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VORTRAG

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“The biggest crisis in Japan’s sport history”: Punishment and Violence in Japanese Educational Sports Clubs

At the beginning of 2013 two independent cases made the headlines of Japanese newspapers. The first involved the suicide of a high school student that was allegedly triggered after he received several beatings from his basketball coach. The second involved fifteen female judoka, including competitors in the London Olympics, who filed a letter with the Japanese Olympic Committee complaining of violence by two coaches, including the head coach of the women's team. Both these cases caused a national debate about the practice of *taibatsu* (corporal punishment) in sport in Japan.

This presentation examines the function of Japanese educational sports clubs and focuses on the issue of *taibatsu* in particular. Based on data from focus groups conducted with students at ten Japanese universities and underpinned further by a longer term ethnographic engagement with Japanese educational sports clubs, I examine the ways in which students' normalized acts of violence from coaches, essentialising *taibatsu* as cultural practice, accepting physical punishment as a necessary form of discipline and, in many cases, interpreting such acts as forms of caring and kindness. Considering the central position of the sport club in the lives of so many Japanese students, the presentation will address the continued relevance of such educational spaces in 21st Century Japan.



Brent McDonald is a senior lecturer in sociology at Victoria University in Australia. His central research focus is in the sociology of sport, particular in the area of race, ethnicity and social justice. Brent's interest in Japanese sport started following his experiences of playing rugby in Japan from 1994-1996. His embodied experiences led to an intellectual interest into how culture influences and shapes the meaning and practice of sport and the body. Brent's special interest is the space of educational sports and he has conducted ethnographic research across a range of various sports settings including University rowing, high school rugby, swimming schools, and aikido.