

Tradition in a New Costume: (Re)Presenting Masculinity in Japanese Figure Skating

East Asian Studies/Faculty of Social Sciences

Master's thesis

Author:

Kristyna Hrivnacova

22.4.2024

Turku

The originality of this thesis has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin Originality Check service.

Master's thesis

Subject: MDP East Asian Studies

Author(s): Kristyna Hrivnacova

Title: Tradition in a New Costume: (Re)Presenting Masculinity in Japanese Figure Skating

Supervisor(s): Yoko Demelius, PhD

Number of pages: 73 pages

Date: 22.4.2024

Abstract

Focusing on the displays and construction of masculinity in Japanese figure skating, this thesis carries out a thematic analysis of media content connected to three prominent Japanese skaters. Via the lens of West and Zimmerman's "doing gender" and Connell's hegemonic masculinity theories, it examines newspaper reporting, advertisements, and costumes of Yuzuru Hanyu, Shoma Uno, and Yuma Kagiyama, and discusses how the resulting themes support this thesis' argument for figure skating masculinity as a complicit form of masculinity. The research shows that the three figure skaters both display and are primarily characterised by traditional masculine virtues such as perseverance, single-minded devotion, and dependability, with notions such as expression of emotion and openness regarding mental health playing a marginal role. The thesis further argues that the skaters' masculinity is portrayed and reaffirmed via their adherence to an adjusted version of the life cycle expected of Japanese men. As research on Japanese masculinities has been largely dominated by the salaryman discourse, this study contributes to the existing research on Japanese masculinities and their construction, and, more broadly, to the generally limited discourse on sporting masculinities in individual and "women's" sports.

Keywords: masculinity, Japan, figure skating, gender displays, gender construction

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	5
2	Theoretical Framework and Background	8
2.1	The “doing gender” theory	8
2.2	Hegemonic masculinities	9
2.3	Sport and sporting masculinities	10
2.4	Japanese masculinities	12
2.4.1	Salarymen and gender displays	12
2.4.2	“Softer” masculinities	14
2.5	Figure skating and gender	16
2.5.1	Skating as a masculine pursuit	17
2.5.2	Changing and conflicting masculinities	19
2.5.3	Skating as a feminine sport?	20
2.5.4	Current figure skating	22
2.5.5	Gendered rules, evaluation, and scoring	24
2.5.6	Masculinity, figure skating, and Japan	27
3	Methodology and Analysis	32
3.1	Data	32
3.2	Data analysis	36
3.2.1	Legendary Status	38
3.2.2	Expectations	40
3.2.3	Looks	42
3.2.4	Rivalry & Mentorship	44
4	Discussion	45
4.1	Old-new masculinity in an old-new coat	46
4.1.1	Devotion to a cause	47
4.1.2	Overcoming hurdles	48
4.1.3	Looking the part	50
4.1.4	Feelings and masculinity	51
4.2	The adjusted traditional life cycle	52
4.2.1	Stability, husbands, and families	53
4.2.2	Following in your elder’s footsteps	55
4.2.3	Mentorship vs inspiration	56

4.2.4	Journey through education	57
4.3	Limitations and further research.....	58
5	Conclusion	59
	References	61
	Appendix 1: Advertisements	72

1 Introduction

Masculinity is a flexible concept, and what it means to be masculine differs depending on cultural context. In one setting, some versions of masculinity are more appreciated than others, and that exact same version might be viewed as undesirable elsewhere; or even in the same place, but at a different time (Connell 2005; Messerschmidt 2018). The displays of masculinity are also flexible. There are immediately visible aspects, such as style of clothes, length of hair, and presence or absence of make-up; there are habits, such as grooming, skincare, hobbies, and posture; there are conventions and expectations in how to greet others, how to treat them, how to argue with them, where to work and how to lead one's life (Dasgupta 2003; Goffman 1976; Osagawara 2016; West and Zimmerman 1987). All these, and many other gender displays, are a part of what it means to be, or at least to be seen to be, masculine, unmasculine, or effeminate as a man in a particular place, at a particular time. In this thesis, I examine how masculinity is displayed by Japanese figure skaters and how these displays are represented in media, constructing Japanese figure skating masculinity.

My research investigates masculinity in Japan, specifically in the area of figure skating. The discourse on masculinities in Japan has for a long time been dominated by the salaryman masculinity, with soft and Japanese gentleman masculinities being investigated to a lesser degree (Karlin 2002; Liong and Chan 2019). Since the economic crisis in the 1990s, salaryman masculinity has become harder to achieve in terms of employment and lost its appeal to many young men due to the strict expectations on work ethic, thus creating space for softer, herbivore, or gay man masculinities to emerge or return with their respective gendered displays (Charlebois 2015; Cook 2013; Dasgupta 2003; Jung 2011; McLelland 2003).

In the same period, Japanese men's figure skating has reached unprecedented triumphs, with athletes such as Takeshi Honda, Daisuke Takahashi, Yuzuru Hanyu, Shoma Uno or Yuma Kagiyama medalling at the World Championships and Olympic Games. As figure skating gained popularity in Japan, skaters became visible on TV screens, in newspapers and magazines, and on social media. However, figure skating itself or in Japan, figure skating and masculinity, or in general winter, individual, or "women's" sports are significantly less researched than summer team Western sports like football or baseball. I aim to contribute to the existing discourse on sports and masculinity by investigating how masculinity is displayed in a non-Western, non-group setting, and how the local cultural conventions (i.e. Japanese conventions) concerning gender are reflected in figure skating.

Japan, with its varied historical understandings of what masculinity means, is an interesting yet under-researched area within the sports discourse, skating included. Japanese figure skating masculinity

keeps its necessity for gracefulness, expression of emotion, and eye-catching aesthetics, and thus could be considered a softer version of masculinity. Yet, as athletes, skaters also need to be tenacious, ambitious, and dedicated, aligning more with salaryman masculinity and Japanese sporting ideals. Given that some figure skaters in Japan have reached the status of celebrity and their lives are very well reported (Yuzuru Hanyu in particular), it is natural to assume that phenomena such as celebrity worship or identification (Brown 2018) have affected how audiences think of masculinity and masculine success.

Furthermore, “the production of exemplars of masculinity (e.g. professional sports stars)” is argued to play a part in how hegemonic masculinity is maintained in societies (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, p846). This poses the question of how these exemplars are produced when the object – an extremely popular athlete – engages in an activity that is not seen as traditionally masculine. In this thesis, then, I investigate if and how various historical masculine traditions influence the production of masculinity in the Japanese context, and which traits and displays are shown preferentially in media content. This comes at a time when Japanese masculinity is changing, LGBTQ rights are increasingly gaining support, and figure skating is turning artistic again after the hypermasculine performances of the 1990s and early 2000s (Adams 2011; Lim and Ho 2023), making this research highly relevant to the current social climate.

I conduct the examination of the masculine displays in Japanese men’s figure skating by looking at multimedia content concerning the three top Japanese skaters of the past decade: Yuzuru Hanyu, Shoma Uno, and Yuma Kagiyama. Through the lens of the “doing gender” theory (West and Zimmerman 1987) and hegemonic masculinities theory (Connell 2005), the research utilises newspaper articles, costume photography, and advertisements to analyse which displays constitute the skaters’ masculinity and how they are represented in media. This is done with the understanding that media chooses to represent masculinity in a particular way to appeal to audiences and to lead the audience’s opinion, thus (re)producing masculinity and its displays (Westbrook and Shilt 2014). I aim to expand the discourse concerning the types of masculinities currently present in Japanese society, with particular attention to the differences between the hegemonic salaryman and figure skating masculinities, including their implications for the current Japanese masculinities overall. Furthermore, as sports discourse concerns itself with predominantly Western and team sports, this addition to the Asia-focused research on an individual winter sport aids the widening of our understanding of the role sport played and plays in the development of Asian masculinities.

Although they will be mentioned here for their importance and influence on the topic, the thesis will not focus on national sports policy, the role of sport and victories in Japan’s standing on the world

stage, or the economic implications of figure skating's popularity. Similarly, the scope does not cover pair skaters or ice dancers, though some female skaters will be utilised for comparison when discussing public perceptions of the sport, representations of gender on the ice, and gendered prejudices within the art-versus-athleticism debate.

This thesis is structured as follows. After Chapter 1: *Introduction*, Chapter 2: *Theoretical Framework and Background* establishes the theories of "doing gender" and hegemonic masculinity and gives information on the core concepts of this thesis, including sporting masculinities, Japanese masculinities, and the development of figure skating and the role that gender historically played in it. Then, Chapter 3: *Methodology and Analysis* presents the methodological choices of this thesis, the multimedia data collected, as well as the process of latent thematic analysis and its four resulting themes. In Chapter 4: *Discussion*, analysis results are connected to and compared with the larger structures of existing Japanese masculinities in order to show how masculinity in figure skating is displayed and constructed. Limitations and points of further research are also included here. Lastly, Chapter 5 is devoted to the conclusion and final remarks.

2 Theoretical Framework and Background

This chapter expands on the theories employed and how they are used in this thesis, as well as providing the background necessary for this research. In terms of theory, the two main frameworks I utilise are the “doing gender” theory (West and Zimmerman 1987) and the hegemonic masculinity theory (Connell 2005). These frameworks are then used to introduce background concepts: sport and sporting masculinities, masculinities in Japan, and figure skating.

Given that this thesis speaks about gender and gender displays, words such as masculine, masculinising, feminine, effeminate, and others will be used often. It is then worth noting that these words, unless specifically stated otherwise, are intended to mean “masculine”, “masculinising” etc in the particular time and place that the thesis section deals with. For example, in the section on the origins of figure skating, it will be argued that skating was a man’s, and generally masculinising, pursuit. This may seem contradictory if “masculine” is understood to mean characteristics generally associated with modern Western male culture, such as emotional restraint, machoness, and sexual experience; but aligns if “masculine” is understood in the setting of upper-class Great Britain of the 19th century and its gentlemen, which the section speaks of. Throughout the thesis, the notions of what is and is not considered masculine will change depending on the era and region spoken about.

2.1 The “doing gender” theory

The “doing gender” theory, first published in 1987 by Candace West and Don H Zimmerman, views gender as something that is constructed through the repetition of gender displays, practices, and accountability in social interactions (West and Zimmerman 1987). These displays, which are understood by the audience to indicate femininity or masculinity in a particular cultural context, then at once relay one’s gender identity to others; reproduce expectations of what is and is not appropriate for a given gender; and strengthen or weaken one’s claim to a particular sex category (ibid; Hollander 2013). This theory builds on the previous work of Erving Goffman, who in his work *Gender Displays* (1976) argues that gender is visible through identificatory displays, such as hair or clothing, as well as rituals, that is, behaviours customarily connected to a particular gender; one may think of tipping a hat or kisses on a cheek as gendered forms of greeting (Goffman 1976, p70). For the purpose of this thesis, I consider situations such as competitive performance, fan interaction, and media interviews as social interactions where displays and practices can indicate “correct” or “incorrect” gender. These displays

can be seen and described in media content in gender-indicative ways which in turn indicate, reassure, and help construct gender in the eyes of the audience (Westbrook and Shilt 2014).

The “doing gender” theory has been criticised for not considering personal agency or resistance to the system (Vidal-Ortiz 2009). In the view of West and Zimmerman, gender displays may be optional, but “it does not seem plausible to say that we have the option of being seen by others as female or male” (West and Zimmerman 1987, p130), that is, “women can be seen as unfeminine, but that does not make them “unfemale”” (ibid, p134). This has been discussed in terms of transgender persons and the process of transition; however, I do not focus on figure skaters’ intention in what they do or how they perceive to be constructing their own masculinity. My aim in this thesis is to investigate skaters’ gendered displays regardless of intention, their representation in media content, and the similarity to or difference from Japanese gendered expectations, in particular those connected to the hegemonic salaryman masculinity.

2.2 Hegemonic masculinities

The concept of hegemonic masculinity will appear in this thesis as an ideal that figure skating masculinity measures against. Hegemonic masculinity is “the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations” (Connell 2005, p76) and helps perpetuate and justify the unequal gender configurations of patriarchy (Connell 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Hegemonic masculinity does not represent a majority, nor an unchangeable standard. Rather, it describes an evolving set of practices which result in an advantageous social position, creating an environment where even partial adherence to this standard – complicit masculinity – receives benefits (Connell 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). As preferences and needs of societies develop, so hegemonic masculinities work to incorporate new aspects to maintain their top positions; things such as changing one’s hair colour or wearing bright clothing, which were once associated with LGBT men in the West, are now much more incorporated into the commonly accepted versions of masculinity. Due to the fluidity of the concept and the resulting impossibility of adhering to all standards, a representation of this standard is needed: an exemplar of masculinity. Anyone can become an exemplar, including actors and often athletes, and they do not need to be real: fictional characters such as James Bond or *Lord of the Rings’* Aragorn can also be used (Connell 2005).

What does and does not constitute hegemonic masculinity depends on the setting in which masculinity is researched, and because settings are multiple, it may be argued that hegemonic masculinities are

also multiple. Messerschmidt (2018) proposes that research on masculinities should be conducted on the local (communities), regional (societies), and global (transnational arenas) levels, postulating that each level will contain “multiple and often, conflicting hegemonic masculinities” (Messerschmidt 2018, pp144-145). I will use the local and regional levels, where the local level is taken to mean the elite figure skating world and the regional level to mean Japan. Firstly, although figure skating is a sport engaged internationally and thus includes various regional negotiations of gender, elite figure skating constitutes a relatively small community bound by the rules and conventions of the sport, including gender-specific ones regarding, for example, costumes and evaluation. Therefore, it will be considered as local. Secondly and primarily, I will focus on the regional level, exploring the relationship between various Japanese masculinities and figure skating masculinity.

2.3 Sport and sporting masculinities

In general, discourse on particular sporting masculinities tends to focus on Western team summer sports (such as football, basketball, or rugby). Research on individual sports and winter sports seems to be rare, as is research into Asian sporting masculinities in non-group settings. Existing research on individual sports includes studies into, for example, equestrianism and masculinity (Dashper 2012) and equestrianism and gender equality (Plymoth 2012); masculinity in rhythmic gymnastics (Piedra 2017); Korean women’s bodybuilding (Oh 2015); as well as ballet dancers and heteromascularity (Haltom and Worthen 2014). For figure skating, existing studies focus on transgender experiences and disablement in skating (Herrick, Rocchi and Couture 2020; Jerreat-Poole 2023); women’s equality and *girlification* of athletes (Beki and Geczi 2017; Story and Markula 2017); and sexual prejudice among fans of US football and men’s figure skating (Lee and Cunningham 2016). Most pertinently to this thesis, Ho and Lim (2023) use Asian masculinity and sport to investigate the perceived rivalry in figure skating between USA’s Nathan Chen and Japan’s Yuzuru Hanyu. However, research into sports in East Asia typically focuses on popular Western sports such as football, baseball, or basketball, likely because Asia presents a huge market (Rowe and Gilmour 2010).

Sport, in the way it is understood today, came into being during the Victorian era of the British Empire, transforming from a local, small-scale activity into an organised system symbolic of British power (Allen 2014; Mangan 1981). Meant to “[instil] physical and mental toughness, obedience to authority and loyalty to the ‘team’” in hopes of their professional success, it prepared upper-class boys for their future positions of power in the expanding empire (Kidd [1987] 2013, p555; Allen 2014; Mangan 1981). Sport acted as a way of socialising boys and young men, affirming their masculinity via sporting

practices and distinguishing them from women, who were largely excluded from sports (Kidd [1987] 2013; Mangan 1981; Spallacci 2020). This positioning of men and sports as separate from women had widespread consequences. Firstly, sport became a masculine domain that resisted the inclusion of women as well as practices stereotypically associated with women, such as expressing emotions (Kidd [1987] 2013). Furthermore, expressing emotion (except anger), playing through pain, aggressiveness, and overall exhibition of a macho heterosexual personality became standard, putting nonconforming individuals – such as women, gay men, athletes in “feminine” sports – into positions of mockery and abuse (Allen 2014; Lee and Cunningham 2016; Robertson 2003). Many of these traits are still seen as traditionally masculine displays in the West (Connor et al 2021) and arguably result in masculinity as a far more limited space than femininity (Adams 2011, p71). While women’s presence in “men’s” sports such as football or hockey has been much reported and generally supported in the West, the same cannot be said about men in “women’s” sports.

As well as mental endurance and emotional stoicism, the muscular bodies of male athletes were important visible symbols of strength. It is the muscular body, rather than a soft, thin, or old one, that “may be seen as the physical manifestation of specific ideal masculine traits including discipline, dominance, resilience, attractiveness, sexual experience or frequency, and the absence of imperfections” (Lefkowich et al 2017, p456; Spencer 2014). Thus, muscles aid in displaying the “correct” gender in men. These characteristics and physical strength coincide with the mental and physical qualities required of soldiers (Spallacci 2020), which leads to parallels between sport, masculinity, and nationalism. In both the West and the East, sporting bodies become celebrated and desired symbols of national power (Jansen and Sabo 1994; Spallacci 2020) and sporting competitions an opportunity to show a country’s strength, excellence, and development (Lee 2015; Yamamoto 2012). Athletes, then, may be seen as national symbols and heroes who embody as well as model one of the ideals, if not *the* ideal, of masculinity.

This Western sporting masculinity differs from Asian sporting masculinity, though research into their differences is limited. Sport in Imperial Japan had much the same function as in Britain, keeping boys and men organised, obedient, and loyal, and teaching military values via “[sporting] bodily practices that served to reinforce links to the samurai ideals of masculinity” (Low 2003a, p86). Conformity and respect were important characteristics in Light’s (2003) research, which focused on the role of sport in the construction of masculinity within the Japanese school system. He argues that sporting practice in Japan is infused with samurai *bushidō* (武士道) values, creating “a militaristic form of masculinity concerned with respect for order, self-control and loyalty” (Light 2003, p104).

Accordingly, in the traditional Japanese sport of sumo, the “display [of] perfect moral behaviour, as well as power and skill in the ring” (Bonde 2014, p108) were important, but in contrast to the typical sporting muscular body, it was the “large, strong, well-fed sumo bodies” that stood in the centre and symbolised the stability and wealth of the Empire (ibid, p106). From the point of view of Japanese sports, practice instils and competitions are won through “superior endurance, tenacity and collective power” (Light 2003, p106) rather than individual excellence, spontaneous changes in strategy or “trick” play. These traits remain highly valued in men in today’s Japan and also reflect the Confucian *wen* masculinity (discussed in the next section), positioning Asian sporting masculinities overall as softer compared to the West.

2.4 Japanese masculinities

In 2003, Dasgupta wrote that: “[T]he salaryman has come to embody *all* Japanese masculinity” (Dasgupta 2003, p118), and for many decades, the general image of Japanese masculinity really was one of a man in a dark suit and carrying a briefcase as he falls asleep on the last evening train. However, it is hardly the *only* masculinity that existed, or exists, in Japan. It developed from or alongside other gender ideologies, including military masculinity, soft masculinity, and Confucian masculinity, which stems from the Chinese concepts of *wen* (literary, mental) and *wu* (martial, physical). Nevertheless, the continued widespread acceptance of and preference for salaryman masculinity, with all the “male privilege, dominance, and centrality in the company and the society” it represents (Taga 2005, p132), marks it as a hegemonic masculinity in the Japanese context.

2.4.1 Salarymen and gender displays

Emerging after Japan’s defeat in World War II, salaryman masculinity transformed the previous military masculinity into one with more economy- and peace-oriented characteristics (Taga 2005). The connection between the two can still be seen in the practices expected of a salaryman, such as total devotion to the cause, self-sacrifice, and tireless work, as well as the term *kigyō senshi* (企業戦士), that is, a corporate soldier or warrior (ibid). Additionally, much like becoming a soldier, the process of creating salarymen requires preparations in the form of good formal education and in-company training which turns one from a fresh graduate to a well-adjusted employee.

The salaryman masculinity is performed through a variety of practices. Firstly, as implied above, employment and work play a central role in constructing a salaryman's masculinity and identity. As Japan's post-war modernisation process required a steady inflow of dedicated employees to support the country's economic rise, so the employment system rewarded these employees with lifetime employment and seniority pay (Watanabe 2020). Secondly, the resulting stable income together with the government promotion of stay-at-home, financially dependent wives created a gendered dual system which put men into the position of dependable sole breadwinners (Ogasawara 2016). The term *daikokubashira* (大黒柱), meaning the main structural pillar of a Japanese house, is used to describe the men on whose shoulders traditionally rests this responsibility to support their households. This role typically passes from father to son and is closely tied to productivity and employment, as the *daikokubashira* is expected to be the main financial provider of the family; the ability to provide then by default becomes an intrinsic part of masculinity (Dasgupta 2015; Gill 2005).

Further practices of the salaryman masculinity are a legion. Through analysis of self-improvement and company-life preparation manuals for young men new to the salaryman lifestyle, Dasgupta (2003) argues that everything from dress to gestures, grooming and speaking style, and the performance of heterosexuality, whether true or purely presentative, is an important part of the salaryman whole. However, he also points out that salarymen were at times portrayed as "weak and insipid" (Dasgupta 2003, p128), with Ogasawara drawing attention to the disapproval of company men who were completely "absorbed by work and turned into company-'only' men" (Ogasawara 2016, p172). In addition, and in accordance with the hegemonic masculinity theory, the salaryman masculinity was flexible and not accessible to everyone. Rather, much like an exemplar of masculinity, it represented a middle-class ideal to strive towards (Ezawa 2016; Ogasawara 2016); it was "the *ideology* [of] the salaryman that was far more extensive in its reach" (Dasgupta 2013, p155).

These practices, and by default masculinity and associated identities of a provider and an employee, were interrupted by the financial crash and resulting recession in the 1990s. The widely promoted idea of a family with a single male breadwinner began disintegrating as many of those who were able to secure a salaryman lifestyle lost their jobs as the practice of lifetime employment started disappearing (Taga 2005). This could be understood as a weakening of the hegemonic position of the salaryman masculinity; however, Dasgupta (2013) argues that the limited availability of stable jobs further highlighted the importance of financial stability and job security in forming relationships and starting families, further promoting the preference and unreachability of this position. Regardless, the post-Bubble period was a time of transformation when the true variety of Japanese society became

recognised by the public (Dagsputa 2015), making limited space for previously largely invisible masculinities such as gay-man and softer masculinities (Dasgupta 2003; McLelland 2003).

Changes are also currently impending for the salaryman masculinity as Japanese men increasingly recognise the limitations that the current life cycle imposes, from the long hours spent on an education which may not even result in stable employment to the subsequent, even longer hours that the company expects. These factors and more impede men's ability to make meaningful connections with partners and children, while the societal pressure to provide as the Japanese economy stagnates is resulting in men keeping away from relationships and marriage altogether (Osagawara 2016). This breaks the typical heterosexual life cycle of Japanese (salary)men, where marriage and, to a certain degree, fatherhood are considered necessary steps in reaching adulthood and becoming a full-fledged productive member of society (Dasgupta 2013, p104; Low 2003b). Furthermore, the skills required of salaryman and promotion structures have changed considerably since the 1990s, meaning that, in accordance with the flexibility of hegemonic masculinities, the masculine markers associated with the salaryman changed, expanded, and incorporated new ideas of what it means to be a man in the Japanese society. To understand how different times created and recreated different masculinities with their respective gender displays, one must consider what came before the salaryman masculinity and what has been emerging with its transformation.

2.4.2 “Softer” masculinities

Jung (2011) uses the term “East Asian Confucian masculinity” (p19) to encompass the ideal Confucian masculine traits which stressed mental abilities over physical ones. Stemming from the Chinese concepts of *wen* (文; literary, mental) and *wu* (武; martial, physical), this Confucian masculinity was softer compared to Western masculinities and promoted restraint, patience, and education (Louie 2003; Taga 2005). In almost direct opposition to the modern Western traditional and sporting masculinity, the ability to control one's sexual desires and anger was prized, while “a softness of manner and even homosexual behavior did not threaten a man's manliness” (Taga 2005, p129; Liong and Chang 2019).

In Japan, the concepts of *wen* and *wu* translated into Japanese gentlemen (*shinshi*, 紳士, “men of talent”), that is, elite men of great education who devoted their lives to public service (Karlin 2002). They were also men who, in order to boost Japan's status on the international stage, adopted “civilised” Western manners and fashions, at times to the derision of more hard-masculinity-oriented men (ibid).

Ho and Lim (2023) propose that the masculinities of restrained *wu* and softer Japanese gentleman “align with 18th-century upper-class White European masculine ideals of beauty, elegance, and expressiveness” (p6), which will be of importance in the later section on figure skating. These softer tendencies, however, were transformed into the ideal of a loyal, strong soldier fighting for the empire as nationalism and militarism rose in Japan during the start of the 20th century; and after World War II, into the heterosexual, obedient corporate warrior and salaryman (Karlin 2002; Louie 2003; Taga 2005).

With the decline of salarymen, softer masculinities are once again becoming more prominent in East Asia. Jung (2011) uses the term “pan-East Asian soft masculinity” (p71) to explain why the men of South Korean popular culture have gained public favour in Japan, arguing that politeness, purity (of innocent love) and tender charisma are transcultural masculine markers traditionally appreciated in both Japan and South Korea. Consequently, androgyny was not seen as de-masculinising (Taga 2005) and continues to be popular in the genre of “boys love”, which narrates homoerotic stories of gender-ambiguous men (Lim and Ho 2023). It is argued that it is partly because of this tradition and popularity that the queer-coded, androgynous performances of soft East Asian masculinity in Yuzuru Hanyu’s programs¹ are not presented in Japanese media in the feminine vocabulary used by the American media (Ho and Lim 2023; Lim and Ho 2023). Overall, the rise of “feminine esthetics and sensibilities” in East Asia (Ho and Lim 2023, p6), such as the South Korean *kkonminam* (꽃미남, pretty flower boys) and K-pop idols, or Japanese *bishōnen* (美少年, beautiful boys) and preference for genderless fashion, has coincided with the rise of herbivore masculinity in Japan. Herbivore men are described as “slim heterosexual men who are professionally unambitious, consumption-oriented, and passive or uninterested in [...] romantic relationships” (Charlebois 2015, p117).

In Japan, this renewed visibility of softer masculinities occurred at the same time as Japan’s triumphs on the international figure skating stage. While this thesis does not argue that figure skating has been the sole reason for this development in Japanese masculinities, it does aim to explore the gender displays and media representations of figure skating masculinity in the Japanese context. As was argued previously, “the production of exemplars of masculinity (e.g. professional sports stars)” (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, p846) as well as celebrity influence (Brown 2018) have an effect on masculinity and audiences and act as powerful reminders of what men should be and what they should strive towards. These exemplars would be crucial to upkeeping traditional masculine virtues, such as being a *daikokubashira* and a primary breadwinner of the family, in a time when many of these virtues

¹ Although the correct British spelling is “programme”, “program” is used throughout this thesis due to figure skating convention.

have become practically unreachable due to the limited availability of stable, fulltime employment (Cook 2013; Watanabe 2020). It is, then, important to investigate how masculinity is displayed and produced in Japanese figure skating in a time of employment precarity in order to understand how this form of masculinity is connected to other Japanese masculine traditions and its potential as a precursor to a wider shift in what is understood to be appropriate for men in Japan.

2.5 Figure skating and gender

Figure skating is a winter activity which lies at the line where sport and art meet. Much like gymnastics or high diving, scoring does not rely solely on a show of strength or speed, but incorporates a subjective, aesthetic element. Similarly to ballet and in opposition to sports such as ice hockey or pole jump, extremely difficult actions are intentionally performed in a way that makes them seem effortless and fluid. In terms of audience, it is one highly divided along gender lines. Although figure skating saw the highest expected number of viewers in both the US and the UK during the Beijing Winter Olympics (40% and 24% respectively), the percentages for women far outstripped those for men (53% to 29% in the US; 36% to 10% in the UK) (YouGov 2021). One reason for this might be that figure skating has a reputation for being a feminine sport; a women's sport; a girls' sport, which invalidates it as a past-time suitable for boys and men within the constraints of heteronormative masculinity (Adams 2011; Piedra 2017). Another may be the prejudice that men who engage in or with an activity that is perceived as feminine are themselves effeminate and possibly gay, which puts their masculinity in danger (Adams 2011; Connell 2005; Piedra 2017). As a result, rather than sport validating one's masculinity, as happens with football or rugby (Kidd [1987] 2013), a figure skater's masculinity is questioned by what he does (Adams 2007).

These perceptions are, however, quite new. As was discussed in the previous chapters on sport and masculinity, the definitions of and relationships between masculinity, femininity, and sport have changed considerably over time. Throughout its history, skating was genderless, then masculine, then equal, and now highly gendered. It started without any class connotations, morphed into an elite sport, experienced several popular booms, and now settled on somewhat elite again. Social connotations evolved accordingly. The section below gives an overview of how gender was expressed in figure skating and what role it played in the development of the sport.

2.5.1 Skating as a masculine pursuit

Until the invention of fabricated ice and indoor skating rinks, ice skating was highly dependent on seasons and geographical location. During its origins in 14th century Holland, skating was an activity for the general public, and skaters “came from all classes to skate together – women, men, and children – on the frozen canals” (Adams 2007, p876). In this sense, skating did not have a particular gender, class, or profession. However, when James, Duke of York (who would eventually become King James II of England) and his courtiers learnt to skate in their Dutch exile and brought this skill to England during the 1660 Restoration, skating started slowly transforming into a sport popular with the elite and the clergy. During the 18th and first half of the 19th century, Adams (2007) argues, skating was a pastime that excluded women and promoted physical activity among “men of rank and privilege” (p873). This stemmed from several factors.

First, rank afforded the higher class a sufficient income for the maintenance of outdoor skating spaces (such as clearing snow off a frozen lake) as well as the free time to engage in such activities. Second, much like gentlemen’s clubs provided an opportunity for socialising, so did the eventual emergence of skating clubs create more spaces for men of a similar position in life to expand and maintain their social networks. Third, skating looks considerably more dignified than, for example, running, thus making it a suitable pastime for a person of rank (Adams 2007). Lastly, the aristocratic and masculine ideals of the era included the “man of feeling”. Stressing expressiveness, elegance, and aesthetics, activities such as dancing, fencing, and eventually skating became a part of the physical exercises recommended to men to maintain their health and strength (Adams 2011, p89). Consequently, agility, gracefulness, and fluid arm movement were seen as desirable characteristics of upper-class masculine movement (ibid), though to modern sensibilities, these qualities are typically associated with femininity (Piedra 2017). In this era, roughly up until the 1870s, lie the origins of figure skating, formulated by ideals of masculinity that are no longer seen as primarily masculine in the Western or sports contexts. Despite this unique context, research on the formulation of gender in figure skating is scarce (with notable exceptions such as Adams 2011 and Weinstein 2018).

Agility and fluidity were also crucial in the sense that figure skating during this time included the skating of *figures*, that is, patterns of varying complexity traced onto the ice with the edge of one’s skates. One’s claim to masculinity, then, could be recognised in and supported by a show of skill in tracing a clean, complicated design at a time when many elements that we now consider central parts of figure skating, such as spins and jumps, were barely in existence. However, this also means that although upper-class women faced many hurdles as they began to take part during the 1860s, the way in which they skated did not significantly differ from the way men skated for decades to come. Due to this lack

of institutionalised differences in how men and women are supposed to and allowed to skate, Madge Syers entered the 1902 London World Championship and placed second (Adams 2011; Hines 2011). It is important to note here that despite this similarity in body movement and the fact that both men's and women's skating were described with similar language (words such as "graceful", "athletic", "beautiful" or "powerful" were used indiscriminately), "the sameness of women's and men's skating [did] not seem to have put feminine or masculine gender identities at risk" (Adams 2011, p138).

On the one hand, this shows a difference in how skating and its skills were perceived then compared to how we might perceive them today. While today skating (or dance or gymnastics) may be viewed as an activity undermining one's masculinity and affirming one's femininity (Adams 2011; Haltom and Worthen 2014; Kidd [1987] 2013; Piedra 2017), it would not have been considered strange to call an upper-class gentleman's skating "beautiful". On the other hand, skaters at the time wore their day clothes as no specific set of skating garments had developed yet. Given the strictness of dress rules at the time, gender was denoted by the skirts, trousers, and types of hats and accessories easily visible to others. Furthermore, as women were new to skating and seen by society as delicate, it was a gentleman's responsibility to assist the lady on the ice (Adams 2011, p119), reproducing gender expectations and displaying one's masculinity.

One concept central to what we consider sport today was for an extended period resisted in figure skating, and that is competition and competitiveness. As explained in the previous chapter on sport and its development, competition was and still is by many considered a healthy aspect of sport, teaching young people, especially boys, to use their skills and physical prowess to beat their opponents. However, figure skating resisted the inclusion of competition for several reasons, first and foremost because individual competition among British upper-class men was seen as ungentlemanly (Adams 2011). Competition led to prize money; being paid for one's wins and skills was close to the middle class and professionalism, directly contradicting the concept of a "gentleman of leisure"; and a search for individual glory was considered unseemly (Adams 2011, p128; Hines 2011). One of the longest debates in figure skating – is it a sport or is it an art? – begins here as a class issue. Sport entailed the necessity for speed, a show of strength, and comparing achievements; it was sweaty, undignified, and meant for the middle and lower classes. In British winter sports, speed skating was known among gentlemen as a competitive activity where prize money led to gambling and ungentlemanly behaviour; it provided a "dark twin" to figure skating. On the other hand, activities such as skating, horse-riding, or fencing carried a degree of sophistication, even art. In this sense, skating was not primarily divided along gender lines during this era, but rather along class lines.

2.5.2 Changing and conflicting masculinities

The sentiments regarding competition, however, began to change as middle-class moral values began taking precedence over those of the upper classes (Adams 2007). With the rise of the British Empire and increased militarisation of boys' private schools, masculine ideals started leaning towards stoicism, toughness, aggressive play, and team loyalty in the latter part of the 19th century (Allen 2014; Kidd [1987] 2013; Mangan 1981). Many of these traits persist to this day in the domains of heteronormative sporting masculinities. This change in desirable male characteristics rendered skating and the skills associated with it too feminine and, arguably due to the Oscar Wilde trial on homosexuality in 1895 and subsequent rise in moral homophobia (Hattersley 2006), too gay. However, rather than the activity being abandoned altogether, it instead led to a transformation of how skating was done among upper-class British men (Adams 2007). As a result, a distinct English style emerged in the 1860s (as opposed to the Continental style, which will be discussed later).

Abandoning anything that might be considered pretty or soft, skating in England became a regimented, precisely performed activity, popularly also a group endeavour in the so-called combined skating. Adams (2011, p92) describes the English style as "practised with a stiff upright posture. Knees were not to bend. Arms were not to lift. Nothing fanciful was to interfere with precision." The middle-class values of conformity, self-control, and reserve were the intended acquired characteristics of this upper-class exercise, as befits an empire held together by unified ideals, skills, and values (Adams 2007; Adams 2011; Allen 2014; Kidd [1987] 2013). Also following middle-class values, in which athletic competition was seen as highly masculine, British contemporary debates on figure skating competition won on the side of skating becoming competitive (Adams 2011, p104).

Alongside and yet in complete opposition to the English style, the Continental style of skating developed in countries such as Austria, Germany, and Russia. In the midst of the Viennese waltz fever, figure skating became a public spectacle in the late 1800s in Austria, where "the pleasure of moving to music [and] the pleasure of the spectator" were of utmost importance (Adams 2007, p886). Especially with the appearance of the American Jackson Haines in Vienna in 1868, who incorporated elements of dance and theatricality in his skating, the combination of aesthetic movement and music pushed skating closer to entertainment than sport and won over audiences (Adams 2007).

This is an early example specific to figure skating where the local definitions of masculinity, in terms of body movements and public perceptions, highlighted a difference in gender expectations across cultures and societies: a style of skating which would have compromised one's masculinity and sexuality in England boomed in popularity in Austria. Today, public perceptions and media

representations of figure skating also differ based on local definitions. Lee and Cunningham (2016) argue that the prejudice against LGBT people and people presenting in gender non-conforming ways (such as male skaters) is higher in more homohysterical cultures and circles (in their research, the US football). Ho and Lim (2023) found that in Western media, the competitiveness between USA's Nathan Chen and Japan's Yuzuru Hanyu was typically presented as a war-like rivalry between "the Quad King", implying strength and machoness corresponding to Western masculine definitions, and "the Ice Prince", implying artistry and lyricity corresponding to Western feminine definitions. On the other hand, Japanese media presented two equally skilful skaters with little to no gendered language and the competition as a matter of nationalism where one country bests the other (Ho and Lim 2023). However, neither article deals with how masculinity is constructed in figure skating within Japan's specific cultural setting, how it impacts local gender expectations, or how masculine displays are produced.

As class lines continued shifting and masculine values changing during the 19th century, figure skating began evolving into an organised, internationally competitive sport. This allowed men – because these events were, at the start, purely masculine occasions – to measure their strength against men from other countries. However, a competition did not act only as a clash of physical prowess, but also as a clash of masculine ideals of men from different cultures, who embodied different masculine traditions. As the emergence of European competitions called for a common set of movements and skills which could be assessed, so the debate eventually tilted in favour of the rather entertaining Continental style, pushing the stiff English style off the international skating rinks. This drive for the standardisation of skating and its rules led to the establishment of the International Skating Union (ISU) and the first World Championship in 1896 (Hines 2011). At this time, skating was still not viewed as inherently feminine, but the number of women participating and excelling in it was steadily rising, as is exemplified by the fact that Madge Syers entered what was regarded as a men-only World Championship in 1902 and placed second.

2.5.3 Skating as a feminine sport?

At the start of the 20th century, competitive figure skating spread outside of Europe and welcomed more women. The first national championship was held in Canada in 1905; the first women's world championship, The Championship of the ISU, took place in 1906; and both women's and men's categories were included when figure skating became an Olympic sport in 1908. These large events, where women skated and were visibly successful, played a role in a major shift in the public perception

as well as the performance style of figure skating, both of which were arguably brought on by a single skater.

Sonja Henie was a Norwegian who skated competitively in the 1920s and 1930s before embarking on a long career of acting and ice exhibitions. She won the first of her ten World Championship golds in 1927, aged fourteen, and her first Olympic gold a year later. Her skating was based on dance techniques, flowy and seamless; her costumes were eye-catching; her popularity with the audience was unprecedented. Adams (2011) argues that “Henie’s fame and popularity brought figure skating to a large public for the first time, turning it into a commercial entertainment with mass appeal” (Adams 2011, p145-146). With the onset of the Second World War, which put further distinctions on what masculinity and femininity meant, the fact that figure skating was closely associated with dancing, sparkles, commercial shows, and a young, pretty, white girl had two major consequences. Firstly, it created a popular picture of figure skating as a sport for girls (as opposed to men, or even adult women), which largely persists until today. Secondly, it led to a sharply decreasing number of boys and men who skated, and by the 1950s, girls and women were the primary participants, thus earning figure skating the label of a feminine sport. This change of label is important, Adams (2007) argues, because the so-called feminine sports, as well as individual ones, typically receive less public and scholarly attention than typically male, team sports; one might compare baseball to rhythmic gymnastics.

The Henie effect persisted and in the 1960s, when world championships entered TV broadcasts in the US, skating proved popular; this popularity peaked in the 1990s with the Kerrigan-Harding incident and then began declining as audiences became oversaturated with skating (Hines 2011). Several skating powerhouses emerged during the second half of the 20th century with the decline of English, Swedish and German prominence: USA, Russia (then USSR), and from approximately 1990s also Japan, China, and South Korea (Weinstein 2018). Though men figured prominently, for example, the American Elvis Stojko, Canadian Kurt Browning, or Russian Evgeni Plushenko and Alexei Yagudin, it was women whose skating was most closely watched and who received the most endorsement and commercial opportunities (Adams 2011, p56). Skaters such as USA’s Kristi Yamaguchi and Michelle Kwan, Japan’s Midori Ito and Fumie Suguri, Russia’s Irina Slutskaya, or China’s Chen Lu drew considerable recognition.

On the other hand, and arguably because of this lack of public attention, men’s skating in the 1990s showed more flexibility, for example, in including popular music and movie soundtracks alongside classical pieces, adjusting costumes to fit more tightly, engaging in crowd work, and stepping aside from lyrical performances. The obviously athletic part of skating, jumps, became an important distinguisher of sporting ability and masculinity, particularly in the form of quadruple jumps (four rotations in one jump). The first quad toe loop was achieved in 1988 by a Canadian; the first quad

salchow in 1998 by an American. A smooth fall-free performance could be sacrificed in an attempt at athletic excellence, just as fluid, balletic movement at times turned sharp, even jerky. The commentary on men's skating also emphasised statistics and technique over aesthetics because the aesthetic focus would paint the skater as effeminate, but arguably also because the focus on numbers de-eroticises the relationship between the male observer (whether commentator or fan) and the athlete (Adams 2011, p79). Adams (2011) argues that these trends were particularly visible in Western skaters who tried to give skating a more masculine feel during this "macho" decade of skating in an attempt to distance themselves from the effeminate, gay reputation that figure skating garnered. In terms of endorsements, it was the gay label that made male figure skating especially unmarketable in the West during the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and early 1990s, and it was only the most obviously stereotypically masculine skaters, such as Elvis Stojko and Kurt Browning, who had significant success with endorsements (Adams 2011, pp54-60).

The events discussed above resulted, over the course of the 20th century, in figure skating transforming from an upper-class leisure activity for primarily men to a competitive, highly feminised sport for girls. Instead of tracing patterned figures in the ice in silence, skaters today perform feats of athleticism and artistry to the sounds of Vivaldi and Elton John. Rather than skating in daywear appropriate to each gender in 1900, current athletes have specially designed, and sometimes designer, costumes which are in their own way meant to signal gender regardless of the fact that male skaters tend to be viewed as effeminate or gay by the virtue of their craft. Nonetheless, many brilliant male skaters have become widely applauded since 2000 and arguably, it is men who have been the face of figure skating in recent years.

2.5.4 Current figure skating

In the last ten years, the largest forces in men's figure skating were Japan, the USA, and with one prominent skater each also briefly Spain and China. Russia, though ranking high in the late 1990s and early 2000s, was more successful in women's rather than men's individual skating until 2022, when it was banned from international competition alongside Belarus due to the Ukraine Invasion (ISU 2022).

In the USA, the already mentioned Nathan Chen is known primarily for his athleticism; he was the first skater capable of jumping five different quadruple jumps, winning three consecutive Grand Prix titles and an Olympic gold medal in 2022. He is known for his modern choices in music and costumes and is widely considered among the best skaters in history. Especially during his rise after he joined the senior

circuit in 2016, his competition with Japan's Yuzuru Hanyu was often reported in the media. Ho and Lim (2023) examined how English-language and Japanese-language news media differ in their representations of Chen and Hanyu. They found that American reporting portrayed their so-called rivalry in terms of Chen's athleticism and Hanyu's lyricism much more than Japanese outlets, despite Hanyu's jumping abilities, thus implicitly coding "Quad King" Chen as masculine and "Ice Prince" Hanyu as feminine (Ho and Lim 2023, p3). Chen's later turn to skating "well-roundedness", meaning his ability to perform difficult jumps in a fluid, non-disruptive manner during a program, is a part of a larger figure skating trend towards incorporating athleticism and art in equal measures. Alongside Chen, Vincent Zhou, the first skater to land a quadruple Lutz in competition in 2018, and the newly rising Ilia Malinin, the first to land a quadruple Axel in 2022, represent the US. Malinin is currently the skater in history capable of landing all six types of quadruple jumps officially recognised by the International Skating Union (ISU).

In terms of Japan, it is impossible to debate Japanese skating without discussing Yuzuru Hanyu. He won four consecutive Grand Prix titles, two consecutive Olympic Golds in 2014 and 2018, and was the first skater to land a quadruple toe loop in 2016. Known for his musicality, impeccable skating skills, and weightless captivating performances, many have called him the best skater in history. Though his performances typically included only three types of quad jumps, his ability to incorporate them seamlessly into other program components makes him one of the most well-rounded skaters and an idol to younger athletes. Hanyu retired from competition in 2022 and embarked on a career in professional skating. Shoma Uno and Yuma Kagiyama are still competitive. Uno holds an Olympic silver and bronze medals from 2018 and 2022 respectively, and is a double world champion and the first skater to land a quadruple flip in 2016. He is known for his expressive skating and choices of classical music. Kagiyama won silver in the 2022 Olympics and two silver again in the 2021 and 2022 World Championships; he is the new hopeful of Japan and most modern in his choices of music. The media content analysis in this thesis will focus on Hanyu, Uno, and Kagiyama, and more information will be given about them in *2.5.6 Masculinity, figure skating, and Japan*.

Though rules and conventions regarding costumes changed over time, currently, there are immediately visible differences in how men and women dress in the competitive part of an event (as opposed to the gala that takes place after a competition). Women tend to have white skates; men usually wear black. Although women are allowed to wear pants or unitards, most opt for a skirt, for example, due to the weight of the pants, comfort, aesthetic reasons, or skating convention. Men are required to have full-length trousers (any colour, though black prevails); tights are not allowed. This means that now, similarly to when women first joined skating in the 1860s, it is usually easy to tell a

skater's competitive gender category by whether or not they have a skirt (see section 2.5.1). Additionally, a skater will lose points if they do not comply with these rules.

Furthermore, bright colours such as red, yellow, and purple are typically seen in women's skating; darker shades and black are more popular in men's; blue, green, and white are common in both. Women's costumes are more likely to have see-through parts or elements that "stick out", such as frills and feathers. Men most typically seem like a shirt or t-shirt with black trousers, perhaps stemming from a time in figure skating history when men skated in suits, but bejewelled costumes are not unusual. In terms of recent figure skating, America's Nathan Chen is known to skate more in non-sequined, simple costumes, such as a colourful long-sleeve shirt and black pants, or in full black. Another American, Ilia Malinin, dresses similarly. On the opposite side, Yuzuru Hanyu was during his competitive career typically seen in elaborate, sequined costumes, that often seemed genderless. Shoma Uno dresses similarly, albeit less ethereally. Due to the connection between appearance and gender displays, costumes and looks in general form an important part of this thesis and will be examined in both *3.2 Data Analysis* and *4. Discussion*.

2.5.5 Gendered rules, evaluation, and scoring

As one can see from the section above, successfully landing quadruple jumps has become not only possible but increasingly necessary to medal in international competitions. In continuation of the art-vs-sport discourse, there has been a debate in figure skating about whether the current scoring system treats jumps (i.e. athleticism, arguably masculine) preferentially by assigning them a higher value than skating skills or presentation (i.e. art, arguably feminine), or whether this simply encourages skaters to push the limits of the sport. Regardless of this debate, however, it is the truth of figure skating evaluation that it is gendered and set up to show male skaters as more capable. By assigning men's scores higher multiplication factors, allowing them to skate for longer, and banning women from performing certain elements, the scoring system perpetuates the idea of men as superior athletes by making it practically impossible for a woman to receive the same marks, thus protecting the men's masculinity. This system has been evolving over the years and is perhaps all the more complex for the fact that it tries to objectively evaluate an artistic and, therefore, subjective sport while also perpetuating gendered expectations. For the purposes of this thesis, I will only give a very brief overview of the basic structure of individual competitions and scoring practices that will be relevant later in the thesis, as well as the gender-specific conventions and officially imposed limitations which play a role in how gender displays are formed in figure skating.

Currently, each individual performance is evaluated on the grounds of elements (Technical Element Score; TES) and components (Program Component Score; PCS). Elements include jumps, spins, and step sequences. Each element has a basic value, and depending on how well or badly it was performed, points are added or subtracted. This is called a Grade of Execution (GOE), and it currently ranges from 5 to -5 points (see Fig1). GOE brings an element of artistic evaluation because aesthetically pleasing actions, such as a creative entry into a jump or a clean landing, can earn a skater a higher GOE. GOE is meant to encourage the skater to choose those jumps for his program which he can perform well rather than attempting more complex elements purely for their higher base value. For example, the famously difficult triple Axel jump has a base value of 8.0 pts. Theoretically, executing it very badly can bring its value down to 3.0, but performing it very well can bring it up to 13.0 pts. Therefore, while strength, consistency, and the control of speed are crucial, accurately assessing one's abilities is even more so. On the other side of scoring, components represent the artistic part of the evaluation and include composition, presentation, and skating skills. They are scored on a scale from 0 to 10, to the maximum of 50 pts in the short program and 100 pts in the free skate.

Jumps, as an important part of figure skating, are most pertinent to this thesis, as they are traditionally seen as an expression of masculinity in figure skating due to the need for strength and speed in take-off and rotation (Lim and Ho 2023). The more rotations one can perform in a jump or a combination of jumps, the higher their scores and, typically, the admiration they receive. The ISU currently officially recognises six types of jumps. Ordered from simple to difficult, there are: toe loop (usually called toe), salchow, loop, flip, lutz, and axel. They are jumped as singles, doubles, triples, or quadruples (quads); however, quadruple jumps are extremely difficult, especially in combinations (such as quad toe – triple toe) and appear only among the best skaters. The last quad, the quadruple Axel, was a long-term goal of Yuzuru Hanyu, who famously wanted to execute it in the 2022 Beijing Olympics; this will be discussed later in this thesis. Regardless of Hanyu's efforts, however, it was only successfully landed in competition by Ilia Malinin (USA) later in 2022, shifting the next jumping challenge to quintuples (five rotations). Having an "arsenal of quads" at one's competitive disposal is considered a definitive advantage due to the points they can bring, and as the term may suggest, quads are often portrayed in a war-like, masculine manner in media (see Ho and Lim 2023) despite the fact that female skaters also perform them.

Short program (SP) and free skate (also free skating or long program; FS) are the two parts of figure skating competitions. For men, SP lasts approximately 2 minutes and 40 seconds and consists of seven elements. Because of its short duration, the SP has no room for error, as compared to the FS, which lasts roughly 4 minutes and 30 seconds, includes a wider range of elements, and has space for adding

or changing elements even during the performance. Generally speaking, in high-level men's competition, achieving over 100 pts in the short program; over 200 pts in the long program; or over 300 pts in combined total is likely to place a skater in the winning positions. As of April 2024, the world records were 335.30 pts for the combined total and 113.97 pts for the short program, held by Nathan Chen (USA); and 227.79 pts for the free skate, held by Ilia Malinin (USA).

It is important to remember that figure skating is a judged sport, that is, a number of judges observe each program and assign GOE to each part of the program (see Fig. 1, where nine judges and their marks are listed). In addition, much like gymnastics or dance, it is also a sport where audiences are meant to focus on the athlete themselves, as opposed to focusing on a hockey puck, a javelin, or the bar in pole vault. Therefore, each skater places themselves in the position of a viewing object. For female skaters, this aligns with the notion that historically, "the female body has been the object of public surveillance and desire [...] displayed for popular consumption in films, paintings, television, and stage" (Murphy 2003, p309). The men's place, then, is traditionally though contestably in the position of the viewer. Male skaters, much like male dancers or K-pop idols, take the stage with the understanding that their bodies and actions will draw the gaze, attention, and likely judgement of their audiences, directly contradicting the heteronormative notion of men doing the looking instead of being looked at (Murphy 2003; Oh 2015; Tewksbury 1993). In terms of figure skating, the existence of the gendered scoring system could be plausibly explained as a protection measure for a male skater's masculinity; although the male skater puts himself into the arguably female place of a viewing object, the female skaters of the same skill level can virtually never outscore him due to the rules imposed by the International Skating Union.

The scoring system contains a number of differences depending on the skater's sex; the list presented here is not exhaustive. As of January 2024, women were not allowed to jump quads in their short program, although quadruple jumps are the highest-value elements. Women's free program is shorter (3:50-4:10 for women, but 4:20-4:40 for men), and their Program Component Scores are factored at 1.33 in the short program (as opposed to men's 1.67) and at 2.67 in the free program (men at 3.33; visible as "Factor" in Fig. 1). This creates an intentionally constructed gender difference as it means that even if a female skater performed the exact same program to the exact same standard as a male skater, her scores would be lower. In terms of jumps, the difference in rules may be explained by the fact that jumping (i.e. athleticism) has been considered "the masculine side of skating because of its perceived strength and quantifiability" (Lim and Ho 2023, p1), tying in with the previously discussed argument that focus on numbers lessens the issue of gaze and eroticism between male observers and male athletes (Adams 2011, p79).



JUDGES DETAILS PER SKATER
MEN FREE SKATING

Rank	Name	Nation	Starting Number	Total Segment Score	Total Element Score	Total Program Component Score (factored)	Total Deductions								
1	Shoma UNO	JPN	6	204.47	111.59	92.88	0.00								
#	Executed Elements	Info	Base Value	GOE	J1	J2	J3	J4	J5	J6	J7	J8	J9	Ref.	Scores of Panel
1	4Lo		10.50	3.75	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	3	4		14.25
2	4S		9.70	3.19	3	3	4	4	4	3	3	3	3		12.89
3	4F		11.00	3.14	2	3	3	3	4	2	3	3	3		14.14
4	3A		8.00	1.37	1	2	2	1	3	0	2	2	2		9.37
5	ChSq1		3.00	2.14	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	5	4		5.14
6	FCSp4		3.20	0.96	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3		4.16
7	4T+2T		11.88	x 2.58	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3		14.46
8	4T		10.45	x -1.36	-2	-3	-2	-2	0	-2	0	-1	-1		9.09
9	3A+2A+SEQ		12.43	x 1.94	3	2	2	2	3	1	3	2	3		14.37
10	StSq4		3.90	1.78	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	5		5.68
11	CCoSp4		3.50	1.05	2	3	3	3	3	2	4	4	3		4.55
12	CSSp3		2.60	0.89	3	4	2	3	5	1	4	5	3		3.49
			90.16												111.59
Program Components				Factor											
	Composition		3.33	8.25	9.25	9.25	8.75	9.25	9.25	9.25	9.50	9.50			9.21
	Presentation		3.33	8.25	9.75	9.50	9.00	9.50	9.25	9.50	9.50	9.50			9.39
	Skating Skills		3.33	9.00	9.50	9.50	8.75	9.50	9.50	9.00	9.00	9.75			9.29
	Judges Total Program Component Score (factored)														92.88
Deductions:															0.00

Figure 1: Scoring sheet for Shoma Uno (Japan) from the 2022 Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final, detailing the elements, components, and points of his free skate.

In general, given that many female skaters now perform quadruple jumps in singles or combinations and are equally varied in their artistic capabilities as men (most notably Russian Alexandra Trusova), these evaluation differences and element rules artificially keep women’s scores lower than men’s, perpetuating the belief that women are not as athletically capable as men. Although this thesis does not focus explicitly on gendered evaluation, it is nonetheless important to understand that in terms of scores, figure skating is inherently tilted towards showing men as the stronger skaters. Despite the calls for the adjustment of gendered rules, no such changes have been made as of February 2024.

2.5.6 Masculinity, figure skating, and Japan

Japan is currently one of the best figure skating nations in the world in both men’s and women’s individual skating. Between 2010 and 2023 in the men’s category alone, Japan has won 17 medal positions out of 39 at the World Championships (44%) and 6 out of 12 in the Winter Olympics (50%). Each medal stamps the skater as well as the sport and Japan with a mark of excellence, and as this thesis will later argue, among other displays such as public recognition and perseverance in the face of hardship, it is a competitive achievement that is a prominent way in which skaters’ masculinity is described and promoted to audiences by the media, supporting the ideals of individual excellence and professional success in the skating “industry”.

Japan first joined international skating competitions in the interwar period, but only became truly significant in the late 1980s when Midori Ito became the first woman to land the first triple Axel (a famously difficult jump) and in 1989 became the first non-Western skater to win a World Championship title. Along with China and Korea, Japan played a part in what Weinstein (2018) calls “a clear rise in Asian prominence in figure skating” in the 1990s and onwards (p144). For Japan, the steepest rise came in the 2007 Tokyo World Championship where Japan took gold and silver in women’s and silver in men’s individual skating. Although currently not the biggest sport in Japan, figure skating counts among the most watched as well as most popular. Following baseball, soccer, and volleyball, figure skating came in fourth as a favourite sport to watch with 9.9% (Statista 2023), and the men’s free skate during the 2022 World Championship had an average viewership of 6.5 million people in Japan (Video Research 2022). Furthermore, tickets to senior-level events, such as competitions, galas, or ice shows, are much sought-after and typically distributed via a lottery system.

Although many Japanese skaters made great achievements in the last decade, both domestic and international skating has been headlined by the two-time Olympic gold medallist Yuzuru Hanyu, who enjoyed a rockstar-level of fan support during his active career (Orlowitz 2022; Radnofsky and Cohen 2018) and continues to do so in his retirement (Kano 2023). The face of figure skating in Japan and arguably worldwide, Hanyu’s rise and domination of the sport between 2012 and 2020 and the immaterial labour of his dedicated following both online and offline created a strong brand (see Fresco 2020 on fans’ immaterial labour and branding), resulting in endorsements worth over 13 million US dollars in 2019 (ESPN 2019).

This, arguably, created further advertising and endorsement opportunities for companies and lucrative partnerships for skaters. During the 2010 World Championship, Daisuke Takahashi performed surrounded by banners of Japanese, French, Italian, and German companies, with Japan taking approximately a half (Myramerida 2010), but during Shoma Uno’s performance at the 2022 World Championship, Japanese companies took roughly three-quarters of the advertising space and outnumbered non-Japanese corporations (Kostya i Ksyusha Abramovich 2022). While Canon and Olympus already advertised in 2010, the major cosmetics and skincare brand Kose Sekkisei only joined later as an advertiser and a skating sponsor (visible on athletes’ jackets), as well as releasing products with Hanyu as an ambassador. This may be because figure skating’s primarily female audience has grown alongside or arguably due to Hanyu’s popularity; Rowe and Gilmore (2010) argue that sports fandoms in Asia are fast-growing, highly consumerist, and celebrity-oriented, which makes them highly lucrative markets. While research or data on this topic are scarce in the context of Japan and figure skating, it is regardless pertinent to this thesis that rather than choosing a female skater, Kose decided

to promote with Hanyu. Also pertinent to this thesis is the fact that in March 2024, Hanyu became an ambassador for the luxury brand Gucci (Onate 2024), further showing the purchasing potential he represents.

Hanyu's career, much like those of Shoma Uno and Yuma Kagiyama, is reported both in Japanese and global media, though due to Hanyu's fan following and skating prominence, updates on his professional and private activities are more pervasive, detailed, and do not escape the influence of social expectations of the publishing country. Hanyu's supposed rivalry with America's Nathan Chen was much played up in the international media, especially before the 2018 and 2022 Winter Olympics (Ho and Lim 2023). However, as Ho and Lim (2023) found in their analysis of English-language and Japanese newspaper articles, this rivalry along with the construction of "Chen as athletic-masculine and Hanyu as artistic-feminine" (p8) was prevalent in English-language publications. Japanese outlets portrayed them as equals whose "masculinities are implicit in nationhood" (Ho and Lim 2023, p8), therefore, each skater's gold medal equated to the home nation's victory over the other. This corresponds to the theories presented in section 2.3 *Sport and sporting masculinities*, where sport, masculinity, and nationalism were shown to be connected (Lee 2015; Spallacci 2020; Yamamoto 2012). Also often discussed in media are the stereotypically masculine displays of overcoming obstacles and pushing through pain, especially when it comes to injuries sustained during practice or competition and performing in competition despite these injuries. Although these are not notions exclusive to figure skating (see Jerreat-Poole 2023 on media and athlete disablement), it will later in this thesis become evident that they do play a role in the construction of a masculine figure skating picture in the Japanese media.

Despite Japan's rise as a predominant force in figure skating, there is a gap in research into Japanese figure skating as such or its connection to Japanese nationalism, national symbolism, or masculinity; this thesis contributes to closing this gap by investigating the displays and representations of Japanese figure skating masculinities. It focuses on the three most important Japanese male skaters of the last decade; in order of age: Yuzuru Hanyu, Shoma Uno, and Yuma Kagiyama.

Yuzuru Hanyu (born December 7, 1994). Having won, among others, two consecutive gold Olympic medals, two World Championships, and four Grand Prix Finals, he is one of the most decorated athletes and most recognisable faces in figure skating. In 2018, he received the People's Honor Award from the then Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe for his achievements as well as giving "hope and courage to society" (Kyodo News 2018), and the victory parades in his home city of Sendai following his first and second Olympic gold drew around 100.000 people each in 2014 and 2018 (Mainichi 2018). A great part of his story is formed by his experience of the Great Tohoku

Earthquake in 2011, which damaged his family home and the Sendai skating rink. This experience started a career-long wish to bring strength and hope to the people of the damaged areas (Flade 2011), and he donated a part of his Olympic winnings to the reconstruction efforts (Japan Times 2018). In July 2022, at the age of 27, he retired from competition and later that year began his professional career in an ice show titled *Prologue*, a first-ever solo skating show, later to be followed by *Gift*, the first time a skater performed at the Tokyo Dome, and the *Repray* Tour (Olympics.com 2023). Famously strict about his privacy, he announced his marriage in August 2023 to the surprise of many, and in November, just three months later, announced his divorce, citing extensive media harassment as the cause (Asahi Shimbun 2023). Known for his international popularity, chase after the quadruple Axel, Winnie the Pooh tissue case, and breaking world records nineteen times, he continues to be regarded as one of the greatest skaters in history.

Shoma Uno (born December 17, 1997). A native of Nagoya, Uno is one of the most decorated Japanese skaters, including a silver and a bronze from the 2018 and 2022 Olympics respectively, and two gold and two silver World Championship medals. In 2016, he was the first skater ever to land a quadruple flip, and in 2017 the second after Hanyu to land a quadruple loop. The start of his 2019/2020 season was marked with falls and non-medal positions, most likely due to a coaching change and full-time training switch to Switzerland. Despite this, he finished first at the 2019 Japanese Figure Skating Championship, his first individual victory over Hanyu, whose popularity (as well as skill) arguably overshadowed Uno's achievements. He broke three senior-level world records, and his short program junior score from 2015 remains unbroken. Saying he is motivated by his coaches and rivals rather than his own personal goals (Slater 2023), he is known for his rather laid-back, quiet character, and love of video games, for which he runs a YouTube channel. This online presence has been a way to differentiate himself from as well as to share the joy of gaming with other people during and after the strictest COVID-19 years (Kano 2020), and arguably is also an attempt to diversify his one-dimensional public persona to include activities separate from figure skating. Currently aged 26, he is nearing the typical retirement age for competitive figure skaters.

Yuma Kagiyama (born May 5, 2003). Beginning his life in Karuizawa but later moving to Yokohama with his family, he holds, among others, a silver medal from the 2022 Olympics, three silvers from the World Championships 2021, 2022, and 2024, as well as gold from the 2024 Four Continents Championship. He has been coached by his father Masakazu Kagiyama, a two-time Olympian, since he started skating at the age of five. He is cited to look up to Hanyu, Nathan Chen, and especially Uno (Gallagher 2022; Yanai 2019). Missing most of the 2022/2023 season due to a foot injury, he made a return the following season with a bronze medal at the 2023 Grand Prix Final. He is known

for his energetic performances, skating speed, and more modern choices of music, including Michael Bublé at the 2022 Olympics and Imagine Dragons in the current and last seasons. At 20 years old, he is one of the few skaters globally able to score above 300 points in combined total and represents a new generation of Japanese skating excellence.

Due to the differences in ages, achievements, and popularity, the amount of available data and information decreases from Hanyu to Uno to Kagiyama, however, given that all three skaters participated in major competitions and experienced setbacks during the research timeframe (detailed in the next section), enough data exists to support this thesis. As is visible from the skaters' introductions, each of the three is a successful athlete, and thus attracts fan following and media reporting, making them ideal for the study of masculine displays and the construction of masculinity in Japanese figure skating.

3 Methodology and Analysis

In this thesis, I use media content to investigate displays and construction of masculinity via the “doing gender” and hegemonic masculinity theories. Multimedia content was chosen because it describes and visually relays gendered displays to audiences, thus perpetuating and reformulating the gender-appropriateness of different displays in the minds of the public. Furthermore, because this research speaks of athletes, the media reports often focus on similar situations and ask athletes similar questions (regarding, for example, victory, defeat, or injury), which makes comparison and double-checking possible. Furthermore, costume photography was utilised as the visual aspect is central to figure skating and skaters are typically most recognisable in their costumes. Lastly, because advertisements portray athletes in ways most appealing to the public in order to grow product sales, they were also employed as data to analyse which gender displays are thought to heighten the public’s interest. The data concerns the three most important Japanese skaters of the past decade, who were introduced in the previous section: Yuzuru Hanyu, Shoma Uno, and Yuma Kagiyama. Thematic analysis was used to create ten initial codes, which were then compiled into four themes: Legendary Status, Expectations, Looks, and Rivalry & Mentorship.

3.1 Data

The data in this research comprises newspaper articles, photography, and advertisements published between January 1, 2022, and December 31, 2023². The timeframe begins prior to the 2022 Beijing Olympics, where all three skaters competed, and includes the World Championships and Grand Prix series; the retirement, start of professional career, and private life developments of Yuzuru Hanyu; as well as withdrawals from competitions from all three skaters due to injuries. This provides a variety of situations in which gender displays can be observed, as opposed to focusing purely on competition.

Regarding data types, newspaper articles were collected manually from the online version of *Yomiuri Shimbun*³ on January 25-26, 2024. I chose *Yomiuri* for several reasons, most particularly its readership volume, gender distribution, and accessibility in terms of paywall; paywall was considered an important criterion as it affects how many people have access to detailed news and photography rather than just a headline. The original idea of using sports-related publications was abandoned due

² An exception for photography had to be made due to unavailable data.

³ Accessible at: <https://www.yomiuri.co.jp/> .

to the significantly lower number of monthly visits, the high rate of male readership, and paywall limitations. Furthermore, among the five largest newspapers in Japan, *Nikkei* was cut for its primarily financial orientation, and *Mainichi* and *Sankei* for the comparatively low number of monthly visits. This left *Asahi* and *Yomiuri* with roughly 70 million monthly visits, a gender distribution of approximately 70% men to 30% women, and 70% of readers aged between 25 and 54 in December 2023 (SimilarWeb 2024a, 2024b). Although *Yomiuri Shimbun* is considered more conservative than *Asahi Shimbun*, it was finally chosen for practical reasons. The search function in *Asahi* is limited, and many articles are behind a paywall but are not marked as such on the search results page. On the other hand, *Yomiuri* offers a time specification tool, allowing for a search within a desired time period, and locked articles are marked with an icon, making work with *Yomiuri Shimbun* easier.

In terms of article selection criteria, articles had to be open to the public (i.e. not behind a paywall), and the headline of the article had to include the last name or full name of at least one skater. Each article was manually downloaded as a PDF document automatically translated to English by Google Translate; due to the number of articles, carrying out translations personally would be impossible within the time allowed. Although this resulted in errors typical for this service and Japanese language (such as incorrect pronouns and mistranslated names), my language capabilities limited the effect of this issue. The collection resulted in 125 articles collected for Hanyu; 73 for Uno; and 46 for Kagiyaama, to a total of 244 items (see Table 1 for details). Some articles mention two or all three skaters in their headlines; they were counted as two or three separate entries respectively.

SKATER	FOUND	LOCKED	NO TITLE	COLLECTED
Yuzuru Hanyu	267	53	89	125
Shoma Uno	187	53	61	73
Yuma Kagiyaama	141	33	62	46
TOTAL	595	139	212	244

Table 1: Detailed view of the number of articles found during search ("Found"), articles inaccessible due to paywall ("Locked"), articles that do not contain the name of any skater in their headline ("No title"), the number of articles collected for each skater ("Collected"), and the total number of articles collected in each category ("Total").

In terms of photography, I focus on costumes and utilise those worn by the skaters during their short and free programs at the Beijing Olympics (February 2022) for all three skaters and the Beijing Grand Prix Final (December 2023) for Uno and Kagiyama. As Hanyu had retired from competition by the time of the Beijing Grand Prix, his costumes were supplemented by those from the Seoul Four Continents Championship in February 2020, his last individual international competition prior to the 2022 Olympics where both his costumes differ. These events were chosen for their time distance, as skaters often perform the same program for more than one season without a change in costume design, and their importance in the figure skating season, which makes them closely watched and reported. Photos were downloaded from Getty Images⁴ on February 21, 2024, totalling 12 items (see Table 2; continues on the next page).

SKATER	COMPETITION	PROGRAM	COSTUME DESCRIPTION
Yuzuru Hanyu	Beijing Winter Olympic Games 2022	SP: Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso	Black skates, black trousers. Light blue and white pleated top with a kimono fold, loose sleeves, intricate detail in golden feathers and silver rhinestones.
		FS: Heaven and Earth	Black skates, black trousers. Sky blue and purple loose top with a kimono fold, intricate flower detail in white and gold fabric along chest and shoulders, silver rhinestones. Black belt with golden detail, black gloves.
	Four Continents Championship 2020	SP: Ballade No. 1 in G Minor	Black skates, black trousers. White-to-sky blue gradient blouse top, gold belt, gold rhinestone collar, silver and blue rhinestone detail.
		FS: Seimei	Black skates, black trousers. Japanese style top with white swirl-detail fabric over a neon green underlayer, golden belt, gold rhinestone lines over chest, purple ribbons on bell sleeves.
Shoma Uno	Beijing Winter Olympic Games 2022	SP: Oboe Concerto	Black skates, black trousers. Dark blue-grey draped top with silver sequined mesh left sleeve.
		FS: Boléro	Black skates, black trousers and top with gold and silver rhinestone detail along sleeves, hips, and shoulders, forming a lead-like pattern.
	Grand Prix Final 2023	SP: Gravity	Black skates, black trousers. Dark grey and pale lilac top with white mesh sleeves, white embroidery along shoulders and chest, modest rhinestone detail.
		FS: Air on G String; Mea tormenta, properate	Black skates, black trousers. Black mesh top with one dark green strip across chest and left arm, plant-like silver rhinestone detail on stomach, modest white rhinestone detail.

⁴ Available at: <https://www.gettyimages.fi/> .

Yuma Kagiyama	Beijing Winter Olympic Games 2022	SP: When You're Smiling	Black skates, navy trousers. Navy quarter-sleeve collared shirt with gold rhinestone lines from shoulders to upper chest and along sleeve edges. Black belt, silver buckle.
		FS: Gladiator	Black skates, black trousers. Black mesh top with gold-bronze detail of chest armour, modest silver rhinestone detail on chest and wrists.
	Grand Prix Final 2023	SP: Believer	Black skates, black trousers. Black top with silver chainmail detail on upper chest and right arm, black sequin stripes, sleeves covering palms.
		FS: Rain, In Your Black Eyes	Black skates, black trousers. Black and deep purple draped satin top with loose sleeves.

Table 2: An overview of the skaters' costumes, including which competition the photography data was taken from and the physical description of each costume. "SP" stands for short program, the first part of a competition, while "FS" stands for free skate, the second, longer part of a competition.

Lastly, a selection of advertisements was used in the analysis. Although all three skaters, Hanyu especially, are connected to various businesses, products, and services, only two for each skater have been employed due to time constraints and the availability of data. Since many advertisements were difficult to date exactly, secondary news reporting and publication on a corporation's or athlete's official social media were used to choose those ads that are within the timeframe of January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2023. The cooperation does not have to be first published within this time; ongoing partnerships were also in the selection process.

Additionally, those companies were chosen which produced advertising material with the skater's name or face in them. For example, one of Kagiyama's sponsors is Artistic&Co, a company producing beauty and skincare tools. This would have been an interesting addition to the data, however, no material directly including the skater could be found as of February 2024, therefore the company is not among those chosen for this thesis. Lastly, the size of the advertising company, advertisement visibility and length of association also played a role. Hanyu was employed by Lotte Xylitol (chewing gum) or helped the Japanese Red Cross with promoting blood donations, however, these were shorter campaigns that did not garner as much attention as, say, his contract with Kosé Sekkisei, a cosmetology company that advertises with Hanyu online, physically on posters and banners, and also internationally. For the reasons above, these companies were chosen: Citizen Watch and Kosé Sekkisei for Hanyu; Mizuno and Colantotte for Uno; and Oriental Bio and Nojima for Kagiyama (see Table 3 for an overview and Appendix 1 for details).

SKATER	COMPANY	PRODUCT/SERVICE
Yuzuru Hanyu	Citizen Watch	luxury watches
	Kosé Sekkisei	skincare products
Shoma Uno	Mizuno	sportswear
	Colantotte	magnetic health devices (jewellery)
Yuma Kagiyama	Oriental Bio	health foods
	Nojima	electronics retail

Table 3: An overview of advertising companies connected to each skater and what product or service is advertised.

3.2 Data analysis

I used latent thematic analysis to identify four main themes. To find out how figure skating masculinities in the Japanese context are constructed in the media and presented to audiences, it was necessary to search for common themes in how the skaters' behaviour, choices, achievements, and other actions are portrayed in the data. These practices are rarely explicitly described as masculine or masculinising; the latent thematic approach allowed me to read into the data, consider gendered expectations present in the local context, and make inferences regarding the basal cultural assumptions on masculinity, femininity, and displays thereof. Although thematic analysis is not directly mentioned, the articles *Hyperathletic Artistry: Nathan Chen and Yuzuru Hanyu Performing Asian Masculinities* by Lim and Ho (2023) and *Disablement in figure skating: media, celebrity, spectacle* by Jerreat-Poole (2023) both use various types of media content to identify narratives underlying the performances and treatment of high-level figure skaters. They were used as guides for the analysis in this research.

Following the process guide for thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006), I familiarised myself with the data and created initial codes for repeating motives. The database function in the note-taking and organisational app Notion allowed for tagging each article with the appropriate codes, and its sorting functions eased navigation and code searches within the data during the analysis. For the newspaper articles collected from *Yomiuri Shinbun* (from here on "Yomiuri data"), ten initial colour codes were used: *legend*; *expectations*; *challenge-obstacle*; *fans-popularity*; *good character*; *looks*; *health*; *mentorship*; *personal life*; and a miscellaneous *interesting* category (see Figure 2 for details).

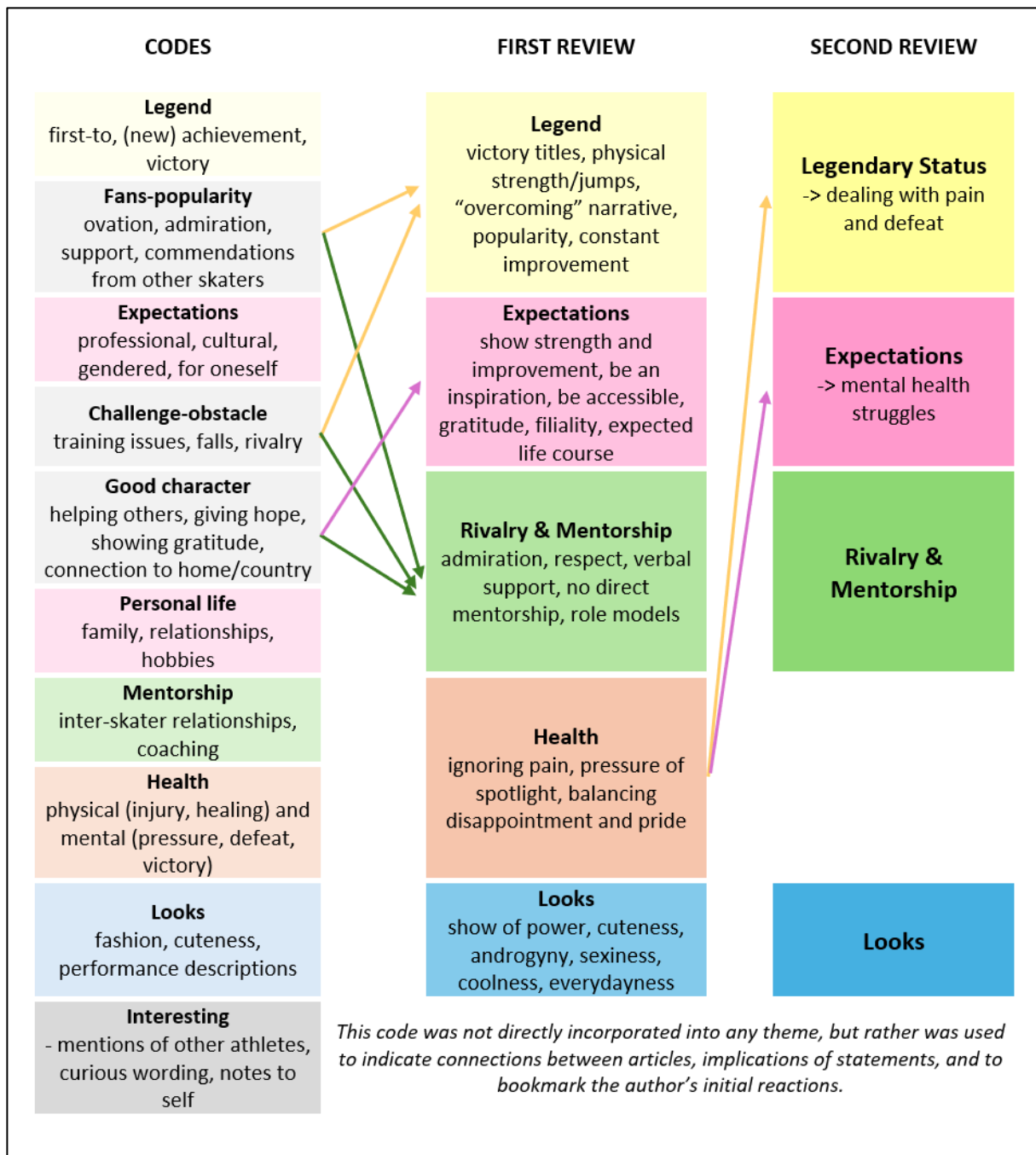


Figure 2: Visualisation of the thematic analysis where "Codes" denote the ten initial codes, "First review" shows the five themes formed after the first review, and "Second review" shows the final four themes. Arrows are used for codes that were divided among more than one theme. Non-arrowed codes were directly incorporated into themes of the same colour.

These codes were not decided upon prior to the first read-through but rather emerged during the reading process. Codes that appeared later or were modified in the first reading were later corrected, added, or deleted during the second reading. Photography data was individually described in a separate document and later incorporated into the *legend* and *looks* codes. Advertisements were also individually described and then assigned to the *looks*, *legend*, and *expectations* codes.

During the first reviewing process, I compiled the codes into five themes: Legend, Expectations, Rivalry & Mentorship, Looks, and Health. Each theme was considered in terms of its similarity to or difference from the various types of Japanese masculinities (discussed in section 2.4) to determine what characteristics and displays formed the Japanese figure skating masculinity. Taking this comparison process into account, Health was separated and incorporated into other themes after the second review, resulting in the final four themes: Legendary Status, Expectations, Looks, and Rivalry & Mentorship. The process is visualised in Figure 2, and detailed results are given in the following sections.

3.2.1 Legendary Status

The analysis revealed that the three athletes (henceforth “Trio”) are consistently portrayed as exceptionally strong, competent victors: in possession of a Legendary Status. This was shown through a variety of verbal and visual ways which repeated throughout the data. In visual data (photography and advertisements), the Trio’s competency, fighting spirit, and powerfulness were common themes, and out of the 244 items in Yomiuri data, 149 were coded *legend* (61%). Even in the case of unsatisfactory competition results or unsuccessful jumps, the readers were reminded of the Trio’s other victory titles (“Olympic medallist”, “2022 World Champion”); of specific quadruple jumps they have achieved, attempted, or trained; of the pain they had to overcome to be able to compete (typically various foot injuries); or of widespread fan support and commendations from other skaters. In articles pertaining to competition, jumps (rather than expression, spins, or steps) were consistently mentioned in performance descriptions, as were Personal Best or Season’s Best results, if such scores were achieved.

Physical and mental strength are among the most important characteristics of this theme. Firstly, evidenced by descriptions of jumps in Yomiuri data and shots of skaters jumping in advertisements, physical strength in the form of (quadruple) jumps acted as the most easily discernible marker of a great skater even to those who may not be familiar with figure skating. Secondly, descriptions of improvement, constant training, and acceptance of defeat, either shown as background in advertisements or written in articles, portray mental strength worthy of a champion. Perhaps counterintuitively, physical injuries are not shown as signs of weakness. Rather, they are typically associated with training too hard and overcoming or simply dealing with said pain to compete, further supporting the physical and mental strengths capabilities of the Trio. Mental “injuries” will be discussed in 3.2.2 *Expectations*.

In connection to training and post-competition impressions, direct quotes from the Trio often included “striving” words. While clear expressions of pride and disappointment were uncommon, showing aim for further and continuous improvement was routine in the case of victory and defeat both. Kagiya’s first Olympic experience was in opposition to this in terms of honestly expressing excitement and pride, presumably due to his youth, shorter skating career, and the significance of the event. The “striving” words typically included working on jumps if the skater’s results were poor; and improving expression if they won or the competition. A large portion of the Beijing Olympics reporting concerns Hanyu’s chase of the quadruple Axel (a jump not successfully landed in competition until September 2022). In Yomiuri data, Hanyu’s effort to land this jump and the certification of it⁵ seems nearly synonymous with victory, the story of his goal in some instances overtaking Hanyu’s actual competition results. The jump is portrayed as a viable way to reach a (golden) medal in the free skate after Hanyu’s mistake in the short program which left him in 8th place, further connecting jumps with great results and continuous effort with Legendary Status.

Ovation and popularity also emerged as strong themes. Hanyu, as one of the best figure skaters in history and a rockstar-level celebrity in Japan, was especially lauded in terms of fan involvement (in the form of, for example, fan letters, fans going to pray to Hanyu-associated shrines, fans’ reactions online, and trending topics on social media). To a lesser extent, this is also true for Uno and Kagiya, though the sizes of their fanbases are limited and their activities less reported. Connected to ovation and strength are also the personal stories of the skaters, particularly Hanyu’s experience of the 3-11 Triple Disaster and Kagiya’s father falling sick. Both were children during these events which are portrayed as “trials by fire” in the sense that the skaters worked hard through difficult times to become champions. These narratives, as much as their achievements, seem to make the skaters popular and worthy of admiration, and the events will also be discussed in 3.2.2 *Expectations*.

Overall, the Legendary Status theme is most represented by the treatment of Yuzuru Hanyu. Due to his achievements and subsequent fame, the reporting on his activities and the advertising are much more frequent. Advertising especially can stray further from his own area of competency (skating), arguably due to the size of his following and resulting purchasing power. As opposed to Uno or Kagiya, whose endorsements and sponsors tend to be connected to sport, Hanyu has appeared in advertisements for bedding and chocolate as well as cosmetic products and watches, which will be discussed along with the personas he dons in these advertisements in the Looks section below. Based on the companies he advertises with and the attention he is paid by the media, it could be argued that

⁵ “Certification” here means that the jump was marked 4A (quadruple axel) on the scoring sheet. If a jump is not landed cleanly, it may be downgraded (4A -> 3A) or certified but with a low Grade of Execution (discussed in 2.5.5 *Gendered Rules, Evaluation, and Scoring*).

Hanyu has transcended his athlete identity, however legendary, and become a celebrity. I further explore the implications of this in the following section.

3.2.2 Expectations

Although this theme is titled “Expectations”, it is important to state that expectations are rarely, if ever, plainly stated in the data. Furthermore, many of the concepts discussed below are directly connected to those mentioned in Legendary Status, however, Expectations include more of the Trio’s private life and out-of-competition character as well as qualities linked to competition.

The skaters are consistently portrayed as idols and sources of inspiration. Based in their victories or private life experiences, the motives of strength and improvement appeared across Yomiuri data as well as in Uno’s Colantotte ad in connection with the notion – an unspoken expectation – that after a fall, a defeat, or a disaster, the skater will rise and improve, inspiring others to do the same. Hanyu’s connection with the 3-11 Disaster was discussed often and his efforts for rebuilding have been tied to him from the beginning of his active career and remained ongoing after his retirement. Articles told this story supported by accounts from his previous coaches, teachers, or persons unrelated to Hanyu personally who lived in the affected areas. These persons speak of Hanyu as a symbol of hope and strength, a narrative supported by further details of Hanyu’s experiences of the 3-11 Disaster and subsequent issues with searching for training spaces outside his damaged hometown rink. Furthermore, for Kagiya, the story of his father and coach, who represented Japan in Olympic figure skating, also became a part of the narrative. Kagiya’s father fell sick when Kagiya was young, and his physical improvement became, according to Yomiuri data, Kagiya’s motivation for skating. Their experiences inspired improvement in themselves in order to help others.

In addition to the previous paragraph, all three skaters are shown to be admired by young people, including Kagiya’s classmates, children at an orphanage Uno visited, and new skaters whom Hanyu helped coach. In short, Yomiuri data portrays the Trio as good people who engage in good deeds and spark good efforts. This is what differentiates “strength and improvement” in Legendary Status from “strength and improvement” in Expectations. In Legendary Status, these qualities are stones on which rests the overarching persona of a victorious athlete; in Expectations, the “always good” professional and personal activities of the Trio serve as sources of hope and guidance for the public. Both understandings were practically never contradicted in the data collected for this thesis.

An aspect that is contradictory to the paragraph above, as well as the physical and mental strength notions proposed in Legendary Status, is mental health. The pressure connected to being a top athlete

with an inspirational reputation did not appear often in the data but was discussed candidly by Hanyu during the press conference where he announced his retirement. Saying that audiences cannot see the pain nor the athlete's "collapse" post-competition, he spoke of crying, inability to eat, dealing with physical pain and the limitations imposed by COVID-19, as well as "the existence of Yuzuru Hanyu" as a burden and his ability to finally discover new things and new selves in his post-competitive life (Yomiuri Shimbun 2022c). These feelings are rarely mentioned by Uno or Kagiyama within the data. While it is possible they do not experience pressure and competition in the same ways, it could also be argued that in order to uphold the idol/inspiration (as well as Legendary) status, projecting an aura of "indestructibility" is key.

In terms of expectations for family and personal life, perhaps because *Yomiuri Shimbun* is not a tabloid, not much detail was given. However, there were instances where social expectations could be seen. Given the father-son relationship and success at the Beijing Olympics, Kagiyama was quoted to say, "I feel I was able to fulfil my filial duty to my parents by winning the silver medal", and he spoke on several occasions about his happiness that he could achieve an Olympic medal when his father could not (Yomiuri Shimbun 2022d). Similarly, the "third son" narrative (Yomiuri Shimbun 2022e) regarding Kagiyama was also discussed during the Olympics, where "third son" marked Kagiyama as the top Japanese skater to follow in Hanyu's and Uno's footsteps. Both situations echo the manner in which family businesses work, where the younger generation learns from their elders, inherits their efforts and continues the family tradition. This narrative will be further expanded in 4. *Discussion*.

Although only addressed in three articles, Hanyu's surprise marriage and subsequent divorce three months later is nevertheless pertinent to this thesis. Arguably following the life cycle expected in Japan, Hanyu got married after establishing himself professionally, however, the divorce contradicts this life cycle. Hanyu cited media harassment as a reason for this divorce, supporting the idea that he became a celebrity rather than remaining an athlete, which was discussed in the previous section. Celebrity harassment is not a new notion and a certain presupposition that people are interested in the private lives of athletes and celebrities is mentioned in Yomiuri data regarding Moshi-Moshi videos, an Olympics campaign where athletes filmed a video pretending to call somebody to share their Olympic experiences. These videos were meant to "communicate the appeal of the Olympics which goes beyond athletic results" (Yomiuri Shimbun 2022f) and create a sense of closeness during a COVID-19 pandemic-era sporting event. This mirage of normalcy and a notion of athletes being accessible, friendly, and "one of us" are also upheld in a selection of advertisements and will be discussed in 3.2.3 *Looks*.

Generally speaking, expectations in the data did not focus on good results, but rather on inspirational behaviour and continual show of strength and competency. Social expectations regarding family and relationships were not shown often, possibly due to the type of reporting *Yomiuri Shimbun* engages in, but aspects such as filiality, inheriting a “business”, and marriage were touched upon. Given how indirectly expectations were expressed in the data, these aspects will be expanded upon in *Discussion*.

3.2.3 Looks

Because figure skating is a highly visual sport and appearance acts as one of the most obvious markers of gender, Looks are a theme central to this thesis. There were many aesthetic variations in how the Trio was described in text in *Yomiuri* data, the ways they were styled and shot in advertisements, and what costumes they chose for their performances. Within the data, Hanyu appeared to be an outlier in terms of his androgyny, but all three skaters were to a certain degree subject to three basic visualisations: the powerful competitor; the ethereal spirit; and the cute boyfriend. This is true for all types of data utilised in this thesis, and two or all visualisations can appear in the advertising material for a single company.

The “powerful competitor” could be considered to support the Legendary Status of a skater as well as answering the idol aspect of Expectations. In costuming, Uno and Kagiyama both appear in several instances in all-dark (though not always all-black) ensembles, contrasting starkly with the white ice as a black formal suit would; Kagiyama does skate once in a suit-style costume and once in a collared shirt. In some of his advertisements for Citizen (watches), Hanyu appears in a dark suit and a watch, lending him the appearance of a high-profile businessman. Similarly, while Uno is shot to project his athleticism and focus in both Mizuno (sportswear) and Colantotte (health jewellery) material, Kagiyama confidently shows off his skills for Oriental Bio (health foods). In *Yomiuri* data, competitive performances are described in terms of jumps, speed, strength, and competency. Overall, this visualisation highlights the fighting spirit and capabilities of the Trio.

Secondly, the “ethereal spirit” is the most androgynous visualisation and, as stated above, appears most frequently for Hanyu. His costumes tend to be the most heavily decorated in rhinestones, embroidery, and pleats, and use more colour, primarily different shades of light blue. Various Citizen (watches) ads portray him in a flowy, beyond-this-world state, and a Sekkisei (cosmetics) advertisement for moisturiser styles him in a pale mint blue top and matching make-up. Though not in make-up, Uno is portrayed in a similar way for Colantotte, in a bejewelled lilac costume top, and Colantotte itself is a company producing health jewellery (though not discussed in this thesis, Kagiyama

is also sponsored by Colantotte). All three skaters are described in softer vocabulary in Yomiuri data when it comes to their exhibition performances⁶, including words such as “dancing”, “gliding”, or “flowing”, which are not used when describing competitive skating. This visualisation does not always stand apart from strength and competition; Uno’s lilac Colantotte ad features the slogan: “Challenge: The future starts here” (Colantotte ca. 2023). However, in general, the “ethereal spirit” seems to be designed to show off the beauty and dream-like unreachability of the skaters.

Lastly, the “cute boyfriend” visualisation is connected to the “one of us” notion proposed in Expectations. Appearing most often in advertisements, the skaters are shown as domestic, normal people, wearing comfortable clothes, and engaging in everyday tasks. Uno does this for his Mizuno sportswear advertisements and Hanyu for Sekkisei’s skincare products. Kagiya, perhaps due to his age, is portrayed more as a “cute boy next door” rather than “cute boyfriend”, showing his funny side for Nojima while Yomiuri data speaks of him in terms of being a good student and engaging in school activities. This visualisation gives the Trio’s public personas a new depth by showing them out of a high-stakes, competitive atmosphere, bringing them closer to the daily lives of the public. In direct opposition to “ethereal spirit” and even “powerful competitor”, “cute boyfriend” places the Trio firmly into the reachable world, by default making following in their footsteps, at least in some small ways, achievable for the regular person.

Overall, Looks encompasses the ways in which the Trio advertises themselves and is advertised by others to the public. Skaters typically choose or at least have influence over their costumes, and given how high-profile especially Hanyu and Uno are, it may be assumed that they have some decisive power in what companies they work with and what material they produce. Thus, the three visualisations are specifically crafted by the skaters and the companies to display a particular version of the Trio to the public, gender displays included. In terms of verbal descriptions in Yomiuri data, competitive performances are connected to physical prowess, denoting qualities such as speed of skating and visual impressiveness of jumps, while the entertainment-oriented exhibitions are more likely to be described in dance-like vocabulary. This disparity in descriptions as well as the three visualisations will be further expanded upon in *Discussion*.

⁶ The exhibition is a post-competition event where skaters who reached high positions perform a skate of their liking individually, and sometimes also as a group. These performances are not scored and could be serious, comedic, and use props or skating elements forbidden in competition (such as backflips).

3.2.4 Rivalry & Mentorship

Although very common parts of sports, Rivalry and Mentorship appeared rarely in the data. On the individual level, notions such as respect for the other athlete, admiration of their abilities, and desire to replicate their skills all point to a healthy competitive spirit and a drive for improvement rather than outright rivalry. Due to their skills and distinct styles, Hanyu and Nathan Chen (USA) are mentioned by both Uno and Kagiya as athletes they look up to more than athletes they need to overcome. However, on the national level, reporting on the Beijing Olympics sometimes curiously focused on the Trio while barely mentioning the victorious Chen. This could be understood as a means of protecting the skaters' Legendary Status, but it also echoes the findings of Ho and Lim (2023) who argued that medals in men's figure skating are a matter of national, rather than personal, achievement in Japanese reporting. Thus, highlighting the achievements of Japanese skaters while glossing over Chen's decisive victory would uphold the idea of Japan's excellence. Regardless, as this thesis focuses on gender displays and the construction of masculinity rather than international relationships or sporting nationalism, it could be argued that based on the data collected, rivalry is not a large aspect of skating masculinity in Japan.

While mentorship in the form of *senpai-kohai* (先輩・後輩) relationships is a deeply entrenched part of Japanese culture, it only appears a few times where the Trio or their coaches are concerned. This may be because the Trio trained in distant locations (Hanyu being based in Canada, Uno in Switzerland, and Kagiya in Japan), and the effects of COVID-19, which limited interactions, movement between training locations, and travel to competitions, also need to be taken into account. Though the Trio occasionally practised in the same place, met at events, and verbally supported each other (as reported in Yomiuri data), it would nevertheless be difficult to foster a true mentor relationship under these conditions. In terms of coach-athlete relationships, expressions of gratitude typical for sports appeared, but with the exception of the father-son relationship in Kagiya's coaching, the notion of mentorship did not seem to be of much importance.

As with personal relationships in 3.2.2 *Expectations*, it is possible that the type of reporting *Yomiuri Shimbun* engages in is not conducive to investigating the skaters' interpersonal relationships. However, given that rivalry is a common motif in sporting masculinity and mentorship an everyday aspect of Japanese culture, their limited expressions are interesting in terms of how Japanese figure skating masculinity is displayed and constructed, and both will play a role in the discussion below.

4 Discussion

Although the data analysis revealed several angles that would have been interesting to discuss in terms of gender displays and the construction of masculinity, this thesis will confine itself to arguing that the four themes discussed above – Legendary Status, Expectations, Looks, and Rivalry & Mentorship – result in a local complicit masculinity based in historical masculine traditions. The “doing gender” theory (West and Zimmerman 1987) and the concept of gender displays (Goffman 1976) are used to determine which appearances, actions, and characteristics are repeated and emphasised in the data, and how those notions connect to or divert from the hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005), that is, the salaryman masculinity. I argue that figure skating masculinity, rather than displacing the gender displays connected to salarymen, assimilates different Japanese masculine traditions with a wider selection of acceptable appearances and, to a certain degree, discussions of mental health. The adjusted looks can be found in costuming and advertisements, which are, along with the Trio’s achievements, the most visible aspects of the skaters’ lives. There, the athletes can be portrayed in a variety of ways, some of which would not be considered appropriate in daily life; the “ethereal spirit” is a representation of this. In terms of mental health, Hanyu’s candid answers regarding the pressure and struggles of being a top athlete bring a new depth to conversations regarding sports.

However, while these aspects exist, reading into the data reveals that the Trio still adheres to the expected life cycle in Japan in their own ways. Although the time and energy demanded of them certainly limits their educational efforts and interpersonal relationships while they remain competitive, I argue that the Trio nevertheless follows along an adjusted life cycle in ways expected of Japanese people in general or of Japanese men. Such concepts as filiality to parents, studying with the intent to continue onto university, dedication to their employment, and getting married after establishing oneself directly appear in or can be inferred from the data. This, combined with the numerous expressions of commitment, fighting spirit, “indestructibility” (see 3.2.2 *Expectations*) and overcoming hardships, shows an adherence to traditional masculine characteristics and gendered expectations that is hidden in often sparkly, weightless performances of musicality and strength. As such, figure skating masculinity here is connected to the regional/wider as well as local/limited masculinities (Messerschmidt 2018), where “regional” is understood to mean “Japanese”, and “local” to mean “Japanese figure skating”.

This chapter will discuss the traditional masculine characteristics as well as the adjusted life cycle in order to build a salaryman-adjacent form of complicit masculinity. It will be followed by the limitations of this thesis and potential topics for future research which stem from the results of data analysis as well as the discussion below.

4.1 Old-new masculinity in an old-new coat

As discussed in 2.4 *Japanese masculinities*, what (or perhaps, *who*) is and is not included in the definitions of ideal, hegemonic masculinity has changed periodically in Japan, depending on what the national situation called for and who held influence over culture. From the Chinese-origin *wen* and *wu* to the Japanese gentleman; from the devoted soldiers of the Empire to the corporate warriors fuelling Japan's economic rise; and from the "beautiful boys" to herbivore men, masculinity has been defined and redefined. Additionally, as shown in 2.2 *Hegemonic masculinities*, numerous descriptions of masculinity can overlap, coexist, contradict, and borrow from each other to maintain the power and predominance of men in different environments. Consequently, figure skating masculinity in Japan is arguably an amalgamation, contradiction, and result of the masculinities that came before it and coexist with it today. I argue that this masculinity in itself does not play a truly transformative role, but rather continues to promote old virtues in new ways, acting as a complicit masculinity, that is, a masculinity that only adheres to some markers of hegemonic masculinity, but still "passes" as masculine, thus receiving the benefits of patriarchy (Connell 2005; Messerschmidt 2018).

The characteristics of the "old-new masculinity" include commitment, devotion, fighting spirit, perpetual striving for improvement, overcoming hurdles and a certain abstinence from pleasure and enjoyment. They are visible in various forms – coats – in the salaryman masculinity (Dasgupta 2013; North 2011), military masculinity (Taga 2005), and *wen-wu*-based Japanese gentleman masculinity (Karlin 2002; Louie 2003). Just as salarymen were expected to work long hours, so the Trio is marked out by their dedication to long hours of training, and they share the narrative of pushing through pain towards victory with their soldier counterparts. The Trio seems to strike a careful balance between *wen* (文; literary, mental) and *wu* (武; martial, physical) as they are described to both put thought into their practice and athletic goals and also perform battle-like physical actions in order to ensure their, and by default Japan's, success.

In terms of sport, these notions are also present in Japan's national sport, sumo, whose wrestlers are expected to improve in skill and continue winning; a failure to remain on the top traditionally results in the athlete's retirement (Bonde 2014; North 2011). Much like other forms of Japanese masculinity, sumo wrestlers are expected to "keep calm and avoid displaying emotions publicly" (Bonde 2014, p108). This was visible in the reporting on Hanyu and Uno, who rarely expressed their joy or disappointment clearly. Kagiya, on the other hand, was reported as showing both enjoyment and sadness in regard to competition, during the Beijing Olympics especially. This disparity may be the result of limited data on in-person interviews, but it is equally possible that the age difference between

the skaters plays a role, making it appropriate for Kagiya to openly share and for *Yomiuri* to directly report the emotions of a high school student; emotions which might have been considered inappropriate for Hanyu and Uno to publicly express. However, the two narratives which I have found to be particularly important in marking the Trio as men and masculine are devotion and overcoming. Explored below, they are followed by the appearance of the skaters and their expressions of mental health.

4.1.1 Devotion to a cause

Gender displays are as much expressed and perceived via appearance as they are through actions (Goffman 1976), and in Japan, single-minded drive and devotion to a goal are highly valued masculine characteristics (Light 2003, p106). The data largely portrays the skaters as living an essentially ascetic life that is fully committed to their sport; there is little reporting on anything else. This seems peculiar, considering the advertisement opportunities and personal developments that occurred in the Trio's lives during the period; even commercial events such as ice shows did not garner much media attention. Similarly, topics such as hobbies, favourite things or personal relationships were rarely discussed. While this contradicts the interests of the Trio's fan following, it also supports the masculinising narrative of the Trio as fully dedicated to their craft.

Within the data, only Uno was mentioned to have a hobby, the already discussed gaming. However, even this was framed in terms of devotion: "Uno is known as an unparalleled lover of games and is a hardcore gamer who plays several hours a day" (Yomiuri Shimbun 2022b). A good skating example of this devotion is Hanyu's chase of the quadruple Axel; the process of training and attempting was well-reported, as was each failure and resultant continued effort. It drew a large media and public following in both Japan and in the international figure skating community, both because it was a historic effort and because of the "try and try again" nature that Hanyu displayed despite his continued inability to land the jump successfully. These futile efforts arguably garnered more admiration and attention both during and after the chase than if Hanyu had landed the jump, resulting in a certain awed respect for Hanyu. Hanyu's strength and commitment, much like Uno's devotion, were utilised and subsequently viewed as markers of his masculinity – gender displays – and the cultural importance placed on these characteristics resulted in acclamation and thus preferential treatment, as is typical of complicit masculinities.

Personal relationships, although central to the understanding and construction of gender, are basically never discussed in the data, even in the case of Hanyu's marriage and divorce. This may be because *Yomiuri Shimbun* is not a tabloid newspaper and attempts to preserve Hanyu's privacy, but relationships sustained during a competitive career could arguably be considered a distraction, contradicting the overwhelmingly reported dedication. Though the data in this thesis does not touch upon this directly, there is a sense that the skaters' continued commitment to their profession is taken as a part of their duty to represent, serve and fight for Japan. Therefore, during their active service as peace-time warriors on the global stage, personal activities such as relationships and hobbies would be frowned upon in the sense that the athletes are shirking their responsibilities to instead engage in personal pleasures. However, as already stated, the data presented here is insufficient for a fully formed argument; this notion only serves here as a potential catalyst for further research.

More than any other, it is the salaryman masculinity that is the most pertinent here in terms of comparison to figure skating masculinity, if we consider skating to be the Trio's work in the same way company business is to a salaryman. As was discussed in 2.4 *Japanese masculinities*, work is a descriptor central to the salaryman masculinity in what Dasgupta calls the "work/production/masculinity nexus" where, essentially, a man is viewed as masculine due to a display of productive, paid labour outside the home and his devotion to the company (Dasgupta 2013, p159; Charlebois 2015). Thus, following the schedule of company life, the Trio's practice may be seen as daily work; local competitions as performance checks; and international events as comparisons of entrepreneurial power on the global stage. By the virtue of showing their commitment to productive outside work in the manner of the salaryman, the skaters' claim to masculinity is automatically strengthened. This is what I meant by the "old masculinity in a new coat" in this section's title. When we look at figure skating masculinity, rather than seeing a modern "new masculinity in a new coat", we are arguably looking at older and continuing masculine traditions placed into an environment that is more flexible with its demands on appearance and lifestyle (discussed below).

4.1.2 Overcoming hurdles

In support of "devotion", the "overcoming" narrative takes a prominent place in the data to show the Trio's physical and mental strength as well as capability in dealing with obstacles. This "overcoming" appears in a variety of situations: struggling with a new jump, dealing with personal tragedy, or continuing after a poor score. The resulting feeling that one can depend on and place responsibility onto the skaters as men (external opinion) will be explored in the following section on the adjusted

life cycle. The masculine gender displays which I discuss here are primarily connected to the internal processes where one, upon encountering an issue, either lets the event transform them or actively works to transform themselves, producing a stronger, “unbreakable” self.

This personal, mental strength is portrayed very favourably in different types of data in an almost “hero against the world” type of narrative. For Hanyu, the two formative events are the 3-11 Disaster and his failure to cleanly land the quadruple Axel at the 2022 Beijing Olympics. Both have become key elements of his story which show how he has successfully dealt with a catastrophe and personal disappointment to then grow larger: taking bronze at the World Championship following the disaster and creating a sold-out skating tour after the Olympic season. Similarly for Kagiya, the illness of his father sparked a motivation to train hard, leading him in the long run to gold at the 2020 Youth Olympics and silver at the 2022 Beijing Olympics. The “overcoming” narrative, which stresses that mental fortitude in the face of hardship is a necessary step in reaching later achievement, is foundational to the Trio’s claims to strength and capability and marks them as men via these characteristics typical of traditional hegemonic masculinities. By displaying these characteristics and them being reported, the skaters solidify their masculine position in society and by default become complicit beneficiaries of the established patriarchal system.

The emphasis on the strength of character also explains the virtual absence of rivalry in the data, both in the form of “Japan vs the world” and “athlete vs athlete” which are typically found in sports reporting and discussions of sporting masculinities. Although *Yomiuri* reporting on competitions often uses battle-like language, with words such as “fight” and “overcome”, it is important to understand that the “fight” is generally not aimed at another skater or country, but rather the problem seems to be the skaters’ injury, insufficient training, a moment of fear, or the condition of the ice. It is never admitted that Japan or its athletes could have been bested. *Yomiuri Shimbun* seems to intentionally direct attention away from the shortcomings of Japanese athletes in what could be understood as a means of protecting the Trio’s masculinity and maintaining the public’s belief in the athletic excellence of Japanese men.

The resultant narrative, then, gives the impression that the path to victory is reached via an acceptance of what one cannot change (conditions of the environment) and, more importantly, a fight with one’s own abilities rather than a fight with another skater. Consequently, Japan and its athletes only need to plan more carefully and train harder to achieve victory. As Light writes on rugby, masculinity, and the Japanese educational system, there is a belief and expectation in Japan that “victories [are] secured through the display of superior will, endurance and single-minded commitment” rather than trick, clever, or spontaneous play (Light 2003, p106). These qualities, which represent important masculine

values, coalesce from different masculine traditions and are connected to morality, spiritual superiority, and perseverance (Bonde 2014; Light 2003; North 2011). One may observe that the *wen* (mental) type of strength is emphasised over *wu* (physical strength), as was the case with Japanese gentlemen. Simultaneously, the values are reminiscent of more militaristic masculinities which, although necessitating strength of the body, also stressed the strength of mind and character. Again, the production of a stronger, “unbreakable” self that is able to persevere through obstacles is the ultimate goal through which victory is reached. The defeat of an enemy seems almost secondary to this goal, and one’s masculinity is bolstered by the effort put into achieving it. Therefore, by reporting and repeatedly showing this narrative, *Yomiuri Shimbun* as well as the advertising companies are giving further credence to this gender display, confirming and perpetuating its social significance as a marker of masculinity.

4.1.3 Looking the part

As the most easily visible and immediately available gender marker, appearance is explored in both the theory of gender displays and the “doing gender” theory for its importance in how gender is expressed by individuals and understood by audiences (Goffman 1976; West and Zimmerman 1987). As was discussed in 2.1 *The “doing gender” theory*, a gender display indicates femininity or masculinity in a particular cultural setting, and when speaking of appearance, traditional displays that the audience may take as a gender indicator are, for example, the cut and colour of clothes, hair length, use of make-up, or the type of bag an individual carries. For the Trio, the outward markers of masculinity are visible in costumes as well as the goods they are put in connection with in their advertisements.

The periodic androgyny and colour involved could be seen as incongruous with the salaryman standard of black, white, and navy which make him fit in rather than stand out. However, this can be seen as a part of work responsibility if we consider costumes to be the skaters’ best business suits. The three visualisations discussed in 3.2.3 *Looks* – the powerful competitor, the ethereal spirit, and the cute boyfriend – sometimes play into the salaryman masculinity, especially with the competency and professionalism encapsulated in the “powerful competitor”. The “ethereal spirit” could be seen in terms of the legacy of beautiful boys media and thus echoing a different part of Japanese culture, however, the skaters do not appear as colourful or flowy outside of competition or specific advertisements. That is, the skaters only appear as “out of the ordinary” in their fashion choices when it comes to the most important moments of their employment – competitions.

On the other hand, in practice and advertisements that do not echo competition, the Trio appears in colours typical for the “cute boyfriend” and the current young adult Japanese male: black, grey, beige, and shades of blue, only sparsely decorated or patterned. Therefore, although the extraordinary appearance of skaters in competition is most easily visible in media and the most memorable, I would argue that in terms of everyday life and business, the skaters do not stray from the general gender expectations in Japan. Meanwhile, the more unusual fashion choices could be assigned to stage clothes and work responsibilities, thus leaving little influence on the accepted versions of appearance within masculinity in Japan. Additionally, by virtue of *not* looking unusual in daily life, the Trio fits into existing appropriate masculine gender displays and expectations.

4.1.4 Feelings and masculinity

In terms of “new masculinity”, Hanyu’s honest answers in regard to his mental health could be considered a break from the expected stoicism discussed above. While athletes may speak of competitive defeat or a slump season as catalysts for anxiety or worry, candid conversations on the pressure of expectations and their emotional and physical consequences are uncommon, and mental health remains a highly sensitive, if not taboo, topic in Japan. Mental health issues are poorly understood by the public, considered a private matter, and often perceived as a personal failing rather than a product of genetic factors or life experiences, resulting in persistent stigma, lack of public discussion and limited social contact with people suffering from a mental illness (Ando et al 2013). This would explain why Hanyu’s struggles were not reported upon past the initial press conference and only one similar comment was made by Uno when he expressed skating domestically was more nerve-racking than skating internationally (Yomiuri Shimbun 2023); however, this may also be due to the nature of *Yomiuri’s* reporting. Though the impact of Hanyu’s answers was likely minimal, it is nevertheless a new turn in what is acceptable for a top athlete to publicly admit.

In addition, and further opposition to the expectation of stoicism, expressions of emotion and portraying various feelings effectively is an intrinsic part of figure skating performances. While emotionality could be considered as a part of work responsibilities (much like costumes) or as an echo of beautiful boys media, expression is nevertheless a scored part of skating and thus figures in training plans and conversations of improvement. This marks (the show of) emotion as important and the fact that top figure skaters are among the famous athletes of Japan brings a possibility of increased emotionality to be viewed as acceptable among men.

Overall, the media attention to the dedication and continuous improvement of the skaters echoes and solidifies the expectation of and preference for men being strong, stoic, and committed. This agrees with Dasgupta's notion that the growing unavailability of permanent employment, rather than bringing about the acceptance of various forms and markers of masculinity, actually highlighted the social preference for stability in work and family in Japan (Dasgupta 2013, p81). As such, figure skating masculinity then perpetuates primarily traditional masculine virtues at its core while being admired and celebrated; it could thus be considered a complicit masculinity.

Simultaneously, the popularity of the unreachable, emotionally expressive, and at times dreamy top-level figure skating resembles the popularity of the androgynous beautiful boys manga (Lim and Ho 2023) as well as K-pop idols who, much like figure skaters, toe the line between hard and soft masculinity in their appearance and physical performances (Elfvig-Hwang 2022). This popularity may seem in opposition to the continuing preferences for masculine traditions, however, masculinities are flexible, and in order for them to survive, "specific masculine practices may be appropriated into [them]" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, p845). This may be exemplified by the rising acceptance of male skin care, beauty products, and variety in fashion – ways of giving old masculinity a new coat. Figure skating as a complicit masculinity, then, remains loyal to the traditional personality traits of Japanese men while enjoying wider freedoms its gender displays in terms of appearance and perceived emotionality.

4.2 The adjusted traditional life cycle

Stemming primarily from the theme of Expectations, I argue that the Trio's masculinity is shown and constructed via adherence to a reformulated version of the life cycle expected of Japanese males. As was discussed, actions can function as gender displays because they indicate an individual's gender to the audience (Goffman 1976). Furthermore, these actions tend to be repetitive because gender in the "doing gender" theory is considered as something maintained over time rather than achieved once (West and Zimmerman 1987), meaning that displaying masculinity today may not result in still being viewed as masculine tomorrow. Tipping a hat or slapping another person's shoulder could be considered small actions in which masculinity is repeatedly indicated in Western societies; larger actions may include climbing professional ranks, providing for a family, or taking care of house repairs.

In Japan, the life cycle dictates that a man graduates, finds suitable employment, and when he is well-established enough, he marries and inherits the *daikokubashira* (大黒柱) title, becoming the “pillar of the house” and household (see 2.4.1 *Salarymen and gender displays*). The three skaters, as top athletes, are primarily focused on training and competition which does not leave space for fully engaging in the activities typical for other boys and men their age, whether that is joining a baseball club in high school, graduating university on time, or entering steady employment. However, certain steps of the cycle appear directly or are substituted by different narratives that echo the traditional milestones. Directly reported actions include, for example, entering university or marriage, while aspects such as mentorship and continuance of family business are implied. The skaters’ masculinity, then, is displayed, affirmed, and reaffirmed by their, although partial, participation in the expected life cycle. This shows a degree of flexibility in this expectation and further supports my argument that figure skating masculinity is a complicit masculinity.

4.2.1 Stability, husbands, and families

Stability and dependability are some of the core characteristics that Japanese men are expected to if not possess, then at least display. In the case of a salaryman, the ability to provide and often be the sole breadwinner of the family is intrinsic to their sense of masculinity and to how one’s masculinity is perceived by others. This ability was and remains an important consideration on the part of the woman as well as the man prior to marriage. Within the data, there is no mention of any romantic relationships for any of the skaters except for the three articles regarding Hanyu’s surprise marriage and divorce.

Figure skaters cannot show their stability and financial capabilities as a salaryman would and thus cannot be defined in the same masculinising ways. What can be and is emphasised instead in the data is their devotion to training and, more importantly, the fruits of their productive labour – medals, high scores, new personal bests, and world records. These achievements arguably play a substitute role for a stable paycheck by giving evidence of the skater’s capabilities. Furthermore, the consistency of victories and improvements reported in the media (detailed in 3.2.1 *Legendary Status*) results in a perceived sense of stability and thus dependability, both of which are traits valued in men in Japanese society. This reaffirms the masculine position of the Trio and again ties them in with the culturally expected masculine display of becoming a steady, providing husband.

In keeping with the expected life cycle, following a decade-long successful career which established him as both one of the best figure skaters in history and a consistent athlete, Hanyu had been 28 years

old, a year into his competitive retirement and planning the first-ever solo skating show at the time of the marriage announcement. While his profession may not be viewed as a stable one, Hanyu's marriage can still be societally perceived as the natural next step in the life cycle, considering the consistency of and respect resulting from his skills and achievements. In simpler terms, he had established himself and his dependability before announcing his marriage, much like a new employee may wait a few years to solidify his position at the company before finding a wife.

It is interesting, however, that two out of the three reports came in the form of direct republications of Hanyu's marriage and subsequent divorce announcements, with no additional information, commentary, or quotes from people close to Hanyu. Again, this may be due to the nature of *Yomiuri's* reporting but given that marriage is viewed in Japan as one of the steps necessary in becoming a full adult (Dasgupta 2013, p104), it is unexpected that the event was not given more attention. It comes in opposition to the reflections and comments on Hanyu's efforts during the Beijing Olympics, which were reported in *Yomiuri Shimbun*, and included congratulations and praise from the writers as well as a wide range of individuals, including other Japanese and international skaters, fans on the internet and citizens of Tohoku (Hanyu's home region).

The divorce announcement, coming three months after the marriage news, was similarly underreported and went directly against the expectation of stability. Hanyu cited media harassment as the reason; the expectation of this was likely why the name of Hanyu's wife was not known until after the announcement. *Yomiuri Shimbun* did not report on the divorce past the initial republication of Hanyu's statement, even though it became public that the woman was Mayuko Suenobu, a professional violinist with ties to Japanese figure skating. While the newspaper may have decided to not report on information that was not announced through Hanyu's official channels, it could also be argued that it was done to preserve Hanyu's image as an applauded national hero with a dependable character. However, because the data on the topic of personal relationships was scarce, no definitive conclusions can be drawn.

Overall, the constant portrayal of the Trio as capable, consistent victors works to fulfil the expectation of a stable male financial provider, thus assuring audiences of their masculinity and if not adherence, then at least striving towards the goals of the hegemonic salaryman masculinity. This, again, marks figure skating masculinity as complicit because the skaters participate in the characteristics of the hegemonic salaryman and thus benefit from the existing patriarchal system despite not displaying all its requirements (Connell 2005). It is a matter of further research to investigate how top Japanese skaters, male and female, are treated and perceived as they transition to their post-competition

careers and family lives, either keeping to or straying from the expected life cycle, and how potential discordant actions reflect on their masculinity and femininity.

4.2.2 Following in your elder's footsteps

The idea of younger generations taking their elders' place when the time comes is one echoed throughout cultures, Japan included. Much like the *daikokubashira*, other responsibility roles – such as taking over the positions of a director of a family business or becoming the head of the household on official paperwork – are traditionally passed from father to son and mark a man as a dependable adult. In the case of the Trio, I argue that there are two distinct versions of this process because there are two distinct versions of family: the family one is born into, and the Japanese figure skating family. Although the ties between and duties of members differ according to each version, the “inheritance” of skills and goals is alike and acts as a repetitive gender display – by either passing down to a younger male family member or accepting responsibility from a male elder, each skater participates in a culturally masculinising display. As the youngest of the three skaters, Kagiya is most reflective of the transitions between various milestones of the life cycle and how a young man may take hold of various roles to show his maturity, ability, and thus masculinity, displaying gender via his actions.

Firstly, as was already discussed, Kagiya's father Masakazu was also a competitive figure skater, representing Japan in the 1992 and 1994 Winter Olympics. After retirement, he became a coach to prospective skaters as well as, eventually, his own son. This echoes the tradition of parents teaching their children the family craft so that the family business can be passed down; in Japan, this typically means fathers apprenticing their sons much like Masakazu Kagiya did and continues to do with Yuma Kagiya. A part of this is also the filiality children are traditionally supposed to show their parents via their efforts to live up to the parents' expectations; this was shown directly in Kagiya saying, “I feel I was able to fulfil my filial duty to my parents by winning the silver medal” at the Beijing Olympics (Yomiuri Shimbun 2022d). The data uses both the father-son training combo and Kagiya's filiality to show the strength of the family endeavour and to connect the skater to a wider set of masculine societal expectations, by default marking Kagiya as masculine. Simultaneously, Kagiya himself displays his masculinity by continuing the skating family line and honouring his parents, as is traditionally expected of sons in Japanese families; the skater and the media support each other in showing and reaffirming those characteristics which are viewed as culturally appropriate for men.

Secondly, in the case of Japanese figure skating as a family, Kagiya was directly called the “third son”, following Hanyu and Uno (Yomiuri Shimbun 2022e). In the last ten years, Japan has reached a

previously unseen success in international figure skating with first Hanyu (born 1994), to be later joined by the three years younger Uno (born 1997), who in turn was followed by the younger-still Kagiyaama (born 2003). These age differences may seem too small for the skaters to be considered different generations, however, a skater's competitive career at the senior level usually lasts about ten years, if their physical condition remains good. Therefore, Hanyu can be considered the founder of this particular skating line, which has accounted for an unprecedented number of international victories, and a role model for Uno and Kagiyaama. The process of mentorship is not present here, perhaps because as was already discussed, the distance among the Trio's respective skating locations as well as the impacts of COVID-19 would have limited their interaction. Regardless, I argue that the passing down of figure skating excellence implicitly and explicitly echoes the passing down of a family business and thus helps create the image of the Trio as masculine. It will be interesting to observe the continuation or discontinuation of these narratives, should a "fourth" son emerge to follow Kagiyaama or either of the skaters become fathers.

4.2.3 Mentorship vs inspiration

Mentorship in the form of *senpai-kohai* (先輩・後輩) relationships is an intrinsic part of Japanese culture. As students and employees grow older, they are expected to take care of their younger counterparts and share the experiences and wisdom they gathered over time. Taking this into account, one would assume that the Trio would develop similar dynamics due to them being connected by their nationality, profession, and skill, however, as discussed in 3.2.4 *Rivalry & Mentorship*, clear instances of inter-skater mentorship do not appear in the data except in the form of reassurance (from Hanyu to Kagiyaama) and respect (among the Trio and other skaters, regardless of age). I propose that in order to support the image of the skaters in an adjusted expected life cycle, the mentorship situations they should have experienced among themselves were instead substituted in media by instances of mentorship to third parties and being an inspirational presence.

All three skaters are reported in situations where their status as mentors, mentees, or sources of inspiration is visible. In terms of mentorship roles, Hanyu is reported to help with teaching children and teenagers – the prospective figure skating generation – to skate at his home rink in Sendai, while Kagiyaama's and Uno's regard for the advice of their coaches, who were once competitive athletes as well, occasionally appears. Admiration is expressed for all three skaters, not only by figure skating fans but by also people who are in some way connected to the Trio. This may include classmates, other skaters, or younger people native to the skaters' respective home areas, who are inspired and guided

by the Trio's character and actions. These exchanges in skills and imitations of guidance serve to mimic the *senpai-kohai* bonds which are absent among the Trio and show the public these traditional relationships are, at least in some way, upheld. Similarly, by being reported as idols of younger generations, the three skaters gain the status of role models; while admiration and idolisation cannot substitute mentorship, it nevertheless in some ways fulfils the expectation of it.

Although the mentoring present here does not in itself serve as a masculine display, it shows that the Trio are taking their expected place in society and their life cycles. This marks them as socially well-adjusted, responsible adults, which in turn supports their claim to the role of a dependable man and husband, a valuable characteristic in Japanese culture (see 4.2.1 *Stability, husbands, and households*). Additionally, it further evidences the flexibility of the life cycle and supports the notion of figure skating masculinity as complicit, because although the Trio does not fully adhere to the mentorship expectation, they still receive social benefits by partially adhering to it.

4.2.4 Journey through education

Although not a prominent theme in the data, education nevertheless appeared, most pertinently in connection to Kagiya whose transition from high school to university happened within the data timeline. Connected to the expected life cycle where school precedes and determines employment, the importance of education and putting effort into studying is highly emphasised in Japanese society and impressed upon young people.

The youngest of the Trio, Kagiya is described in the data by his teachers as a shy boy who is engaged in school activities and gets along well with his classmates (Yomiuri Shimbun 2022a), fulfilling the expectation of a good student. Continuing the life cycle, he enrolled in Chukyo University in Nagoya. Although it is not mentioned in the data, Uno is also a student at Chukyo while Hanyu graduated in 2020 from Waseda University in Tokyo. Due to the demands of their profession, none of the skaters attended as a normal student would and they are not expected to continue directly into employment post-graduation; for the same reasons, they cannot finish their studies within the common time period. This, technically speaking, delays their life course, but via an adjusted life cycle they are nevertheless adhering to the educational expectations of Japanese society by skating while studying. Similarly to mentorship, education does not necessarily mark the Trio as masculine because education is expected of everyone regardless of gender. However, I would again argue that by participating in expected activities and reaching a university degree, the skaters solidify their image as responsible, reliable

individuals, which supports their claims to the stability and dependability characteristics discussed previously.

Overall, the matter of education is only rarely addressed in the data, leaving gaps in how education and top-level athleticism interact in Japan. It is a matter of further research to see if and how the importance of educational credentials in Japanese society extends into athletic circles.

4.3 Limitations and further research

Due to the qualitative nature of this research and the limited number of skaters, generalisations cannot be easily drawn on Japanese men's figure skating or masculinity in Japan in general. Furthermore, because the conservative-leaning broadsheet *Yomiuri Shimbun* was the source of the newspaper data set, it is possible that replicating this research with a more progressive publication or a tabloid would yield disparate results due to the differences in political leaning, readers' demographics, and primarily reported topics. As is visible in the results and discussion, *Yomiuri* does not report at length on homosocial behaviour, including the *senpai-kohai* dynamic, or on the skaters' personal lives, thus limiting the conclusions that can be drawn on these topics. Additionally, this thesis only investigated male skaters and so did not study how skating femininity is formed in Japan. Considering female skaters are physically strong, travel extensively, sometimes train out of Japan, and portray various emotions on ice, research into their perceived femininity or unfemininity would provide a useful comparison to male skating. Similarly, an investigation on gender displays and life cycles of skaters after their retirement would be able to show whether the idea of an adjusted life cycle continues after the athletes leave competition.

Furthermore, in limitations, there is a possibility of researcher bias and confirmation bias as the author is a fan of figure skating and had knowledge of this sport and the conversations surrounding it prior to starting this research. Lastly, due to the author being a non-native speaker of Japanese, there may be a case of misunderstanding the data or its intended meaning. Regardless, this thesis is an addition to the existing body of research on Japanese masculinities, sporting masculinities, and the displays and construction of gender in "feminine" sports, widening our understanding of what masculinity is perceived to mean.

5 Conclusion

In this thesis, I investigated how masculinity is displayed and constructed in Japanese figure skating by analysing multimedia content related to three key skaters of the past decade: Yuzuru Hanyu, Shoma Uno, and Yuma Kagiyama. Employing latent thematic analysis, I examined newspaper reporting, advertisements, and costumes through the lens of the “doing gender” and hegemonic masculinity theories (West and Zimmerman 1987; Connell 2005) to compile four themes which repeated throughout the data: Legendary Status, Expectations, Looks, and Rivalry & Mentorship. These themes were discussed in connection to previous and existing Japanese masculinities to argue that Japanese figure skating masculinity is, at its core, loyal to traditional masculine displays such as single-minded devotion to a cause, perseverance, and ordinary outward appearance. My findings also show that masculinity in figure skating is expressed and supported by the skaters’ adherence to an adjusted, more flexible version of the life cycle expected of Japanese men, where actions such as filiality, demonstrations of dependability, and the inheritance of responsibility roles act as masculine displays.

I further argue that holding to these traditionally masculine traits while also including some flexibility with the expected life cycle, expressions of emotion, and discussions of mental health result in a complicit masculinity, meaning that although figure skating masculinity does not fulfil all markers of the hegemonic salaryman, it emulates it enough to warrant social acceptance and public support. As is written in this thesis’s title, I propose that men in Japanese figure skating exhibit “tradition in a new costume”, that is, their famous costumed appearance works as a new outer shell for masculine traditions that are deeply entrenched in Japanese society. It is possible that the actions incongruous with salaryman masculinity, like the already mentioned emotion and mental health, are precursors to a larger perception shift in what is considered acceptable for men in Japanese society. However, the goal of my thesis was to contribute to the existing research on sports and masculinities, which primarily examines Western team summer sports, by investigating masculine displays in an individual winter sport in an Asian setting; it is a matter of further research to examine if and how (the portrayals of) these displays influenced the public.

As women and minorities continue to fight for equality, it is important to remember that social and cultural constraints are placed on everybody, including men. Mary Louise Adams, in her book *Artistic Impressions: Figure Skating, Masculinity, and the Limits of Sport*, writes that “as a category, masculinity remains far narrower than femininity” (Adams 2011, p71). Although she speaks of modern North America, her words nevertheless highlight the fact that women’s participation in “men’s” sports has been and is being given more attention than men’s participation in “women’s” sports. This is true of media and public discussions as well as research, all of which tend towards debates on summer, team,

traditionally men's Western sports and how women have been carving out a space for themselves within them. Far fewer focus on how men are welcomed, perceived, and treated when they enter traditionally women's sports or, as has been shown here with figure skating, sports that have been labelled as women's relatively recently. The findings of my thesis, which reveal how masculine tradition and constraints are carried forward in a "feminine" setting, contribute to balancing this inequality of attention. Furthermore, I would argue these findings also point to the importance of studying cases such as these. Because they hold the key to our understanding of *why* masculinity remains such a narrow category despite its ever-changing displays and construction, further research into them may indicate *how* this category can be made broader, richer, and more inclusive.

Because masculinities and their displays are as flexible as they are numerous, they offer great opportunities for new investigations connecting them to social and cultural backgrounds, politics, religions, and lived experiences across the wide expanses of countries, medium-sized city communities and small classrooms. These masculinities may echo or disregard past standards – or both – but they regardless have an impact on how we treat individuals based on our perceptions of gender, how these perceptions influence our striving towards equality, and how they maintain the patriarchal gender order. In the rich and varied context of Japan, masculinities have been transforming and adjusting as much as anywhere else in the world, each type – the salaryman, the gentleman, the soldier, the beautiful boy, and others – leaving, continuing, and interweaving their legacies. As I have shown in this thesis, figure skating masculinity is complicit in perpetuating old masculine virtues which have been limiting and prescribing the lives of Japanese men and women across lifetimes despite looking "new" on the surface. Further research into masculinities and femininities is crucial to our understanding of which "virtues" are as new, and thus as transformative, as they seem.

References

- ADAMS, Mary Louise. 2007. 'The Manly History of a "Girls' Sport": Gender, Class and the Development of Nineteenth-Century Figure Skating'. *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 24(7), [online], 872–93. Available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09523360701311752> [accessed 5 Apr 2023].
- ADAMS, Mary Louise. 2011. *Artistic Impressions: Figure Skating, Masculinity, and the Limits of Sport*. Toronto [Ont.]: University of Toronto Press. Available at: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kutu/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=4672843> [accessed 16 Apr 2023].
- ALLEN, Dean. 2014. "'GAMES FOR THE BOYS" Sport, Empire and the Creation of the Masculine Ideal'. In *Routledge Handbook of Sport, Gender and Sexuality*. Routledge, 21–9. Available at: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kutu/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=1644420> [accessed 28 Mar 2023].
- ANDO, Shuntaro, Sosei YAMAGUCHI, Yuta AOKI and Graham THORNICROFT. 2013. 'Review of Mental-health-related Stigma in J Apan'. *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences* 67(7), [online], 471–82. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/pcn.12086> [accessed 10 Apr 2024].
- ASAHI SHIMBUN. 2024. 'Skating Icon Yuzuru Hanyu Announces Divorce after 3 Months | The Asahi Shimbun: Breaking News, Japan News and Analysis'. *The Asahi Shimbun* [online]. Available at: <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/15060661> [accessed 27 Mar 2024].
- BEKI, Piroska and Gabor GECZI. 2017. 'Women on Ice - Gender Equalization'. *Applied Studies in Agribusiness and Commerce* 11(1–2), [online], 137–45. Available at: <https://ojs.lib.unideb.hu/apstract/article/view/6977> [accessed 28 Mar 2023].
- BONDE, Hans. 2014. 'SUMO AND MASCULINE GIGANTISM'. In J. HARGREAVES and E. ANDERSON (eds.). *Routledge Handbook of Sport, Gender and Sexuality*. Routledge, 106–11. Available at: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kutu/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=1644420> [accessed 30 Oct 2023].
- BRAUN, Virginia and Victoria CLARKE. 2006. 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3(2), [online], 77–101. Available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa> [accessed 26 Apr 2023].
- BROWN, William J. 2018. 'Celebrity Involvement: Parasocial Interaction, Identification and Worship'. In *Routledge Handbook of Celebrity Studies*. 255–70. Available at:

<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/edit/10.4324/9781315776774/routledge-handbook-celebrity-studies-anthony-elliott> [accessed 12 Mar 2023].

CHARLEBOIS, Justin. 2015. 'Herbivore Masculinity: Opposition or Accommodation to Hegemonic Masculinity?' In Shirley JACKSON (ed.). *Routledge International Handbook of Race, Class and Gender*. New York, NY: Routledge, 117–27.

COLANTOTTE. ca. 2023. "'Uno Shōma senshu ōen kyanpēn 'chōsen' mirai wa koko kara" ARAN mini [SHOMA 2023] kōnyū-sha gentei kyanpēn ["Shoma Uno Support Campaign 'Challenge' The Future Starts Here" ARAN mini [SHOMA2023] Purchaser-only campaign]'. *Colantotte* [online]. Available at: <https://www.colantotte.jp/campaign/shoma2023> [accessed 2 Feb 2024].

CONNELL, R. W. 2005. *Masculinities*. 2nd ed. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press.

CONNELL, R. W. and James W. MESSERSCHMIDT. 2005. 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept'. *Gender & Society* 19(6), [online], 829–59. Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0891243205278639> [accessed 8 Jan 2024].

CONNOR, Sandra, Kristina EDVARDSSON, Christopher FISHER and Evelien SPELTEN. 2021. 'Perceptions and Interpretation of Contemporary Masculinities in Western Culture: A Systematic Review'. *American Journal of Men's Health* 15(6), [online], 155798832110610. Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/15579883211061009> [accessed 26 Apr 2023].

COOK, E. E. 2013. 'Expectations of Failure: Maturity and Masculinity for Freeters in Contemporary Japan'. *Social Science Japan Journal* 16(1), [online], 29–43. Available at: <https://academic.oup.com/ssjj/article-lookup/doi/10.1093/ssjj/jys022> [accessed 16 Apr 2024].

DASGUPTA, Romit. 2003. 'Creating Corporate Warriors: The "Salaryman" and Masculinity in Japan'. In Kam LOUIE and Morris LOW (eds.). *Asian Masculinities: The Meaning and Practice of Manhood in China and Japan*. London ; New York: Routledge, 118–34.

DASGUPTA, Romit. 2013. *Re-Reading the Salaryman in Japan: Crafting Masculinities*. New York: Routledge. Available at: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kutu/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=1024581> [accessed 21 Mar 2024].

DASGUPTA, Romit. 2015. 'Re-Imagining the "Post-Bubble" Family in Tokyo Sonata and Hush'. In *Configurations of Family in Contemporary Japan*. Routledge, 27–38. Available at: <https://www.routledge.com/Configurations-of-Family-in-Contemporary-Japan/Aoyama-Dales-Dasgupta/p/book/9781138204775> [accessed 22 Oct 2022].

- DASHPER, Katherine. 2012. “Dressage Is Full of Queens!” Masculinity, Sexuality and Equestrian Sport’. *Sociology* 46(6), [online], 1109–24. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43497342> [accessed 28 Mar 2023].
- ELFVING-HWANG, Joanna. 2022. ‘Pretty Tough: Reading Visual Aesthetics of K-Pop Masculinities’. *Hallyu! The Korean Wave* [online]. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/92474165/Pretty_Tough_Reading_Visual_Aesthetics_of_K_Pop_Masculinities [accessed 12 Jul 2023].
- ESPN. 2019. ‘2019 World Fame 100: Who Are the Biggest Names in Sports?’ *ESPN.com* [online]. Available at: https://www.espn.com/espn/feature/story/_/id/26113613/espn-world-fame-100-2019 [accessed 23 Nov 2023].
- EZAWA, Aya. 2016. *Single Mothers in Contemporary Japan: Motherhood, Class, and Reproductive Practice*. Lanham: Lexington Books. Available at: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kutu/detail.action?docID=4509887> [accessed 20 Nov 2022].
- FLADE, Tatjana. 2011. ‘Hanyu Shoots for the Top’. *Golden Skate* [online]. Available at: <https://www.goldenskate.com/shooting-for-the-top/> [accessed 18 Nov 2023].
- FRESCO, Estee. 2020. ‘In LeBron James’ Promotional Skin: Self-Branded Athletes and Fans’ Immaterial Labour’. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 20(4), [online], 440–56. Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1469540517745705> [accessed 25 Nov 2023].
- GALLAGHER, Jack. 2022. ‘[ICE TIME] Yuma Kagiyama Takes On the Olympic Challenge with Heroes Yuzuru Hanyu, Shoma Uno | JAPAN Forward’. *Japan Forward* [online]. Available at: <https://japan-forward.com/ice-time-yuma-kagiyama-takes-on-the-olympic-challenge-with-heroes-yuzuru-hanyu-shoma-uno/> [accessed 18 Nov 2023].
- GILL, Tom. 2005. ‘When Pillars Evaporate: Structuring Masculinity on the Japanese Margins’. In James E ROBERSON and Nobue SUZUKI (eds.). *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan: Dislocating the Salaryman Doxa* [online]. Routledge, 162–79. Available at: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kutu/detail.action?docID=240595&pq-origsite=primo> [accessed 3 Apr 2024].
- GOFFMAN, Erving. 1976. ‘Gender Display’. *Studies in Visual Communication* 3(2), [online], 69–77. Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/reader/214186440> [accessed 8 Jan 2024].
- HALTOM, Trenton M. and Meredith G. F. WORTHEN. 2014. ‘Male Ballet Dancers and Their Performances of Heteromascularity’. *Journal of College Student Development* 55(8), [online], 757–78.

Available at:

http://muse.jhu.edu/content/crossref/journals/journal_of_college_student_development/v055/55.8.haltom.html [accessed 8 Apr 2023].

HATTERSLEY, Michael. 2006. 'Did Oscar Wilde Set Back Gay Rights?' *The Gay & Lesbian Review* [online]. Available at: <https://glreview.org/article/article-1009/> [accessed 20 Nov 2023].

HERRICK, Shannon S. C., Meredith A. ROCCHI and A. Lauren COUTURE. 2020. 'A Case Study Exploring the Experiences of a Transgender Athlete in Synchronized Skating, a Subdiscipline of Figure Skating'. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 44(5), [online], 421–49. Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0193723520919816> [accessed 28 Mar 2023].

HINES, James R. 2011. *Historical Dictionary of Figure Skating*. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press. Available at: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kutu/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=692304> [accessed 5 Apr 2023].

HO, Michelle H. S. and Wesley LIM. 2023. 'Asian Sporting Masculinities in Figure Skating: Media Representations of Nathan Chen and Yuzuru Hanyu as Rivals'. *Media, Culture & Society* 45(3), [online], 561–77. Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/01634437221140522> [accessed 29 Apr 2023].

HOLLANDER, Jocelyn A. 2013. "'I Demand More of People": Accountability, Interaction, and Gender Change'. *Gender & Society* 27(1), [online], 5–29. Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0891243212464301> [accessed 9 Jan 2024].

ISU. 2022. *ISU Statement on the Ukrainian Crisis Participation in International Competitions of Skaters and Officials from Russia and Belarus*. Lausanne, Switzerland: International Skating Union. Available at: <https://www.isu.org/media-centre/press-releases/2022-4/27825-isu-statement-on-the-ukrainian-crisis-01-03-2022/file> [accessed 20 Nov 2023].

JANSEN, S and D SABO. 1994. 'The sport war metaphor - hegemonic masculinity, the Persian-gulf war, and the new-world order'. *Sociology of sport journal* 11(1), [online], 1–17. Available at: <https://openurl.ebsco.com/srh%3ASRH.5650400B.E46809C3/detailv2?sid=Primo&volume=11&date=19940301&spage=1&issn=0741-1235&issue=1&genre=article&title=Sociology%20of%20sport%20journal&epage=17&doi=10.1123%2Fssj.11.1.1> [accessed 17 Mar 2023].

JAPAN TIMES. 2018. 'Huge Hometown Crowd Celebrates Olympic Figure Skating Champ Yuzuru Hanyu in Sendai'. *The Japan Times* [online]. Available at:

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/sports/2018/04/22/figure-skating/huge-hometown-crowd-fetes-olympic-figure-skating-champion-yuzuru-hanyu-sendai/> [accessed 18 Nov 2023].

JERREAT-POOLE, Adan. 2023. 'Disablement in Figure Skating: Media, Celebrity, Spectacle'. *Media, Culture & Society* [online], 016344372311595. Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/01634437231159528> [accessed 28 Mar 2023].

JUNG, Sun. 2011. 'Bae Yong-Joon, Soft Masculinity, and Japanese Fans: Our Past Is in Your Present Body'. In *Korean Masculinities and Transcultural Consumption: Yonsama, Rain, Oldboy, K-Pop Idols*. Hong Kong University Press, 35–72. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1xcrmm> [accessed 24 Apr 2023].

KANO, Shintaro. 2023. 'Figure Skating: Hanyu Yuzuru Stuns with Performance of "Gift" Show at Tokyo Dome to Sell-out Crowd'. *Olympics.com* [online]. Available at: <https://olympics.com/en/news/figure-skating-hanyu-yuzuru-gift-tokyo-dome> [accessed 20 Apr 2023].

KARLIN, Jason G. 2002. 'The Gender of Nationalism: Competing Masculinities in Meiji Japan'. *Journal of Japanese Studies* 28(1), [online], 41–77. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4126775> [accessed 7 Mar 2023].

KIDD, Bruce. 1987. 'Sports and Masculinity'. In Michael KAUFMAN (ed.). *Beyond Patriarchy : Essays by Men on Pleasure, Power, and Change*. Toronto; New York: Oxford University Press, 250–265. Reprint. 2013. *Sport in Society* 16(4), [online], 553–64. Available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17430437.2013.785757> [accessed 5 Apr 2023].

KOSTYA I KSYUSHA ABRAMOVICH. 2022. 'Figurnoye Kataniye. Chempionat Mira 2022 Goda. Proizvol'naya Programma Yaponskogo Figurista Somy Uno. [Figure skating. World Championship 2022. Free program of Japanese figure skater Shoma Uno.]'. [video clip]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rixeAfYkQo4> [accessed 23 Nov 2023].

KYODO NEWS. 2023. 'Olympic Figure Skating Champ Yuzuru Hanyu to Receive People's Honor Award'. *Kyodo News+* [online]. Available at: <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2018/06/fb5bec7b76bd-govt-to-confer-peoples-honor-award-on-gold-medal-figure-skater-hanyu.html> [accessed 18 Nov 2023].

MCLELLAND, Mark. 2003. 'Gay Men, Masculinity and the Media in Japan'. In Kam LOUIE and Morris LOW (eds.). *Asian Masculinities: The Meaning and Practice of Manhood in China and Japan*. London; New York: Routledge. Available at:

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kutu/detail.action?docID=240462&pq-origsite=primo>
[accessed 26 Mar 2023].

LEE, Jung Woo. 2015. 'Examining Korean Nationalisms, Identities, and Politics through Sport'. *Asia Pacific Journal of Sport and Social Science* 4(3), [online], 179–85. Available at:
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21640599.2016.1139533> [accessed 5 Apr 2023].

LEE, Woojun and George B. CUNNINGHAM. 2016. 'Gender, Sexism, Sexual Prejudice, and Identification with U.S. Football and Men's Figure Skating'. *Sex Roles* 74(9–10), [online], 464–71. Available at: <http://link.springer.com/10.1007/s11199-016-0598-x> [accessed 29 Apr 2023].

LEFKOWICH, Maya, John L. OLIFFE, Laura HURD CLARKE and Madeline HANNAN-LEITH. 2017. 'Male Body Practices: Pitches, Purchases, and Performativities'. *American Journal of Men's Health* 11(2), [online], 454–63. Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1557988316669042>
[accessed 23 Jan 2024].

LIGHT, Richard. 2003. 'Sport and the Construction of Masculinity in the Japanese Education System'. In Kam LOUIE and Morris LOW (eds.). *Asian Masculinities: The Meaning and Practice of Manhood in China and Japan*. London; New York: Routledge, 100-117.

LIM, Wesley and Michelle H. S. HO. 2023. 'Hyperathletic Artistry: Nathan Chen and Yuzuru Hanyu Performing Asian Masculinities'. *Dance Research* 41(1), [online], 1–18. Available at:
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/371099900> [accessed 14 Sep 2024].

LIONG, Mario and Lih Ching CHAN. 2019. 'Men and Masculinities in Contemporary East Asia: Continuities, Changes, and Challenges'. In Lucas GOTZÉN, Ulf MELLSTRÖM, and Tamara SHEFER (eds.). *Routledge International Handbook of Masculinity Studies*. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY : Routledge, 2020. | Series: Routledge international handbooks: Routledge, 143–53. Available at:
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781351676298> [accessed 26 Mar 2023].

LOUIE, Kam. 2003. 'Chinese, Japanese and global masculine identities. In Kam LOUIE and Morris LOW (eds.). *Asian Masculinities: The Meaning and Practice of Manhood in China and Japan*. London; New York: Routledge, 1-15.

LOW, Morris. 2003a. 'THE EMPEROR'S SONS GO TO WAR - Competing masculinities in modern Japan'. In Kam LOUIE and Morris LOW (eds.). *Asian Masculinities: The Meaning and Practice of Manhood in China and Japan*. London; New York: Routledge, 244-247.

LOW, Morris. 2003b. 'Conclusion'. In Kam LOUIE and Morris LOW (eds.). *Asian Masculinities: The Meaning and Practice of Manhood in China and Japan*. London; New York: Routledge, 81-99.

- MAINICHI. 2018. 'Over 100,000 Turn out as Olympic Champ Hanyu Parades in Hometown Sendai'. *Mainichi Daily News*, 22 Apr [online]. Available at: <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20180422/p2a/00m/0na/009000c> [accessed 18 Nov 2023].
- MANGAN, J. A. 1981. *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MESSERSCHMIDT, James W. 2018. 'Multiple Masculinities'. In Barbara J. RISMAN, Carissa M. FROYUM, and William J. SCARBOROUGH (eds.). *Handbook of the Sociology of Gender*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 143–53. Available at: http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-319-76333-0_11 [accessed 8 Jan 2024].
- MYRAMERIDA. 2010. '2010 Worlds FS Daisuke Takahashi'. [TV programme recording]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THUKSiFu92M> [accessed 23 Nov 2023].
- MURPHY, Alexandra G. 2003. 'The Dialectical Gaze: Exploring the Subject-Object Tension in the Performances of Women Who Strip'. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 32(3), [online], 305–35. Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0891241603032003003> [accessed 4 Feb 2024].
- NORTH, Scott. 2011. 'Deadly Virtues: Inner-Worldly Asceticism and Karôshi in Japan'. *Current Sociology* 59(2), [online], 146–59. Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0011392110391145> [accessed 20 Nov 2022].
- OGASAWARA, Yuko. 2016. 'The Gender Triad: Men, Women, and Corporations'. In Gill STEEL (ed.). *Power in Contemporary Japan*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 167–82. Available at: http://link.springer.com/10.1057/978-1-137-59193-7_10 [accessed 29 Apr 2023].
- OH, Miyoung. 2015. 'South Korea's Gendered Nationhood: A Case Study of Heavyweight Weightlifter Jang Mi-Ran'. *Asia Pacific Journal of Sport and Social Science* 4(3), [online], 237–50. Available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21640599.2015.1126949> [accessed 8 Apr 2023].
- OLYMPICS.COM. 2023. 'Figure Skating Hero Hanyu Yuzuru to Start Gaming-Inspired "RE_PRAY" Solo Ice Tour in Saitama'. *Olympics.com* [online]. Available at: <https://olympics.com/en/news/figure-skating-hanyu-starts-solo-ice-tour-repray-saitama> [accessed 18 Nov 2023].
- ONATE, Andrea. 2024. 'EXCLUSIVE: Gucci Taps Japanese Figure Skater Yuzuru Hanyu as Brand Ambassador'. *WWD* [online]. Available at: <https://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-scoops/yuzuru-hanyu-gucci-brand-ambassador-1236262421/> [accessed 22 Mar 2024].

- ORLOWITZ, Dan. 2022. 'Meet the "fanyus," the Passionate yet Chaotic Force behind Yuzuru Hanyu'. *The Japan Times* [online]. Available at: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/sports/2022/02/06/winter-olympics/olympics-figure-skating/yuzuru-hanyu-fandom/> [accessed 23 Nov 2023].
- PIEDRA, Joaquín. 2017. 'Masculinity and Rhythmic Gymnastics. An Exploration on the Transgression of Gender Order in Sport'. *Masculinities & Social Change* 6(3), [online], 288. Available at: <http://hipatiapress.com/hpjournals/index.php/mcs/article/view/2733> [accessed 28 Mar 2023].
- PLYMOTH, Birgitta. 2012. 'Gender in Equestrian Sports: An Issue of Difference and Equality'. *Sport in Society* 15(3), [online], 335–48. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17430437.2012.653204> [accessed 28 Mar 2023].
- RADNOFSKY, Louise and Ben COHEN. 2018. 'Japanese Sensation Yuzuru Hanyu Delights Skating Fans Once More'. *Wall Street Journal*, 10 Feb [online]. Available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/japanese-star-yuzuru-hanyu-takes-gold-in-figure-skating-1518853790> [accessed 29 Apr 2023].
- ROBERTSON, S. 2003. "'If I Let a Goal in, I'll Get Beat up": Contradictions in Masculinity, Sport and Health'. *Health Education Research* 18(6), [online], 706–16. Available at: <https://academic.oup.com/her/article-lookup/doi/10.1093/her/cyf054> [accessed 5 Apr 2023].
- ROWE, David and Callum GILMOUR. 2010. 'Sport, Media, and Consumption in Asia: A Merchandised Milieu'. *American Behavioral Scientist* 53(10), [online], 1530–48. Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0002764210368083> [accessed 29 Apr 2023].
- SIMILARWEB. 2024a. 'Asahi.com Traffic Analytics, Ranking, Stats & Tech Stack | Similarweb'. *Similarweb* [online]. Available at: <https://www.similarweb.com/website/asahi.com/#overview> [accessed 15 Jan 2024].
- SIMILARWEB. 2024b. 'Yomiuri.co.jp Traffic Analytics, Ranking, Stats & Tech Stack | Similarweb'. *Similarweb* [online]. Available at: <https://www.similarweb.com/website/yomiuri.co.jp/#overview> [accessed 15 Jan 2024].
- SLATER, Paula. 2023. 'Shoma Uno Grapples with Goals'. *Golden Skate* [online]. Available at: <https://www.goldenskate.com/shoma-uno-grapples-with-goals/> [accessed 18 Nov 2023].
- SPALLACCI, Arnaldo. 2020. 'Sport, Masculinity and Gender Relations'. *Baltic Journal of Health and Physical Activity (SpecIss(1))*, 12–21. Available at: <https://www.balticsportscience.com/journal/vol12/iss5/2/> [accessed 26 Mar 2023].

- SPENCER, Dale C. 2014. "“Eating Clean” for a Violent Body: Mixed Martial Arts, Diet and Masculinities’. *Women’s Studies International Forum* 44, [online], 247–54. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277539513001052> [accessed 4 Apr 2023].
- STATISTA. 2023. ‘Japan: Most Watched Sports 2023’. *Statista* [online]. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/793450/japan-most-watched-sports/> [accessed 23 Nov 2023].
- STORY, Corinne and Pirkko MARKULA. 2017. "“I Had One Year in Junior and Then I Was Too Old:” Structural Age Rules and the Girlification in Canadian Elite Women’s Figure Skating’. *Sport in Society* 20(9), [online], 1223–40. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17430437.2016.1269086> [accessed 28 Mar 2023].
- TAGA, Futoshi. 2005. ‘East Asian Masculinities’. In Michael S KIMMEL, Jeff HEARN, and Robert W CONNELL (eds.). *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*. 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States: SAGE Publications, Inc., 129–40. Available at: <http://sk.sagepub.com/reference/handbook-of-studies-on-men-and-masculinities> [accessed 29 Apr 2023].
- TEWKSBURY, Richard. 1993. ‘Male Strippers: Men Objectifying Men’. In *Doing “Women’s Work*. United States: SAGE Publications, Incorporated, 168–81. Available at: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kutu/reader.action?pq-origsite=primo&ppg=179&docID=1652019> [accessed 21 Feb 2024].
- VIDAL-ORTIZ, Salvador. 2009. ‘The Figure of the Transwoman of Color Through the Lens of “Doing Gender”’. *Gender & Society* 23(1), [online], 99–103. Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0891243208326461> [accessed 9 Jan 2024].
- VIDEO RESEARCH. 2022. ‘Heikin shichō ninzū 10 (taimu shifuto • sōgō) [Average number of viewers: 10 (time shift/overall)]’. *Video Research* [online]. Available at: <https://www.videor.co.jp/tvrating/> [accessed 23 Nov 2023].
- WATANABE, Hiroaki Richard. 2020. ‘The Human and Labour Factors of Japanese Economy’. In *The Japanese Economy*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Agenda Publishing, 89–144.
- WEINSTEIN, John B. 2018. ‘The Orient on Ice: Transnational Cultural Portrayals by Asian and Asian American Figure Skaters’. In Iris H. TUAN and Ivy I-Chu CHANG (eds.). *Transnational Performance, Identity and Mobility in Asia*. Singapore: Springer Singapore, 143–57. Available at: http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-981-10-7107-2_9 [accessed 10 Apr 2023].

- WEST, Candace and Don H. ZIMMERMAN. 1987. 'Doing Gender'. *Gender and Society* 1(2), [online], 125–51. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/189945> [accessed 8 Jan 2024].
- WEST, Candace and Don H. ZIMMERMAN. 2009. 'Accounting for Doing Gender'. *Gender and Society* 23(1), [online], 112–22. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20676758> [accessed 8 Jan 2024].
- WESTBROOK, Laurel and Kristen SCHILT. 2014. 'Doing Gender, Determining Gender: Transgender People, Gender Panics, and the Maintenance of the Sex/Gender/Sexuality System'. *Gender & Society* 28(1), [online], 32–57. Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0891243213503203> [accessed 13 Jan 2024].
- YAMAMOTO, Mayumi Ya-Ya. 2012. 'Development of the Sporting Nation: Sport as a Strategic Area of National Policy in Japan'. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 4(2), [online], 277–96. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19406940.2012.685489> [accessed 5 Apr 2023].
- YANAI Yumiko. 2019. 'Zen'nihon Jr ōja Kagiya Yūma ga kataru, akogareno Uno Shōma to raibaru Satō Shun [All Japan Junior Champion Yuma Kagiya talks about his idol Shoma Uno and his rival Shun Sato]'. *Sports Graphic Number Web* [online]. Available at: <https://number.bunshun.jp/articles/-/841655> [accessed 18 Nov 2023].
- YOMIURI SHIMBUN. 2022a. "'Gakkōde wa shai bōi'... 2-i hasshin no Kagiya Yūma ni bokō kara "sugoi" to kansei ["A shy boy at school"... Yuma Kagiya, who started in 2nd place, is cheered by his alma mater as "awesome"]'. *Yomiuri Shimbun Online* [online]. Available at: <https://www.yomiuri.co.jp/olympic/2022/20220208-OYT1T50333/> [accessed 25 Jan 2023].
- YOMIURI SHIMBUN. 2022b. 'Fan ni wa onajimi no "#UnoShōmaWIN"... gēmu suki naradewa no hasshu tagu ga teichaku ["#UnoShomaWIN" is familiar to fans... a hashtag unique to game lovers has become established]'. *Yomiuri Shimbun Online* [online]. Available at: <https://www.yomiuri.co.jp/olympic/2022/20220209-OYT1T50232/> [accessed 25 Jan 2023].
- YOMIURI SHIMBUN. 2022c. 'Kaiken de Hanyū Yuzuru "Ima ga ichiban umai n janai ka na" 'ningen to shite utsukushiku aritai'... ichimon'ittō [Yuzuru Hanyu at a press conference: "I think I'm at my best right now" "I want to be beautiful as a human being"...Q&A]'. *Yomiuri Shimbun Online* [online]. Available at: <https://www.yomiuri.co.jp/sports/winter/20220719-OYT1T50182/> [accessed 25 Jan 2024].
- YOMIURI SHIMBUN. 2022d. 'Kagiya Yūma "oyakōkō ga dekita kana to omou"... Chichi - Masakazu kōchi ni "Seichō shita sugata o miseru koto ga dekita" [Yuma Kagiya: "I think I was able to be filial

to my parents”... To his father, coach Masakazu, “I was able to show him how much he has grown”]. *Yomiuri Shimbun Online* [online]. Available at: <https://www.yomiuri.co.jp/olympic/2022/20220210-OYT1T50299/> [accessed 26 Jan 2024].

YOMIURI SHIMBUN. 2022e. ‘Hatsu no gorin de kagayaita “San’nan bō” Kagiyaama, ni-i hasshin de ikki ni shuyaku no za [Kagiyaama, the “third son”, shone in his first Olympics, starting in second place and quickly taking centre stage]’. *Yomiuri Shimbun Online* [online]. Available at: <https://www.yomiuri.co.jp/olympic/2022/20220208-OYT1T50316/> [accessed 26 Jan 2024].

YOMIURI SHIMBUN. 2022f. ‘Hirano Atomu ya Hanyū Yuzuru kara no “moshimoshi” dōga, JOC no nerai wa “tanjaku dōga de sapuraizu” [“Moshi Moshi” videos from Ayumu Hirano and Yuzuru Hanyu, JOC aims to “surprise with short videos”]’. *Yomiuri Shimbun Online* [online]. Available at: <https://www.yomiuri.co.jp/olympic/2022/20220216-OYT1T50198/> [accessed 25 Jan 2024].

YOMIURI SHIMBUN. 2023. ‘Uno Shōma, Hanyū Yuzuru ra ni narabu 6-do me no yūshō... “Gorin yori kinchō suru” zen’nihon de tegatai engi [Shoma Uno, Yuzuru Hanyu and others win for the 6th time... “I’m more nervous than the Olympics” Solid performance at All Japan]’. *Yomiuri Shimbun Online* [online]. Available at: <https://www.yomiuri.co.jp/sports/winter/20231223-OYT1T50203/> [accessed 25 Jan 2024].

YOUGOV. 2021. ‘The Most-Followed Winter Olympic Sports, by Men and Women’. *YouGov* [online]. Available at: <https://business.yougov.com/content/47124-the-most-followed-winter-olympic-sports-by-men-and-women> [accessed 18 Nov 2023].

Appendix 1: Advertisements

A. YUZURU HANYU

1. Citizen Watch (luxury watches) [accessed 2 Feb 2024]

Business ad - <https://hanyusan.tumblr.com/post/187629698632/missnfry-yuzuru-hanyu-x-citizen-watch-ads>

Notte Stellata ad - <https://www.citizen.com.hk/html/en/products/citizen-l/regular/em0657-80n.html>

Hope & Legacy ad - <https://twitter.com/axelsandwich/status/1467000347717554176>

Origin ad - <https://twitter.com/kailascaesal/status/1394318463640899586>

2. Kosé Sekkisei (skincare, cosmetics) [accessed 2 Feb 2024]

“Beautiful moment” ad - <https://www.instagram.com/sekkisei.official/reel/CjkVMcqBVjL/>

Mint make-up ad - <https://www.instagram.com/sekkisei.official/p/CwOkdshPV3w/>

Light blue ad - https://twitter.com/YuzuruHanyu_TR/status/1468518094909886466

Morning ad -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMwbqeCU2Uc&ab_channel=%E9%9B%AA%E8%82%8C%E7%B2%BE%E5%85%AC%E5%BC%8F%E3%83%81%E3%83%A3%E3%83%B3%E3%83%8D%E3%83%AB

B. SHOMA UNO

1. Mizuno (sportswear) [accessed 2 Feb 2024]

collection site: <https://www.tumblr.com/myjunkisyuzuruhanyu/tagged/mizuno>

2. Colantotte (magnetic health jewellery) [accessed 2 Feb 2024]

Grand Prix Final 2023 (dark green costume) -

<https://www.colantotte.jp/campaign/shoma2024>

Grand Prix Final 2023 (lilac) - <https://www.colantotte.jp/campaign/shoma2023>

Olympics 2018 - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4I7mTjT-](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4I7mTjT-Xg&list=PLgJYj7Rkt40ggU2Qu0Fua1kbyj1LTXSnC&index=11&t=7s&ab_channel=oricon)

[Xg&list=PLgJYj7Rkt40ggU2Qu0Fua1kbyj1LTXSnC&index=11&t=7s&ab_channel=oricon](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4I7mTjT-Xg&list=PLgJYj7Rkt40ggU2Qu0Fua1kbyj1LTXSnC&index=11&t=7s&ab_channel=oricon)

C. YUMA KAGIYAMA

1. Oriental Bio (health food) [accessed 3 Feb 2024]

“For better lives” ad - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwd6ofZyO4I&ab_channel=LIVE-Link

2. Nojima (electronics retail) [accessed 3 Feb 2024]

“Conference” ad - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBLXrAwL-sY&ab_channel=%E3%83%8E%E3%82%B8%E3%83%9E%E3%80%90%E5%85%AC%E5%BC%8F%E3%80%91%E3%83%81%E3%83%A3%E3%83%B3%E3%83%8D%E3%83%AB

“In store” ad -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZodhl1tB2k&ab_channel=%E3%83%8E%E3%82%B8%E3%83%9E%E3%80%90%E5%85%AC%E5%BC%8F%E3%80%91%E3%83%81%E3%83%A3%E3%83%B3%E3%83%8D%E3%83%AB