarding hegemonic masculinity and by means of modern looking beautiful body to escape from a negative image of *oyaji sarariiman*.

- The *esute* salon websites *discourage men from physical efforts* in beautification of their bodies by emphasising an easy way to achieve desired musculature or body shape, using modern technologies instead of conventional body disciplining practices such as sports or diet.
今なぜ痩せマッチョなのか

女の子からの支持率アップ間違いなし！

細身のTシャツやスーツなど、タイトなファッションが主流になってきた現代、ボディビル系マッチョではうまく着こなすことができません。
“痩せマッチョ”なら細身のファッションも上手に着こなせるので、女の子からの支持率アップも間違いなし！！

痩せマッチョとは？

細身でありながら筋肉質な体型

ただ痩せている、ただ筋肉がついていて体格がよいということではなく、細身でありながら筋肉質な体型を“痩せマッチョ”といいます。
ボディビル系のマッチョのように筋肉ムキムキではなく、パリコレモデルのようなスラッとしていて筋肉もある体型をめざしましょう。
安全・確実な美容電気脱毛を採用しているから
レーザーや光脱毛とは仕上がりが違います！

⚠️ レーザー脱毛や光脱毛、薬剤脱毛だと…
- 肌に大きなダメージを受ける
- 2〜3ヶ月後にまた生えてくる
- 太く密集している毛、日焼けした肌などには効果が出にくい

おすすめ こんなお悩みをお持ちの方におすすめです！

悩み1 毎日のひげ剃りが面倒、カミソリ負けが気になる方
ダンディハウスのひげ脱毛なら全体的に剃らず、顔や首の
むだ毛部分を剃らず、間引いて薄くするなど、一人一人の
お好みに対応。毎日のシェーピングを軽減します。お
肌の弱い方にもオススメです。

悩み2 ひげをカッコよくデザインしたい方
あなたの好きなスタイルにデザインするのがデザイン脱
毛。鼻の下だけ残す、アゴひげを残す、フェイスライン
のひげを整えるなど、自分好みにデザインし、かっこよ
くひげを生やしてオシャレを楽しめます。

悩み3 ひげ・ボディのむだ毛にお困りの方
ひげは勿論、気になる足・腕・胸・背中のおでこ毛を全てな
くすのも、間引いて自然に仕上げるのも思いのまま。
全身のむだ毛の悩みに対応いたします。

悩み4 レーザー脱毛、光脱毛に満足されてなかった方
レーザー脱毛や光脱毛では取りきれなかったむだ毛も
ダンディハウスの美容電気脱毛なら1本単位で扱っていて
いきますので、つるつるの仕上がりを期待できます。

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身だしなみとして“ヒゲ脱毛”をする男性が増加中！
あなたもまずは脱毛体験！

男の身だしなみとして、ヒゲの剃り残しや青ヒゲは避けたいところ。
特に第一印象では爽やかさが大切です。
ヒゲ脱毛でヒゲを減らせば、顔の印象アップ・ヒゲ剃りの時間短縮やカミソリ負けの対策になるので、
20代から30代の男性を中心に「カッコよくなるため」と「便利さ」を求めてヒゲ脱毛する方が増えています。

サロン検索 ➜
体験お申し込みはこちら ➜
お電話でのご予約も
0120-025236

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With more style than yesterday.
Physical attributes of masculine appearance

The most frequent associations of young Japanese salarymen regarding the masculine appearance are:

• beard,

• sportiveness,

• physical strength (which also helps to fulfill a role of a protector and fighter),

• the feeling of roughness or sharpness.
Characteristics of a masculine-looking man

- Sporty: 16
- Beard: 14
- Strong: 13
- Solid build: 12
- Short hair: 10
- Muscles: 9
- Rough, frowning face: 8
- Big body: 7
- Masculine social role: 6
- Strong face: 5
- Fighter: 4
- Mature age: 3
- Active: 2
- Posture: 1
- Wild/animal-like: 0

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Physical attributes of non-masculine appearance

The most frequent associations of young Japanese salarymen regarding the non-masculine appearance are contradictory. They can be divided into three major types:

1) androgynous beautiful young man;
2) an overweight oyaji (middle aged man);
3) a father.
Characteristics of a non-masculine looking man
What’s wrong with ojisan?

- This man is different. Ojisan having fun, ojisan. Maybe he looks not according to his age...he wants to show that he is fashionable, but his belly is popping out, so it’s not really...It’s like it’s better to hide it. I think being able to keep your body slim means being able to control yourself, to work, to take care of a family, I think these things are much related. Also in Japan, in trains, when a fat man enters, it’s the image that he smells bad because he sweats. In winter it’s still alright, but in summer...A fat man makes an impression of someone who’s not capable at work. (Yamato, 28)
Images of masculinities

**MASCULINE MAN**
- Strong;
- Macho attitude towards women;
- Self-confident;
- ‘Hard’ type, strict;
- Unpopular;
- Uninvolved father.

**NON-MASCULINE MAN**
- Beautiful, ikemen (イケメン);
- Ikumen (育メン);
- Cool;
- Supportive, kind;
- Popular;
- Overweight;
- Oyajippoi (オヤジっぽい);
- Seiketsukan (清潔感)
Male attractiveness and masculinity are understood as different entities by young salarymen.

Young Japanese salarymen demonstrate the tendency to yearn for the body that corresponds to the masculine appearance ideal advertised in men’s aesthetic salons: lean, strong, not too muscular body (hoshomacho type) and kawaii (cute), kind looking smooth face.

Thus, young salarymen prefer the type of physical appearance that they describe as „non-masculine“ . It shows their conformity to the socially spread images of „soft“ masculinity as more desirable, youthful and modern. This way salarymen demonstrate their wish for such social rewards as acceptance at work and establishing successful relations with women.
Body care: sports

• **Sports** is understood as an essential part of one’s masculinity, however, the majority of Japanese salarymen do not do any exercise because of long working hours and excessive responsibilities.

• **Team sports** is regarded as especially masculine, because it trains such “manly” characteristics as loyalty, self-sacrifice, gaman, comradeship, and others.
Body care: beautification

• The most popular beautification practices:
  - weight loss procedures,
  - hair styling,
  - beard depilation/shaving,
  - eyebrow plucking,
  - facial treatment by using not only traditional cosmetics such as lotions and creams, but also special technological devices for keeping youthful condition of one’s skin.

• Beautification practices are natural body care procedures among the majority of young Japanese salarymen.
Finally, I think it’s a symbol. In my opinion, not growing a beard is a sign that it’s probably a person with the same way of thinking as I am. If there enters a man with a beard, I’d start thinking that maybe his values are different than ours, and if a man wears the same clothes, the same...shares the same culture of shaving beard, well, I don’t know exactly what is the meaning of this, but in the sense of culture, if one shares this symbolic culture, then our way of thinking should be similar; so probably we’ll understand each other, and I think it’s a base for trustworthy relations. I think so. I think so, right? In this sense it’s a symbol. I think it’s a symbol. If here comes a man with beard and in a suit with lots of personality in it, during the negotiations, while working, I’ll think and think that he’s different, and it’s scary. It’s scary to trust him. So, because you don’t want to be like this, you have to shave beard, wear a suit according to the same rules, and so you’ll demonstrate image like “this is a friend”. I think so. (Sonobe, 24)
• Fatherhood is understood rather as a social role than a part of masculine identity.
• Salarymen consider a man being a good father if he is able to earn money for the family, has enough will to suppress one’s individual wishes for the sake of family members and provides the opportunity for one’s children to find their individual way in life (although the fathers themselves, on the contrary, seem to avoid expressing their individuality namely because it is considered to be egoistic and non-masculine).
• Married salarymen experience problems in their sexual life, especially after birth of children.
“Father is no more a man?”

“a baby and masculinity are somehow not related” (Asahina, 26)

“these two are fathers. Not men. (K: Fathers, but not men?) Yes, yes. A man is meant sexually in contrast to women, and a father is not sexual, it’s more like a role” (Nakamura, 24)

“isn’t it different: masculinity and fatherhood? They look like fathers, and it’s different from masculine neatness” (Yamazaki, 30)

“they are fathers, but it is different from masculinity” (Shoshi, 32)
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<tr>
<th>Physical appearance</th>
<th>Gender roles</th>
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| **GAMAN**           | - Not confronting one’s girlfriend/wife  
| Body disciplining techniques:  
| - dieting;  
| - sports. | - Obeying the rules of *kaisha*  
|             | - Sacrificing one’s individual wishes in sake of family’s goodness (including sexual wishes) |
| **SHOGANAI/AKIRAMERU** | Thinking of one’s physical changes as depressing, but inevitable (gaining weight, becoming less attractive physically to one’s wife, losing hair etc.) |
To conclude

Young Japanese salarymen construct their masculine identity by adopting to the social environment. They seek for the recognition at work as capable and reliable employees, in a family as good fathers and husbands, and in a general sense as attractive individuals. For achieving this aim there exists a strong tenency among young Japanese salarymen to put efforts in looking kind, soft and youthful, despite of the fact that they do not perceive these features masculine. The salarymen construct their masculine identity through neglecting the images they themselves perceive as ‘masculine’. However, these men do not suffer because of sense of lack of their masculinity, because sacrificing one’s own tastes for the sake of the surrounding people also signifies masculinity and can be best summarized as „gaman“ (endurance).