

Spring 2017

# Hello Keikan-chan: The Implications of Female Japanese Police Mascots

Gage Meyers

*Augustana College, Rock Island Illinois*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/asiastudent>



Part of the [Asian Studies Commons](#), [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), [International Relations Commons](#), and the [Japanese Studies Commons](#)

---

## Augustana Digital Commons Citation

Meyers, Gage. "Hello Keikan-chan: The Implications of Female Japanese Police Mascots" (2017). *Asian Studies: Student Scholarship & Creative Works*.

<http://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/asiastudent/1>

This Student Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Asian Studies at Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Asian Studies: Student Scholarship & Creative Works by an authorized administrator of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@augustana.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@augustana.edu).

Hello Keikan-chan:  
The Implications of Female Japanese Police  
Mascots

By Gage Meyers  
Augustana College 2017

Advisors:

Dr. Xiaowen Zhang

Dr. Mari Nagase

Dr. Umme Al Wazedi

## Introduction

Beginning in the early 2000's, certain police departments in Japan began creating female counterparts to their already existing male mascots. Creating mascots is not a new phenomenon in Japan. It has been part of a long standing trend known as the "kawaii trend" (kawaii meaning cute in Japanese). This "kawaii trend" has resulted in the creation of various costumed characters by cities, provinces, and, for the purposes of this paper, police departments, throughout Japan. For a niche group such as police mascots, to have numerous female mascots to be created in the same time period cannot surely be a coincidence. By examining certain factors from the previous twenty years, such as when the mascot trend began, some factors can be theorized. I theorize that these female police mascots were created as a result of Japanese police wanting to bolster their image, the implications of using women in marketing, and to reflect the rise of women's social status in Japan. This study will examine the purpose and logic behind mascot, the male centric culture of Japan and how that impacts police interactions with women.

## Importance

The topic of Japanese mascots has gone relatively unexplored by scholars today, and



certainly an exploration into Japanese mascots through a feminist lens is non-existent. By design, Japanese mascots act as a reflection of what they represent; their physical design takes on aspects from the local culture such as landmarks, myth, and food. These mascots are meant to increase tourism and sell merchandise for their various cities and regions. One of

the most famous of these mascot characters is Kumamon (see left), mascot for the Kumamoto

prefecture. Characters like Kumamon bring in considerable income to the area through merchandise, and to have a mascot reach a level of international acclaim would be ideal for a region.

The Japanese police creating mascots is nothing new. In fact, many mascots have existed since as far back as the 1980s. However police mascots are different from standard, regional mascots. Japanese police are not selling merchandise using their mascots, rather they are selling themselves: the ideal of what a police officer/department is and should be. Japanese police mascots act as magnifying lense on current social issues going on in Japan. Much like how local mascots represent towns and historical sites and how they are seen by the public, police mascots affect how the police are viewed by the community.

## **History of the Japanese Mascot**

Before going any further into this topic, a discussion of what a “mascot” actually is needed here. There are many different words for mascot characters, including the Japanese words *gotouchi kyara*, *yuru kyara*, and *masucotto* (meaning “loose character,” “local character,” and “mascot” respectively). Both *gotouchi kyara* and *yuru kyara* are special categories of mascot. They define the Japanese police mascots to an extent, but are not equivalent to how police mascots are used. For example, both *gotouchi kyara* and *yuru kyara* engage with the community to increase tourism and sell merchandise. While police mascots also engage with the community, it is so the police can carry out their work efficiently. Through interviews, Japanese police have emphasized a distinction between their mascots and *gotouchi kyaras* and *yuru kyaras*, furthering the difference between these three mascot subcategories. Additionally, the

term “brand personality” can be defined as the human characteristics associated to a brand. These personalities can be created by the consumer or by the advertiser for the sake of consumers.<sup>1</sup> Various methods of this include the consumer conjuring humanizing qualities for the brand, viewing brands as people of notoriety (including celebrities and historical figures, or even how the consumer sees the brand in the relation to himself.)<sup>2</sup> This definition describes the use of Japanese mascots relatively well; the characters are typically anthropomorphic, given backstories, and hobbies, making them more human and relatable. Additionally the Japanese mascots are used to incite interest into whatever “brand” they represent. Despite this, these qualities are not initially created by the consumer. Initially it was local Japanese governments that began creating the mascot characters.

## Literature Review

In her paper “Dimensions of Brand Personality”, social psychologist Jennifer Aaker deconstructs brand personalities into three components: Dimensions, Facets, and Traits.<sup>3</sup> Dimensions are the overarching personalities that a brand is associated with. There are five dimensions total which are: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness.<sup>4</sup> Each of these dimensions in turn have facets that associated with it. For example, one particular trait that comprises Ruggedness is “outdoorsy.” Finally, each facet is comprised of various other traits of the own. To continue on with the previous example, the “outdoorsy” facet is normally associated with masculinity and Western imagery.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Aaker proposes that through the

---

<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Lynn Aaker, "Dimensions of Brand Personality." *SSRN Electronic Journal*. 347-358. Accessed August 20th 2016. doi:10.2139/ssrn.945432.

<sup>2</sup> Aaker, "Dimensions of Brand Personality." 347-358.

<sup>3</sup> Aaker, "Dimensions of Brand Personality." 347-358.

<sup>4</sup> Aaker, "Dimensions of Brand Personality." 347-358.

<sup>5</sup> Aaker, "Dimensions of Brand Personality." 347-358.

establishment of brand personalities corporations can see an increase of consumer usage and favorability and the actualization of emotions in consumers which bring about feelings of trust and loyalty.<sup>6</sup> Aaker's work does not refer to mascot characters in particular. Rather a brand personality are human characteristics associated with a brand. Mascot characters are active brand personalities. Mascot character are constructs designed to have human characteristics to make the brand more appealing to consumers. While a crucial introduction to the concept of brand personalities, Aaker's "Dimensions of Brand Personality" only refers to American marketing. Aaker does not explore the concept of cross cultural brand personalities until her later work alongside Verónica Benet-Martínez and Jordi Garolera on their collaborative work "Consumption Symbols as Carriers of Culture: A Study of Japanese and Spanish Brand Personality Constructs".

In their exploration of brand personalities outside the United States, Aaker, Martínez, and Garolera state that brand personalities are formed by advertisers who shape the demand of consumers' needs being satisfied by the product and what characteristics of said product the consumer values.<sup>7</sup> Regarding the Dimensions of Japanese brand personalities, there is a strong contrast between those and the American brand, which were elaborated upon in Aaker's earlier thesis. The trio found that the Japanese have little value in "Ruggedness" while the dimension of "Peacefulness" is seen in higher regard.<sup>8</sup> Aaker and her fellow researchers theorize that this cultural difference is most likely attributed to aggressiveness, which is mostly associated with being rugged, not being normally celebrated or encouraged in East Asian cultures, and thus less valued. In contrast, characteristics that show harmony, serenity, and respect (described as

---

<sup>6</sup> Aaker, "Dimensions of Brand Personality." 347-358.

<sup>7</sup> Jennifer Lynn Aaker, Verónica Benet-Martínez, and Jordi Garolera, "Consumption symbols as carriers of culture: A study of Japanese and Spanish brand personality constructs.," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 81, no. 3 (2001): , doi:10.1037//0022-3514.81.3.492.

<sup>8</sup> Jennifer Lynn Aaker, Benet-Martínez, Garolera, "Consumption symbols as carriers of culture: A study of Japanese and Spanish brand personality constructs.," 492-508.

obedience by Aaker and company) are much more founded in the cultural roots of many East Asian nations.<sup>9</sup>

In her master's thesis ““Amateur" Mascots on the Loose: The Pragmatics of Kawaii (Cute),” Mary Birkett elaborates on the historical context that led to the creation of the Japanese mascot characters. In the mid 1980's Japan experienced the beginning of an economic boom. It was not until 1991 that this boom was the result of an economic bubble and Japanese faced stark economic decline. As a result of the booming economy, urban migration flourished to the point where only 20% of Japan's population lived in rural area.<sup>10</sup> As result of the mass urban migration industries began to relocate as well. Many rural Japanese towns relied on these industries and their absence left these towns in dire economic straits. As Japan continued into their recession the government began initiating “regional decentralization” policies. As part of this governmental restructuring, greater responsibility was placed on local governments, civic groups, and private industries to handle the “needs of regional citizens.”<sup>11</sup> These local governments were later encouraged through a reward program established by the national government to join together and form municipalities. With the wide range of autonomy, local governments of rural areas began tackling the issue of depleting population and found that increasing tourism was often an answer.<sup>12</sup> Local rural governments, attempting to draw in the young, recently migrated urbanites, branded themselves as nostalgic and preserving the “traditional” Japanese way of life. This also served to build “regional character” for the area by

---

<sup>9</sup> Jennifer Lynn Aaker, Benet-Martínez, Garolera, "Consumption symbols as carriers of culture: A study of Japanese and Spanish brand personality constructs.," 492-508.

<sup>10</sup> Mark Birkett, "“AMATEUR” MASCOTS ON THE LOOSE: THE PRAGMATICS OF KAWAII (CUTE) ," 2012,, accessed May 7, 2017, <https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/91832/foozle.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Mark Birkett, "“AMATEUR” MASCOTS ON THE LOOSE: THE PRAGMATICS OF KAWAII (CUTE).

<sup>12</sup> Mark Birkett, "“AMATEUR” MASCOTS ON THE LOOSE: THE PRAGMATICS OF KAWAII (CUTE).

developing and altering their cultural identity through greater emphasis on its folklore, specialty items, shrines, history, etc. It is through these culturally associated facets that eventually led to the creation of the local mascot, thus branding these regions and towns. While this change did increase tourism by the younger generation, this rebranding resulted in large scale tourism from the elderly.

To start, it is clear that *yurukyaras* have a gender. In order to make these characters more appealing, an entire identity is established. *Yurukyaras* are given a personal history, family, personality, and a gender. There are some like Barysan of Ehime Prefecture whose gender is undetermined, but a vast majority of Japanese mascots have a gender. Usually the gender is indicated by the suffix attached to their name. For example, Pipo-kun (see right) of the Tokyo



Metropolitan Police Department is a male as shown by the “kun” suffix. “Kun” is reserved for males while “chan” is meant for females. But once again, these suffixes are by means indicator of gender. Gunma-chan, the mascot for the Gunma prefecture, despite having the female suffix is male. In this case, using “chan” is not a matter of gender, but age.

“Chan” is usually used for young children between the ages of five to six as a way of emphasising cuteness. To reiterate, while gender is usually an aspect of a *yurukyara*'s identity, it is not a significant factor. However, in the case of the Japanese police creating female mascots in particular, it is of great importance and intrigue. The Japanese police made a deliberate choice to create a female mascot over making a second male mascot. Due to the public nature of mascots,

an organization having a distinct, female representation contains a great deal of social implications.

Many of these mascots were, in fact, male as to properly reflect the demographic of Japanese police at the time. Policing, like construction work, is usually a male dominated profession. This stems from such ideas that the physical labor required of officers is too much for woman to bear. As time has gone on, however, this has proven not to be the case. Police work requires a greater intellect and interpersonal skills, skills gained through experience and one's own ability and not affected by gender.<sup>13</sup> While it is true that male officers are more likely to be stronger than their female coworkers, female officers have been trained to use force as efficiently as men.<sup>14</sup> As previously stated, police departments creating mascots is not a new phenomenon. However, with multiple departments creating female mascots all within the same time period it cannot be a mere coincidence.

## Methodology

### Timeline of the Creation of Female Counterpart Mascots

The use of mascot characters by police departments is not a new trend. In fact, the oldest police mascot, Ruri-chan, a female mascot belonging to the Tochigi Prefecture, has existed since 1986.<sup>15</sup> What is new however, is the creation of female versions of already existing male police mascots. By outlining when each female was created, we can determine that a majority were created in the early 2000s, with exception to Okayama Prefecture. Out of the 47 reported police

---

<sup>13</sup> "Female cops given a boost." *The Japan Times*. N.p., 29 Sept. 2013. Web. 15 Feb. 2017.  
<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/09/29/editorials/female-cops-given-a-boost/#.WKsvTvkrK02>

<sup>14</sup> Female cops given a boost." *The Japan Times*.

<sup>15</sup> Edward Harrison, and Harrison, John. "Japan's Police Mascots." *Idle Idol: The Japanese Mascot*. Web. 15 Feb. 2017.

departments with mascots, 14 of which have created a female mascot; meaning roughly 30% of police departments have a female mascot. Out of those 14 departments, six had clearly made a secondary, female mascot at roughly the same time. It should be noted that this sample is not and should not be considered a complete list. Due to time limitations and the lack of information in this topic made research difficult. Out of the remaining eight departments that have a female mascot, half created a female mascot at the same time as their male mascot. It should be noted, however, that the creation of these two mascots fell within the same time frame as the departments in the sample that created their secondary female mascot. However the departments in the sample were chosen specifically for the time difference between the creation of their initial male mascot and the creation of the female counterpart. Additionally with the other four departments that created a female mascot, when they created said female mascot was undeterminable. The prefectural police departments in sample are listed below:

| Male Mascot  | Year Created | Female Mascot | Year Created | Prefecture |
|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|------------|
| Hikaru-kun   | 1992         | Hikari-chan   | 1998         | Niigata    |
| Inuwashi-kun | 1994         | Inuwashi-chan | 2001         | Ishikawa   |
| Joushu-kun   | 2000         | Miyama-chan   | 2001         | Gunma      |
| Api-kun      | 1997         | Repi-chan     | 2003         | Aomori     |
| Momo-kun     | 1990         | Momoka-chan   | 2008         | Okayama    |

## Interview Questions

A crucial portion of this paper’s research was interviewing the six police departments in the sample. Contacting each department proved difficult due a contact email being absent. Instead, I resorted to sending my interview questions through an opinions submission survey. To maintain consistency, the same questions were asked to each department. I introduced myself as a senior student from Augustana College working on their senior thesis pertaining to police mascots. The questions I sent, with the appropriate translation, are as follow:

1. いつ、どうして[をつ[female mascot name]くりましたか。
  - a. When and why did you (the police department) make [female mascot name]?
2. どうして[male mascot name]を作った後で[female mascot name]を作りましたか。
  - a. Why was [female mascot name] created after [male mascot name]?
3. この警察署はゆるキャラを作るよう命じられたのでしょうか。
  - a. Was the department ordered to create a *yuru kyara*?
4. 御警察署には何人の警察官がいらっしゃいますか？その中で女性警察官は何人いらっしゃいますか。
  - a. How many police officers are in the police station? Among them, how many female police officers are there?

The purpose behind Question #1 is relatively straightforward: to learn when and the reason why the female mascot was created. It should be noted that the intent behind Question #1 and Question #2 are different. Question #1 focuses predominantly on why the female mascot was created without any regard to any circumstances surrounding its creation. Ideally, Question #2 would address those circumstances in relation to when the male and female were created. I say “ideally”

because from my interviews, most departments stated that the reasoning for Question #2 is the same as Question #1; typically along the lines of attempting to better engage with the community. The only exception to this was Aomori Prefecture which will be addressed later. The third question was rule any government involvement behind the creation of the female mascot, particularly from the Gender Equality Bureau. The Gender Equality Bureau, or 男女共同参画局 *Danjo Kyōdō Sankaku Kyoku*, strives to dissolve gender norms such as the man being the breadwinner while the wife stays at home. In recent years, the Gender Equality Bureau has been pushing for greater cultural changes in business, especially within the police, calling for increased participation and acceptance of women.<sup>16</sup> Ensuring the Gender Equality Bureau, or the Japanese government as a whole, was not responsible for the creation of the female mascot is integral to this research. If the government was directly involved, then this research would be moot. For the last question, while it does not directly relate to mascots it is important. If the percentage of female officers in their respective departments is high enough, it would be a reasonable purpose for the creation of a female mascot.

To reiterate, a majority of the sample created a female counterpart mascot, created said mascot during the very late 1990s and early 2000s. While some may argue that this trend is the result of a feminist movement in Japan, this is not the case. The previous and noteworthy feminist movement in Japan lasted from the mid 70s to mid 80s; at least a full decade before the phenomena being examined. The two most likely causes for the actions of the sample are; 1) a wave of scandals involving police departments across Japan; 2) the implications of women in advertising; and 3) to reflect to rise in women's social status in Japan. Looking at the first cause,

---

<sup>16</sup> Jake Adelstein, "Japanese Police Women To Go Up To 10% Of Force...by 2023. : Japan Subculture Research Center," Japan Subculture Research Center RSS, August 8, 2012, , accessed March 13, 2017, <http://www.japansubculture.com/japanese-police-women-to-go-up-to-10-of-force-by-2023/>.

one can reason that the creation of female counterpart mascots by Japanese police departments is an effort for police to bolster their image as a response to said scandals.

## **Hypothesis One: Bolster Police Image**

### **Part One: Police Scandal**

The basic purpose of a *yurukyara* is to act as marketing tool. They are meant to convey a certain image of what they represent to appeal to a wide audience. A majority of *yurukyara* represent various historical sites and cities with the intent of increasing tourism and selling merchandise. It is obvious to say that the police is not intending for more people to be crowding their department or to sell plush animals of their mascot. Thus this raises the question of why they would create a mascot to begin with. While it is likely that police departments were riding the “kawaii trend,” the real reason is to portray themselves as in a particular manner to the public. One of fundamental hypothesis of this research is that in order to repair their damaged reputations, the Japanese police created these female mascots. It is during the late 90’s, only a few years before we see the creation of female mascots, that numerous police scandals and a greater awareness of police mistreatment of women. I argue that these scandals in combination with the mistreatment of women is one possible reason for the establishment of female counterpart mascots.

From September of 1999 and March 2000, over 166 cases of police conduct was reported in Japan with 113 officers being arrested or investigated by prosecutors.<sup>17</sup> This number of police misconduct cases is especially high in comparison to the number of misconduct reported in 2014

---

<sup>17</sup> D. T. Johnson, "Above the Law? Police Integrity in Japan," *Social Science Japan Journal* 6, no. 1 (2003): , accessed March 16, 2017, doi:10.1093/ssjj/6.1.19.

and 2015. In 2014 and 2015 respectively, 49<sup>18</sup> and 33<sup>19</sup> conduct cases were reported, resulting in a 41 conduct case per year average. The 166 cases reported from 1999 to 2000 is four times greater than the average, thus demonstrating how this one year span is a serious outlier. The first case in this long line of police scandals began in Kanagawa prefecture and was deemed the “most serious police scandal ever uncovered in Japan.”<sup>20</sup> In it, officer Yoshihisa Sakayori was discovered to be a frequent user of methamphetamines. As part of a police coverup, orchestrated by police chief Watanabe Moto, Sakayori was confined to a hotel room, where police would collect his urine samples for anonymous testing at the police’s forensic lab.<sup>21</sup> Over the span of eight days, Sakayori finally produced a clean urine sample, and was then handed over the police department’s drug control unit, who naturally found that Sakayori’s urine tests showed no signs of drugs in his system. After which, Sakayori was forced to resign due to a fake extramarital affair as ordered by Chief Watanabe.<sup>22</sup> One of the biggest reveals in this case was that the Kanagawa Police Department had produced an “in house manual about how to cover-up a scandal,” which was distributed to over 200 high ranking officers, and its policies have been adopted “in all [Japanese] police organizations.”<sup>23</sup>

One of the most damaging scandals for Japanese police with women was the five year long Chiba Rape Case. The case began on September 5th, 1995 when a 28-year-old woman called “K” was found unconscious in a Japanese motel. K was arrested and jailed for possession of methamphetamines, which were supplied by her lover, a Chiba police sergeant.<sup>24</sup> The Chiba

---

<sup>18</sup> 2014 police scandal summary," Matome, January 7, 2015 , accessed May 7, 2017, <https://matome.naver.jp/odai/2135952026538896801>.

<sup>19</sup> "Summary of crimes and scandals by police officials in FY 2015," Matome, May 6, 2016, , accessed May 7, 2017, <https://matome.naver.jp/odai/2142038069662552901>.

<sup>20</sup> D. T. Johnson, "Above the Law? Police Integrity in Japan,"

<sup>21</sup> D. T. Johnson, "Above the Law? Police Integrity in Japan,"

<sup>22</sup> D. T. Johnson, "Above the Law? Police Integrity in Japan,"

<sup>23</sup> D. T. Johnson, "Above the Law? Police Integrity in Japan,"

<sup>24</sup> D. T. Johnson, "Above the Law? Police Integrity in Japan,"

police then pressured K to keep the matter a secret and said sergeant resigned (with pension) for engaging in an “affair,” as described in the Kanagawa manual. In November that same year, K was raped by another police officer, Tsukade Sakaichi; a jail guard with a prior history of sexual harassment. When K reported the rape, the police pressured her to sign a “written oath” promising that she would not file a criminal complaint and would never speak of the rape.<sup>25</sup> Once again, Sakaichi, the assailant resigned with pension. After serving her time in prison and returning home in 1999, K contacted the police asking for Sakaichi to apologize for the rape; her oath to be destroyed, and the former Chief of the investigation to apologize for forcing her to sign said oath. Upon meeting with the two individuals and receiving her apologies, K was given the Japanese equivalent of \$2,500 as hush money.<sup>26</sup> In 2000, K was confronted by the Deputy Chief after learning K had been speaking with a freelance reporter about the investigation. K was reminded about the hush money and was told to ignore all calls from the reporter. One of damning pieces of information in this case is that the cover-up orchestrated by executives in the National Police Agency (NPA).<sup>27</sup> At private meeting amongst the executives of the NPA, it was agreed that this scandal was to remain “in house” and that Sakaichi should not be arrested or investigated as well as that he should be “taken care of” to prevent any further leaks. In a public opinion poll taken after the scandals, 60% of Japanese adults said their trust in the police had decline and 45% stated they did not trust the police entirely.<sup>28</sup> It is clear that the Japanese police’s image suffered as a result of these scandals and that something needed to be done.

Looking at the growing popularity of mascot characters at the time, it's reasonable to assume that

---

<sup>25</sup> D. T. Johnson, "Above the Law? Police Integrity in Japan,"

<sup>26</sup> D. T. Johnson, "Above the Law? Police Integrity in Japan,"

<sup>27</sup> D. T. Johnson, "Above the Law? Police Integrity in Japan,"

<sup>28</sup> D. T. Johnson, "Above the Law? Police Integrity in Japan,"

the creation of female mascot could improve police relations with their community and bolster their image. By doing so, the Japanese police would be able to carry out their duties efficiently once again.

As result of the public distrust of police after the scandals Japanese police performance suffered. This can be seen in the police's clearance rate, which is the measured by number of crimes that are charged divided by the total number of cases. A department's clearance rate is, in essence, how efficiently that department solves crimes with the higher the rating, the more efficient the department. Looking at the Japanese police's clearance rate between 1997 and 2001, the clearance dropped from 40% to 20%.<sup>29</sup> As a result of the scandals, the public was unwilling to cooperate with the police. In order to carry out their duty, having the public's trust is essential. As seen after the scandals, losing the public's trust is dire. By attempting the bolster their image police would not only be repairing their damaged reputation, but would also be improving their effectiveness.

## **Part Two: Police Mistreatment of Rape and Domestic Abuse Victims**

For women in Japan, bringing forth rape and domestic abuse charges were and still are rarely met with satisfactory results. In regards to rape specifically, a common myth is that rape is committed by strangers; thus implying that statutory rape cannot happen.<sup>30</sup> Japanese police's handling of these cases only reinforces this idea. Japanese police have tendency to only accept rape reports that meet their qualifications of a "classic rape": "sexual intercourse with physical

---

<sup>29</sup> D. T. Johnson, "Above the Law? Police Integrity in Japan,"

<sup>30</sup> John P.J. Dussich, "Decisions Not To Report Sexual Assault: A Comparative Study Among Women Living in Japan Who Are Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and English-Speaking," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 45, no. 3 (2001): , accessed April 24, 2017.

force, committed by a stranger in a secluded public place at night.”<sup>31</sup> By limiting what is an “acceptable” form of rape reflects poorly with women in the community and has led to a reluctance to report rape unless it meets the specifics of a “classic rape.” In many countries, including Japan, rape victims are persuaded by police and lawyers to drop their charges when the rape in questions did not involve visible signs of physical force, such as bruises and torn clothing.<sup>32</sup> According to Fresno State Professor of Criminology John P.J. Dussich, this type of rape culture insights that women take some responsibility for being raped and that they were not completely innocent. Additionally, because statutory rape typically do not involve signs of physical force, women lack the physical evidence to go forward with their case, thus continuing the cycle of inaction by Japanese police.<sup>33</sup>

In Japan domestic violence is met with the same attitudes as sexual assault. University of Michigan professor Yoshihama Meiko cites one of Japan’s biggest problems in this matter to be Japan’s legal system and Japanese culture surrounding domestic violence. Firstly, the Japanese legal system uses definitions and responses as specified in the arguably outdated Penal Code of 1907, which despite the 90 years follow its establishment, few amendments have been address domestic besides excluding said later amendments that label domestic violence as a crime. Furthermore, Japan’s family law requires that in the event a spouse rejects the other’s desire for divorce, the partner seeking divorce must file for conciliation supervised by the court.<sup>34</sup> Among the 39,000 conciliation filed by wives in Japan in 1997, the second highest reason for divorce is

---

<sup>31</sup> John P.J. Dussich, "Decisions Not To Report Sexual Assault: A Comparative Study Among Women Living in Japan Who Are Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and English-Speaking,"

<sup>32</sup> John P.J. Dussich, "Decisions Not To Report Sexual Assault: A Comparative Study Among Women Living in Japan Who Are Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and English-Speaking,"

<sup>33</sup> John P.J. Dussich, "Decisions Not To Report Sexual Assault: A Comparative Study Among Women Living in Japan Who Are Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and English-Speaking,"

<sup>34</sup> Yoshihama Meiko, "Domestic Violence: Japan's "Hidden Crime", " Japan Quarterly 46, no. 3 (July 1, 1999): , accessed March 16, 2017.

physical violence committed by the husband. According to Meiko's studies, domestic violence was often a result of the male partner believing that the woman was not submissive and catering to his needs-what he considered acceptable female behavior.<sup>35</sup> When police officers and other members of the justice system are met with the issue of domestic violence, they respond by indifference and lack of action. Japanese police considered rape and domestic violence a "domestic matter" and that they should not be involved despite the law actually clarifying it as a crime.<sup>36</sup> By referring to domestic violence as a "private matter" police claim that they are protecting an individual's right to privacy, a highly valued right by Japanese citizens.<sup>37</sup> In doing so, women's right to safety and justice have been made inferior to a right to privacy, thus enforcing that they too are inferior.

In 2001, John P.J Dussich conducted a series of polls with Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and English-speaking women who were all victims of rape and/or domestic violence while living in Japan.<sup>38</sup> Dussich found that 52.7% of the women interviewed expected negative treatment from police.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, 23.5% of women who did not report being sexually assaulted did so because they felt they would be asked unpleasant questions by the police, that the police were untrustworthy, and because of negative experience they had with the police previously.<sup>40</sup> Additionally 28% of victims who reported their victimization also received secondary

---

<sup>35</sup> Yoshihama Meiko, "Domestic Violence: Japan's "Hidden Crime"

<sup>36</sup> Yoshihama Meiko, "Domestic Violence: Japan's "Hidden Crime", Japan Quarterly 46, no. 3 (July 1, 1999): , accessed March 16, 2017.

<sup>37</sup> Yoshihama, Mieko. "Policies and Services Addressing Domestic Violence in Japan: From Non-interference to Incremental Changes." *Women's Studies International Forum* 25.5 (2002): 541-53. Print.

<sup>38</sup> John P.J. Dussich, "Decisions Not To Report Sexual Assault: A Comparative Study Among Women Living in Japan Who Are Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and English-Speaking,"

<sup>39</sup> John P.J. Dussich, "Decisions Not To Report Sexual Assault: A Comparative Study Among Women Living in Japan Who Are Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and English-Speaking,"

<sup>40</sup> John P.J. Dussich, "Decisions Not To Report Sexual Assault: A Comparative Study Among Women Living in Japan Who Are Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and English-Speaking,"

victimization from the police.<sup>41</sup> These sets of numbers have significant implications, the first being how a majority of women expect negative treatment from police and 27% actually do experience that. The data from Dussich shows that police do have a negative image with not only Japanese women but foreign women as well.

A major shift in police culture was necessary to improve their image and their relations with their communities as a whole. To do so, more female officers is necessary. It is expected that by increasing their number of female officers that said officers will push for reforms within their workplace and how the entire police force conduct themselves. In summation, in order to bolster their image, police departments would need to become more appealing to women so that more women would become officers.

### **Part Three: Implications of Having a Female Mascot**

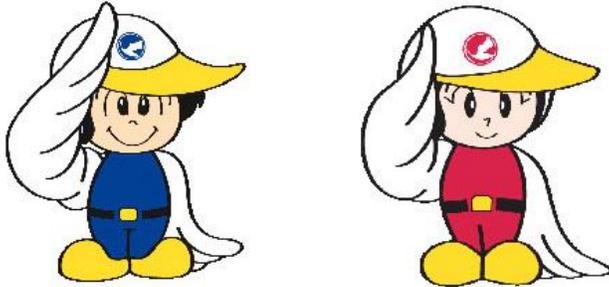
Excluding their mascots, one of Japan's biggest exports has been their culture. Anime and manga have spread far past the tiny peninsula across the globe and how women are portrayed in Japanese media is especially important. As discussed in the works of Jennifer Aaker and her compatriots, what companies use in their marketing sends specific messages to their audience. To reiterate, the concept of the 'Ford' brand is rooted in Outdoorsiness and Western imagery. In contrast, Japan lacks "Ruggedness" as an advertising dimension and it has instead been replaced by "Peacefulness."<sup>42</sup> Japanese police utilize the Dimension of "Peacefulness" when creating their female mascots.

---

<sup>41</sup> John P.J. Dussich, "Decisions Not To Report Sexual Assault: A Comparative Study Among Women Living in Japan Who Are Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and English-Speaking,"

<sup>42</sup> Jennifer Lynn Aaker, Benet-Martínez, Garolera, "Consumption symbols as carriers of culture: A study of Japanese and Spanish brand personality constructs.," 492-508.

One of the major factors in establishing the female counterpart mascots is connected to both Peacefulness and Sincerity. According to the Aomori Prefecture Police Department, their mascot, Repi-chan (in red), was created to help improve relations with the community.<sup>43</sup> Her



female design promotes a sense of helpfulness and kindness. In fact in the Repi-chan's backstory, she was created to help her male counterpart, Api-kun (in

blue), due to the difficulties of doing police work alone.<sup>44</sup>

Additionally, having a female mascot shows the community their willingness to promote female officers and encourage women to join the force, thus improving their image. In regards to Japanese police mistreatment of domestic abuse and rape victims, having female officers gives trust and a sense of safety back to victims. For victims, being able to go officers that understand their ordeal and will carry out their duties is significant. The establishment of a female mascot signals this message.

## Hypothesis Two: Women's Rise in Social Status

Through the demands of the women of Aomori's Prefectural Police Department the mascot Repi-chan was created. No longer satisfied with having female officers represented by Api-kun, the male counterpart, the policewomen called for better representation. Some may see

<sup>43</sup> "Interview with Aomori Police Department." Online interview by author. April 5, 2017.

<sup>44</sup> "Aomori Prefectural Police." アピーくん・レピーちゃん | 広報課 | 警務部 | 青森県警察. Accessed May 12, 2017. [https://www.police.pref.aomori.jp/keimubu/kouhou/api\\_lepi.html](https://www.police.pref.aomori.jp/keimubu/kouhou/api_lepi.html).

this as ultimately trivial. After all what good does a mascot serve for gender equality? However, this argues that improving gender equality is not the significant factor in this scenario, rather it reflects an already visible rise in women's social status in Japan. Being able to demand representation, in something as seemingly meaningless as a mascot, and have it come to fruition is an incredible milestone for policewomen in Japan.

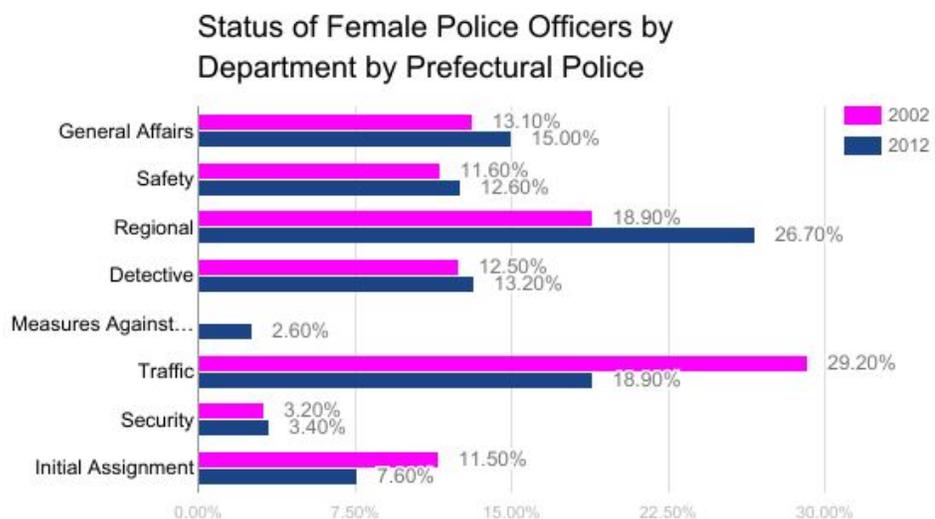
It has not been until the past decade that women have seen major changes to police culture. Traditionally female officers were assigned to less reputable positions, with the majority of policewomen being assigned to the traffic sector. This made clear in the chart below which was released by the National Police Agency (NPA) of Japan:<sup>45</sup>

In the decade shown in the graph it is clear there has been in police culture regarding female change. The most obviously change is the percentage of policewomen being assigned to the traffic sector.

What was one a staggering 29.2% of the entire traffic sector being made of women has decreased by roughly 9% by 2012.<sup>46</sup> Additionally

there has been an

increase in women being promoted to detective by 2012. While the increase has been minimal, it



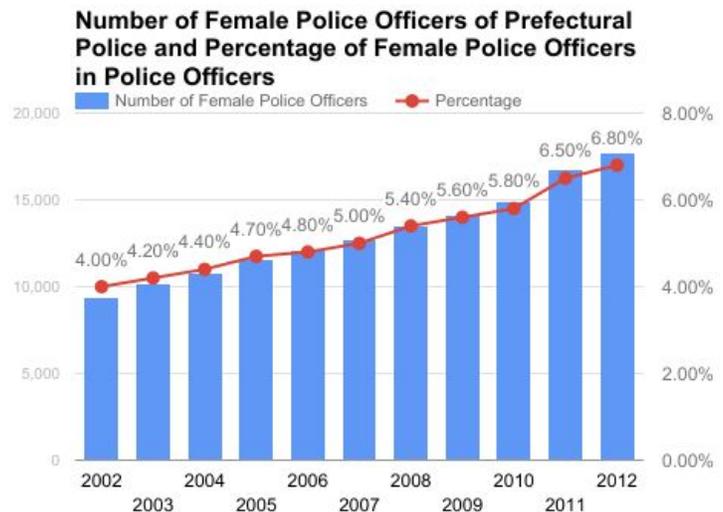
<sup>45</sup> "Expansion of recruitment and promotion of female police officers," National Police Agency, , accessed May 7, 2017, <https://www.npa.go.jp/hakusyo/h24/honbun/html/ot500000.html>.

<sup>46</sup> "Expansion of recruitment and promotion of female police officers,"

is still significant progress. In contrast there has been a staggering increase in regional officers amongst female officers jurisdiction over numerous police districts.<sup>47</sup> It has been reasoned that this growth has occurred as a result of an increasing number of stalking cases.<sup>48</sup> The rise in said stalking cases is that, in the past when there less policewomen in authority, police departments were reluctant to address stalking cases and were only then becoming more proactive in 2012.<sup>49</sup> In essence, with female officers being elevated to positions of authority, more cases pertaining to crimes against are being addressed.

In the years following the creation of female counterpart police mascots, there has been an increase in the number of female officers being hired.

Looking at the chart below there has been a 3% increase in women officers between 2002 and 2012.<sup>50</sup> Out of the current 250,000 police officers nationwide in Japan, roughly 7% of them are female.<sup>51</sup>



This is likely due to an initiative enacted by the NPA were the agency called for women to make up 10% of the total number of police officers in Japan.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>47</sup> "Expansion of recruitment and promotion of female police officers,"

<sup>48</sup> Jake Adelstein, "Japanese Police Women To Go Up To 10% Of Force....by 2023.

<sup>49</sup> Jake Adelstein, "Japanese Police Women To Go Up To 10% Of Force....by 2023.

<sup>50</sup> "Expansion of recruitment and promotion of female police officers,"

<sup>51</sup> Jake Adelstein, "Japanese Police Women To Go Up To 10% Of Force....by 2023.

<sup>52</sup> Jake Adelstein, "Japanese Police Women To Go Up To 10% Of Force....by 2023.

Currently, the NPA has yet to reach their 10% goal. However through the interviews performed with the departments in the sample, the most of departments that had a female mascot already had women making up 10% of their department.<sup>5354</sup> While Aomori, a symbol for the power of unified actions by policewomen, it should be stated that women only make up 8% percent of their department. While it is still higher the 6.8% nationwide, it is still less than the 10% goal set by the Gender Equality Bureau. In light of the information, a new question must be asked: What percentage of women in the Japanese police force is an accurate reflection of a rise in status? For the purposes of this paper, I argue being above the national average is sufficient but improvements can be made. To meet the goal set by the Bureau, each department should strive to meet the 10% female participation. For Aomori, the 8% was a significant enough number to merit change by the department. Having such a large number of policewomen in the department, it was unfit for them to be represented by a male mascot.<sup>55</sup> Through collective organization, they were able to acquire better representation in the form of Repi-chan. Despite this, this victory for the police women of Aomori may be undermined by the continued gender inequality in Japan.

### **Concerns with Hypothesis Two: Continued Gender Inequality**

As optimistic as this theory is, gender equality still persists in Japan and none of this is more clear than with Aomori's female mascot Repi-chan. Despite the strides made by female officers in Japan there is still a notion that women are less than men. In Japanese mass media, there are five observations that can be made about the portrayal of women, yet for this analysis

---

<sup>53</sup> "Interview with Gunma Police Department." Online interview by author. April 5, 2017.

<sup>54</sup> "Interview with Aomori Police Department." Online interview by author.

<sup>55</sup> "Interview with Aomori Police Department." Online interview by author.

only three are applicable to Repi-chan. The first is the use of patriarchal language through the normative process of women being “special.”<sup>56</sup> To clarify, the use of any noun, such as lawyer, doctor, or in this case officer, suggests a male standard. However adding “female” or “woman” as an adjective imply something unique and nonstandard. For example, as provided by author of *Mass Media in Japan*, Anne Cooper, “Margaret Thatcher was not a prime minister but a “woman prime minister.””<sup>57</sup> This observation does not even consider nouns that already subscribe to preexisting gender role such as nurse or teacher, but the implication still applies. In context, Repi-chan is a female police officer. Her “identity” as a woman overshadows her role as a police officer. The fact that Repi-chan is a women is what is significant. It is for this very reason that this author’s research exists.

The second and third observations made by Cooper is that women are subordinate and their capabilities are low.<sup>58</sup> In Repi-chan’s backstory, she was created to help her male counterpart, Api-kun, due to the difficulties of doing police work alone. In essence she is an assistant to the male counterpart, rather than a “real cop.” While it could be argued that Repi-chan is simply reducing Api-kun’s burden by doing the same police work, that isn’t the message being sent by Aomori’s Police Department, which is what matters most. Advertising in its most basic form is sending targeting messages to its audience. If the intent of said message is not directly stated or clearly observed, then it will not reach the audience. In this context, while this author is confident, if not hopeful, that the Aomori Police Department is *implying* that their female mascot is equal to the male, they are not clearly advertising that as such. Their female

---

<sup>56</sup> Anne Cooper-Chen and Miiko Kodama. *Mass Communication in Japan*. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1997. Cooper-Chen, Anne, and Miiko Kodama. *Mass Communication in Japan*. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1997.

<sup>57</sup> Cooper-Chen, Anne, and Miiko Kodama. *Mass Communication in Japan*. 1997.

<sup>58</sup> Cooper-Chen, Anne, and Miiko Kodama. *Mass Communication in Japan*. 1997.

mascot's existence can simply be boiled down to "existing to help the male," which ultimately counteracts the progress female officers have made.

## **Conclusion**

Looking at the supporting evidence, it appears that both hypotheses are equally plausible. Hypothesis one is supported by information gathered from the interviews conducted with the sample. Said departments created their female mascot out of the desire to improve their image and to work better with their respective communities. Doing so allows the police to be more productive and efficient in solving crimes. The underlying message from using a female mascot support this. Women in Japanese advertising display a sense of harmony and kindness. This message is especially important for attracting female officers who can make greater strides in the field and change police culture. In contrast, the second hypothesis is supported by empirical data gathered by the NPA. The rise in female officer participation coincide with the establishment of the female mascots. Additionally, women's improved status can be seen from the changes made in the division of labor; more female officers are being promoted to positions of authority and prestige while less women are being transferred to the traffic sector, a field reserved for women due the lack of danger and simplicity. The question of whether the female mascots were being made as a reflection of female participation in the police force, however, is not supported by the research collected. This is due to a lack of data on account of limited time and the ever present language barrier. While the topic of female police mascots appears unimportant, the purpose behind their creation is significant. It is entirely possible that other motives not highlighted in this paper were responsible for the phenomenon. The hypotheses discussed are only the most

plausible from organizational, cultural, and social perspective. No matter the case, it is important to acknowledge that substantial progress, both police image and women's social status, is being made.

## Works Cited

- "2014 police scandal summary." Matome. January 7, 2015. Accessed May 7, 2017.  
<https://matome.naver.jp/odai/2135952026538896801>.
- Aaker, Jennifer Lynn. "Dimensions of Brand Personality." *SSRN Electronic Journal*. Accessed August 20th 2016. doi:10.2139/ssrn.945432.
- Aaker, Jennifer Lynn, Verónica Benet-Martínez, and Jordi Garolera. "Consumption Symbols as Carriers of Culture: A Study of Japanese and Spanish Brand Personality Constructs." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 81, no. 3 (2001): 492-508.  
 doi:10.1037//0022-3514.81.3.492.
- Adelstein, Jake. "Japanese Police Women To Go Up To 10% Of Force....by 2023. : Japan Subculture Research Center." Japan Subculture Research Center RSS. August 8, 2012. Accessed March 13, 2017.  
<http://www.japansubculture.com/japanese-police-women-to-go-up-to-10-of-force-by-2023/>.
- "Aomori Prefectural Police." アピーくん・レピーちゃん | 広報課 | 警務部 | 青森県警察. Accessed May 12, 2017.  
[https://www.police.pref.aomori.jp/keimubu/kouhou/api\\_lepi.html](https://www.police.pref.aomori.jp/keimubu/kouhou/api_lepi.html).
- Birkett, Mary. "'AMATEUR' MASCOTS ON THE LOOSE: THE PRAGMATICS OF KAWAII (CUTE) ," 2012,, accessed May 7, 2017,  
<https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/91832/foozle.pdf>.
- Cooper-Chen, Anne, and Miiko Kodama. *Mass Communication in Japan*. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1997. Cooper-Chen, Anne, and Miiko Kodama. *Mass Communication in Japan*. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1997
- Dussich, John P.J. "Decisions Not To Report Sexual Assault: A Comparative Study Among Women Living in Japan Who Are Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and English-Speaking." *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 45, no. 3 (2001): 278-301. Accessed April 24, 2017.
- "Expansion of recruitment and promotion of female police officers." National Police Agency. Accessed May 7, 2017. <https://www.npa.go.jp/hakusyo/h24/honbun/html/ot500000.html>.
- "Female cops given a boost." *The Japan Times*. N.p., 29 Sept. 2013. Web. 15 Feb. 2017.  
<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/09/29/editorials/female-cops-given-a-boost/#.WKsvTvkR02>

Harrison, Edward, and John Harrison. "Japan's Police Mascots." *Idle Idol: The Japanese Mascot*. Web. 15 Feb. 2017.

"Interview with Aomori Police Department." Online interview by author. April 5, 2017.

"Interview with Gunma Police Department." Online interview by author. April 5, 2017.

Johnson, D. T. "Above the Law? Police Integrity in Japan." *Social Science Japan Journal* 6, no. 1 (2003): 19-37. Accessed March 16, 2017. doi:10.1093/ssjj/6.1.19.

Meiko, Yoshihama. "Domestic Violence: Japan's "Hidden Crime"." *Japan Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (July 1, 1999): 76-82. Accessed March 16, 2017.

"Progress of the Government for Realizing a Gender-Equal Society," Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, , accessed March 13, 2017, Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office. Accessed March 13, 2017.  
[http://www.gender.go.jp/english\\_contents/about\\_danjo/toward/progress/index.html](http://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/about_danjo/toward/progress/index.html).

"Summary of crimes and scandals by police officials in FY 2015." Matome. May 6, 2016. Accessed May 7, 2017. <https://matome.naver.jp/odai/2142038069662552901>.