

## **The 'Gay Salaryman' at Work: Negotiating with Hegemonic Ideologies of Sexuality in the Japanese Workplace**

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### **Abstract**

*There has, in recent years, been considerable discussion about the intertwinings between organizational culture, and discourses and ideologies of gender and sexuality. In particular, researchers from disciplines ranging from cultural studies through to organizational studies have drawn attention to and problematized the relationship between a publicly articulated hegemonic ideology of heteronormativity and workplace culture. However, most of this research on sexuality and the workplace has tended to focus on organizations in the West. In relation to non-Western organizational cultures, while there has been considerable research on gender in the workplace, there is very little that deals with sexuality, in particular non-heterosexual sexualities.*

*This paper discusses the issue of non-heterosexual sexual identity in the context of organizational culture in Japan. Japan's post-World War Two transformation from a war devastated nation to an industrial superpower was, and continues to be, closely associated with the middle-class, white-collar 'salaryman', who became an embodiment of both Japanese corporate culture and Japanese masculinity. The publicly articulated discourse of the salaryman was premised on an equation of work with heteronormativity, specifically on the salaryman as husband/father/provider for a dependent family.*

*Yet, in reality this equation of the salaryman-centred workplace culture with heterosexuality has always been far more tenuous than initial appearance may suggest. For instance, a flip-side of the discourse of the salaryman husband/father as provider, is the construction of the suit-clad salaryman as a trope of desire*

*and fantasy in gay male popular culture discourse, and the existence of numerous gay bars in cities like Tokyo, catering to a salaryman clientele. This paper, drawing upon both popular culture representations of the 'gay salaryman', and interviews with individual salarymen who identify as non-heterosexual, explores the nuanced and complex relationship between the publicly articulated hegemonic heteronormative ideology of the workplace, and the day-to-day micro-negotiations with the expectations of this ideology undertaken by non-heterosexual individuals.*

### **Introduction**

There has, in recent decades, been a shift in academic studies of organizational culture away from regarding the workplace as an exclusively 'sexless and rational realm',<sup>1</sup> towards a greater recognition of the significance of gender and indeed, sexuality to the dynamics of workplace and managerial culture. Moreover, while the culturally privileged discourse within the workplace continues to be, to borrow Rosemary Pringle's description, 'relentlessly heterosexual',<sup>2</sup> there is also, in the literature, a growing recognition of the diversity of sexuality within organizational cultures, and the ways in which they intersect with the dominant heteronormative discourses and ideologies in circulation.<sup>3</sup> This includes the emergence of an awareness of the existence of non-heterosexual sexualities and subjectivities within the context of organizational culture – ranging from a recognition of the importance of homosocial, homoemotional, and sometimes homophysical dynamics within workplaces, through to greater discussion of the experiences of non-heterosexual (lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transgender, transsexual) individuals within corporate culture.<sup>4</sup> However, the bulk of the discussion in relation to sexuality has been in the context of Western (largely Euro-American) organizational culture. This applies to studies of Japanese organizational cultures too; while there has been considerable discussion of the intersections between *gender* and work,<sup>5</sup> sexuality, particularly non-heteronormative sexualities have remained outside the orbit

of discussion. This paper focuses on the intersections between Japanese corporate culture, masculinity, and sexuality – specifically the experiences of non-heterosexual white-collar male employees of organizations.

### **The ‘Salaryman’ and Corporate Masculinity in Japan**

The springboard for the discussion in this paper was the research I had conducted for my PhD.<sup>6</sup> The focus of this work was on the expression of corporate masculinity in Japan; specifically the discourse of the white-collar ‘salaryman’. As a sort of ‘Everyman’ of corporate Japan over the post-World War Two decades, the salaryman came to signify both corporate masculinity, and more generally, Japanese masculinity as a whole. In this regard the discourse of the salaryman could be considered to have been a powerfully entrenched, culturally privileged hegemonic discourse along the lines suggested by sociologist and gender theorist Raewyn Connell.<sup>7</sup> Expressed another way, the salaryman came to signify the ‘archetypal citizen’ of postwar Japan. This was despite an on-the-ground reality that, even at the height of Japan’s economic strength in the 1970s and 1980s, only a minority of the male workforce would have fallen within the strictest definitional parameters of the term – fulltime, white-collar employees of private-sector organizations offering such benefits as lifetime employment guarantee, and promotion and salary-scale linked to length of service, within an ideological framework of corporate paternalism. Rather, it was the discourse surrounding the salaryman and his lifestyle, and the ideology associated with, and embedded in, that discourse that was far more extensive in its reach. Thus, regardless of what the *reality* may have been large swathes of Japanese men identified with, and were defined against, the salaryman discourse. Moreover, even after almost two decades of economic slowdown since the 1990s, with significant corporate re-structurings and shifts in workplace ideology, the salaryman continues to be pivotal to the ways in

which Japanese corporate culture, Japanese masculinity, and indeed Japanese national identity continue to be imagined and framed.

An integral element of the salaryman discourse has been the operation of a particular ideology of gender and sexuality, at the core of which has been the equation of masculinity with the public, work, *production* sphere and femininity with the private, household, consumption sphere. Notwithstanding the reality that women have always participated in paid, productive work (albeit largely as part of the part-time, non-permanent sector), and despite the not insignificant inroads made by women in the decades since the enactment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law in the mid-1980s, discursively there continue to be entrenched socio-cultural expectations that work defines masculinity. The articulation of this thinking is the figure of the 'archetypal citizen' salaryman, someone who is 'a male, heterosexual, able-bodied, fertile, white-collar worker.'<sup>8</sup> Thus, underpinning the discourse of salaryman masculinity (and by extension, male corporate culture) is an ideology of regulated heterosexuality, signified through the notion of the salaryman as a husband and father who provides for a dependent wife and children – the *daikokubashira* (literally, 'central supporting pillar') of a household coupled with the *sengyō shufu* ('fulltime housewife').

The commonly used expression *shakaijin* (literally, 'social person/member of society') is the term used in Japan to refer to socially responsible adult members of society. While the connotation is that an individual attains *shakaijin* status upon entry into fulltime work, in actual fact, as Wim Lunsing notes, linked into this status is the notion of becoming '*ichininmae no shakaijin* (a fully adult social being)' through marriage. Conversely, not getting married carries the implication of not being *ichininmae*, but rather '*hanninmae* . . . half a person . . . not independent individuals but like children waiting to grow up, no matter what their age is.'<sup>9</sup> In this regard then, not being married beyond a certain age has connotations of not living up to the expectations of socio-culturally responsible citizenship, signified, for women, through being a wife and mother, and for men, through being a *daikokubashira* provider. This comes

across in works such as Murata Yôhei's study of the ways in which single, middle-aged men are excluded and marginalized within the context of organizational culture – his informants talk about such things as being passed over for promotion beyond the level of section manager, and being expected to not complain about a heavier work-load due to not having family responsibilities.<sup>10</sup>

However, given the considerable socio-cultural and economic upheavals since the 'Lost Decade' recession of the 1990s, there is a growing anomaly between the discourse of the *daikokubashira* husband and father, and the on-the-ground reality of an increase in marriage age, and a growth in the proportion of single persons within the population. In 2005, for instance, the average age of first marriage was 29.8 for men, and 28 for women. At the same time, the proportion of never-married persons in the 30-34 age category (arguably, the peak years for marriage and childbirth) in 2005 was 47.7 percent for men, and 32.6 percent for women; up from just 14.3 percent for men in the same age cohort in 1975, and 7.7 percent for women.<sup>11</sup> Overall, the share of single-person households was just under 30 percent of all households in 2005.<sup>12</sup>

Intermeshing with these demographic shifts, have been significant re-structurings within the employment sector. As corporations sought to cut personnel costs and downsize as a consequence of the post-bubble economic slowdown, there was a shift towards relying more on non-permanent and part-time labour, best embodied in the figure of the young *freeter* ('freelance' temporary/casual worker). The term, a combination of the English 'freelance' and the German-derived Japanese term for casual work, *arubaito*, first emerged during the prosperous 1980s boom years, and initially had positive connotations of young people opting for flexibility and choice over being locked into fulltime, permanent employment.<sup>13</sup> However, through the 1990s and 2000s, as corporations downsized and reduced their intake of new permanent staff, *freeter* work and other forms of irregular employment increasingly became the only option for growing numbers of young graduates; by the mid-2000s there were over 2 million Japanese under the age of 35 engaged in part-time or temporary work.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, whereas initially *freeter* were largely in their late-teens and early-twenties, as the economic slowdown extended beyond the 1990s, many of these individuals continued working in the non-permanent sector into their thirties, and even forties – by the mid-2000s, over 800,000 *freeter* were in their thirties.<sup>15</sup>

This had implications for the discourse of the male as *daikokubashira* provider. On the one hand, the ideological hold of the institution of marriage, with the male as primary breadwinner has not significantly weakened – surveys point to the continued desire among younger people (close to 90 percent) to get married and have a family.<sup>16</sup> However, the *reality*, particularly given the continuing strength of the work/masculinity nexus, is that marriage and family are increasingly an unattainable ideal for growing numbers of men approaching middle-age.<sup>17</sup> Thus, in present-day Japan there is a discernible disconnect between those men (embodied in the salaryman) able to enter the permanent sector, and hence gain access to the dividends of patriarchal heteronormative masculinity, and growing numbers (embodied in the *freeter*) who are unable to access these dividends.

### **Queering the Salaryman**

The other issue, one that is the primary concern of this paper, is the pervasive socio-cultural perception of the salaryman as unequivocally heterosexual, as reflected in the *daikokubashira* discourse. In actual fact, the flip-side of the salaryman as heterosexual provider is another discourse, far less visible (and audible), that links the salaryman with *non-heterosexuality*. This is a discourse that operates in varied, intersecting contexts. First, despite the fact that the public performance of heterosexuality as expressed through marriage and *daikokubashira* status has been axiomatic to the discourse of salaryman masculinity, also crucial to its success, particularly during its highpoint during the 1960s and 1970s, were dynamics of homosocial same-sex ‘bonding’, often mediated through after-work practices like drinking and visits to (hetero-)sex industry establishments. This same-sex bonding was best articulated in such psycho-culturally idealized hierarchical relationships as the *oyabun/kobun* (mentor-protégé, literally, ‘parent-role’/‘child-role’) and/or *senpai/kôhai*

(senior/junior) ties.<sup>18</sup> While it is true that there was always a gap between such idealized same-sex relationships and the reality of everyday workplace practices, a gap that has become even more pronounced in the context of the post-1990s corporate culture, nevertheless, at a discursive level these circuits of homosociality continue to frame the way salaryman masculinity operates.

Second, at the level of gay popular culture, the equation of the salaryman with unambiguous heterosexuality in mainstream discourse, has ironically resulted in the salaryman becoming a trope of desire and fantasy, in much the same way that others icons of hypermasculinity like the policeman, or soldier, or construction worker, have long been fetishized and/or parodied within both local and global circuits of male gay popular culture. Such subversive imaginings of the salaryman (the '*riiman*', in everyday popular culture-speak) include pornography revolving around *riiman* fantasies, non-pornographic representations in male gay popular culture texts like *manga* and magazines, salaryman-themed *manga* and *anime* in genre such as Yaoi, B/L ('Boys Love') and *shôjo* (girls') *manga* catering to predominantly heterosexual female fans,<sup>19</sup> and *riiman* bars in areas of Tokyo like the Shinjuku Ni-chome 'gay precinct' or the business district of Shimbashi, catering to gay salarymen or to men attracted to them (*riiman-kei*). Shimbashi, in particular, is a locality that has numerous small restaurants and drinking establishments catering to salarymen, including something like twenty or thirty bars catering exclusively to non-heterosexual salarymen.

What popular culture representations like the ones mentioned above, or the presence of bars like those in Shimbashi point to is the dissonance between the overwhelmingly heteronormative public discourse of corporate masculinity and an on-the-ground reality that does not necessarily fit seamlessly within the expectations of this discourse. The reality is that there *are* salarymen who may not be heterosexual, but nevertheless need to negotiate and engage in varying ways with the hegemonic expectations on a day-to-day basis. However, unlike the visibility of representations of the 'gay' salaryman in popular culture, there is a distinct absence of his existence in the academic literature, both within studies of gender in

organizational culture, *and* within Japanese queer studies. There are, however, two exceptions to this lack of attention – Mark McLelland’s chapter on gay salarymen in the 2005 edited collection, *Genders, Transgenders and Sexualities in Japan*,<sup>20</sup> and a 2000 special issue of the journal *Queer Japan*,<sup>21</sup> edited by activist and writer Fushimi Noriaki, on gays in the workplace, titled *Hentai-suru Sarariiman* (‘Queering the Salaryman’). This paper builds upon the earlier discussion in McLelland’s and Fushimi’s works. The research, currently still in progress, draws upon narratives and accounts of around fifteen salarymen (or, in some cases, former salarymen), ranging in age from their twenties through to their forties and fifties, who self-identified as ‘non-heterosexual’ (in general, ‘gay’). These men came from a variety of industries, ranging from the public sector across to private industry areas like finance, publishing, and trading companies. The discussion with these informants spanned a range of issues, including family and education backgrounds, their process of ‘coming out’ to themselves and others, relationships with their partners, issues of work/life balance, and future personal and career plans, among others. The focus, however, was on the ways in which they negotiated on a day-to-day basis between their sexual identity (as non-heterosexual) and the dominant ideology of the heterosexual *daikokubashira* underpinning salaryman masculinity. Due to space constraints, for the purpose of this paper, I will focus on one specific individual’s narrative. However, the longer, expanded version of this paper will engage at more length with all the various individuals’ stories.

### **Arai Jun: Playing With Heteronormative Salaryman Masculinity?**

Twenty-five-year-old Arai Jun fitted the profile of a young salaryman perfectly.<sup>22</sup> He came from a standard, middle-class, salaryman family. His father was a white-collar bank employee who had worked for the same organization over his entire career, and his mother was a full-time housewife. Arai-san himself had followed a fairly typical path towards salaryman masculinity – going to university, and upon graduation entering a public sector organization, where he was involved in white-collar work that also involved dealing with the public. He was

involved in a steady, committed relationship. However, because the partner worked in another city, they were usually only able to meet up on weekends. The only thing that set Arai Jun apart from his male colleagues was the fact that his partner happened to be male.

In many respects, Arai-san was representative of the shift that has become more pronounced over the past decade or two (and which was reflected in the responses of most of my other informants too) in the way non-heterosexual identity is framed, in that rather than being just the enactment of a sexual act that happens to be between members of the same sex, sexual orientation and its (self- and public-) acknowledgment is seen as being integral to identity and constant over the entire life-course.<sup>23</sup> Thus, he regarded 'coming out' and recognition of himself as 'gay' as being a cornerstone of his masculinity. Unlike many older gay men (including individuals he personally knew), he had no intention of getting married to a woman for the sake of social convention. In his student days, he had been fairly active in a local gay support group, and had even marched in a local Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade. He had begun the process of 'coming out' to himself from around the time he was in junior high school, and in recent years, he had started coming out to a variety of selected individuals, including his mother and younger sister, and a couple of other friends and colleagues, including a male colleague with whom he had undergone the new employee induction training (*kenshû*) when he first entered the workforce. Significantly, the reaction of this colleague to the revelation had been a sort of 'Oh, is that right?' unfazed reaction.

However, his revelation to this colleague was an exception. In general, Arai-san – not unlike my other respondents – made some effort to keep his (implicitly heterosexual) work identity and his (gay) private identity separate. Thus, he remained acutely conscious of the necessity for a separation between his two lives. At one level, he wished for a workplace environment where he could be open about his sexuality. For instance, in response to my query about what he regarded as an 'ideal' workplace situation he came up with 'quite simply ... [one] where I'm accepted as gay'. However, he then stressed that 'in

the end, this was an “ideal”, and that just as he did not worry about his colleagues’ private lives, there was no need for people at work to be concerned with his own life. In short, he was conscious of the reality of the workplace culture within which he had to interact with his colleagues. In his words, much as he may have wished to have been ‘understood’ (*rikai shite hoshii*), it was a situation that ‘couldn’t be helped’ (*shikata ga nai*).

Like many of the other informants, work, to Arai-san was a significant part of his identity. He presented me with his image of the ‘typical’ salaryman as a ‘*peko-peko shita hito*’ (literally, someone who is constantly bowing and scraping to others), someone who ‘works earnestly, whose hobby is work’. He mentioned seeing himself approaching this caricature when he was dealing with customers and members of the public in his workplace – something rather at odds with the earlier image presented of the gay activist who had marched in the Lesbian and Gay Parade. Indeed, there appeared to some contestation as he tried to reconcile his two ‘identities’. At some level, there appeared to be a desire for validation or recognition of his right to salaryman masculinity precisely *because of* his sexuality. This came through on a number of occasions in the course of our discussion. For instance, at one point, when talking about the balance between his work and non-work identities, he reflected upon the following:

You know, as I see it, I never ever think that being gay will somehow impact negatively on my work. I may have [a male] lover, but I’m working, and working with ‘straight’ people, so at work I treat it as just work, and realize that I have to interact with them [my heterosexual colleagues]. If you only interact with gay people, just because you happen to be gay, you end up getting [a] lopsided [perspective] (*katayotchau*), so there’s a need for a balance. So you’ve got to interact with people as human beings, or else if you keep wondering is this person gay or not gay, it’ll end up being too stressful.

And, returning elsewhere in our discussion to a similar theme:

At this stage, as far as work is concerned, I don't think me being gay or me being not gay has any bearing [on work]; I think of myself as normal. You know, everyone has or doesn't have partners (*koibito*). So I just think of myself as pretty much the same. Not really much as a gay [person] ...

At yet another point in our discussion when I asked him to reflect upon the significance of work in his life, he articulated his thoughts as follows:

That's a tough one ... I guess the first thing that comes to mind is that in the past, in the past work was [ranked] second (*ni-banme*). And, number one (*ichi-banme*) was my lover. And with that, on the whole I used to think that was fine, but at present they [work and boyfriend] are about the same. In other words, it's like they're equally balanced on a scale (*onaji tenbin ni kakeru*) – work's work, and my lover's my lover.

In the context of engaging with these various facets of his identity, how did he negotiate with the implicit assumptions of heterosexuality in the workplace? Despite the importance of marriage as a determinant of *ichininmae* status, he had no intention of entering into a heterosexual marriage for the sake of social conformity. At twenty-five, he was still too young for questions about his marital status or future marriage plans to be an issue of concern. However, he was aware that a few years down the track this would start becoming an issue he would have to deal with. As he admitted: 'I have absolutely no intention of getting married, but when you're working, there's always the concern that some day there'll be comments [about being single] in the workplace'. Elsewhere, when talking about how he saw himself ten years down the track, he noted that if he stayed with the same employer, he would probably be in a managerial position. However, 'since I won't be married ten years down the track, I know that there'll be comments and stuff from people around me'. Significantly, this was a sentiment echoed by several of my other informants, one even going to the extent of reflecting that being gay precluded a person (in terms of personality) from 'managing others' (*hito wo kanri suru*). In

Arai-san's case, although he was not entirely sure how he planned to deal with the situation, he stressed that he was 'thinking of ways to deal with it, so as not to be defeated [by such comments] (*makenai yô ni*)'. Either way, as he continued:

In actual fact, given there are lots of gay people who remain single and continue working, if those people can do it so can I ...

Although marriage itself had not yet figured prominently in his interactions with work colleagues and managers, the question of his presumed heterosexuality was something he had to deal with on a day-to-day basis. His responses to such questions – for instance, questions about his girlfriend – was a mixture of irritation and defiance at what he saw as an intrusion on his privacy, and a kind of 'playful' strategy, which Lunsing, with reference to similar strategies adopted by his non-heterosexual informants, refers to as '*gomakasu* ... avoiding answering a question, ideally in such a sophisticated manner, that the questioner does not notice that one is evading the subject'.<sup>24</sup> This mixture of irritation and strategic 'bluffing' comes out in the following reflection:

I get asked things like whether I have a girlfriend or not. Since it's too tedious, I just replace 'boyfriend' with 'girlfriend' (*kareshi wo kanojo ni okikaete*)...I just feel there's no need to ask me about that each time! But, when they ask such things [if I have a girlfriend] it'll be strange if I say I don't. So I say that [i.e. make my boyfriend into my 'girlfriend'].

This combination of different strategies in negotiating with expectations of heterosexuality was also evident when Arai-san was talking about his responses to the topic of homosexuality in workplace conversations. His workplace was close to the entertainment (*mizu shôbai*, literally, 'water trade') district of the city. Consequently, it was not unusual for individuals associated with this sector to come into his workplace on business during office hours. This included individuals who displayed characteristics that were 'visibly gay', people he felt he had at some time 'seen around [the gay scene]'. He described

his way of dealing with the comments made by colleagues about such 'obvious' individuals:

If I'm asked, if I'm told something like, 'That person's "that way", he's *okama* (derogatory/slang term for a homosexual male), did you know that?', I'll turn around and say 'Oh, is that so?' This may sound strange, but, observing that kind of situation is fascinating [for me] – it's interesting because it's not gay people having the conversation.

There seems almost a sense of the tables being turned here, the gaze being reversed with the 'other' now doing the observing. However, how would he feel if the comments made were particularly derogatory, homophobic ones? His reaction, echoing many of the other informants, would be one of 'getting angry (*hara [ga] tachimasu*)', but there was nothing he could really do about it apart from console himself by 'thinking that that's how low this person is'.

However, it needs to be stressed that Arai-san should not be seen as some kind of cowering 'victim', constantly in fear of being exposed. In a different situation, he was just as likely to reveal himself to colleagues, but *strategically*. For instance, when talking about the ways he negotiated with expectations of his heterosexuality, he mentioned that although he tried to skirt around the issue, if someone were to ask him the question, 'are you gay?' directly, he would respond honestly. The reasoning he provided was that the fact that the person had actually asked of her/his own volition was an indication that that individual had some inkling, and hence would be better able to deal with Arai-san, than someone who had absolutely no idea.

### **Conclusion**

This deployment of strategies (including *gomakasu*) in negotiating with the expectations of hegemonic salaryman masculinity was something deployed by many of my informants, not just Arai-san. What emerged from all the narratives and accounts, were the complexities involved in these processes. In other words, while there is no denying the

pervasiveness of the heteronormative discourse, and the need to (outwardly) conform to it, the dynamics at play were definitely not situations of naked coercion or of the informants being 'brainwashed' into subscribing to the hegemonic expectations. Rather, what the informants' voices brought out was the variety of (sometimes contradictory) ways in which individuals engage with hegemonic ideologies (including those relating to sexuality) in the workplace.

Perhaps this was articulated best in the subjectivity of Hiyama Kenji, another one of my informants in his late-twenties. Like Arai Jun, Hiyama-san had been (relatively) open about his sexuality in his student days, and even had a boyfriend. However, upon becoming a *shakaijin*, he had made a deliberate choice (despite scathing criticism from his gay friends) to get married to a woman and start a family; at the time of our interview, he had become the father of a newly born baby girl. However, what he quite emphatically stressed to me, was that he *did not* see himself as a 'victim', nor did he think that being gay was 'a sin' or something 'bad'. Indeed, he was quite unequivocal in acknowledging that he remained 'gay' (not even 'bisexual'). However, in his view, being gay and being a *shakaijin* in corporate Japan were incompatible; hence, to him it was a personal *choice* he was making, rather than through any desire to become straight. Challenging though his sentiments may have been to me, what they did highlight, was the reality that *all* individuals – male, female, heterosexual, non-heterosexual – negotiate with hegemonic ideologies of both work (performing *shakaijin*-ness) *and* sexuality, as well as the intersections between the two. It was just that my non-heterosexual salaryman informants were conscious of the day-to-day negotiations involved in the process, in ways that the heterosexual salaryman informants from my earlier Phd research were not necessarily aware of.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> M. Hall, 'Private Experiences in the Public Domain: Lesbians in Organizations', in *The Sexuality of Organizations*, J. Hearn et al. (eds), Sage Publications, London, 1989, p. 125.

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<sup>2</sup> R. Pringle, 'Bureaucracy, Rationality and Sexuality: The Case of Secretaries', in *The Sexuality of Organizations*, J. Hearn et al. (eds), Sage Publications, London, 1989, p. 164.

<sup>3</sup> See L. McDowell, 'Body Work: Heterosexual Gender Performances in City Workplaces', in *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities*, D. Bell and G. Valentine (eds), Routledge, London, 1995, pp. 75-95; also edited collections, such as: I. Aaltio and A. J. Mills (eds), *Gender, Identity and the Culture of Organizations*, Routledge, London, 2002; C. Cheng (ed), *Masculinities in Organizations*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, 1996; D. L. Collinson and J. Hearn (eds), *Men as Managers, Managers as Men: Critical Perspectives on Men, Masculinities and Management*, Sage Publications, London, 1996; J. Hearn et al. (eds), *The Sexuality of Organizations*, Sage Publications, London, 1989; C. L. Williams (ed), *Doing 'Women's Work': Men in Nontraditional Occupations*, Sage, Newbury Park, 1993, etc.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, M. Roper, "'Seduction and Succession': Circuits of Homosocial Desire in Management', in *Men as Managers, Managers as Men: Critical Perspectives on Men, Masculinities and Management*, D. L. Collinson and J. Hearn (eds), Sage Publications, London, 1996, pp. 210-226; R. A. Rasi and L. Rodriguez-Nogues (eds), *Out in the Workplace: The Pleasures and Perils of Coming Out on the Job*, Alyson Publications, Los Angeles, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> See, M. Brinton, *Women and the Economic Miracle*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993; Y. Ogasawara, *Office Ladies and Salaried Men: Power, Gender, and Work in Japanese Companies*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1998; M. Osawa, *Kigyô Chûshin Shakai wo Koete: Gendai Nihon wo 'Jendaa' de Yomu* (Moving Beyond a Corporate-centric Society: Reading Contemporary Japan through 'Gender'), Jiji Tsûshinsha, Tokyo, 1993.

<sup>6</sup> R. Dasgupta, "'Crafting" Masculinity: Negotiating Masculine Identities in the Japanese Workplace', PhD Thesis, Curtin University, Perth, Australia, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, Allen and Unwin, St. Leonards, NSW, 1995, pp. 76-81; also R.W. Connell and J.W. Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept'. *Gender and Society*, vol. 19, no. 6, 2005, pp. 829-859.

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<sup>8</sup> V. Mackie, 'Embodiment, Citizenship and Social Policy in Contemporary Japan', in *Family and Social Policy in Japan: Anthropological Approaches*, R. Goodman (ed), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, p. 203.

<sup>9</sup> W. Lunsing, *Beyond Common Sense: Sexuality and Gender in Contemporary Japan*, Kegan Paul, London, 2001, pp. 74, 75.

<sup>10</sup> Y. Murata, 'Chûnen Shinguru Dansei wo Sogai-suru Basho' (Places Where Middle-Aged Single Men Feel Alienated). *Jinbun Chirigaku* (Human Geography), vol. 52, no. 6, 2000, pp. 533-551. See also R. Dasgupta, 'Salarymen Doing Straight: Heterosexual Men and the Dynamics of Gender Conformity', in *Genders, Transgenders and Sexualities in Japan*, M. McLelland and R. Dasgupta (eds), Routledge, London, 2005, pp. 168-181.

<sup>11</sup> T. Shimoda, 'Representations of Parenting and Gender Roles in the *Shôshika* Era: Comparisons of Japanese and English-Language Parenting Magazines'. *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies*, 14 January 2008, viewed 16 July 2010, <<http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/articles/2008/Shimoda.html>>. Significantly, even in the 50-54 age category, the proportion of unmarried males increased from a mere 1.5 percent in 1970 to 14 percent in 2005. The female rate in the same age-group increased from 2.7 percent to 6.1 percent over this period. See H. Tanaka-Naji, 'Stated Desire versus Actual Practice: Reviewing the Literature on Low Fertility Rates in Contemporary Japanese Society'. *Japanese Studies*, vol. 29, no. 3, December 2003, p. 417.

<sup>12</sup> Y. Yuzawa and M. Miyamoto, *Dêta de Yomu Kazoku Mondai: Shinpan* (Reading Family Issues through Data: New Edition), Tokyo, NHK Books, 2008, p. 14.

<sup>13</sup> A. Allison, 'The Cool Brand, Affective Activism and Japanese Youth'. *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 26, no. 2-3, 2009, p. 98.

<sup>14</sup> R. Dasgupta, 'The "Lost Decade" of the 1990s and Shifting Masculinities in Japan'. *Culture, Society & Masculinity*, vol. 1, issue 1, 2009, p. 81, n. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Y. Môri, 'Culture=Politics: The Emergence of New Cultural Forms of Protest in the Age of *Freeter*'. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2004, p. 22. Also, Allison, 'The Cool Brand, Affective Activism and Japanese Youth', pp. 98, 99.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, p. 98; also Tanaka-Naji, *op. cit.*, pp. 418, 419.

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<sup>17</sup> M. Rebick, 'Changes in the Workplace and their Impact on the Family', in *The Changing Japanese Family*, M. Rebick and A. Takenaka (eds), Routledge, London, 2006, p. 81. Also, Allison, 'The Cool Brand, Affective Activism and Japanese Youth', pp. 98, 99; Tanaka-Naji, op. cit., pp. 420-424.

<sup>18</sup> See Dasgupta, "'Crafting" Masculinity', pp. 269-277; also A. Allison, *Nightwork: Sexuality, Pleasure, and Corporate Masculinity in a Tokyo Hostess Club*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1994; R. Atsumi, 'Tsukiai - Obligatory Personal Relationships of Japanese White-Collar Company Employees'. *Human Organization*, vol. 38, no. 1, 1979, pp. 63-70.

<sup>19</sup> Due to considerations of word-length, I am unable, in the present discussion, to unpack the complexities and nuances of these genres. There is currently a fairly substantial body of academic research in English (and in Japanese); some representative works include, W. Lunsing, 'Yaoi Ronsô: Discussing Depictions of Male Homosexuality in Japanese Girls' Comics, Gay Comics and Gay Pornography'. *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context*, Issue 12, January 2006, viewed on 20 September 2010, <<http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue12/lunsing.html>>; A. Mizoguchi, 'Male-Male Romance By and For Women in Japan: History and the subgenres of Yaoi Fiction'. *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*, vol. 25, 2003, pp. 49-75; K. Nagaike, 'Elegant Caucasians, Amorous Arabs, and Invisible Others: Signs and Images of Foreigners in Japanese BL Manga'. *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, Issue 20 (Special Issue: 'Japanese Transnational Fandoms and Female Consumers'), April, 2009, viewed on 20 September 2010 <<http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue20/nagaike.htm#n7>> (esp. paragraph 5); M. Thorn, 'Girls and Women Getting Out of Hand: The Pleasures and Politics of Japan's Amateur Comics Community', in *Fanning the Flames: Fans and Consumer Culture in Contemporary Japan*, W. Kelly (ed), Albany: State University of New York Press, Albany, 2004, pp. 169-187.

<sup>20</sup> M. McLelland, 'Salarymen Doing Queer: Gay Men and the Heterosexual Public Sphere', in *Genders, Transgenders and*

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*Sexualities in Japan*, M. McLelland and R. Dasgupta (eds), Routledge, London, 2005, pp. 96-110.

<sup>21</sup> 'Hentai-suru Sarariiman: Tokushû' (Queering the Salaryman: Special Issue). N. Fushimi (ed), *Queer Japan*, vol. 2, April 2000, pp. 5-107.

<sup>22</sup> The names of all informants are pseudonyms. Japanese names, when the full name is used, follow the order of family name/personal name. When referring to my informants, I either use their whole name (eg, Arai Jun), or use the suffix, 'san' (eg, Arai-san), attached to names as a polite form of address.

<sup>23</sup> See, for instance, M. McLelland, "'Live Life More Selfishly": An Online Gay Advice Column in Japan'. *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2002, pp. 103-116.

<sup>24</sup> Lunsing, *Beyond Common Sense*, p. 221. In Japanese (in contrast to English), what helps in these *gomakasu* strategies, is the vagueness in pronouns the language allows.