Japanese Female and ‘Trans’ Athletes: Negotiating Subjectivity and Media Constructions of Gender, Sexuality, and Nation

by

Satoko Itani

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Curriculum, Teaching & Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

© Copyright by Satoko Itani (2015)
Japanese Female and ‘Trans’ Athletes: Negotiating Subjectivity and Media Constructions of Gender, Sexuality, and Nation

Satoko Itani

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Curriculum, Teaching & Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

2015

Abstract

The focus of this thesis is twofold: 1) the construction of Japanese female athletes in ‘masculine’ sports by Japanese media in terms of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and nation; and 2) Japanese female and ‘trans’ athletes’ negotiation with Japanese gender and sexuality norms in the formation of their gendered subjectivities. A theoretical framework informed by feminist, queer, and postcolonial theories is used to analyze the discursive constructions and constitution of subjectivities of Japanese female and ‘trans’ athletes in the ‘masculine’ sports of soccer and wrestling. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was employed to analyze Japanese mainstream newspaper and magazines published between 2001 and 2012 and in-depth interviews with twelve Japanese female and ‘trans’ athletes in wrestling and soccer. The result of the media analysis illustrates that Japanese mainstream media used multiple normative and normalizing
discursive tactics to construct Japanese female athletes within patriarchal, sexist, and heterosexist
gender and sexual norms. These discourses were also mobilized in the reporting of international
competitions in which the success of Japanese female athletes was appropriated to construct
Japanese national identity in order to recuperate Japanese masculinity. The analysis of interviews
with female and ‘trans’ athletes illustrates their intricate processes of negotiation with male
domination of their sport, Japanese gender and sexual norms, the conflicting demands of athletic
careers, and the medicalized discourse of ‘Gender Identity Disorder (GID)’. The discursive
fissures opened up by these conflicting and oppressive discourses, however, provided a ‘third’
gender space in which ‘female sporting masculinity’ is recognized as the ‘norm’ and not as
‘queerness’. Although this ‘third’ space may be temporary, it provided female and ‘trans’
athletes a space to negotiate heterosexist and cisgenderist Japanese sporting spaces and the
society at large.
Dedication

to Keiko Itani
my mother and feminist scholar
who brought into my childhood
the concept of gender
which helped me survive navigate and resist
this sexist cisgenderist and transphobic world
Acknowledgements

I gratefully and sincerely thank Dr. Heather Sykes. My supervisor and a scholar with profound wisdom, knowledge, and compassion, who taught me a critical, decolonizing, and anti-oppressive pedagogy and scholarship by example. A great story teller and healer, who sustained and nourished me in the time of mental and physical breakdown. Without your support, I would not be here today. An outdoor enthusiast, skilled kayaker and mountain biker, who introduced me the magical Yukon, the land of midnight sun and endless trails. I am looking forward to continuing our journey together, now as a fellow scholar and friend.

Thank you Dr. Roland Sintos Coloma, Dr. Caroline Fusco, Dr. Tara Goldtein, Dr. Akiko Shimizu, and Dr. Ruben Gaztambide-Fernandez for agreeing to serve on my committee. I can never overstate how much I have learned and been influenced by your scholarships and teaching. I will never forget the day of my thesis defense. In the time of uncertainly and anxiety, you showed sincere care and gave me the confidence to become an independent scholar.

I would also like to thank the twelve brave athletes who generously offered their time to share their stories with me. I learned tremendously from your wisdom and courage. I promise, your stories will be written in Japanese in the near future.

Thank you KWKN sisters, especially Gina Park, who supported me throughout my dissertation journey with your unwavering friendship, work ethic, and the countless nights with music, swimming, and great food. You all understood with your heart the difficulty of being a PhD student in a North American university, being so far away from your home and having to work in English, the language that is so fundamentally different from our own.

Thank you Mittens Crew members. You generously shared your knowledge and wisdom to navigate through Ph.D. program in the institution where isolation often becomes the biggest threat to our work and health. I will never forget those weeks of writing intensives; I was always encouraged and motivated by your presence and generous support. I am the biggest fan of your amazing works, and I am looking forward to reading your thesis and future works.

Thank you Shawna Carroll: You patiently and skillfully edited this long thesis even when you were facing tremendous life challenges. It has been an honor and a privilege to know and to work with you in the past year. I am looking forward to walking the life with you. I am sure there will be challenges ahead, but I cannot be more sure that we will take on each challenge with deep care, wisdom, and respect.

Finally, thank you my father, Kenichi Itani. You always quietly gave me your trust and congratulated my achievement in your heart. Your dedication to the art of tenkoku is my great inspiration. Thank you my brother, Nobuyuki Itani, for being such an amazing brother ever since I can remember. I am looking forward to our time in the beautiful mountains.
Table of Contents

List of Tables .................................................................................................................. ix
List of Figures ................................................................................................................... x
List of Appendices .......................................................................................................... xi
Preface ............................................................................................................................ xii

PART I: SETTING UP

Chapter 1. Introduction ...................................................................................................... 1
  Background ..................................................................................................................... 1
  Research Questions ....................................................................................................... 6
  Chapter Outline ............................................................................................................. 7

Chapter 2. Literature Review: Situating the Current Research ..................................... 11
  Sport, Gender, and Sexuality ......................................................................................... 11
    Homophobia and Transphobia in Sports in North America .................................... 11
    Sport, Gender, and Sexuality in Japan ..................................................................... 16
  Transgression and Negotiation of Japanese Feminine Norms through Sport ............ 19
  The Social Construct of Ab/normal Sexualities in Japan ............................................ 21
    A Brief History of Queer Gender and Sexual Practices in Modern Japan .............. 22
    The Emergence of ‘Transgender’ Communities ....................................................... 27
  Nation, Body, and Gender ............................................................................................ 32
    Gendered Production of “Imagined Communities” through Sport ......................... 33
  Nationalism/s and Gender in Japan ............................................................................ 34

Chapter 3. Methodologies and Methods: Approaching Subjectivities of Japanese Female
Athletes in Masculine Sports ......................................................................................... 38
  “Masculine” Sports: Why Soccer and Wrestling? ....................................................... 38
  Theoretical and Interpretive Frameworks .................................................................... 40
    Subjectivity .................................................................................................................. 41
    Discourse and Power/Knowledge .......................................................................... 42
    Performativity of Gender/Sex and Abject Bodies ..................................................... 43
    Disidentification ........................................................................................................ 46
    Marginality/Coloniality .............................................................................................. 47
  Methods .......................................................................................................................... 49
    Data/Data Collection: Mainstream Media ............................................................... 50
      Newspaper .............................................................................................................. 50
      Magazines ............................................................................................................... 50
    Period of media data collected ................................................................................. 51
    Media data collection ............................................................................................... 52
Data/Data Collection: In-Depth Interviews ........................................... 53
Participants recruitment ................................................................. 53
Participants ................................................................................. 55
Data Analysis ............................................................................... 56
Data Translation ........................................................................ 56
Foucauldian and Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis ................. 57
Reflexive and Decolonizing Research ........................................ 60
Researcher Positionality? ............................................................ 60

PART II: MEDIA DISCursive CONSTRUCTIONS

Chapter 4. Media 1. Patriarchal and Heteronormative Constructions of Female Athletes in Masculine Sports and Its Troubles ......................................................... 64
Normative Construction: Heteronormativity and Binary Gender .......... 68
Patriarchal Gender Order: Feminization of Female Athletes and Valorization of Male Masculinity ............................................................ 69
“Thanks to him”: Men’s Contribution to Female Athletes’ Success ........ 76
Re-signification: Shifting Relationship between Japanese Femininity and Sports ...... 83
From Male Superiority to Female Peculiarity ...................................... 84
Yamatonadeshiko and Nadeshiko Japan ........................................... 90
Normalizing Female Masculinity: Recitation, Trouble, and Repair .......... 93
Nimensei (Two-facedness): Separation of Masculine and ‘Natural’ Feminine Self .................................................................................. 93
Dedication, Abstinence, and Assumed Heterosexuality ..................... 98
Taiikukaikei Women ................................................................. 102
Conclusion .................................................................................... 108

Interlude 1 .................................................................................... 110

Chapter 5. Media 2: Imagined Japanese & Colonial Amnesia .................. 113
Colonial Encounters and Anxious Body ........................................... 115
A Strong Spirit in a Small Frame: From *Yamatonadeshiko* to Nadeshiko Japan ...... 118
Women’s Soccer and Progressive America ..................................... 129
Moral *Nadeshiko* and Colonial Amnesia ....................................... 138
311 and Nadeshiko Japan .............................................................. 144
Conclusion .................................................................................... 148

PART III: DISCOURSE, NEGOTIATION, SUBJECTIVITY

Interlude 2 .................................................................................... 150

Chapter 6. Interviews 1: Navigating Sexism and Feminine Norms ............... 154
Self-Naming and Being-Named: Formation of Gendered Subjectivities of Female
Athletes in Wrestling and Soccer .............................................................. 157
Subject Formation through and against Masculine Constructions of Soccer and Wrestling .............................................................. 158
Negotiating Muscularity ........................................................................ 170
Normative Female Sporting Masculinity .............................................. 180
“Don’t be a woman” .............................................................................. 187
Subjectivity and Materialized Gender Norms ........................................ 194
Conclusion ............................................................................................. 203

Chapter 7. Interviews 2: Negotiating Cisgenderism, Transphobia, and Transnormativity .... 204
Identification, Disidentification, and Resistance to Transnormative/GID Discourses.. 206
Power/Knowledge: Performative Transsexuality and the Production of the Intelligible Subject ................................................................. 207
Languages and Intelligibility Before GID .............................................. 219
Negotiating Cisgenderism, Transphobia, and the Masculine Constructions of Soccer 225
Identifications, Counter-Identifications, and Disidentification with Gendered Constructions of Sport ...................................................... 226
Negotiating Gender Expressions: Jersey as Gender Neutral Clothes in Cisgenderist School and Society .............................................. 234
Normative Female Sporting Masculinity and Trans Invisibility .............. 239
Challenges in Coming Out from a “Masculine Female Athlete” to ‘Trans’ Intelligibility ........................................................................ 244
Conclusion ............................................................................................. 255

Chapter 8. Conclusion ............................................................................. 257
Visible ‘Trans’/GID Athletes, Invisible Bisexual, Lesbian and Transgender Athletes 259
Queer/ing Sporting Space ...................................................................... 263
Queer or “Third” Gender Space .............................................................. 266
Japanese Queer? Western Queer Politics and Translation ...................... 268
References .............................................................................................. 271
Appendices ............................................................................................. 280
List of Tables

Table 3-1: Number of Registered Athletes in Selected Sports in Japan ............................. 40
Table 3-2: Media Data Search Results ................................................................................. 52
Table 4-1: Number of Articles About Women’s Soccer and Wrestling in Japanese Major
          Newspapers ............................................................................................................. 66
Table 6-1: List of Study Participants ................................................................................. 157
List of Figures

Figure 5-1:  Okayama Yugo Belle’s Team Emblem  .............................................................. 135
List of Appendices

Appendix A. List of the Cited Media Articles ................................................................. 280
Appendix B. Call for Participants (English & Japanese) ................................................... 287
Appendix C. Information Letter (English & Japanese) ....................................................... 289
Appendix D. Consent Form (English & Japanese) ............................................................ 293
Appendix E. Approval of Research Ethics ........................................................................... 295
Appendix F. Semi-structured Interview Guides (English & Japanese) ............................. 296
In this thesis, Japanese names are presented as they would appear in Japanese; the first name follows the family name, unless the person publishes in English, in which case the family name will appear first. All translations from Japanese to English, both media articles and interview excerpts, were done by the author unless stated otherwise.

On May 28, 2014, the Japan Society of Psychiatry and Neurology announced that they changed the names of mental disorders in accordance with the newest edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) released in May 2013, in which the diagnosis of gender identity disorder (GID) was replaced with Gender Dysphoria. In this study, I used GID instead of Gender Dysphoria. This is not because of my stance on this issue of categorization and medicalization of gender identities, but because when all data was collected, GID was officially in use and thus, my participants also used GID as a part of their identification.
PART I: SETTING UP

Chapter 1. Introduction

“Hey, Itani, why don’t you grow you hair? You would look pretty in long hair!”

“Well, I have trainings, it’s too bothersome to grow my hair.”

“Don’t you have a boy you are interested in?”

“I’m too busy with track training, no time for boys or fashion.”

“That’s right...”

“Oh! I thought you were boy! Do you play sports or something?”

“Yes, I’m a track runner.”

“I see.”

Background

As a closeted gender-queer person until the age of twenty-one, I cannot recall how many times I had dialogues about my masculine appearance, lack of interest in boys and feminine fashion with friends, neighbors, relatives, and strangers. The conversation often ends “nicely” when they find out, or are reminded of, my status as a competitive runner, an athlete.

I was born and raised in a medium sized city in the southeast part of the Japanese main island, Nishinomiya-city. The city is located about 15 km west of Osaka, the second largest city in Japan. As an active “tomboy” with strong running legs, I have been called various names since I was young, from otoko-onna [man-woman] and onabe ['trans’ man\(^1\) or female-to-male cross-dresser], to boyish and manly. Interestingly, however, my masculine expression and physical strength became less problematic as I began to become more competitive and a

---

\(^1\) In the social context that onabe was used to refer to me, it refers to lesbian women who dress like men and work at bars for the service of mostly female customers. Due to their gender transgression and profession, onabe was often used in a derogatory way. See Sugiura (2007) for the detailed history of use of “onabe” in Japanese lesbian and transgender communities.
successful athlete. I also began to notice that in competitive teams, there were more girls with shorter hair who did not talk much about fashion or boys, compared to those in teams that are not training for high level competitions. There was sometimes even a demand on athletes by coaches not to be interested in fashion and boys. In some ways, competitive female athletes were expected not to be feminine, at least in my region. Thus, the competitive athletic space provided a hidden ‘safe’ space for me as a closeted gender queer person. Throughout my middle and high school careers, I grew up thinking that as long as I am an athlete, I do not need to explain my masculine appearance and lack of interest in boys and feminine fashion. Serious athletes must commit to athletics, and this was the only explanation needed to deal with gender policing and to avoid what might be interpreted as heteronormative conversations and social demands. Within the social and athletic spaces that I belonged to, there was no “lesbian” label used against competitive and masculine female athletes.

The ‘safe’ athletic space and the sort of “pass” an athletic identity had provided for me to have a masculine appearance and gender expressions without much scrutiny, remained deep in my memory; however, it began to emerge as a contradiction in my higher education in the US and Canada. Works in North American and European sport studies were beginning to theorize sporting spaces as very homophobic and explained how female athletes, particularly in more masculine sports, needed to make efforts to prove their “straightness” by demonstrating their heteronormative femininity (and male athletes to prove their manliness and interest in women). These theories grounded in North American and European sport cultures were inspirational and provided me with the theoretical tools to reflect on my experiences and the role of sports in Japan, differently. Yet, the North American and European theories of homophobia in sports did not connect to my experiences. I must pause and ask, if modern sport is an “arena of masculinity” (Pronger, 1992) and the site of reproduction and reinforcement of heteronormativity, and thus
very homophobic and transphobic, why did my experience differ from these tensions?

To answer this question, I do not resort to “Japanese culture” as the answer. It is not because Japanese society is more tolerant of diverse gender expression. Gender policing is still very much a part of my experience in Japan every time I go home, and I am clearly aware that my masculine gender expression is outside of Japanese gender norms. As its location in the Gender Gap Report in 2013 (105th overall) shows, Japanese society is still highly hierarchical and gender equity is far away from being achieved. ‘LGBTQ’ communities are still struggling to make their equity issues heard by policy makers and Japanese society at large. Furthermore, the ‘safe’ athletic space has an expiration date after all—relative freedom of masculine expression, or “lack” of femininity, is granted or tolerated only insofar as you are competing at a high level. Once you are outside of the common age group for elite athletes, athletic identity no longer functions as a “pass” to be excused from heteronormative feminine norms. Then, in equally if not more patriarchal and homophobic Japanese society compared to the US and Canada, how are Japanese gender and sexual politics articulated in the construction of female athletes, particularly in masculine sports? How do female athletes experience their gender and sexuality in sports? How do they negotiate gender and sexual norms and sport participation? I hope this study provides a partial answer to these complicated questions.

By addressing the above issues, I hope to contribute to Japanese, Canadian, and American scholarship in two major ways. The first is the issue of “whiteness” in North American sport studies scholarships. North American scholars have accumulated a wealth of studies that investigate and theorize the relationship between patriarchy, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and the participation and experiences of female and queer athletes (Anderson, 2005; Cahn, 1994; Caudwell, 2006; Griffín, 1992, 1998; Krane, 1997; Lenskyj, 1986, 1990; 2003; Pronger, 1992; Sykes, 2006, 2011; Sykes & Cavanagh, 2006). While there have been critiques of the whiteness
of sport studies and a resulting “explosion” of the analysis of whiteness, white identities, and white privilege in the past two decades (McDonald, 2005, p. 245), the theorization of homophobia and transphobia in sports have been largely based on the experiences of white, middle class athletes. Furthermore, while North American academic institutions continue to attract scholars and graduate students from around the world, there are very few publications in English about the experience of queer athletes in non-Western countries. Particularly, the experiences of East Asian queer athletes are almost entirely absent in these scholarships.

Now it seems as though the theoretical investigation of the relationships between sexism, homophobia, transphobia and the marginalization of female and queer athletes have been completed in North America, and the focus has shifted from theoretical to practical concerns about how to combat homophobia and transphobia in sports. After a series of high profile “coming out” events by elite male athletes in team sports, the discourse that “sports is no longer the last bastion of homophobia,” has even begun to emerge. Yet, after decades of mobilization of queer theories and the critique of whiteness in sport studies, the theoretical formulation of the “sport-homophobia-lesbian stigma” triad still remains largely North American, white, and middle class. With this study, I hope to add a significant and important piece of work based on Japanese female and queer athletes’ experiences, and to reinvestigate the “sport-homophobia-lesbian stigma” triad at the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and nation.

The second area I hope to contribute to is the issue of the translation of theories across geopolitical, cultural, and linguistic differences. Recently, Japanese scholars have also begun to take up the line of research about homophobia and transphobia in Japanese sports, mobilizing North American scholarships and theories (Fujiyama et al., 2010; Kazama et al., 2011). Yet, the

question of if and how gender and sexual politics in Japan are articulated in the form of homophobia and transphobia in sports, has not been fully considered.

Linguistic level translation too poses an important methodological issue. Terms like “lesbian”, “gay”, “bisexual”, “transgender”, “transsexual”, “queer”, “intersex” and even the alphabet abbreviation “LGBTQ” are imported and translated into *katakana.*³ These English words and concepts are mobilized in Japanese queer politics. Words and concepts of lesbian, gay, and bisexual in particular became common knowledge. Similarly, the word “homophobia” has been translated into Japanese as *dōseiai keno* [同性愛嫌悪], which means “hate against same sex love”, when translated back into English. However, there are Japanese identity categories now used interchangeably with English terms that have had unique social roles and subject positions. As I conceptualized and wrote the proposal for this study in English, translation posed a challenge when interviewing athletes. It quickly became clear that I had to start conversations with athletes by defining terms used in the interview. Most athletes have heard of the terms; however, there are often confusions about their common use and definitions. The writing up of this thesis also involves extensive translation from Japanese to English, as all of my data are in Japanese. Thus, in this study, there are multiple layers of translation from English to Japanese, and to English again. I must constantly negotiate (and fail) to translate the subtle nuances and histories of word usages.

Thus, theoretical, conceptual, and linguistic translations pose a significant challenge in this study. Yet, by writing through these difficulties and losses, I hope to contribute to the discussion of methodological issues raised by transnational scholarship in an increasingly globalized world.

---

³ *Katakana* is one component of the Japanese writing system along with *hiragana* and *kanji*. It is used for transcription of foreign language words into Japanese and the writing of the words that have been adopted from another language and completely or partially naturalized to Japanese language. For instance, English “lesbian” has been adopted to Japanese language and spelled in *katakana*--レズビアン[rezubian].
Research Questions

To explore the questions of discursive construction of female athletes in masculine sports in Japan and their subjectivities, it is necessary to first identify discursive fields examined in this study. I selected the mainstream media for this study, among numerous discursive fields that construct female athletes in terms of their gender and sexuality, such as medical, health, educational, media, and policy discourses. Mainstream media was chosen not only because of the significant influence it has to the society, but also because of its closer connection and contact to daily life of athletes and people who have contact with athletes. In investigating media construction of the female athletes, the study asks the following questions:

1. How do discourses of gender and sexuality in the mainstream media construct female athletes in ‘masculine’ sports?
2. How do the discourses construct the athletes as ‘normative’ Japanese women, while marginalizing others?
3. How do discourses of race, ethnicity, and nation intersect with the discourse of gender and sexuality to construct the female athletes in masculine sports who are national stars?

The analysis of these questions about media discourses guide the second part of this research concerning the subjectivities of female athletes in masculine sports. In order to investigate the ways in which their subjectivities are formed and negotiated in their daily lives, I need to ask another set of questions about how the athletes negotiate with social norms regarding gender and sexuality:
1. How do female athletes in masculine sports identify, counter-identify, and disidentify with the dominant discourses in terms of their gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and nationality as Japanese?

2. How do their gender, sexual, racial, and ethnic identities influence their negotiation with social norms and subjectivities?

By combining these two sets of questions, I aim to identify the ways in which Japanese gender and sexual norms, as well as colonial and national politics, construct female athletes in masculine sports, and how these norms and constructions impact on female athletes’ understanding of self and their negotiated constructs.

**Chapter Outline**

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter Two, *Approaching Subjectivities of Japanese Female Athletes in Masculine Sport*, provides a literature review and theoretical frameworks. Since there is a very small amount of work that has directly investigated homophobic and transphobic discourses in Japanese sports, the literature reviewed in Chapter Two is drawn from diverse fields of study and disciplines. The first section provides an overview of literature that has investigated the relationship between Japanese gender and sexual norms and women’s participation in sport. More specifically, the theme of these literature is grouped into following categories: 1) Japanese media constructions of women in sports; 2) the experiences of gender and sexual minorities in sport in Japan; and 3) the transgression and negotiation of Japanese feminine norms through sport. The second section introduces the key literature that has interrogated the discursive construction of sexual “deviants” in Japan and the development of Japanese queer communities. As there is no literature that closely interrogates the experiences of gender and sexual minority athletes in Japan, these publications outside of sport studies provide important
insights into the subject positions of Japanese queer athletes. The third section reviews literature that analyzes nation-state as an “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983/2006) and how the construction of an imaginary “national body” is an important component of nationalism and racism. This section provides an overview of how the reviewed conceptualizations of nation and nationalism are useful for my analysis of articulation of gender and sexual politics in sport at the intersection of nationalism. The last part of this chapter introduces the analytical and interpretive frameworks informed by queer, feminist, and postcolonial theories and their methodological implications for this study.

Chapter Three, Methods, introduces the research design and procedures including the data, data collection and data analysis. This chapter provides more detailed discussion of the above-mentioned issues of intersectional analysis of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity and nation and translation. In the last section, I shift my methodological concerns to that of researcher positionality. As mentioned earlier, my geographical movements from Japan to US and to Canada, were also processes of accumulation of educational and linguistic privilege. In this section, I discuss in detail how these privileges may be translated into power and oppression with respect to my participants, and how indigenous and postcolonial thinkers have provided tools to address this issue.

The results of the research are presented in Chapters Four to Chapter Seven. Chapter Four, Discursive Construction of Female Athletes in Masculine Sports: Normative, Normalizing Discourses and Resignification of Yamatonadeshiko, is the first part of a media discourse analysis. This chapter focuses on the discursive construction of Japanese female athletes in soccer and wrestling, in terms of gender and sexuality, by analyzing a Japanese major newspaper and a selection of magazines. This chapter is divided into three major sections that analyze significant ways in which the athletes are constructed in the media: 1) normative, 2) normalizing
(trouble and repair), and 3) resignifying. By dividing the discourses into three categories, I do not intend to claim that these are completely separate discourses in different media sources at different times, nor do they progress in a linear manner in one chronological direction. Rather, these categorizations are used to identify different elements in the discourses. Thus, there are many articles, phrases, and words repeatedly chosen for analysis in different categories. Some articles contain all three categories in terms of their discursive strategies and their effects.

Chapter Five, *Imagined Japanese and Colonial Amnesia: Appropriation of Female Athletes’ Masculinity and Construction of Japaneseness*, is the second part of the media discourse analysis. This chapter builds on the discussion of Chapter Four by analyzing how normative, normalizing, and re-signifying discourses examined in Chapter Four provides discursive resources in the construction of “imagined Japanese” and “colonial amnesia”. In analyzing the subject formation of female athletes at the intersection of the politics of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and nation, the goal of this chapter is to reveal: 1) the discursive tactics used to incorporate masculine female athletes into heteronormative national imagery; and 2) the colonial imagery of Japan constructed against the West and the *other* Asia.

From Chapter Six, I shift my discussion to the formation of gendered subjectivities through the analyses of interviews with female and ‘trans’ athletes who competed in women’s wrestling or soccer at the elite level in Japan. In Chapter Six, I focus on the interviews with cisgender identified female athletes to analyze how their gendered subjectivities are formed in and against sexist and heteronormative constructions of Japanese women. The participants’ experiences illustrate the intricate processes of negotiation with sexism, feminine norms, and the demands of athletic career. Their stories also demonstrated the ways in which normative and normalizing constructions of female athletes’ masculinity as ‘female sporting masculinity’ created a sort of “third” gender space in which female masculinity in sport is recognized as
‘norm’ and not as ‘queerness’.

Chapter Seven is the last data chapter of this dissertation. This chapter focuses on the interviews with ‘trans’ or non-cisgender athletes. Their experiences demonstrate the ways in which their gendered subjectivities were formed within and against the Japanese ‘GID’ discourses and the gendered constructions of their sports. Their stories showed the damaging and silencing oppression of cisgenderism and transphobia, as well as the subtle and creative ways they negotiated the cisgenderism, transphobia, and ‘trans-normativity’ of the Japanese society in and through sport. Their experiences also demonstrate that the increased recognition of ‘GID’ through the ‘trans-normative’ discourses did only very little to open up a space for ‘trans’ athletes in the Japanese society.

In the concluding chapter, Chapter Nine, I overview some of the theoretical, methodological, and political issues arised from this research study. Although addressing each of these issues sufficiently in this brief chapter is impossible, I conclude by discussing my current thoughts on the issues as the first step toward my future works.
Chapter 2. Literature Review: Situating the Current Research

I begin this thesis by exploring how social norms about gender and sexuality shape the ways in which female and queer athletes experience sporting spaces. As a wealth of research concerning this matter has been accumulated in various English literature within North America, I first overview how North American feminist and queer scholars have approached this issue. By doing so, I identify concepts and theories useful in my research concerning discursive construction and subjectivity of female athletes in Japan.

Sport, Gender, and Sexuality

Homophobia and Transphobia in Sports within North America

Since the 1970s, scholars in North America and Europe have vigorously investigated the issue of gender and sexualities in sport and have elucidated the matrix of power that intricately constitutes and is constituted by hegemonic masculinity, misogyny, homophobia⁴ (Cahn, 1994; Griffin, 1998; Lenskyj, 1986, 2003; Pronger, 1992) or homonegativism⁵ (Krane, 1997), and transphobia⁶ (Sykes, 2006, 2011; Sykes & Cavanagh, 2006) in sport. Scholars have identified

---

⁴ Homophobia is a range of negative attitudes and feelings toward homosexuality or people who are identified or perceived as being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT). Definitions refer variably to antipathy, contempt, prejudice, aversion, and irrational fear.

⁵ Krane (1997) argues that the form of discrimination based on sexual orientation in sport should be described as “homonegativism”, rather than more commonly used “homophobia”, which connotes individual based bias and fear. Krane asserts that, in sport, discrimination based on sexual orientation functions more as a system that is used to intimidate and limit opportunities for women, and trivialize their accomplishments. Hence, the term homophobia does not accurately address the social issues implicit in discrimination against lesbians in sport; instead the term homonegativism is more suitable to denote the larger scope of this form of prejudice.

⁶ Transphobia is a range of antagonistic attitudes and feelings toward transgender and transsexual individuals based on their expression of their identified gender, towards those who express themselves differently from the gender norms of the society.
how heterosexism, homophobia, homonegativism, and lesbian ‘stereotypes’ have been used to construct female athletes, particularly in more masculine sports (Griffin, 1992; Krane, 1997; Lenskyj, 1990). Cahn (1994) provides a detailed historical account of the “mannish lesbian” stereotype in sport within the United States, describing how, since the 1930s, athletic women came to be associated with “failed heterosexuality” and later with “mannish” lesbianism through medical and popular discourses. By the end of the 1980s, concerns about homophobia and transphobia came to be recognized as an essential part of the critical feminist analysis of sport and physical education.

Following the works of earlier feminist sport scholars’ “descriptive” studies on “women in sport” (Birrell, 2000) in the 1990s, researchers began to pay increasing attention to how masculinity is associated with power. They have investigated how gender relations are reproduced by, resisted in, and transformed through sport and have analyzed sport as a site for the production of an ideology of a hegemonic form of masculinity, the dominant position of men, and the subordination of women (Birrell, 2000; Connell, 1995; Krane, 1997; Messner, 1992, 1997, 2002; Messner & Sabo, 1990). Hargreaves (1986, 1994) argues that sport is a site of cultural struggle in which male hegemony is produced and is dependent on the continual reproduction of unequal power relations between women and men. Women’s participation in sport threatens to blur the “natural” boundaries between sexes upon which this male hegemony depends (Lenskyj, 1986, p. 35).

Since the mid 1980s, scholars extended their analysis of masculinity and power to sexuality. They have revealed how the increasing women’s participation in sport in the mid eighteenth century, and the sporting or exercising middle-class, white female body, was scrutinized through medical and sociobiological discourses (Cahn, 1994; Lenskyj, 1986; Vertinsky, 1990). These authors particularly demonstrate the processes by which the lives of the
middle class white women were controlled through medicalization of the female body. Female reproductive functioning, such as menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and menopause, was discursively constructed as pathological and evidence of a natural “weakness,” and thus, women were deemed “unfit” to engage in any vigorous exercise and sports. Furthermore, Vitalist theory of physiology at the beginning of the twentieth century held that “energy for the human organism was derived from a ‘vital force,’ which being limited and non-renewable, should therefore be expended only in the service of family, god or country”, not leisure activities such as sport (Lenskyj, 1986, p. 19).

Concerns over the sexualities of women who participated in sport persisted throughout the twentieth century. Beginning in the 1930s, female athletes’ solidarity and their powerful, skillful, and assertive performances and mannerisms were deemed to connote a “failed heterosexuality” (Cahn, 1994, p. 165). What started as a warning for athletic “mannish” women in the 1920s, regarding the difficulty they would have attracting the most worthy father for their children, changed to a “failed heterosexuality”, which gradually shifted to the suspicion of lesbianism in the 1930s (Cahn, 1994; Lenskyj, 1986, 2003; Griffin, 1992, 1993, 1998). By the late 1960s, masculine female athletes, particularly from the Eastern Bloc, raised the concern that they might not be women at all (Lenskyj, 1986). The fast improving performances of women soon began to challenge gender ideals. These athletes “posed a threat to compulsory heterosexuality and male dominance”, crucial parts of which were based on “biological” differences (Lenskyj, 1986, p. 87). Furthermore, few reported cases of male pseudo-hermaphroditism of high-profile athletes, besides the outstanding performances of so-called “unfeminine” female athletes in the 1950s and 60s, alarmed medical authorities that the boundary between women and men is seriously endangered in sport.

The introduction of gender verification tests within the international competitions in 1968
was symptomatic of gender anxiety, or “panic”, about masculine female athletes. Since the official introduction of the test, its scientific, social, and political implications and assumptions have been critiqued by athletes, activists, and scientists alike. Medical communities also challenged the practice of gender verification testing both on scientific and moral grounds (Chapelle, 1986; Elsas, Hayes & Muralidharan, 1997; Ferguson-Smith & Ferris, 1991; Lemke, 2005; Ljungqvist & Simpson, 1992; Simpson, 1986; Simpson et al., 1993, 2000) and made significant contributions to the “partial” abolition of the testing. Nevertheless, these works did not critically examine the discursive construction of “hyper” masculine female athletes as abnormal or pathological. The critiques were concerned with “disqualified” athletes’ rights to keep their test results confidential and to participate regardless of their ‘pathological’ conditions.

The same lack of critique regarding the medicalized constructions of differently gendered bodies are also found in the discussions regarding the implementation of transgender policy, which is underpinned by the transphobia of the western society (Sykes, 2006). The policy is justified on the grounds of fair competition, safety for female athletes, and human rights’ concern for transgender people. Transgender policy has been generally welcomed as a progressive decision made by the IAAF and the IOC; however, Cavanagh and Sykes (2006) argue that transgender policy is merely a “new disciplinary technique designed to manage binary gender designations” (p. 77).

Today, the suspicion of masculine female athletes as lesbian and transsexual still haunts, divides women, and makes LGBT athletes’ experiences in sport difficult (Clarke, 2002; Symons & Hemphill, 2006). But various efforts to combat homophobia and transphobia in sport have been made within LGBT communities and by the international and national sport governing bodies. The 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics constructed ‘Pride House’, the first Olympic

---

7 The International Olympic Committee (IOC) introduced the Stockholm Consensus on sex reassignment surgery to allow "transsexual" athletes to compete at the Olympics in 2004.
pavilion for gay and lesbian athletes and allies. During the last decade, an increasing number of national and international sporting bodies and feminist sport organizations, such as Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity, 8 Women Sport International, 9 Women’s Sport Foundation, 10 and UK Sport, 11 have made policy statements and created educational programs to address homophobia and transgender issues in sport. Yet, the recent scrutiny of sexualities of elite athletes such as Caster Semenya, a South African 800m runner, and Johnny Weir, a Canadian openly gay figure skater, demonstrates the profound fear of gender ambiguity and suspicion of high performance female athletes’ gender in the western sporting world.

While anti-homophobia in sport movements becomes increasingly international and global, there are very few scholarly works focused on local articulations of gender and sexual politics in sport outside of western countries. The recent international protests against Russia’s “anti-homosexual propaganda law”, during the period leading up to Sochi Olympic Games in February 2014 demonstrates the momentum and increasingly globalized gay and lesbian movements in sport. It also reveals the disconnect of international sporting gay and lesbian movements, from the anti-oppression and decolonizing movements that are based on more local experiences and are critical of further marginalization and oppression that happen through and as a result of sport mega-events.

Scholars began to criticize the one-size-fits-all approach to the issue of homophobia in sport based on Western gay and lesbian experiences, and the concept of “human rights” has been argued to produce a kind of “gay imperialism” (Haritaworn, Tauqir, & Erdem, 2008) in sport,

8 http://www.caaws.ca/homophobia/c/index.cfm
9 http://www.sportsbiz.bz/womensportinternational/taskforces/wsi_position_statement.htm
10 http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/sitecore/content/home/athletes/for-athletes/know-your-rights/coach-and-athletic-director-resources/about-itat.aspx
11 http://www.sportengland.org/about_us/our_news/new_charter_tackles_homophobia.aspx
which is disjointed from local anti-colonial movements and decolonizing efforts in the sport mega-event hosting countries (Davidson, 2013; King, 2009; Sykes, 2011a). As scholars like Samantha King (2009), Heather Sykes (2011a, 2013, 2014), and Judy Davidson (2013) have warned, the analysis of homophobia and heteronormativity in sport needs serious consideration of the homonormative and colonizing impulses underpinning these analysis.

If the critical investigation of homonationalism and imperialism in sporting gay and lesbian movements forms one of the wheels of knowledge production that contribute to wider decolonizing effort in sport, the other wheel should be the investigation of different ways in which gender and sexual norms and politics are articulated in sport in non-Western societies. A more localized analysis is necessary in order to develop the anti-oppression and decolonizing movements that contribute to the specific geopolitical and socio-cultural conditions of the society in question, and to avoid repeating “gay imperialism” at the level of scholarship. As I discussed in the introduction chapter, however, there are only few such scholarly works available in English that speak back to the Western analysis of homophobia and heteronormativity in sport. In terms of the research concerning Japanese society, there are only a few studies that specifically focused on the ways in which gender and sexual norms form the experience of gender and sexual “minorities”. In the next section, I overview research that investigates Japanese gender and sexual norms and the discursive construction of Japanese female athletes.

**Sport, Gender, and Sexuality in Japan**

Scholarly investigation concerning the issue of gender and sexuality in sport within Japan have a relatively short history. The Japanese Association for Women in Sport (JWS), the first Japanese organization dedicated for gender equity and a women’s movement in sport within Japan, was established in December 1998 in preparation for the first Asian Conference on Women and Sport (ACWS) in 2001. This organization consisted of a diverse population of
feminist activists and sport scholars. Since the establishment of JWS and ACWS, there has been a gradual accumulation of the research focused on gender equity in sport within Japan. The Japan Society for Sport and Gender Studies (JSSGS), the first Japanese academic society that focused on gender issues in sport was founded in 2002. With the foundation of this society, research on gender equity and the experiences of women in Japanese sport established itself as a field of study. JSSGS has also provided a platform for bringing together scholarly works on gender, and later sexuality studies in sport, for more active and critical dialogues, rather than having such works scattered in different and more conventional academic societies, such as Japan Society for Sport Sociology, Japan Society for the Philosophy of Sport, Physical Education Japan Society of Physical Education, Health and Sport Sciences and so on. The Journal of Sport and Gender Studies (JSGS), the first academic journal in Japanese that collects studies on gender and sexual issues in sport, was created by JSSGS in 2003. This journal has been published annually and contributed to a gradual, but steady accumulation of research on gender and sexuality issues in sport within Japan.

In the preface of the first volume of JSGS, Iida (2003a) introduces different ways in which scholars have approached the issue of gender and sexuality in sports within and outside of Japanese academia. In this essay, Iida discusses how such studies have revealed and problematized patriarchy, sexism, heteronormativity, gender binarism, and homophobia in sport. These scholarly works on sport and homophobia that Iida introduced, however, are North American and European scholarships.

While heteronormativity in Japanese sport has been discussed in many of the works published in JSGS since 2003, the first empirical investigations of the experiences of ‘LGBTQ’ people in sport and physical education in Japan did not occur until 2011. A group of researchers conducted the first empirical research on how sexual minorities in Japan experience oppression
and marginalization in sport and physical education as Western literatures have demonstrated (Kazama et al, 2011). The group used a questionnaire survey method to ask sexual and gender minorities who participated in Osaka Pride Parade about their experiences in sport and physical education. As the first study, this research provides many important insights into heteronormative culture of sport in Japan and the experiences of gender and sexual minority people. Among many important findings, the key findings that have strong relevance to my thesis are: 59 percent of participants have felt the pressure to conform to gender norms; 80 percent answered that the “atmosphere” of sport and physical education was heteronormative; six percent have heard negative remarks about homosexuality; women’s participation in masculine sports such as soccer is considered to be a deviation from the gender norm and the “lesbian” label is used against women; and some gender and sexual minorities gave up or avoided sport participation due to the gender binary structures of the sporting space (e.g. changing rooms, shower room, teams, clothes). These findings demonstrate that heterosexism in Japanese sports and physical education have marginalized and shaped the experience of gender and sexual minorities in ways similar to the findings of North American literature.

Another study was published in the same year by Iida (2011) concerning the attitudes toward homosexuality in sport within Japan. This study interviewed 26 self-identified heterosexual people in their 20s who have been involved in competitive sport. Participants are asked about their perceptions about and experiences with sexual minority athletes, as well as Japanese sport culture in terms of gender and sexuality norms. One of the major findings from this study indicates that participants tend to “positively” perceive ‘masculine female athletes’, while they tend to give more “negative” evaluation to ‘feminine male athletes.’ The study also shows that the existence of lesbians in sport is more readily recognized and lesbians in sport tend to be more accepted than male counterparts. Iida interprets these findings by mobilizing Eve
Sedgwick’s homosocial theory. Iida argues that the reason why interview participants did not show as much negative attitudes toward lesbians and masculine women as they did towards gay men and feminine men is because women and female homosexuality are not threatening to male domination in the society, while male homosexuality threatens it by exposing the sexual impulse underlying male homosocial bonding and undermining the control over female sexuality.

The studies above provide important insights into the heteronormativity of Japanese sporting spaces, marginalization of gender and sexual minority athletes, and relatively greater recognition and acceptance of lesbian athletes compared to gay athletes. While these findings are important as foundational studies about sport and sexuality in Japan, these studies do not go beyond the demonstration of heterosexism and homophobia in Japanese sports and general attitudes toward gay and lesbian athletes. In order to go beyond simple verification of Western theories with Japanese cases, it is important to accumulate closer examinations of Japanese discourses of homophobia and transphobia in sport, and the experiences and subjectivities of not only lesbian and gay athletes, but also bisexual and transgender athletes, as well as those who identify with other identity categories. In addition, more investigation is needed to explain what discourses, power relations, and negotiations exist between acceptance of lesbian athletes in Japanese sport and the “lesbian” label against female athletes in masculine sports. What are the discourses used to label, recognize, or accept lesbian athletes and how do such discourses in return illuminate the specificity of gender and sexual politics in sports within Japan? How do such discourses, power relations, and negotiations form subjectivities of lesbian and trans athletes in women’s sport, as well as female athletes in general? While the above studies laid important foundations for the research on gender, sexuality, and sport in Japan, it also demonstrates the vast gap in scholarship that needs to be filled.

Transgression and Negotiation of Japanese Feminine Norms through Sport
Although not directly dealing with the issue of sexuality in sport, Aiba’s series of studies (2007, 2008, 2010, 2013) investigate the physicality and physical skills of female professional wrestlers in Japan, and provide interesting insights into how gender norms are reproduced, negotiated, and challenged by masculine female athletes. Aiba conceptualizes the bodies of Japanese female professional wrestlers as potentially transgressing gender norms and explores how the wrestlers perceive their wrestling bodies through in-depth interviews with female professional wrestlers. Aiba uses Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of “gender habitus” and investigates if and how different gender habitus is formed within a sub-culture such as female professional wrestling. She finds that while wrestlers perceive their masculine bodies, career and, training as professional wrestlers in different ways, they do not necessarily result in a redefinition of an “ideal body” away from normative femininity. At the same time, the study also indicates that the large and strong female wrestlers’ bodies create its own “gender habitus”, in which such bodies are not only considered necessary and a normal part of the sport, but also attractive both as wrestlers and as women.

Aiba published Joshi puroresurā no shintai to jendā: Kihanteki onnarashisa wo koete (Bodies of women professional wrestlers and gender: Beyond normative femininity) in 2013, as an accumulation of her above studies. Her close examination of the processes and events that form female professional wrestlers’ perceptions of their wrestling bodies offers important insights into how the masculine sporting body of female athletes form their gendered subjectivities. Aiba (2013) argues that while wrestlers develop positive relationships with their body in terms of physical and mental strength gained through the training, their gendered subjectivity is negatively affected by not being able to fit into the normative structures made suitable for normative feminine bodies. For instance, wrestlers had to give up “cute” clothes since such a line of clothing is available only in small sizes. Their larger and more muscular
bodies are also often misrecognized as men, resulting in offensive and uncomfortable experiences in gender segregated spaces such as bathrooms and women-only passenger cars. Aiba maintains that while the wrestlers’ strength, physicality, and combat skills challenge and subvert feminine norms, the experience of mis-gendering and not-fitting into the normative material structures negatively affected their self-perception. Aiba’s research illustrates the contour of Japanese normative feminine bodies and how the conflict between social norms about the female body and their embodiment is negotiated in the wrestling space where such transgression is a “necessary” part of sport.

An examination of the results of the above works by Kazama et al (2011), Iida (2011), and Aiba (2013) show tensions between feminine norms and the norms created in sporting spaces. On the one hand, the effects of such tensions are observed in homophobic labeling and mis-gendering of female, as well as inconvenience and discomfort experienced by the athletes in relations to the material conditions in their lives. On the other hand, the tensions also trouble gender norms when gender transgression becomes a necessary, if not normal, part of sports. The existence of lesbian and transgender athletes may also be recognized, and in some cases accepted in Japanese society, wherein lesbians and transgender people are often rendered invisible.

The Social Construct of Ab/normal Sexualities in Japan

So far, I have explored the research in North America, Europe, and Japan that focuses on the issue of gender and sexuality in sport. In order to understand the ways in which the “lesbian” label is used and how it affects the subjectivities of female athletes in masculine sports in Japan, it is important to first examine the ways in which such identity categories emerged and have been used in othering certain gender expressions, sexual practices and desires in Japanese society. In the section below, I overview how same-sex desires, sexual practices and cross-gender practices
are conceptualized in Japanese society.

Various Japanese terms have emerged after World War II to describe same-sex and cross-gender practices, and some of them are still used interchangeably with English “homosexuality,” “transgender,” “transsexual”, and more recently, “Gender Identity Disorder (GID).” As historians and anthropologists have shown, these practices and terms have had diverse forms and meanings in the Japanese society depending on the historical time and social status of those who may be categorized as “homosexual” or “transgender” today (Chalmers, 2002; McLelland, 2005). Thus, a description of each term will become something of a history of Japanese queer sexuality.

**A Brief History of ‘Queer’ Gender and Sexual Practices in Modern Japan**

For the past two decades, historians, anthropologists, and ‘LGBTQ’ activists have provided copious accounts of the long and rich history of Japanese ‘queer’ practices and identities (Furukawa, 1994; Hawkins, 2000; Imanishi, 1998, 2000, 2001; Mitsuhashi, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c; Pflugfelder, 1999; Watanabe & Iwata, 1989; Yajima, 2006). In this section, I attempt to provide a genealogy of “homosexuality,” “transgender,” and “transsexual”, starting from the Meiji Period (1868-1912 A.D.), and will highlight the key historical turning points that are crucial to understanding the current discourses of the ‘queer’ population in Japan. The range of the time period covered in this section goes beyond the data collected for my dissertation, but it provides helpful insight into the contemporary discourses of gender and sexuality, and to the

---

12 The year 1868 marked the end of Tokugawa Shogunate, the last feudal regime in Japanese history, and the beginning of the Meiji Restoration. The emperor Meiji was moved from Kyoto to Tokyo, which became the new capital and his imperial power was restored. This period from 1868 to the death of Meiji emperor in 1912 is called the Meiji Period. Like other Asian nations, Japan was forced to sign unequal treaties with Western powers. These treaties granted the Westerners one-sided economical and legal advantages in Japan. In order to regain independence from the Europeans and Americans, and establish itself as a respected nation in the world, Meiji Japan was determined to close the gap to the Western powers economically and militarily. Drastic reforms were carried out in practically all areas, as the name of the period “Meiji”, or "enlightened rule”, shows.
ways in which the discourses of ‘queer’ sexuality both in the mainstream and in the ‘queer’ community have interacted, contested, and resisted to form ‘queer’ subjectivities in Japanese society today. One precaution, however, needs to be exercised in writing the history of Japanese ‘queer’ practices and identities as this attempt runs a great risk of presentism and the epistemic violence prediated in the naming and categorizing other sexual and cultural practices through the dominant (in this case Western) epistemic lenses. More careful historical research is needed to excavate the different social functions and meanings given to the gender and sexual practices from the contemporary heterosexual and cisgender identities and practices. Meanwhile, in this section I used ‘queer’ in quotation marks to denote that the naming of ‘queer’ in this section is done through the epistemological lenses of contemporary Western queer theory.

Joseph Hawkins states how he was surprised by a deep “gulf” that separates the Japanese LGBTQ culture of today and those that flourished prior to the turn of the twentieth century. Through modernizing, industrializing, and westernizing processes in the Meiji Period and throughout the twentieth century, “Japanese sexuality” was transformed by adopting and modifying western medical discourses of “deviant” sexualities. The ‘queer’ practices and those who practiced them came to be marked as hentai (sexually perverse or queer), okashii (odd and inverted), byōki (illness), and kitanai (moral depravity and/or dirty) (Hawkins, 2000; Mackintosh, 2009; McLelland, 2005).

The Meiji Period is characterized as the era of rapid westernization and modernization. It was in this period when ‘queer’ culture and practices came under criticism, if not hated. There were a series of regulations to control such practices: the practice of Kabuki actors living as women off the stage was banned; the amended Ishiki Kaiti ordinance of 1876\(^\text{13}\) prohibited

\[\text{Ishiki Kaiti ordinance of 1873 (the 6th year of the Meiji Period) had significant impact on Japanese people’s lives, since it prohibited and made various traditional practices and rituals punishable crime, including the selling of shunga (drawings of sexual activity, including those between the same sex), tattooing, mixed-gender bathing,} \]
cross-dressing for both women and men; and during the years between 1873 and 1883 *keikan* (male-male sex) was criminalized (Imanishi, 2001). Mitsuhashi (2003a) argues that gendered appearance and sexuality became the target of control along with other behaviors and cultural practices, which the Japanese government considered backward (p. 101). It is important to note, however, *nanshoku* (male-color, or male-homosexual practice) remained prominent well into the Meiji Period (McLelland, 2005).

When the control of ‘queer’ practices first began in the Meiji Period, the regulation did not involve medical discourse. It was in the Taisho Period (1912-1926) when the medical discourse of sexual perversion took over the previous labeling of “backwardness” (Mitsuhashi, 2003a). The early 1900s saw the introduction of the words *dōseai* (same-sex love or homosexual) and *isei* (heterosexuality) (Chalmers, 2002, p. 19). A wide range of writings of sexologists such as Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, Magnus Hirschfield, and Freud were imported, translated, and became increasingly influential. The term *hentai*, which signifies queer and “perverse” sexual interests, became a widely recognized term during this period (Matsuzawa, 1997, p. 55 in McLelland, 2005, p. 23).

Japanese descent into militarism in the early 1930s saw the government tighten its hold on sexual discourse and practice. Press and film came under direct state control and the government silenced not only “frivolous” tabloids and magazines but also the sexology press.\(^\text{14}\) Open

---

\(^\text{14}\) McLelland (2005) summarizes the development of the publication industry devoted to the discussion of sexuality that particularly focused on perverse sexuality. These “experts” of sexual knowledge began advising within the newspapers and magazines, and as literacy rate rose and cheap newspapers and magazines proliferated, sexual knowledge became more accessible to the public. Pflugfelder argues that the explosions of interest and discourses of perverse sexuality “transformed the sexual behaviors of others into a spectacle for consumption as well as a vehicle for self-understanding” (1999, p. 289, cited in McLelland, 2005, p. 23).

---

mixed-gender sumo-wrestling, and the cutting of women’s hair without authority’s permission. See: Kunio Haruta (1994); and Hajime Imanishi (1998, 2000) for more details on the purposes of ordinance and its impact on people’s lives.
discussion of sexuality thus largely ceased during the war years (McLelland, 2005). The war years were also characterized by increasing state surveillance into the personal lives of the Japanese population. The wartime regime was interested in “race improvement”; both the state and the media were proactively engaged in promulgating eugenicist policies (Fruhstuck, 2003, in McLelland, 2005), which resulted in an increased polarity in gender roles. These were based on the heteronormative duties for the nation, in order to reproduce strong and healthy offspring. Furthermore, McLelland points out that “the government’s pronatalist policies and its support for registered prostitution resulted in sexuality becoming increasingly heteronormative for both men and women” (2005, p. 37).

During the late 1940s and 50s, the period immediately after WWII, Japan saw an explosion of ‘queer’ discussion and representation in the popular press. At this time, both male and female homosexuality was seen as part of a wider family of perversions, including sadomasochism and cross-dressing (McLelland, 2005; Murakami & Ishida, 2006). Thus the concept of a “man who loves man” and an “effeminized man”, for example, were used interchangeably (Murakami & Ishida, 2006). Illustrating this point, male transvestites, who emerged in the late 1950s as the most visible representative of male homosexuality in popular culture, were called gei bōi (gay boy). What we might call transsexual today was also not distinguished from homosexuality. There are a few records of gender reassignment surgery (GRS) in Japan in this period; however, most cases reported were that of male to female for those who worked in show pubs and gay clubs. There is no research to show how they might have identified or understood their gender expression, but at least in the eyes of the public, partly due to the conceptual ambiguity and partly due the ability of some transvestite entertainers to cross over into mainstream entertainment, transvestitism or transgenderism was established as the main paradigm through which same-sex desire was understood (McLelland, 2005, p. 11).
During the 1970s, homo (an abbreviation of homosekusyuaru, transliteration of English homosexual, but only referring to a homosexual man) culture gradually emerged as distinct from transgender culture. One of the important factors for the change was the publication of Barazoku in 1971, the first mainstream gay magazine that received significant attention from the mainstream media and audiences. It called for “freedom, autonomy, responsibility, solidarity, beauty and righteousness” (Mackintosh, 2009, p. 2) and came to represent a new, more masculine style of homosexual culture (McLelland, 2005, p. 189).

The 1970s, on the other hand, marked a dark era for the people who would later form the transsexual community. In November 1970, the doctor, who had been arrested in 1965 for violating the Eugenic Protection Law\textsuperscript{15} by performing GRS on male sex workers, was convicted. This incident, called the “Blue Boy Case,” engrained in people’s mind that GRS was something that male sex workers do and that it is a crime. This perception remained unchallenged until the resurfacing of the GID issue in the 1990s. As a result, transsexual individuals went underground or overseas to receive the surgery, and GRS and the issue of gender dysphoria became untouchable in the Japanese medical community until the mid 1990s (Mitsuhashi, 2003, p. 108-109).

Although discourses of female same-sex desire and practices did exist prior to the 1970s, images of lesbians were created by male writers for the interest of male readership. Also, so-called rezu bā (lez bars) that existed in Tokyo as early as the 1960s did not provide a space for lesbians. Such bars targeted mainstream women and men and the concept of rezu at the time denoted women who dressed in men’s clothing and was not clearly distinguished from who would later be called cross-dresser, transgender, or transsexual. It was in the 1970s when Wakakusa no kai (Young Grass Group), the first lesbian organization was established. It marked

\textsuperscript{15} The Eugenic Protection Law is currently the Maternal Protection Law, after its revision in 1996.
the beginning of the formation of the lesbian community and lesbian movement in Japan (Sugiura, 2006, 2011). The effort to provide spaces and information for the lesbian community started from this group, *Wakakusa no kai*. The women’s liberation movement of the 1970s, which included lesbian membership, also helped to create the ground for lesbians not only to present their own versions of lesbian representation but also to critique patriarchy as the root of lesbian oppression (Sugiura, 2006).

In the 1980s, small organizations emerged and began to pioneer new understandings of the political ramifications of homosexuality. The mainstream press picked up the perspectives and widely promulgated them during the gay boom of the early 1990s. McLelland (2005) argues:

[This change] enabled many self-identified gay men and lesbians to publish narrative accounts of their lives outside of the entertainment paradigm that had previously structured such confessions. One result was that during the 1990s Japan developed a gay culture similar in many ways to that of Anglophone societies and that both *gei* (gay) and *rezubian* (lesbian) are now commonly deployed as identity categories by Japanese homosexual men and women. (p. 189)

A lesbian group known as Regumi no Gomame, for example, was established in 1984, and they had political goals that were aligned with the lesbian organizations of the West: the construction of a positive lesbian identity; opposing anti-lesbian prejudice; and building networks (Sugiura, 2011). Almost all of the lesbian activists during the 1980s, however, remained closeted due to the strong prejudice toward homosexuality. It was in 1990s, when “out” lesbians began to appear in the media.

**The Emergence of ‘Transgender’ Communities**

The transgender community also, even during the covert era for GRS, gradually increased their visibility. By the 1980s, male commercial *josōka* had gained popularity in the media. Some
of them had GRS and/or hormone therapy and had achieved significant feminization of their body and mannerisms. In 1981, at his debut as a singer, a gay josōka, Betty, was given the name “nyūhāfu (new-half)”, a catch phrase which refers to people who are “half man, half woman”, and resulted in a “new-half boom” (Mitsuhashi, 2003). The term josōka and new-half are often used interchangeably; however, creation of the term “new-half” was significant since it connotes a new gender instead of cross-dressing practice. “Half,” or hāfu in Japanese is used to signify individuals of mixed race. Nyūhāfu, thus signified the mix of gender, instead of crossing over from one gender to another. Nyūhāfu, nonetheless, did not take root as a new identifiable gender identity category outside the show business world as GID would do later in the 1990s.

The nyūhāfu community increased its presence throughout the 1980s and the community was gradually separated from that of gay men and josōka (Mitsuhashi, 2003, p. 110-111). It was within nyūhāfu and josōka communities that the concept of transsexuality was first introduced outside the medical community. The emergence of transsexual activists, such as Masae Torai resulted in the creation of further divisions within sexual minority communities. Torai distinguished transsexual from josōka, or transvestite17, based on their strong gender dysphoria and desire to have GRS (Mitsuhashi, 2003, p. 115). The word “transgender” in a narrow sense of the term (full time cross-dresser who does not wish to have GRS) was introduced in 1994 on Kuín (Queen).

Contrary to the josōka community, it seems that there was no significant amateur dansōka (female transvestite) community that would later branch out to form a FtM transgender

16 Prior to the appearance of new-half, feminine or androgynous gay men were some sometimes called “gay-boy,” “sister-boy,” “Mr. Lady,” or “okama.” They were considered feminine gay men and not as people with a feminine gender identity.

17 The word “transvestite” was introduced on in Kuín in 1982 but only used in a limited community. In the public, the word “josōka” still remains in popular use. See Mitsuhashi (2003) for more detail on the influence and expansion of this word.
community. Instead, the FtM transgender community first emerged out of the lesbian community (Nomiyà, 2005). According to Sugiura (2008), until the 1980s, it was common practice within lesbian communities to divide their sexual identities into three different subcategories: *tachi* refers to women who play a “male role” in a relationship; *neko* are those who assume a “female role”; and *onabe* are those who dress like men and work at bars (p. 128). In the 1980s, as a result of the women’s liberation movement and lesbian feminism, *tachi*, or masculine identified lesbians, came under criticism because their behaviors were considered a reproduction or mimicry of conventional misogynistic gender roles. As the definition of lesbian became increasingly rigid, *onabe* was gradually alienated from the lesbian community (Sugiura, 2008). From the testimony of masculine identified women in the 1960s and 1970s, there were indeed people who today would be called FtM transsexual who did not want to be categorized as lesbian (Sugiura, 2008, p. 136). *Onabe* and the male identified female, however, continued to be categorized as “a kind of lesbian” in the public sphere until the 1990s, due to the absence of a major movement to redefine and shift the image and the discourse of *onabe* or available alternative gender categories. It was only in 1994 that the word “transsexual” appeared in a newsletter that had a small circulation for the lesbian community (Nomiyà, 2005; Sugiura, 2008), and it provided a more specific identity to some individuals in the lesbian and *onabe* community.

The formation of the first transsexual community in Japan was marked by the publication of a newsletter for the community in 1994 by Torai, who has organized activism for the legalization of GRS, hormone therapy, and the correction of gender on family registers. Transsexuality, however, received major media attention rather suddenly when it was announced that a professor at Saitama Medical University applied for the ethical review to perform GRS in 1996. In the following year, the Japan Society of Psychiatry and Neurology (JSPN) formed a special
committee on GID and created the first “Guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of GID.” It was the first time in Japanese history that the medical community made a major movement towards performing GRS as a treatment for GID. In 1998, based on the newly created guidelines, the first legal GRS, as medical assistance for a person with GID, was performed at Saitama Medical University.

This series of events in the mid 1990s marked the beginning of the GID-based transsexual community in Japan. The first GID-based self support group was established in 1996, and such groups have been rapidly formed throughout the nation since. It was the first time the word and the concept of GID became public knowledge, and the public received this “new mental disorder” as sensational news. After the flux of media attention, GID seems to have become so well known that there are almost no college and university students who have not heard of GID today (Tsuruta, 2009, p. 220). In 2003, the “Law Concerning Special Cases in Handling Gender for People with Gender Identity Disorder” was enacted. It defined GID in the law and enabled people with GID diagnosis to change their sex in their family registries. Some praise this new legislation for its significant progress, while others criticize its strict conditions, which exclude people who for a variety of reasons could not meet the criteria (Itani, 2011; Tanaka, 2006; Yoshino, 2008).

As of July 2014, the Japanese government has not passed any legislation to protect the rights of non-heterosexual couples or to protect workers from discriminations, based on sexual

---


19 As I have discussed above, this is not the first GRS performed in Japan but it was the first case which followed the guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of GID, and thus the first case as a “treatment” of GID.

20 The words “transsexuality” and “GID” were introduced to Japanese society almost at the same time and the terms have been often used interchangeably. It is safe to say that most transsexual self-support groups equate transsexuality with GID, unless they clearly state otherwise.
orientation, or gender expression or identities. Although ‘queer’ people are increasingly visible in Japanese society and there is more information, spaces, and events for them, only certain groups of people have access to these resources. In a still largely homophobic and patriarchal society, many people, women in particular, cannot afford and/or take risks to come out or live with their partners (Sugiura, 2011).

Although I have reviewed literature as if there is a history of the “Japanese queer” community, careful attention to the histories and experiences of the queer people who are not Japanese national within Japan is crucial and long overdue. As Yuriko Iino (2006) rightfully argues, there is still a tendency among scholars and activists who research about ‘queer’ culture and history in Japan to assume that there is only “Japanese” ‘queer’ people living in Japan. For instance, zainichi\(^{21}\) people have experienced layers of discrimination based not only on sexual orientation, but also on ethnicity and nationality, and are often disregarded in ‘queer’ communities as well as in most academic writing. Even though scholars in Japan have recently produced an increasing amount of studies in ‘queer’ culture and history, analyses that challenge such assumptions and ideologies of Japan’s so-called mono-ethnic nation-state are urgently needed. My study does not examine the experience of the zainichi Korean community or other ethnic minorities in Japan; however, the examination of the ways in which Japanese female athletes are constructed in the media sheds light on the construction of “Japanese” and “Japanese women”, and how Japan as a “mono-ethnic nation-state” is reproduced in sports’ discourse.

\(^{21}\) Zainichi (resident in Japan) is commonly used to refer to Korean residents, the largest group of foreign residents in Japan. Although recent immigration is part of the process, for the most part, of Japan’s colonization of Korea between 1910 and 1945, it is responsible for the large population of Zainichi Koreans. The process of this colonization led to over 2 million Koreans being mobilized to Japan. Although the majority of them returned to Korea soon after the war, approximately 600,000 Koreans remained in Japan. Since the end of the U. S. occupation of Japan in 1952, these Koreans have been deprived of their Japanese nationality and classified as Zainichi foreigners. Although Zainichi Koreans are entitled to permanent residency and national welfare rights, as “resident aliens” they still face discrimination in such areas as employment, housing, and education.
the next section, I identify the key literature that informs my analysis of nationalism and “imagined Japaneseness” that shapes discursive construction of female athletes in masculine sports in terms of their gender and sexuality.

Nation, Body, and Gender

*Nationalism has typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope.* (Enloe, 1989, p. 44)

Benedict Anderson (1983) famously defined nation as an “imagined political community”, in which the members hold the mental image of the affinity. Nation is a social construct produced as a result of modernity. It is “imagined” because the members will never meet most of the other members face-to-face. Scholars argue that all invented nation-ness or nationalisms are gendered and that all nations depend on constructions of gender (McClintock, 2005; Ueno, 2004). Borrowing from Cynthia Enloe’s remarks, McClintock argues that nationalisms have “typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation, and masculinized hope” (p. 353).

George Mosse (1975) argues that the symbolic image of ideal manliness and an athletic body was an essential aspect of modern nation building, which took a form of a kind of secular religion. The worship of people became the worship of the nation, and *produced* national myths and traditions (p. 2). Extending his previous work on nationalization of masses, Mosse (1985) argues that “Symbols, the objectification of popular myths, give a people their identity . . . Nationalism, which at its beginning coincided with romanticism, made symbols the essence of its style of politics” (p. 7). Celebration of athletic, nationalized, and masculinized bodies is at the basis of international sporting events such as the Olympics, in which superiority of nation, race,
and ethnicity are contested (McDonald, 2007; Levent, 2004).

Mosse (1985) further argues that while those men who possessed the qualifications for respectability came to form the masculine ideal that was symbolized by athletic bodies like that of Greek sculptures of ancient Olympians, those women who embodied a symbolic, athletic and “manly” identity, on the other hand, came to represent a threat to the society. Those women who embodied a “manly ideal” by disguising themselves as boys to fight the wars of national liberation or by measuring up in sports, were considered to be trespassing upon masculine preserves and threatened to men and the ideals of respectability. Mosse (1985) asserts:

Whatever the dispensation for athletic types or soldier girls . . . “masculine” women would be condemned as abnormal when they appeared to mimic the dress and comportment of men without displaying the heroic spirit supposedly concomitant with masculinity. And when, as in the case of lesbians, there was no happy ending in sight in which the old gender roles could be resumed [by returning home from the war], such masculine women were seen as threatening society. (p. 102)

Although Mosse did not discuss such development either in East Asia or North America, his historical analysis of the rise of nationalism and the roles the image of athletic bodies played in the production of imagined communities in Germany provides a useful framework to analyze the way in which gendered nationalism is re/produced in and through sports and athletic masculinity.

**Gendered Production of “Imagined Communities” through Sport**

The conceptualizations of nation and nationalism as imagined and gendered, offer useful lenses in analyzing sports’ function in and as a site of re/production of nationalism in the context of contemporary East Asia. Scholars have examined the relationships between sports and “national identity” and how sports mega events have become an occasion to construct, reinforce,
and advertise modernization of the country, international belonging, and ethnic identities in East Asia (Hogan, 2003, 2009; Joo, 2012; Manzenreiter, 2006; Xu, 2006). These studies reveal how the project of constructing the ‘new’, modernized national identity in East Asian countries through sports mega events mobilized the symbols of ‘local’ and the ‘West’, ethnic traditions and modernity, to construct an “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983). Hogan (2003, 2009) and Joo (2012) also demonstrate how patriarchal gender order and normative femininities are utilized and reinforced in these constructions and representations of nationhood.

These studies offer keen analysis of how the nation is imagined and how the identities are constructed through discursive and visual representation in sports mega events, particularly in the East Asian context. However, the tension between the normative femininity and masculinity of the female athletes exhibited in sporting events are not examined in these studies. Though the context of study is outside of East Asia, McCree’s (2011) work on “gendered nationalism” in Trinidad and Tobago challenges the “gendered media sporting nation” thesis with respect to the “supposed exclusion, marginalization or invisibility of the female sport heroine/star from (sport)nationalism” (p. 344). McCree analyzes the media discourse around the death of Juzelle Salandy, a female boxing star in Trinidad, and argues that while the media used the “conventional gendered representational techniques”, such as sexualization and attention to her affective orientation, Salandy’s mixed representations as a “strong, powerful, beautiful, sexy, and caring” (p. 344) national heroin and role model both challenged and reproduced conventional feminine norms. This analysis provides interesting insight into the ways in which the tension between the celebration of sports’ heroines and their masculinity is negotiated in media discourse when female athletes’ masculinity and achievement is a significant national event.

Nationalism/s and Gender in Japan
Various scholars have attempted to understand and define Japanese nationalism/s in relationship to its colonial past and present by approaching this from the construction of ‘Japanese culture’ (i.e., Nishikawa, 1998; Pak, 2007; Sakai, 2005; Suzuki, 2005), the histories of physical education policies and curriculums (i.e., Irie, 1993, Nishio, 2003), the Japanese patriarchy and Japanese women’s complicity that underpins and supports Japanese nationalism/s (i.e., Jung, 2003; Pak, 2007; Ueno, 2004) and so on. The authors in the anthology titled Nationalisms in Japan (Shimazu Ed., 2006) demonstrate the complexity and multiplicity of nationalisms in Japan in its many manifestations and that there are competing forms of nationalisms which exist in Japan at any one time. Shimazu (2006) argues that the very multiplicity and variety of forms of nationalisms within Japan contest “what seemed an incontrovertible notion of ‘Japanese’ national identity” (p. 182).

Analyzing the genealogy of Japanese national identity constructions and nationalism/s, Suzuki (2005) argues that since the opening of the country in the Meiji Period (1868-1912 A.D.), the Japanese government and intellectuals have invented ‘Japanese culture’ and ‘tradition’ to become a cultural contact or connection point between the ‘West’ and the ‘East’. Suzuki asserts that it was a two-fold and shifting processes of establishing ‘Japanese’ identity by constructing its cultural tradition as uniquely Japanese and Asian while adopting and reinventing the western economic, political, educational, and military systems and technologies in order to overcome the threat of colonization. The discourses to construct or invent the tradition of

---

22 Year 1868 marked the end of Tokugawa Shogunate, the last feudal regime in Japanese history, and beginning of the Meiji Restoration. The emperor Meiji was moved from Kyoto to Tokyo, which became the new capital and his imperial power was restored. This period from 1868 to the death of Meiji emperor in 1912 is called the Meiji Period. The U.S. forced Japan to open its ports for trade at gunpoint and made the Japanese government sign unequal treaties with Western powers. In order to renegotiate the treaties, to rid the possibility of being colonized and to establish itself as a respected nation in the world, Meiji Japan was determined to close the gap to the Western powers economically and militarily. Drastic reforms were carried out in practically all areas as the name of the period “Meiji”, or "enlightened rule”, shows.
‘Japanese’ or ‘Asian’ culture as ‘peculiar’ and ‘superior’ to the rest of Asia and to the West, eventually shifted toward the discourse of “overcoming the western imperialism” (Suzuki, 2005, p. 252), which allowed Japanese elites to “justify Japan’s role as an invader” (p. 252, translation by the author).

Despite the complexity, multiplicity, and hybridity of nationalisms in Japan, Shimazu (2008) argues the recent manifestation of nationalism by neo-conservatives tends to “portray pre-war nationalism as one-dimensional, mostly relying on a few sensational and effective pre-war and wartime symbols, such as the Yasukuni Shrine, the state-produced textbooks, and moral education classes” (p. 183-184). The “third textbook offensive”23 by the revisionist intellectuals and neo-conservatives in particular is a response to the perceived threat of globalization to the national identity of Japan (Rose, 2008).

Feminist scholars (Enloe, 1989; McClintock, 1993, 1995; Ueno, 2004) exposed that the “desire for a national identity”, nationalisms, and the construction of nation-state are gendered and that all nations depend on constructions of gender. In the construction of Japanese modern nation-state, it was Japanese women and the colonized other who were made to be the bearers of “tradition” and femininity (Jung, 2003; Pak, 2007). Scholars point out that in the construction of ‘Japanese’ national identities by various Japanese nationalist thinkers, there were many sets of seemingly disparate, but intertwined, ‘imageries’ and positionalities of Japan, such as ‘civilization’ and ‘culture’, ‘material’ and ‘spirit’, ‘universal’ and ‘peculiar’ and so on (Suzuki, 2005).

23 Japan’s neonationalists have launched three major offensives on school textbooks over the past half-century that focused on the treatment of Japanese colonialism and war crimes. The offensives surfaced in 1955, the late 1970s, and the mid 1990s. The most recent offensive that continues today includes the issue of the treatment of the wartime sexual slavery (military comfort women) by the Imperial Japanese Military during the Second World War after former comfort women began testifying to their experiences in the 1990s. Ueno (2004) argues that the existence of these women were long known before the 1990s, but the end of the Cold War, the democratization movement in South Korea, and the rise of Korean feminism were needed to problematize the wartime sex slavery and to enable survivors to break their 60 year silence.
Analyzing the literature by Natsume Sōseki, a Japanese writer who is often considered one of the most important writers in modern Japanese history and known for his critique of Western civilization and the processes of Japanese modernization, Pak (2007) asserts that his critiques are underpinned by masculine desire for strength and superiority. Pak further argues that Natsume’s writing demonstrates that “people seek national identity in order to gain ‘pride’ in oneself” (p. 65). Through its encounter with western civilization at the end of the nineteenth century, the discourses of Japanese resistant nationalisms simultaneously produced the discourse of “pseudo-colonization fear” (p. 65) that stirred the anxiety about invasion and colonization by western power. It is at this conjunction of the fear of colonization and desire for self-respect, or ‘pride’, where “Orientalism and nationalism collude” (p. 65).

For my current research study, these analyses of genealogy of nationalisms in Japan provide important insight into how Japan as an “imagined community” has been constructed with the sets of seemingly disparate, yet intertwined, binary positions, such as ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’, ‘the West’ and ‘Asia’, and ‘universal’ and ‘peculiar’. Gendered analysis of nation-state building and nationalism help analyze how nationalist discourses manifest in relation to the construction of Japanese women and female athletes. It also helps analyze the ways in which the surface level celebration of the success of Japanese female athletes in masculine sports is underpinned by masculine desire for strength and recognition; thus containing patriarchal and imperial desire for domination over women and the other countries.
Chapter 3. Methodologies and Methods: Approaching Subjectivities of Japanese Female Athletes in Masculine Sports

This chapter introduces the theoretical and interpretive frameworks and research methods used to investigate 1) the discursive construction of Japanese female athletes in masculine sports in terms of their gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and nationality as Japanese; and 2) the ways in which subjectivities of Japanese female athletes in masculine sports are formed and negotiated in their daily lives. In the first section, I explain the choice of “masculine” sports for this study. The second section outlines queer, feminist, and postcolonial frameworks that I employed for this study, with particular focus on the theorization of subjectivity, discourse, power/knowledge, gender performativity, abject bodies, disidentification, and marginality/coloniality. The third section introduces data resources, time periods of the data and their collection, and data transition. The fourth section discusses the process of data analysis, including data translation, and analytical approaches used in this study, namely feminist and Foucauldian critical discourse analysis and intersectional analysis. Lastly, I discuss my research practice and researcher positionality in this research project.

“Masculine” Sports: Why Soccer and Wrestling?

This study focuses on female athletes who participate in sports that are conventionally considered “masculine” or “men’s sports”. These sports typically emphasize speed, power, and strength, which are often associated with masculinity and manliness, and are not considered a typical sport choice for women in Japan. Based on the following criteria and situations surrounding the sports, I selected soccer and wrestling for this study.

1. These sports emphasize speed, power, and strength over balance, aesthetics, and
flexibility, and involve strong physical contacts.

2. These sports are categorized as “masculine” sports in the previously conducted research on the perception of characteristics of sport (Koivula, 1995, 2001; Matteo, 1986).

3. These sports were added to the Olympics for women relatively recently, thus women’s participation in the sports has a shorter history of media exposure.\textsuperscript{24}

4. These sports garnered major publicity in Japan in the last decade by winning gold medals in the Olympics, FIFA World Cup, and the world championship titles.

Japanese women’s national teams in soccer and wrestling during the past decade, despite their relatively shorter history, provide an interesting case to observe the process of discursive shifts in media from trivialization, recognition, and celebration of the female athletes in masculine sports. When starting this study, I left open the possibility that my selection based on the masculine perception of soccer and wrestling could be contested; however, the analysis of Japanese media discourse and interviews supported the selection of soccer and wrestling as “masculine” and “men’s sports”. Furthermore, despite the recent successes of Japanese women in these sports, which has provided far more visibility and female role models in these sports, the registered number of girls and women participating in these sports is still quite small compared to the number of registered male athletes in the same sports and that of female athletes in other popular sports and martial arts such as basketball, volleyball, judo, and kendo (Table 3-2).

\textsuperscript{24} Some women have participated in these sports long before they were added to the Olympics. However, the successful performance in the Olympics (or FIFA World Cup, in case of soccer) dramatically increases their publicity and public awareness of women’s participation in these sports.
Table 3-1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>% of Women in Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>927,671</td>
<td>888,783</td>
<td>38,888</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>615,458</td>
<td>338,628</td>
<td>276,830</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>395,730</td>
<td>130,092</td>
<td>265,638</td>
<td>67.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrestling</td>
<td>10,130</td>
<td>8,788</td>
<td>1,342</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kendo</td>
<td>1,676,141</td>
<td>1,199,199</td>
<td>476,942</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judo</td>
<td>177,572</td>
<td>146,995</td>
<td>30,577</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Basketball and volleyball have the largest number of registered athletes after kendo and rubber baseball (1,140,500 total). Rubber baseball is not included since the total number of female athletes is not published or made public by the national governing body (Japan Rubber Baseball Association). Kendo and judo have the largest registered athletes population among martial arts associations in Japan.

Theoretical and Interpretive Frameworks

Poststructural theories, postcolonial feminist and queer theories in particular, offer useful and critical lenses to analyze the discursive construction of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and nation in the complicated matrix of power and knowledge and how people come to understand themselves in relation to the world, and live, resist, and negotiate identity categories and norms. These theories are useful in investigating the subjectivity of Japanese “masculine female athlete” in contemporary society. Modern sports are more than just forms of physical activities and institutions that reproduce and reinforce hegemonic masculinity of middle-class, heterosexual, white men. For Japan, sport is a western and modern physical culture, and are within the political arena in which meanings of Japanese, modernity, and norms of gender and sexuality are constantly contested and rewritten. The body of a masculine Japanese female athlete is a site
where the Japanese pursuit for modernity, desire for recognition from the world, definition of ‘Japaneseness’, and gender and sexual politics collide. Thus, sexism and heteronormativity in sport are differently articulated in Japanese gender and sexual norms, in comparison to what has been theorized in American and Canadian contexts.

As shown in the research questions, this study includes two major levels of analysis: 1) discursive construction of female athletes in soccer and wrestling in Japanese media, and 2) an investigation into the subjectivities of female and queer athletes who have competed in these sports. The concepts that are useful and essential in formulating and answering these questions are discourse, power/knowledge, subjectivity, and performativity. In the following, I explore each concept and its methodological utilities in this study.

Subjectivity

The concept central to this project is the subjectivities of Japanese masculine female athletes. Kuhn (2010) explains the poststructuralist concept of subjectivity, to refer to “one's conscious and unconscious feelings, beliefs, and desires regarding experiences and relations to the world” (p. 801). Davies (1991) explains that the notion of subjectivity captures one’s experience of being a person. Subjectivity is “constituted through those discourses in which the person is being positioned at any one point in time, both through their own and others’ acts of speaking/writing” (p. 43). She further explains that the focus of subjectivity is “fragmentation, contradiction and discontinuity”, rather than the essence or continuity of identity.

Roland Coloma (2008) extends the poststructuralist concept of subjectivity to analyze the ways in which “race and ethnicity are linked to other axes of difference” in subject formation. Critiquing the conceptualization of subjectivity as compartmental and intersectional, Coloma argues,

the process of subjectification is an ongoing and situated negotiation of self-naming and
being named by others that relies on visible and on-visible markers of difference and is implicates in power relations. Moreover, as a dialectical process of self-making and being-made, subjectification is undertaken within and mediated through the citation of socio-historical discourse. In other words, subject positions are constructed through a process of self-identification and interpellation by others that mobilizes discourses that are specific to particular contexts. (p. 20)

Informed by poststructuralist conceptualizations of subjectivity, Coloma’s “constitutive subjectivity” in particular, my current study attempts look at the negotiation of self-naming and being named by others.

**Discourse and Power/Knowledge**

Foucault’s conceptions of discourse and power/knowledge are useful in analyzing how people see athletes and how athletes come to see and understand themselves in relation to the world around them—particularly in relation to Japanese gender and sexual norms as well as Japanese national and ethnic identities. Foucault conceptualized discourse as a “regulated set of statements which combine with others in predictable ways. Discourse is regulated by a set of rules which lead to the distribution and circulation of certain utterances and statements” (Mills, 2003, p. 54). The media discourse analysis in this study looks at the set of statements made about female athletes in soccer and wrestling and analyze how certain knowledge about these athletes are produced and circulated in the media.

Foucault (1977/1995) also argues that “power and knowledge directly imply one another” (p. 27), and that knowledge is an integral part of the struggles over power. Certain discourses of Japanese gender and sexuality are produced as norms in patriarchal social relations, and the “power-knowledge relations” (p. 27) of Japanese gender and sexuality maintain the normative discourse in circulation. The mainstream media is so ‘powerful’ in a sense that it has
‘authoritative voice’ in interpreting and narrating stories of sports and athletes. It also has a large circulatory capacity, thus could influence the way people think about and relate to female athletes, as well as how athletes think about themselves in the sports that are conventionally considered masculine or men’s.

On the other hand, Foucault (1980) insists that discourse can function both to reinforce and to hinder the work of power because it also produces “reverse” discourse (p. 101). Discourse analysis is a deliberate effort to undermine the work of discourse as an instrument of power by revealing “why particular knowledges, practices, and subjectivities emerge when and where they do, and what purposes they might serve” (Sullivan, 2006, p. 2). The examination of media discourse about female athletes, exposes the articulation of Japanese patriarchy, sexism, heteronormativity, and nationalism that trivialize, normalize, and nationalize these athletes, which maintains patriarchal gender and sexual order while recuperating Japanese masculinity.

Furthermore, the concept of power/knowledge is useful in analyzing queer and transgender athletes’ subjectivities. In Japanese gender and sexual politics concerning transgender people, the Western medicalized identity category of Gender Identity Disorder has dominated the mainstream discourse of “transgender” or non-binary gender identities and gender expressions. This domination of medicalized gender identity has both opened up and closed down different ways in which transgender and queer athletes experience sporting spaces and bodies.

Performativity of Gender/Sex and Abject Bodies

In conceptualizing performative gender, Butler applies the Saussurean understanding of the function of sign, in which the meaning of a word/signifier is derived from the difference of another signifier, not from the ‘direct’ connection between the signifier and the signified. By applying this conceptualization to gender, Butler (1993b) argues that there is no ‘essence’ or
‘real’ identity categories such as “woman”, “man”, “lesbian”, “heterosexuality” and so on. Instead, what seems “natural” about an identity category is the effects produced through imitation of “a phantasmatic ideal” (p. 313). For Butler, gender is “performative in the sense that it constitutes as an effect the very subject it appears to express” (p. 314). This concept of performativity can be applied not only to gender, but also sexuality, race, ethnicity, and nationality. By conceptualizing these identity categories as the embodied act of “phantasmatic ideal”, we can observe performativity by analyzing the discursive constructions of the category and its shift and failures.

Butler formulates agency and resistance through the concept of resignification: since categories of gender and sexualities are signifiers that do not have “natural” connection to the signified (morphology, anatomy, expression etc.), the meanings of the signs, signifiers or identity categories are instable, constantly failing to repeat itself. This instability or the lack of essence can be reconsidered as an openness and flexibility of the category—it can mean something else, and it can be more than or other than this one particular limited thing. The concepts of performativity and resignification also show that if there is no original, there cannot be a bad copy. All differences are legitimate and have their own values without a hierarchy. Thus, by shifting what an identity category means (resignifying), the norm of the category can be undermined.

The concept of performativity of gender and sexuality is used in my analyses of how Japanese female athletes in masculine sports are discursively constructed in the media and how such constructions shift, fail, and are repaired. The multitude of discursive constructions necessary involves gender trouble (Butler, 1990), slippages, ruptures and contradictions in the re/production of a coherent “Japanese women,” revealing the performativity of “Japanese women” and Japanese female athlete. I pick up fragments or fabrics of the “other’s act of speaking/writing”
about (Davis, 1991, p. 43) or “being-made” (Coloma, 2008, p. 20) of the female athletes in the discursive space of Japanese media in order to examine the normative discursive constructions of female athletes, and its “troubling”, queering moments of subversion.

At the same time, however, media analysis reveals how resignification is also a form of “repair” of the gender trouble caused by female athletes and the national appropriation of female athletes’ success in the international competitions. When gender and sexual norms are troubled, various discursive tactics and resources are utilized to normalize the athletes, making them useful and safe for the patriarchal order of Japanese society. Therefore, it is crucial to remain critical of the ways in which gender is troubled and how the resignification occurs in media discourses.

Following her publication of Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (1990), Butler extended her theorization of performativity of gender to the materiality of ‘body’ and the performativity of sex in her Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex" (Butler, 1993). In the book, Butler uses the notion of abject bodies that “serve as deviations from the cultural norm and are not constructed via cultural discourses as bodies that matter in society” (Wilson, 2001, p. 114). The abject designates the unlivable zones of social life, or “a field of deformation” (Butler, 1993, p. 16). The abject bodies are unrecognizable within the frames of intelligibility offered by the society. Society then defines the limits of the subject’s domain which is occupied by the “bodies that matter, ways of living that count as “life,” lives worth protecting, lives worth saving, lives worth grieving” (p. 16).

This concept of abject bodies offered me an important theoretical lens to analyze the meanings the athletes’ bodies are given in different times and places in Japanese society. I conceptualize female wrestlers and non-cisgender soccer players as abject/subject bodies whose intelligibilities and meanings are shifted and mediated through various discourses about women, sports and female athletes within Japan. In this research study, I also examined the intricate
processes of negotiation and formation of the subjectivities of athletes that go between subject/abject and are mediated but also working on and against the normative Japanese discourses of gender and sexuality.

Another important concept essential to Butler’s conceptualization of performativity of gender and sexuality and abject body is “livability”. In her conceptualization of subject and livability, social recognition, or being recognized as a person, is a condition of a livable life. Through interpellation, which is conditioned or framed by the preexisting discourses, one becomes a recognizable subject. The preexisting discourses offer terms that enable one to see their relationship to the society, or see “oneself as part of a community, a polity, a family, or any other kind of human group” (Chinn, 2010, p. 120). Butler, however, argues that there is a dilemma since the “recognizable” subject position may be unlivable. Thus, livability “requires some level of loss” and the question becomes “what kind of loss is least damaging?” (Chinn, 2010, p. 121). This concept of livability is crucial to analyzing the subjectivities of masculine female athletes and transgender athletes in Japan, and how the athletes negotiate sexist and heterosexist gender and sexual norms in and out of sporting spaces. What are the preexisting discourses or discursive resources these athletes utilize to see themselves in relation to the world? What are the dilemma, loss, and consequences of taking up, or not taking up, subject positions offered by the society?

**Disidentification**

José Muñoz (1999) conceptualized disidentification as “the third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it” (p. 11). It illuminates the survival strategies that the minority subject practices which work “on and against” the dominant ideology. Disidentification as a survival strategy “tries to transform a cultural logic from within, always laboring to enact permanent structural change
while at the same time valuing the importance of local or everyday struggles of resistance” (p. 11-12). Muñoz explains that this process of disidentification produces “identities-in-difference” through the failed interpellation of the dominant public sphere (p. 7). Muñoz cautions that disidentification is not always the sufficient survival strategy for all minority subjects since other forms of resistance and strategies, such as direct resistance or conforming to the norm, are necessary for some to survive a hostile normative social sphere.

This concept of disidentification, as the “third mode of dealing with dominant ideology”, offers an additional analytical lenses to explore how female and ‘trans’ athletes in masculine sports in Japan negotiate Japanese gender and sexual norms, the medicalized and normalized discourse of “gender identity disorder (GID)”, and the demands of a stoic sports culture. It allows me to see how some participants take up the dominant construction of the sports of soccer and wrestling, and yet as ‘female athletes’ create their own way of living the subject position without necessarily directly resisting or conforming to these constructs; thus, they are producing the “third” gender space in which the gender and sexual norms are negotiated and different ways of being a “woman” or “trans” subject become possible.

**Marginality and Coloniality**

Concepts of marginality and coloniality, developed by postcolonial theorists are important in this project in two ways: an analysis of the subjectivities of participants with transgender or queer gender identities; and my researcher positionality and knowledge production. Mingnolo (2011) uses coloniality to refer to a “colonial matrix of power” (CMP), which consists of four interrelated domains: the control of the economy; authority; race, gender, and sexuality; and knowledge and subjectivity. These four ‘heads’ are supported by two ‘legs’—the racial and patriarchal foundations of knowledge. Mignolo argues that these are the enunciation of Western (white, bourgeoisie, heterosexual male) epistemology, which are the foundations of Western
civilization.

In contemporary Japanese transgender politics, the Western medicalized conception of transgender as a Gender Identity Disorder (GID) has become dominant. In the interviews with two of my non-cisgender participants, they speak from different subject positions in relation to a normative transgender narrative (transnormative narrative), based on the concept of GID. The subjectivity of one of the trans participants, who identifies himself as a post-operative FtM transsexual, is shaped strongly by the medical discourse of GID. He recognizes the necessity of the transnormative narrative to be recognizable to the society, to me, and to gain access to HRT and GRS. These are a necessity for him, to both insist on his male identity and to have a job as a teacher to survive. Thus, the Western medicalized discourse of transgender identity and Japanese transnormative narratives both limit and enable different ways of being in a society for the participant.

This chain of necessities is formed by the colonial matrix of power. It discursively constructs the transgender subject as deviant, a person with an identity disorder that could be “treated” or “saved” by the medical intervention, based on the Western discourse of binary gender and human rights. Japanese medical authorities occupy both a central position in relation to defining Japanese ‘trans’ subjects and a marginal position in relation to Western knowledge production. They gain power and authority by “importing” and practicing Western medical knowledge, and see transgender subjects through Western eyes, thus placing them in a medicalized, marginalized subject position.

Lastly, as I discussed at the beginning of this paper, the issue of “spurious marginality” (Spivak, 1993, p. 277, cited in Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 36) is crucial for my work as a queer scholar of color. My positionality as a Japanese queer scholar, trained in the Western academe is a very complicated one due to the layers of colonization, marginalization, and the movements
toward a “center” of colonial relations. While my subject position as a queer scholar of color and English learner is at the margin of the Western Academia, in relation to my participants, I occupy a position of a margin-center, a Western trained researcher. As I will discuss in the “research positionality” section later in this chapter, this positionality has several important implications in my relationship with my research participants, data interpretation, and representation. One of the important implications that I note here to end this section is the need for critical consideration about the ways in which I engage in decolonization efforts through knowledge production and “fetishism” of my own marginality that reproduces knowledge imperialism and othering of the people among whom I include myself.

**Methods**

As I discussed in the literature review section in Chapter two, there are very few research studies conducted in the Japanese context concerning discursive construction of female athletes in masculine sport. Thus, I need to begin this research by identifying the socio-historical discourse that is used to mediate a “dialectical process of self-making and being made” (Coloma, 2008, p. 20).

With the purposes of this study in mind, I employ a “double-layered” approach that combines feminist and Foucauldian critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the mainstream media and in-depth interviews with athletes, to identify how the discourses operate. I am cognizant that there are numerous ways to approach socio-historical discourses surrounding female athletes in soccer and wrestling and it is not possible to include all such discourse in one approach that I employ in this study. Nonetheless, the use of feminist and Foucauldian CDA is useful in identifying Japanese gender, sexual, racial, ethnic, and national politics and the discursive resources used in constructions of Japanese female athletes in masculine sports. In addition,
in-depth interviews with Japanese female and queer athletes in these sports reveals some of the ways in which discursive and non-discursive practices and materialization of discourses forms the athletes’ subjectivities and how athletes negotiate such formations.

Data/Data Collection

Mainstream Media

The data for my critical discourse analysis of mainstream media was collected from two major resources: a mainstream newspaper and a popular sports magazine, supplemented by a popular news magazine published between 2001 and 2012.

Newspaper. Among the five national newspapers in Japan, I selected Asahi Shinbun (Asahi) for this study. Asahi has the second largest circulation in the nation, which was approximately 7.61 million for its morning edition and 2.76 million for its evening edition in 2013.\(^{25}\) It was second behind that of Yomiuri Shimbun, which had a circulation of approximately 8.14 million for its morning edition and 3.33 million for the evening edition in 2013.\(^{26}\) The reason why I did not select the largest one, Yomiuri Shinbun, is because it is a conservative newspaper company that has held the revisionist stance in regards to the history of comfort women or wartime sex slavery in Japanese Imperial Army. Since my analytical focus is not the comparison of representation of female athletes among major newspaper companies, I chose not to reproduce the writings of Yomiuri Shinbun.

Magazines. The Sports Graphic Number (Number) is the leading Japanese sports


\(^{26}\) This number is based on the newspaper circulation report published by Japan Audit Bureau of Circulations (JABC) cited in Yomiuri Media Kit. The report is available at: http://adv.yomiuri.co.jp/yomiuri/busu/busu01a.html
magazine published biweekly by Bungeishunju. Though the circulation once hit 47 million, it was approximately 1.03 million in 2013. This magazine is the only sports magazine available in most bookstores and public libraries, including small scale branch libraries in rural area. Aera is a Japanese weekly news magazine, printed in gravure, published by the Asahi Shinbun. The magazine combines photographs and news stories and often selects themes related to women and social issues. This magazine is included in the analysis for supplemental purposes as it offers discussion of Japanese female athletes in the larger social context, compared to Number whose discussions on female athletes often focus only on sports contexts.

**Period of Media Data Collected.** The materials collected for the analysis is limited to those that are written or published between 2000 and 2012. There are several reasons for the choice of this time frame:

1. Women’s wrestling became an Olympic event in 2001, and the Athens Olympics in 2004 was the first Olympic that two events were in the Olympics, thus it gained significant media attention.
2. In 2001, “Kinpachi Sensei”, one of the most popular television drama series, featured the issue of GID and attracted significant media and public attention not only for the issue of GID, but also in the queer community in general.
3. In 2003, Kanako Otsuji, the first openly lesbian politician in Japan was elected as a member of the Osaka-City council.
4. In 2006, Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai (NHK), Japan’s government broadcaster, began a television program called Hāto Wo Tsunagou (Let’s Connect Our Hearts) and

---

27 This number is drawn from the magazine circulation report published by JABC cited in Rakumaga at: http://magazine-ad.com/sports/a0003.html
28 Hāto Wo Tsunagou has featured various welfare issues, including Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, domestic violence, developmental disorders, GID, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Asperger...
featured GID, gay, lesbian, and LGBT issues.

The year 2000 marked the beginning of the series of events that rapidly increased the social awareness of queer communities in Japan. It also coincided with the explosive increase in the public visibilities of women’s soccer and wrestling.

**Media Data Collection.** I used the online database Asahi Kikuzo II Visual to search for *Asahi* and *Aera* articles, and Magazine Plus for *Number* articles. I searched for the articles that included the following keywords: “joshi sakkā” (women’s soccer), “Nadeshiko Japan”, and “joshi resuringu” (women’s wrestling). Among all articles found, I filtered out articles which: contained only game results or advertisements of up-coming competitions; or mention women’s soccer or wrestling as an example of other themes and do not offer extended discussions of the sports or the athletes. In the initial analysis, I selected the articles whose main theme is women’s soccer or wrestling, and that focused on athletes’ gender in the narrative for in-depth analysis. For the number of articles selected, see the Table 3-2.

**Table 3-2**

*Media Data Search Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Search Words in Japanese (English Translation)</th>
<th>Articles Found</th>
<th>Articles Selected for Initial Analysis</th>
<th>Articles Selected for In-Depth Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asahi Shinbun</td>
<td>女子サッカー or なでしこジャパン (women’s soccer or Nadeshiko Japan)</td>
<td>2515</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>女子レスリング (women’s wrestling)</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport Graphic</td>
<td>女子サッカー or なでしこジャパン (women’s soccer or Nadeshiko Japan)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>女子レスリング (women’s wrestling)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aera</td>
<td>女子サッカー or なでしこジャパン</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

syndrome, single mothers, child abuse, morbid dependence, LGBT, eating disorders, sexual violence, and poverty.
Data/Data Collection: In-Depth Interviews

For this study, I used the following criteria to narrow down the possible participants for interviews. Participants are: 1) over the age of 18; 2) currently participating in or recently retired from women’s soccer or wrestling at the collegiate level in Japan; and 3) reside in Kansai or Chubu regions. The second criterion does not exclude the athletes whose gender identity is other than woman, as long as they have competed in a women’s team. This includes a transgender or transsexual man, an intersex person, a gender queer person, or any gender identity category they choose to express. It excludes transsexual and transgender women since this study focuses on the embodiment and performance of masculinity by people who are assigned the female gender at birth. Current and recently retired collegiate level athletes are chosen because they are: familiar with contemporary Japanese sport cultures in their chosen sports compared to those athletes who have been away from competition; more likely than younger athletes to have more experiences in their sport and be able to articulate and analyze their experiences; and more likely to have experienced elite level competitions.

Participants Recruitment. Participants were recruited using purposeful sampling and snowball sampling. Sampling involved conducting an initial Internet search to identify colleges and universities in Kansai and Chubu regions of Japan that have women’s soccer and wrestling teams. Since I did not have any direct connections to Japanese university women’s soccer and wrestling teams or athletes, I contacted professors whom I had connections with through academic conferences in Japan who work in the universities that I identified by my Internet search. I notified the professors about the purpose of my research, participation criteria, and that the ethics review has been completed and approved by the University of Toronto. They
distributed my flier calling for participants to the respective women’s soccer and wrestling teams. Within two months of the initial contact in September 2012, the professors from two different universities informed me that there were a total of ten athletes interested in participating in my study. I conducted interviews between November 2012 and February 2013.

I initially planned to interview the athletes individually; however, it quickly became clear that it was not possible to have a separate time for each athlete to interview individually, within the limited time I had in Japan. Since most participants were competing at the elite level as a university student, their competition and training schedule, as well as their university course work left them with very little time available for an interview. Yet, all of them agreed to be interviewed in groups and kindly offered their lunch time, and time between their classes and work to be interviewed. Thus, for the first interview, participants were grouped in two or three, and each group consisted of athletes from the same cohort in order to avoid age hierarchy, which might influence the amount of time and the issues participants felt comfortable speaking about in the interview.

For the first round of the interviews, the professors who introduced me to the athletes reserved meeting rooms in their universities for the interview, as the athletes were coming between classes and it was more convenient to do so at on-campus locations rather than asking them to come to any off campus locations. During the first interview, participants introduced me to two other athletes who were interested in participating in this study. Following the first round of interviews, I contacted the two athletes to arrange a first interview with them. The total number of participants was twelve. After the first set of interviews, I transcribed the interviews and prepared the follow up questions. Among the twelve athletes that I interviewed, I selected eight participants for the follow up interview, as their experiences and gender identifications matched well for the purpose of this study.
While the group interview may have helped athletes to be more comfortable, compared to meeting a “researcher” individually for the first time, I could sense hesitation from some of the participants when the conversation shifted from “sports experience” to more private matters, such as their experiences of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and the body. In order to ensure more privacy and open up different conversations, I arranged individual interviews at off campus locations (cafés) for the follow up interviews. Among the eight athletes chosen for the follow up interviews, one could not participate due to her competition and training schedule. In total, I interviewed twelve athletes, and among them, seven participated in a follow up interview.

Each interview lasted between forty minutes to two hours depending on their availability. All interviews were digitally voice recorded according to the participants’ permission and transcribed by myself. I sent transcripts to each participant through email and asked if there was anything they would like to delete, change, or add to the transcript. All but one participant requested no changes to the transcript. One participant sent me an email to provide further details to the interview, and also requested not to use a part of the interview in order to protect the privacy of her teammates and her coach.

Participants. In order to protect their privacy, I use a pseudonym for all participants and their universities and teams (Table 3-2). All participants currently belong to or are recently retired from women’s soccer or wrestling teams in two Japanese universities located in different major cities in Japan. Both universities are powerhouses for collegiate athletics and have produced numerous Olympians and world-class athletes. Reflecting the universities’ investments in athletics, all participants who are in soccer teams have experienced national level competition and all wrestlers have experienced international competitions. While all participants have played in a women’s team, not all of them identified as a woman. One participant, Shun, identifies himself as female-to-male transsexual (FtM) or Gender Identity Disorder (GID). Another
participant, Ryo, has a masculine gender identity but is unsure of their gender identity ‘category’. Ryo is suspecting that they might be GID, but they have not gone to counseling or received GID diagnosis, thus their identification with GID is still in a form of question—“I might be GID? But maybe so.” I asked Ryo about their preferred gender pronoun, but they were unsure. Thus in this study, I use the gender-neutral pronoun “they” for Ryo to leave their gender identity open, rather than closing it down with “he” or “she”. The rest of the ten athletes identify themselves as cisgender women. All participants have Japanese nationality and identify themselves as ethnically Japanese.

Data Analysis

Data Translation

Since all data sources are in Japanese within this study, it is important to address the data translation before discussing data analysis. As Kim (2013) points out, while an increasing number of scholars engage in transnational studies of sport in relation to globalization, colonialism, and imperialism, methodological and political issues of the data translation has received very little scholarly attention in sports studies. Kim argues that postcolonial translation (PCT), as postcolonial and anticolonial praxis that “reveals and challenges the hierarchical power relations embedded in linguistic practices”, has its potential for “creating the ‘third space’ for renegotiating the cultural differences” (2013, p. 354). As my current study does not involve the analysis of English texts with Japanese to English translation, the methodological concerns in relation to transition/translation of language in this study are primarily identified at the level of epistemology. This study was conceived and designed in the English language with theories and concepts developed in both North American and Japanese academia. The translation of English theories into the analysis of Japanese gender and sexual norms in this study requires close
examination of the concepts used in the analysis and use of such concepts in the Japanese media, and their use by my participants. For instance, one of the central concepts of this study is sexuality; however, when it is translated into a Japanese word, *sei* (性), it also means “sex”. As Akawaga (2012) argues in his *Sekushuarithi No Rekishishakaigaku* (Historical Sociology of Sexuality), while the concept “sexuality” enables particular analysis of power, the use of “sexuality” in the Japanese context must accompany a critical examination of the different ways and nuances in which Japanese terms that are translated to “sexuality” have been used. The same consideration is required for “homophobia” and “transphobia”. While these terms are analytically useful and essential in my analysis of gender and sexual politics in Japanese sports, I also must carefully attend to the different ways people perceive, respond to, and experience same-sex desires and relationships, as well as cross-gender expressions and identities in Japan.

This issue became salient during my interviews with the athletes. In the interviews, I used various concepts that have been translated from English to Japanese by scholars, such as gender identity, sexual orientation, homosexuality, transgender and so on. Many participants used gender identity and sexuality interchangeably. These incidents cannot be simply dismissed as their “ignorance” about gender and sexual diversity. Doing so reproduces a form of epistemological imperialism that doubly marginalizes my participants through translation and Western queer politics. Rather than placing the judgement on my participants’ conceptualizations of gender and sexual diversity, I closely attend different ways in which my participants talked about “sexuality”.

**Foucauldian and Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis**

While this study mobilizes multiple theoretical approaches in analyzing the discourses about the female athletes, such as queer, feminist, and postcolonial, the “mode” of discourse analysis used in this study is critical discourse analysis (CDA). As Wodak and Meyer (2009)
explain, studies in CDA are “multifarious, derived from quite different theoretical backgrounds, oriented towards different data and methodologies” (p. 5), and thus there is no single definition or method of analysis. Rather, CDA is bound by its shared interest in, and the critical impetus towards, discourse, power, and ideology. Acknowledging the dangers and limitations of creating a definition to such an analytical approach, Dijk’s “definition” of CDA still offers a sort of “greatest common denominator” to the frame in order to clarify and situate my work. Dijk (2001) defines CDA as a “type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (p. 352). Following this definition, this dissertation examines the ways in which Japanese patriarchy is sustained through discursive constructions of norms and others in relation to their gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and nation. This study also examines the ways in which the construction of the reproduction of norms and others are problematized and resisted by its own contradictions and slippages, as well as by other sets of discourses.

More specifically, this study employs Foucauldian discourse analysis, while keeping with the political and critical impetus of feminist CDA. In proposing a feminist CDA as a CDA with particular focus on gender ideology and asymmetrical power relations, Lazar (2007) explains that its aim is to “show up the complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts and communities” (p. 142). As a feminist praxis, Lazar emphasizes that the interest in feminist CDA goes beyond “an academic de-construction of texts and talk for its own sake”, and acknowledges the material and phenomenological consequences the issues analyzed have for the people in specific communities. As Lazar herself acknowledges, feminist CDA as a “feminist politics of articulation” (Wetherell, 1995, p. 141, cited in Lazar, 2007, p. 143) is guided by feminist
approaches and theorization accumulated in women’s studies, and her proposal does not mean there has not been CDA with a feminist approach. Recognizing the wealth and contributions of feminist theorizing and approaches to discourse that paved the way to Lazer’s proposal of a “feminist CDA”, I nonetheless use the banner in order to identify my work with the feminist research that is brought together under the umbrella.

The interest of this study goes beyond the analysis of the “ideological structure that divides people into two classes, men and women, based on a hierarchical relation of domination and subordination, respectively” (Lazar, 2007, p. 146) through CDA. This study looks at the ways in which certain gender identities and expressions, gendered embodiment, and sexual practices and desires are constructed as normal/legitimate while marginalizing and silencing others, and how such discourses materialize in day-to-day practices and are experienced by female athletes who engage in masculine sports. Jäger and Maier (2009) explain that CDA based on Foucauldian discourse theory aims to “identify the knowledges contained in discourses and dispositives, and how these knowledges are firmly connected to power relations in power/knowledge complex” (p. 34-35). Knowledge in a Foucauldian sense, refers to “all kinds of meanings that people use to interpret and shape their environment” (p. 34). Dispositives refers to “the synthesis of discursive practices (i.e. speaking and thinking on the basis of knowledge) and non-discursive practices (i.e. acting on the basis of knowledge) and materializations (i.e. the material products of acting on the basis of knowledge)” (p. 35). This approach allows me to identify discursive and non-discursive practices that female athletes and people around them engage in, the materialization of such practices, and the relationship between them that constitutes the athletes’ subjectivities.

As this study involves two groups of data, Japanese media articles and interviews with athletes, the analytical process involves going back and forth between the two groups of data. As Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) asserts, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation is an
interactive process, which will not proceed in a “cookbook” fashion (p. 344). These processes are simultaneous and each informs the analysis of the other. For instance, terms, tropes, and logics used in the mainstream media constructions of female athletes in soccer and wrestling have commonalities and differences from the discourses and material experiences that are influential to the athletes’ perceptions of their gender, sexuality, ethnicity and body that the athletes identified in the interview. Participants talked about local specificity of gender and sexual norms, and the perception of their masculine embodiments and participation in the sports. Thus, the two groups of data are used neither to validate each other nor to simply compare how much influence one has on the other. Rather, comparison and juxtaposition of the two groups of data are used to identify connections, contradictions, gaps, and “slippages” in the discourses not only enrich the analysis, but also provide insights into how the norms of race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality could be challenged and transformed.

**Reflexive and Decolonizing Research**

**Researcher Positionality?**

I flew to the US at the age of eighteen. In my childhood, America was a land of freedom and advanced knowledge, where people lived “true to themselves”, including “queer” folks. At that time, I had never heard of the word “LGBTQ”, and only knew ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’ in English. Yet, I still held the image of America as the “land of the free”, where gender and sexual “minorities” were free to express themselves and even same sex marriage was actively debated. America was also a land of advanced knowledge, where scholars around the world gathered to produce new knowledge and gain global recognition. It was a place where my mother collected data for her dissertation, which was about the ‘new’ physical education curricula that went beyond the conventional, competitive, sport-centered physical education that was still prevalent
in Japanese schools. In my childhood mindscape, studying in America thus promised my freedom and career advancement, in addition to the “cool” skill of speaking fluent English. Leaving Japan for American higher education meant that I would be able to leave behind the homophobic and transphobic Japanese society and acquire knowledge and language to talk about my suffering, enabling me to make changes with the sword of American queer politics and the shield of the power/knowledge of American education.

More than a decade later, I returned to Japan as a Ph.D. student, and a researcher who chose my “native” land of Japan for their field of research. What I did not see in my mindscape filled with American dreams a decade earlier, were the conflicts and dilemma that my return trip to Japan as a researcher in training would bring. Throughout my processes of formulating research questions, designing a research study, and traveling back home, there has been constant questioning—who am I to research about Japanese female and queer athletes? How is Western knowledge useful in my understanding of Japanese female and queer athletes’ experiences and ultimately, myself? Ultimately, for whose benefit am I doing this research? What will be lost when I write up this thesis in English? My “educational migration” across the pacific to the US and Canada, and eventually back to Japan, is a trajectory drawn by US imperialism, English language domination, and my own privilege. My arrival to the questions above is guided by the works of feminist, post-colonial, and queer theorists, who have painstakingly asked questions of power and knowledge, subjectivity and marginalization.

Spivak’s interrogation of “spurious marginality” (cited in Jackson & Mazzei, 2011, p. 36) makes me feel paralyzed still from time to time, as I think of my project as writing other people's lives for my own advancement as an academic, who is trained in Western academe. I am still learning how to listen to what I cannot hear through my Westernized epistemological ear. Aboriginal scholars around the world are offering me the tools, but they are not mine, either.
Perhaps, the best I can do is to join the forces of activists and scholars in Japan and around the world who are deconstructing colonial legacies, “delinking” the colonial matrix of power” (Mignolo, 2011). While publishing in "prestigious" journals and speaking and writing in academic English are necessary for our survival as researchers, it also allows me to communicate with allies and see the logic and links of the colonial matrix of power.

Peter Cole (2006) poses an important challenge: What are the ways of knowing you abandoned to get here? This challenge raises two important questions for me as a Westernized Japanese queer scholar: as a Westernized Japanese, what is the way of knowing I abandoned to get here?; and as a queer of color subject, what is the way of knowing that I abandoned to survive in such a deeply Westernized, modernized and colonizing country like Japan? What does it mean for me to be Japanese and to think like Japanese, when Japanese language erased my existence for so long? This is perhaps the necessary tension in the decolonizing process. I should not settle in a "comfortable", "stable" understanding given by imperializing language while I also should not attempt to find "where I came from" or engage in the "fetishism" of my own marginality.

Terms offered by Western queer politics such as LGBTTIQQ2 acronym, with all the issue with Western centrism and ontological imperialism, enabled certain queer politics that have enabled Japanese queers to access to livable subjectivities. Many Japanese ‘native’ queer identities, such as okama, onabe, nyūhāfu, and onē, for example, were put in abject positions, which is unlivable for many who may identify with ‘LGBTQ’ categories. When GID was introduced to Japanese society, through its disciplining, medicalizing discourse, “trans” body, which had long pushed into the “shadowy regions of ontology” (Butler, 1998, p. 277), came to matter in the society. Medicalized trans/GID discourse opened up a path for some of Japanese transgender individuals to legally receive HRT and GRS, along with some level of social
recognition. As I discussed in the Chapter Two, the *subject* position offered by the GID discourse, however, came with very problematic and rigid rules of legitimacy. As a Japanese queer researcher trained in North America, what I attempt to do in this dissertation is to weave in both Western and Japanese theories and researches to open up different conversation, which enacts resistances to both the Western knowledge imperialism and Japanese patriarchy, sexism, cisgenderism, homophobia, and transphobia. When identities are closed down, once again, with rigid, normalizing uses of ‘queer’ theorizations and politics, my task is to *disidentify* with both Japanese and Western theories and scholarships to enable *queer* politics once again.
PART II: MEDIA DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

Chapter 4. Media I: Patriarchal and Heteronormative Constructions of Female Athletes in Masculine Sports and Its Troubles

Since the early 2000s, the success of Japanese female soccer players and wrestlers has caused an unprecedented influx of media attention. The female athletes have been attributed to a multitude of meanings and social positions, as they climb through a ladder of national and international recognition. Their success shifted their subject positions from the largely unknown figures in women’s “minor” sports, to the champions of the Olympics and the World Cups: they became national celebrities. Their success was particularly significant for the “post-311” Japan, the distinct period marked by the Great East Japan Earthquake in March 11th, 2011. The triple natural and human made disasters of the earthquake, tsunami, and the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident devastated the nation and put the society into a deep grief, and economic and psychic depression. The victory of the Japanese women’s national soccer team, Nadeshiko Japan29 in the 2011 FIFA World Cup, was said to have given confidence and hope to the devastated and depressed nation. The overwhelming national celebration was marked by the awarding of the prestigious People’s Honor Award to the whole team of Nadeshiko Japan at the end of the year in 2011.

The celebration continued into the year 2012, the year of the London Olympic Games,

---

29 *Nadeshiko Japan* is the official nickname that is a short form for the full name of *Yamato Nadeshiko* 大和撫子. *Yamato Nadeshiko* is a floral metaphor used to personify an idealized “Japanese woman.” Kitamura (2009) argues that Japanese women are often idealized and stereotyped as “utsukushii (beautiful), hakanai (frail), kayowai (weak), karenna (helpless), otonashii (docile), and ijirashii (innocent/sweet/pitiful). On September 17, 2004, the Japan Women’s Soccer League (L-League, a short form for Lady League) announced that it renamed the league “Nadeshiko League” to follow the success of *Nadeshiko Japan* in the 2004 Athens Olympic. In the Olympics, *Nadeshiko Japan* proceeded to the final tournament for the first time.
where *Nadeshiko Japan* won the silver medal and the women’s wrestling team dominated the podium. It was the first time for *Nadeshiko Japan* to reach the finals in the Olympics’ final tournament. For the wrestling team, three women: Obara Hitomi, Yoshida Saori and Ichō Kaori, won gold medals, two of which were their third consecutive gold medals at the Olympics. Yoshida, in particular, firmly established her national heroin status by winning her 10th consecutive wrestling World Cup title at the end the year. She came to be compared with Alexander Karelin, a male super-heavyweight wrestling champion from the former Soviet Union, who is considered to be the best Greco-Roman wrestler of all time. Before Yoshida, he was the only wrestler in the world, including both women and men, to have won ten consecutive World Cup titles. As a result, a year after *Nadeshiko Japan* was given the People’s Honor Award, Yoshida was also award for the People’s Honor Award in 2012.30

Unlike *Nadeshiko Japan*, the women’s wrestling team’s success was not new. They had been very successful since its debut in the FILA World Wrestling Championship in 1987 and the Olympic Games in 2004. They have constantly dominated the world championships’ and the Olympic Games’ podiums. As Iida (2003b) points out, however, they have received very little media coverage, except for the period during the Olympic years. Even during recent years, there was not as significant of an increase in the number of newspaper articles written about women’s wrestling like women’s soccer, although their media exposure, particularly on television, visibly increased as they continued to dominate the Olympic podiums (Table 1). Yoshida Saori, in particular, appeared on many television shows and commercials as her fame and popularity soared towards the end of 2012.

---

30 In 2013, Yoshida became the first person to win eleven consecutive world championship titles.
### Table 4-1

**Number of Articles that Mentioned Women’s Soccer and Wrestling in Japanese Major Newspapers***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Asahi**</th>
<th>Yomiuri</th>
<th>Major Event of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>Wrestling</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>846</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>1060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** *Keywords used for this search were: “女子サッカー” (women’s soccer) or “なでしこジャパン” (Nadeshiko Japan) for soccer and “女子レスリング” (women’s wrestling) or “レスリング女子” (wrestling women) for wrestling.

**Yomiuri and Asahi Newspapers are the two biggest among five national newspapers in Japan. Among five newspapers, Asahi is known for relatively liberal and progressive views while Yomiuri for its conservative views. This search includes national and local sections.

*** FIFA Women’s World Cup is an international football competition organized by the *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA), the sport’s global governing body. The championship has been awarded every four years since the 1991 inaugural tournament held in Guangdong, China. The Women’s championship is held separately from the men’s championship.

****FILA Wrestling World Cup is an international wrestling competition organized by the International Federation of Associated Wrestling Styles (FILA), the sport's global governing body. The championship has been awarded every year since 1987 in Lorenskog, Norway.
This surge of popularity and media attention for these two sports that are conventionally considered more masculine, or men’s sport, have created an interesting discursive space in the Japanese mainstream media in which Japanese normative femininity is needed to be negotiated with the masculinity of these athletes. While the media trivializes and sexualizes female athletes, and construct them within a heteronormative patriarchal gendered context in their daily coverage, they received almost an equal amount of media attention to men’s sport during the Olympics, pointing to the importance of their nationality over gender in the Olympics reporting (Iida, 2003b; 2007). This congregation of heteronormative discourses pertaining to Japanese women in the media, along with nationalist identifications with heroic athletes and the female athlete’s masculinity, create productive tensions that have produced multiple constructions of the athletes in the media discourse. In the early 2000s, when their existence was given very little recognition and attention, the Japanese media have constructed them as “exceptional minorities” at the an margins of imagined Japanese femininity, who just happened to pick up the sports due to a male family member’s influence, thus trivializing their existence and performance (Iida, 2003b). Yet, as they become more successful in the key international sporting events, their success has been increasingly associated with their “Japaneseness” and incorporated into an imagined “Japanese-womanness.”

At the same time, the multitude of discursive constructions necessary involves Gender Trouble (Butler, 1990), slippages, ruptures and contradictions in the reproduction of the coherent “Japanese women,” revealing the performativity of “Japanese women” and “taiikukaikei” (athletic) women. In this chapter, I pick up fragments or fabrics of “other’s act of speaking/writing” about (Davis, 1991, p. 43) or “being-made” (Coloma, 2008, p. 20) of the female athletes in the discursive space of the Japanese media, in order to examine the normative discursive constructions of female athletes, its “troubling”, queering moments of subversion, and
discursive tactics used to repair the trouble. Butler (1993b) argues that these troubling moments are produced by slippages and ruptures, and they expose the constitution of the normative subject and disrupt its “naturalistic effects” (p. 313). In the troubling moments of the productive tension between norms and their ruptures, silences are unsilenced and new meanings and new ways of being are opened up. By examining the mainstream media over a twelve year period between 2001 and 2012, I examine the multiple constructions and subject positions of the female athletes that are made im/possible and un/available in the mainstream media.

This chapter is divided into three major sections that analyze significant ways in which the athletes are constructed in the media: 1) normative, 2) normalizing (trouble and repair), and 3) resignifying. By dividing the discourses into three categories, I do not intend to claim that these are completely separate discourses, in different media sources at different times, nor do they progress in a linear manner in one chronological direction. Rather, these categorizations are used to identify different elements in the discourses. Thus, there are many articles, phrases, and words repeatedly chosen for analysis in different categories. Some articles contain all three categories in terms of their discursive strategies and effects.

I also discuss some discursive “shifts,” in a sense that “discursive resources” (Morson & Macleod, 2013, p. 571) are used repetitively and differently in different historical moments. Yet, these shifts are also not a linear progression without a return. While discursive resources are used to reproduce and reinforce heteronormative, patriarchal gender norms and hierarchies and the marginal status of female athletes, the same resources are used to celebrate these athletes and to incorporate them into national imageries.

Normative Construction: Heteronormativity and Binary Gender

The focus of this chapter is to highlight the discourses that normatively construct female
athletes in soccer and wrestling in Japanese mainstream media, which reproduce and reinforce heteronormativity and patriarchal gender hierarchies. These discourses reinstate gender binaries by differently constituting male and female athletes in terms of their body and physical ability, playing and coaching style, and even their attitude towards the sport. These normative discourses form a set of “discursive resources” that are taken up repeatedly in different historical moments and discursive spaces to push the female athletes to the margin of the imagined Japanese women and also to reincorporate them into the dominant discourses of Japaneseness. Firstly, I examine the discursive strategies to situate men as the original, dominant, legitimate, and superior players of these sports, while marginalizing and trivializing women who step into the “arena of masculinity” (Pronger, 1992). Secondly, I examine how the discourse of men’s originality and superiority are used to appropriate the success of female athletes in the masculine sports. In these discourses, men are constructed as patriarchs who guide women to success, recuperating male superiority through the female athletes’ outstanding performances that trouble their dominance.

**Patriarchal Gender Order: Feminization of Female Athletes and Valorization of Male Masculinity**

As discussed in the earlier chapters, soccer and wrestling have been conventionally considered “men’s” sports. Until recently, the number of registered female athletes in these sports were quite small compared to their male counterparts, and these numbers are used to reinforce its position as a “minor” women’s sport within the mainstream media discourses. The “minor” status of the women is combined with its direct comparisons to male players and a juxtaposition and citation of male athletes to discursively produce men as original and legitimate in these masculine sports, while constructing women as its copy, if not a bad copy.

During the early 2000s, before the women’s national soccer team advanced to the final tournament for the first time at the Olympics in 2004, there were a limited number of articles
written on women’s soccer. Even among those articles published about women’s soccer, most of them were either a simple announcement of a women’s soccer event or reporting game results without including any description or analysis of the participants or game. Those few that provided more than an event announcement or game result, focused on the “minor” status of women’s soccer and gave a pessimistic view about the future of female athletes in soccer. An Asahi article wrote:

激しく体をぶつけ合い、「格闘技」とも言われるサッカー。県内では、Jリーグに進んだり、高校選手権で上位に進出したりと目覚ましい活躍の男子に比べ、女子の活動はあまり知られていない。競技人口が少なく、晴れ舞台はほとんどないが、選手たちはそれぞれ目標を持ってボールを追いかけている(Soccer, a sport also called ‘martial arts’, involves hard body contact. Compared to the boys who advanced to J-League and ranked higher in the All Japan High School Soccer Tournament, girls’ activity is not well known in the prefecture. Playing population is small and there is hardly any grand stage for them, but they are chasing a ball toward their own goals). (N17, 2001, p. Kagoshima 2-28)

In one of the articles that described various efforts made by the local and national soccer organizations, the executive director of L-League was quoted for attributing the violent nature of soccer to its lack of popularity among women: “女性が激しいスポーツをすることにまだ抵抗があるのかもしれない。まずは女性のサッカー人口を増やすことから取り組まないといけない” (There may be resistance for women to play violent sports. We must start from increasing the number of female soccer players) (N29, 2003, p. Kumamoto2-30). Later in the same article, the board chairman of Kumamoto Prefectural Soccer Association is quoted saying, “サッカーをする母親が増えれば、子

---

31 J-League, a short for Japan Professional Football League, was inaugurated in 1993 and is the top professional association soccer league for men in Japan. Until 1992, the top league for men’s soccer was the Japan Soccer League (JSL), an amateur league. The women’s top soccer league was inaugurated in 1989 as Nihon Joshi Sakkā Rīgu (L-League), which consisted of both amateur and professional teams. Following the success of the national team, Nadeshiko Japan, the league is now nick named as Nadeshiko League.
供もする機会が増える。女子サッカーの強化は全体の底上げにつながると期待している” ([the chairman] is expecting that ‘If the number of mothers who play soccer increases, so does the opportunity for their children to play soccer. Strengthening women’s soccer will result in the bottom up of the whole”) (p. Kumamoto2-30). The heteronormative assumption that all female soccer players will become mothers and provide their children the opportunity to play soccer is a re-citation of the “ryōsai kenbo” (good wife and wise mother), the official state-sanctioned discourses of gender ideology. This “prescribed and idealized the role of good wives and wise mothers” (Shigematsu, 2012, p. 6), in which a gendered division of labor is erected and the woman’s role is spoken through the benefit for the nation and male member of the family.

Another Asahi article wrote, “男子に比べて足技が多く、細やかな足技やパスワークが見どころだ” (Compared to boys, there are more foot techniques [in girls’ soccer games], and the highlights are their fine foot techniques and pass-work) (N5, 2001, p. Fukushima1-25). It seems obvious that the highlight of a soccer game should be its foot techniques; however, this article states the obvious to take readers’ attention away from power and speed to the “fineness” of the foot technique and pass-work of girls. As I will examine more in the next chapter, this fine foot technique and “pass-work” became the symbol and pride of Nadeshiko Japan when they took on foreign teams that are often depicted as bigger, faster, and stronger players in more recent years.

In 2004, the Japanese women’s national team won a game against the North Korean team after thirteen years of consecutive losses. This victory also gave the Japanese team a ticket to the Olympics. The head coach of the team was Ueda Eiji, a man who had been hired as a head coach for a J-League team and who became the first Japanese man to coach a foreign national team. In an Asahi article in that year, Ueda confessed that when the head coach position for the women’s team was offered, he thought the money should be spent for the men’s team instead (N14, 2004, p. Sōgō2), demonstrating his discriminatory attitude toward women’s soccer. Nonetheless, he
accepted the position and led the team to the historical victory. The article highlighted Ueda’s “new” coaching style and quoted his belief about how female athletes should be coached: “男子のやり方に近づけなければ、世界とは戦えない” (We must follow men’s ways in order to compete against the world) (p. Sōgō2). As Elise Edwards (2003) points out, Japanese female soccer players are often criticized by their coaches for their lack of independence and creativity on the soccer field. The coaches interviewed to talk about their strategies in coaching female athletes emphasized the importance of eliminating their “feminine” tendencies to make them more “like men” and more independent (N4, 2005; M14, 2011). An Asahi article stated, “女子のサッカーはほど好きでないと続かない” (Girls don’t keep playing unless they really like it) (N17, 2001, p. Kagoshima 2-28). This emphasized the tendency that female athletes quit more easily when compared to male athletes.

Furthermore, even within the article that purports to celebrate the growth and success of women’s soccer in recent years cite male players, the men are used as an index of excellence: “男子でも失敗するプレーを、あの舞台で実現させた丸山の動きの聡明（そうめい）さには驚きました” (I was surprised by the smartness of Maruyama who made the play, which even men can fail, at that stage) (N12, 2011, p. Opinion1-15). Similarly, outstanding female soccer players are given nicknames that borrow and feminize the names of famous male soccer players, such as Onna Nakata (Female Nakata) for Sawa Homare, who was a Nadeshiko Japan’s team captain for the 2011 FIFA World Cup (N55, 2002, p. Sunday1-41) and Onna Dunga (Female Dunga) for Obe Yumi, who was a team captain for the 2004 Athens Olympics (M10, 2004, p. 78). In these discourses, men become the reference point to talk about women players’ brilliance and excellence, constituting these women as copies of the original male players.

These similar discourses that emphasize the minor status of women and situate men as original also exist in the articles on wrestling. An Asahi article stated that a female wrestler, who
did not have any other girls who wrestled around her, thought volleyball was better since it was more feminine (N45, 2007). Another article titled “Women play wrestling too” wrote a story of Fukuda Tomiaki, the “father of women’s wrestling”, who was fixed upon the idea that wrestling is a men’s sport, until he visited Europe in the 1980s and was surprised to hear that women also wrestle there (N37, 2008, p. Sōgō1). When Yosida Saori achieved her third consecutive gold medal in the Olympics, she was often compared to the legendary male wrestler, Aleksandr Karelin, and called, “Onna Karerin” (female Karelin), particularly in weekly popular magazines and online media (W1, 2012; W2, 2011).

These constructions of female athletes, however, involve familiar figures—female professional wrestlers and female sumo wrestlers. Both female professional wrestling and sumo wrestling are considered “transgressive” in a sense that women show audiences physical performances that represent masculinity (Kamei, 2012).

腕力に自信はあったが、格闘技に興味はなかった。本屋で雑誌をのぞいたら、女子選手が鼻血を流して戦っていた。母も「柔道ならまだしも、女の子がレスリングなんて」と反対。…「レスリングはプロレスの印象が強くて反対だったけど、本人が悩んだ末の結論だったので、あきらめた」([Iwama Rena] had confidence in her physical strength but was not interested in martial arts. When I glanced over a magazine, a female athlete was bleeding from her nose while fighting. Her mother also opposed saying, “I would rather you do judo, I cannot let a girl do wrestling.” . . . “Though I was opposing wrestling because it had strong impression of professional wrestling, I gave up because it was her conclusion after long struggle”). (N57, 2002, p. Iwate1-23)

「プロレスと区別がつかなかったみたい。『飛びげりとか、ひっかいたりするの?』と聞いてきた」。女子大のキャンパスにはまだなじんでいなかった (“[My friends] couldn’t really distinguish
[amateur] wrestling from professional wrestling. They asked me like, ‘Do you jump-kick and scratch?’” It [wrestling] hadn’t been acclimated to the women’s college campus yet. (N62, 2008, p. Sōgō2)

The female wrestlers in the above narratives are not depicted simply as a minority, exceptional, or new who venture into a male dominant sport. They are constructed as a kind of queer existence through the image of female professional wrestlers who shed blood, jump kick, and scratch, the origin of which can be traced back to the imagery of various masculine women that have long occupied an interestingly murky in-between space in the mainstream and marginal culture in Japanese society (Kamei, 2012).

In 2003, a year before women’s wrestling made its official debut in the Olympic Games, Asahi Shinbun published an essay article about Miyazawa Kenji, a famous Japanese poet and a writer of children’s stories. In the article, the author equated today’s female (amateur) wrestling to women’s sumo wrestling in the early 20th century, which, according to the author, had erotic and economic functions, which were, in the eyes of the author, not respectable for women to engage in.
Kenji’s\textsuperscript{32} Kyodaizō Techō. Since there is also a word “Onnasumō no tabigaeri [A return journey of women’s sumo wrestling]” right underneath it, it is obvious that this suetsumuhana means the “Haihū Suetsumuhana” which gathered erotic pieces from a senryū\textsuperscript{33} collection, “Yanagidaru.” In the Iwate Daily published around the Kenji’s time, there was an article about women’s sumo wrestling held in the precincts of the Sakurayama Shrine in Morioka. It states that when a police officer interrogated a female sumo wrestler who seemed underage, the officer found that she was a runaway girl came from Sendai to make money. So the officer delivered a strong admonition and returned her to the family. No way Kenji would see such a thing. He probably knew about the existence of female sumo wrestling, which is like today’s female wrestling, through a newspaper [emphasis added]) (N20, 2003, p. Iwate2-34).

Eroticism, underage, runaway girl, money, and women’s sumo wrestling were put together to construct a figure of a girl who incites the officer’s attention. The author uses these discursive resources to construct the image of an “immoral” girl and a perverse activity, female sumo wrestling, and shows his contempt by calling it “such a thing” that a respectable poet like Kenji would no way choose to see.

The marginal status and in some cases perverse or sensationalized images of female wrestlers, however, have collided with the new image of masculine national heroines, since the Athens Olympic in 2004. As I examine in detail in the later section, the intensity of this collision is so high that it has produced diverse discourses about the body, gender and sexuality, along with complicated identifications of national discourse. Compared to that of soccer, female wrestling seems both familiar and unfamiliar, as competing discourses construct it as men’s sport.

---

\textsuperscript{32} Miyazawa Kenji is a Japanese poet and a writer of children’s literatures. Until his early death at the age of 37 in 1933, he left numerous literatures that are still used in public school literature textbooks.

\textsuperscript{33} Senryu is a seventeen-syllable poem which is often satirical of the times.
and new women’s sport, while others solicit the familiar imageries of masculine female figures, leaving the status of wrestling unsettled in Japanese society.

“Thanks to him”: Men’s Contribution to Female Athletes’ Success

On July 10th 2011, *Nadeshiko Japan* advanced to the semi-final of the FIFA World Cup. It was the first time for Japan to advance to a semi-final in the soccer World Cup, including the men’s team. Throughout the tournament, the captain of *Nadeshiko Japan*, Sawa Homare, who was nicknamed as Female-Nakata, was leading the team displaying incredible stamina, power, skill, and a will to score. Her performance and contribution should not have required any male comparison to be appreciated. No Japanese men have experienced the FIFA World Cup semi-final stage after all. Yet, two days later, Asahi Shinbun wrote on the front page: “澤さんは男の子の中で強くなった。小学校時代、試合中に「女のくせに」とスパイクを蹴られたことがある。その子は、心でわびているに違いない” (Sawa became strong among boys. In elementary school, she experienced being told “You are just a girl” and her spikes were kicked [by a boy] during the game. The child must be apologizing in his heart) (N58, 2011, p. Sōgō1).

The narrative of female top players growing up and playing with boys attributes female athletes’ success to men’s involvement. The lack of “female only” playing space and competing opportunities is rhetorically translated into a hard but “better” training environment because of their playing with boys. These experiences are said to be the “strength” of the Japanese female players in international competitions, and is often placed in comparison to American and European teams who have resources and where the game is popular with girls/women only teams and competing opportunities. As Iida (2003b) points out, this rhetoric of men’s contributions has double effects, it both reinforces the patriarchal gender order by silencing the critique of the lack of opportunities and support for girls and women, and constructs boys and men as superior athletes.
The narrative, which constructs the lack of female only playing environment and men’s involvement as a source of their success appears throughout the 2000s and the post-311 periods:

Although [Ando] was overwhelmed by the power and speed of male teammates, she did not give up. She continued training with her father, Hiroshi, even on off days . . . After enrolling the Utsunomiya Girl’s High School, she joined the girl’s only soccer team. In the first training game, she could keep the ball in the moments when she usually lost it. She could dribble pass the opponent with ease and it felt as if her skill suddenly improved. “I wonder if this would be for my benefit [to play] at this level”). (N1, 2001, p. Ibaraki1-33)

(Women’s world top level is almost equivalent to men’s high school national level. “I got used to boy’s speed and became able to dash out to cross balls”). (N38, 2004, p. Saitama2-30)

There is a high school girl who is working hard among male club members in order to learn soccer at the higher level . . . In the practice that involves ball handling, [she] loses against boy’s strong physical contact and quickly loses the ball. Still, she has continued until here with her character of competitive spirit). (N32, 2005, p.
女子でも、どのタイミングで仕掛ければいいかという判断ができる選手が増えたという。「ショートパスに速い攻撃という『日本らしさ』をちゃんと理解し、表現できる選手が増えた」とも感じる。背景には、小学生的頃、男女が同じチームでプレーしていることも大きい。米国など女子サッカー人口が多い国と違い、日本は小学生の女子単独チームは少なく、70%は男子に交じって技を磨いているという。「日本の弱点であり、長所でもある。技術的に伸びる小学生の頃に、男子と厳しいプレッシャーの中でやっていることが実は大きい」

The number of athletes who understand the timing of attack has increased even among girls. He [The head coach for Women’s U19 team] also feels that “The athletes who understand the “characteristics of Japan” that are short passes and fast attack also increased.” In the background, it is also significant that boys and girls play in the same team in the elementary school. Unlike the countries with large female soccer populations like the U.S., there are a small number of girl’s only teams for the elementary school students in Japan. 70% [of girls] are said to be training with boys. “It’s Japanese weakness as well as strength. It is actually quite important that they practice with strong pressure among boys during the elementary school years when their skills develop). (N28, 2011, p. Supōtsu1-25)

The contribution of male figures also appears in patriarchal constructions of female athletes as daughters and sisters. Female athletes are presumed to take on the masculine sports under the influence of their father and brother. The unusual choice of sports is interpreted through the existence of male family members, whose support is vital to women’s success in these sports. The family member’s influence is often complemented with gendered narratives of their childhood such as: she was “kappatsu” (active), “otoko masari” (male-surpasser or manly woman), and “wanted to be a boy.” These discourses are similar to the construction of “tomboys”
in North America, who are expected to grow out of their childhood masculinity to achieve adult femininity (Halberstam, 1998). These “tomboys” are discovered and accepted by male family members and given opportunities to participate in masculine pursuits. As a result, they achieved athletic excellence thanks to the support of their parents, brothers, boyfriend, and husband (N1, 2001; N29, 2003; N18, 2004; N55, 2002; N74, 2005). Some of the illustrative examples are:

高校時代にサッカーをしていた[安藤梢選手の]父寛さん（48）は、「私の顔を見るたびに『サッカーやろう』ってねだってきた」 (Her [Ando Kozue’s] father Hiroshi (48), who used to play soccer in high school, said, “Every time she saw my face, asked me ‘Let’s play soccer.’”). (N1, 2001, p. Ibaraki1-33)

[渡米直後は寂しい思いもしたが]今は違う。パートナーのジェームズさんと昨夏、出会った。元選手で、仕事の合間に子どもたちにサッカーを教えている。オフにはランニングやジム通いにつき合ってくれる ([Although Sawa felt lonely right after moving to the U.S.,] It’s different now. She met her partner James last summer. He is a former player and teaches soccer to children between works. On off days, he goes running and does gym together [with Sawa]). (N29, 2003, p. Kumamoto2-30)

試合も惜敗したが、父や兄は「よく頑張ってくれた」と涙をぬぐった… えりこは商店街みんなの娘のような存在 (Although [Eriko] suffered was a crushing defeat, her father and brother wiped tears, “She tried really hard.” Eriko is a daughter-like existence for everyone in the shopping district). (N54, 2008, p. Tokyoseibu1-29)

選手たちを、01年5月のチーム発足後間もなくから代わる代わる自宅に招き、手料理を振る舞っている。シーズン当初の所属選手29人のうち県内出身は1人。ほかの選手は実家を離れ、自炊しな
から...働き、プレーする。...「見えないところで彼女たちを支えているサポーターは大勢います。私はその1人として、手伝いをしているだけ」「1週間分の栄養をここで補給してるんだ」という選手も1人や2人ではない。...気になることもある。茶わんを置いたまま片手で食べる選手。すかさず「茶わんは!!」と竜門さん。「早くから親元を離れ、一般的なマナーの出来ていない子もいる」。

夫からは「甘やかすな」とよく言われる([Ms. Ryumon] has been inviting the athletes [of Okayama Yugo Bell, a women’s professional soccer team] to her home and provided homemade meals. Among the team’s 29 athletes at the beginning of the season, only one came from the province. Others have left their home and play while working and doing their own cooking... “There are many supporters who support them behind. I am just helping as one of them.”... There are more than one or two athletes who say, “I replenish the nutrition for a week here.”... There are also concerns. Athletes who eat with one hand without holding a bowl. “The bowl!!”, promptly, Ms. Ryumon. “Some kids have not learned the common manners because they left the home early.” Her husband often says, “Don’t spoil them”). (N35, 2008, p. Okayama1-30)

常盤木サッカー部には監督を中心とする一種独特のファミリー的雰囲気がある(Indespite being a women’s professional soccer team) to her home and provided homemade meals. Among the team’s 29 athletes at the beginning of the season, only one came from the province. Others have left their home and play while working and doing their own cooking... “There are many supporters who support them behind. I am just helping as one of them.”... There are more than one or two athletes who say, “I replenish the nutrition for a week here.”... There are also concerns. Athletes who eat with one hand without holding a bowl. “The bowl!!”, promptly, Ms. Ryumon. “Some kids have not learned the common manners because they left the home early.” Her husband often says, “Don’t spoil them”). (N35, 2008, p. Okayama1-30)

In these examples, female athletes’ location within the patriarchal family is emphasized. In the third Asahi article above, which was titled “Eriko call from a shopping district: father and brother shed the tears for the defeat, the Beijing Olympic Women’s Soccer—athlete Arakawa”, only Eriko’s father and brother were mentioned, although her mother was at the restaurant where people in the “shopping district” gather together to watch Arakawa Eriko’s game with her family
members. In the fourth _Asahi_ article, the focus in on how female athletes who gather in Ms.
Ryumon’s still require family care and the supervision of a patriarch, who supervises Ms.
Ryumon with her care for these athletes as one of many supporters, rather than focusing on the
independence and strength of these athletes who leave home at a young age to earn money by
themselves in order to continue playing soccer.

These discursive strategies that situate female athletes within the patriarchal family are also
applied to female wrestlers. Fathers and brothers who were wrestlers, who became the reason for
women to start wrestling appeared in the media repetitively (N21, 2006; N23, 2008; N30, 2003;
M13, 2008; N40, 2002; N45, 2007; N70, 2004; N72, 2012). The “fighting spirits” and
masculinity of the wrestlers were quickly pulled back into the patriarchal feminine gender
roles—daughters and a reliable older sister (N2, 2004). The story of the “ill-fated” champion,
Obara Hitomi, who finally won the Olympic Gold medal in London 2012 after many years of
struggle because of unlucky circumstances and making sacrifices for her younger sister, who was
also a wrestler and the Olympic contender, is a case in point. In the narrative of her early
retirement and come back, and the final road to the Olympics, her father and husband were
represented as devoted family members who supported Hitomi in difficult times (N15, 2012;
N64, 2012). Although this narrative of male family members sacrificing and supporting the
dream of women seems to destabilize the patriarchal gender norms of women playing supportive
roles, this narrative recuperates patriarchal heteronormative gender order through Hitomi’s
appreciation and interpretation of her circumstances.

粘り強くつきあったのが清美とその妻万理子…だ。清美は娘を自宅近くの浜辺に誘い、並んでジョ
ギングした。母は娘の愚痴に耳を傾けた…「ロンドンまでは旧姓の坂本で登録する」と宣言してい
た日登美が「小原姓で出場したい」と翻意したのは、11年世界選手権の直前だった。「パスポート
の有効期限が五輪前に切れると分かったこともある。でも、やっぱり身近で支えてくれる人の姓で
出るべきだと思った。それが一番大きい...五輪マークをかたどった結婚指輪のデザインを自ら描いて持ってきた康司に、日登美は感動した。「女の夢をここまで考えてくれるなんて。私は、この人のために勝ちたいと思った」(Kiyomi [Hitomi’s father] and his wife Mariko... persistently gave her company. Kiyomi invited his daughter to the neighborhood beach and jogged alongside her. Her mother listened to her daughter’s complaints... It was right before the World Cup in 2011 when Hitomi, who had declared, “I will register with my maiden name, Sakamoto, until London”, changed her mind and said, “I want to participate with Obara’s family name.” “It was partly because I found that my passport would expire before the Olympics, but I also thought that I should participate with the family name of the person who supports me closely. That’s the biggest reason... She was moved by Koji [Hitomi’s husband] who brought a wedding ring he designed, which was modeled after the Olympic emblem. “He considers woman’s dream this much. I thought I want to win for him”). (N67, 2012, p. Supōtsu1-27)

At the elite level where these athletes are competing, it is almost impossible to be competitive without support from their family and their teams. It is almost taken for granted for male elite athletes to have a supportive family and coaches, but they do not always appear in the narrative of male athletes’ success. Rather, the extraordinary Japanese male athlete is often portrayed as an independent and entrepreneurial figure, who opens up and seizes his own chance, such as Ichiro Suzuki, Nakata Hidetoshi, and Honda Keisuke.

So far I have focused on heteronormative and patriarchal discourses that construct men as original and women as a (deviant) copy in these sports, while situating female athletes as daughter, sister and wife who found opportunities and succeeded under the guidance of male family members and coaches. These normative discourses, however, are constantly troubled by the shifting social significance of the female athletes and the new meanings constantly added to
their bodies, performances, achievements, identities, and the fact that these women are in the sports that have been constructed as masculine, men’s pursuits. This conflict between normative Japanese femininity and their athleticism and success in the masculine sports, has created a productive tension that significantly troubles Japanese gender norms and incites various discursive strategies to repair them. In the next section, I examine the discursive strategies of normalization, or repetitive, fragmented, and contradictory processes of gender trouble and repair.

**Re-signification: Shifting Relationship between Japanese Femininity and Sports**

As I examined in the previous sections, the discourse of the male dominated, masculine sport of soccer, and the female athletes marginalized within it, appeared repetitively in the mainstream media throughout the 2000s. The same discursive resources were taken up in the interpretation and celebration of *Nadeshiko Japan* in the post-311 period. There has been, however, an interesting discursive shift when the women’s soccer team became increasingly successful in the mid-2000s. The discourse of men’s dominance and women’s marginality was troubled by *Nadeshiko Japan*’s increasing success and their ultimate victory at the FIFA Women’s World Cup in 2011. Extensive media attention of *Nadeshiko Japan* revealed that there are many women who not only play soccer but who also do so very well in Japan, and the number has been steadily increasing even before the recent success of the national team. Once Japanese women became more successful than men on the world stage, the discursive resources that drew on Japanese normative femininity and their small physiques could no longer be utilized to interpret their weakness and marginal status. Furthermore, in the moments of national celebration of their historical victory in July 2011, the mainstream media attempted to appropriate their success in their re-imagination of the nation that had been economically,
physically, and emotionally devastated after two decades of economic recession with the triple
disaster of the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear power accident. Nadeshiko Japan allowed a new
imagery of the nation, one that possessed athletic prowess in one of the most popular sports in
the world, soccer. Within the process of reimagining the country, these female athletes needed to
be taken into a ‘new’ normative femininity, rather than leaving them as outliers at the periphery
of the imagined Japanese femininity. In next section, I examine the discursive strategies of
reincorporating masculine female athletes into normative Japanese femininity through the
shifting relationship between Japanese normative femininity and sports and resignification of the
word, yamatonadeshiko.

From Male Superiority to Female Peculiarity

While the logic of “training with boys is beneficial” stays intact, the differences in playing
and coaching styles between women and men are given more emphasis when interpreting their
success. What initially appeared to be the “assimilationist” logic that blames femininity as a
source of athletic failure and emphasizes the importance of becoming like men in the sport, has
shifted to the logic of female peculiarity that is said to be the source of Japanese women’s
success at the international stage.

This discursive construct of “positive femininity” or the “attributes” of Japanese women
that are beneficial to athletic performance differs from the previous discourse that emphasized
the importance of shedding off femininity to become like men. But when the women’s
achievement exceeded that of the men’s team, the very difference, the “peculiarity” of women
was used to reconstruct them as the other, who are not better than male athletes but different.
Thus, the discursive “negative” effect of femininity on sport performance has gradually shifted to
form a sort of “positive” femininity, as the women’s team becomes more successful than the
men’s team.
The new “positive” femininity of Japanese women encompasses various characteristics, such as their loyalty to the coach and game plan, which was considered before as their dependency, and their love of sports, which was portrayed as their tendency to easily quit the sport “unless they really like it”. Now female athletes are constructed as pure, passionate (hitamuki), patient, strong willed, stoic, and loyal, and these are the qualities that Japanese society recognized as praiseworthy as much as their performance (N39, 2008). Female athletes play fairly and enjoy the game rather than playing with a win-at-any-cost attitude that is common among male athletes and makes it more enjoyable for audiences (N43, 2011). Their passion and love of sports help them overcome disadvantaged training environments, winning tough games, and gaining recognition from the world (N43, 2011; N71, 2007). Since girls have little chance of becoming a professional player in the future, they are free from the pressure of pleasing their coaches, thus, able to take risks and play creatively and decisively (M4, 2010).

[川淵氏は] 転んでもすぐ立ち上がり、審判の判定に文句を言わずプレーに打ち込む姿に心打たれたという…「Jリーグの選手にも見習って欲しい」と W杯16強の男子の奮起を促した([Mr. Kawabuchi] was touched by the attitude [of female soccer players] to get up quickly after falling and to focus on playing without complaining to a decision of a referee . . . He urged men who were in the best 16 in the World Cup to rouse themselves to action saying, “I want J-leaguer to learn from them”). (N28, 2011, p. Supōtsu1-25)

「最後まであきらめない」。祝日の早朝、そんなメッセージがフランクフルトから届いた…俺が俺のプレー、汚い反則や抗議がなく、ボール回しを楽しめた。なでしこは国を励まし、世界を驚かせ、この団体球技の面白さを教えてくれた。雑草の根っこを持つ大輪たちに感謝したい (“Never give up until the end.” In the holiday morning, such messages arrived from Frankfurt . . . There were no self-centered plays, dirty faults, and complaints, and I could enjoy their pass
Nadeshiko encouraged the nation, surprised the world, and taught the attraction of this ballgame. I want to appreciate the large flowers who have the root of weeds. (N60, 2011, p. Sōgō1)

印象深いのは、男子とは違う、その伸びやかな戦いぶりだ。相手の猛攻にひたすら耐えるだけではない。肩に無駄な力を入れず、結果を恐れず、素早いパス回しとセットプレーという武器を存分に生かした...恵まれない環境でサッカーを続けてきた日々を考えれば、さほど苦しくなかったのかもし�れいない。

「プレーする喜び」が彼女たちの全身からあふれていた (What is interesting is the way they play freely. It’s not just about enduring the opponent’s fierce attack. They fully utilized their weapon of quick pass work and set plays without putting unnecessary strain or fearing the result... It could be that they were not suffering so much when thinking about those days when they kept playing soccer in the disadvantaged environments. There were even smiles on their face when they formed a circle before a shoot-out. From their whole body, the “pleasure of playing” was overflowing, which is the origin of sports without the sense of despair and the belief that where there's a will, there is a way). (N43, 2011, p. Opinion2-13)

In these discourses, the previous problematic “feminine attributes” are replaced by new meanings. Yet, their passion, inspiring performance, perseverance and ethical plays cannot be discussed on their own. The evaluations of female athletes are always hinged on male athletes’ performances who no matter how positively or negatively they are depicted, again and again they assume the position of the original. Their “purity” and ability to perform complicated group strategies is also interpreted as their loyalty to the team and to the head coach, which produces a patriarchal relationship between female athletes as pure and loyal followers and the male head
coach who trains them and guides them.

In a *Number* article in 2007, Yoshizaki “Eijinho”, a sport journalist and columnist who is also a former a professional soccer player, joined one of the Nadeshiko League teams to experience their training and to interview athletes and the coach. Yoshizaki asks, “What is the attraction of women’s soccer?” A female athlete replies,

> 「『監督の狙いは何か？』と考えて観戦すると面白いはずです。男子よりも、監督の影響力が大きいと思う。ピッチ上でも狙いを忠実に実践しようとするんですね。」

> そうだよね。たしかにみんなピュアだった。…ほとんどどの選手がアマチュアなのに、ほぼ毎日2時間近くハードな練習をこなしている。ホント、純粋にボールを追いかけているんだ。永井監督もこうおっしゃる。「選手がよく無く。これが、男子との違いのひとつですね」

> (“It should be interesting to think about ‘what is the aim of the head coach?’ while you watch the game. I think there is more influence of the head coach than men[‘s soccer]. On the pitch, athletes try to loyally practice the coach’s aim.”)

That’s true. Everyone was really pure . . . Although most athletes are amateurs, they go through hard training for two hours almost everyday. Really, they purely chasing after the ball. The head coach Nagai also says, “Athletes often cry. This is one of the difference from men”). (M23, 2007, p. 105)

In 2008 before the Beijing Olympics, Sasaki was interviewed by Asahi Shinbun about the difference between coaching women and men: “You have been coaching women for almost two years. What is the difference between coaching men and women?” He replied, “大変と言われるが、そんなことはない。予想以上に選手が前向きだし、生き生きしている。男子よりも反応がいいし、吸収力があると思う。“It’s commonly said to be hard, but it’s not the case. The athletes are more positive and lively than I expected. I feel they respond better and have more ability to absorb than men”) (N26, 2008, p. Olympic1-20).
Four years later in 2012, before the London Olympics began, *Sports Graphic Number* published a four-page article focused on women’s soccer. The article is titled “Study of Japan Style, File 3 Women’s Football: Norio Sasaki Collectivity.” The subheading reads, “ロンドン五輪に誓う: 佐々木則夫はなでしこを美しく磨く” (Take an oath for the London Olympics: Sasaki Norio beautifully polish *Nadeshiko*) (M6, 2012). The article focuses on how Sasaki successfully prepared a physically disadvantaged Japanese female team to play effectively and competitively against stronger but less organized and skilled foreign teams. The article is also followed by yet another article in which a former head coach of the Japanese men’s national soccer team, Ivica Osim, was interviewed to give advice to *Nadeshiko Japan* for their upcoming Olympic Games after becoming the world champion. Osim states that in Japanese society, it is actually women, rather than men, who are “living a real life that one can have self-expression” (M18, 2012, p. 35), which Japanese men do not have. Thus, he claims, it is their mental toughness that gives Japanese women the strength to win against stronger teams like the U.S. and Germany.

In 2012, *Asahi Shinbun* interviewed Nagashima Takehito, a high school teacher and a coach of the women’s soccer team who published a book on coaching girls’ soccer teams earlier in the year. The book is titled: “女子サッカーはおしゃべりプレーヤーを気くばりコーチング” (Girls’ soccer is about coaching talkative players with careful consideration). Nagashima explained that the book was intended to be like ‘women’s studies’ that helps to understand not only soccer but also the group psychology of young women (N9, 2012, p. Saitama2-26). When Nagashima was coaching Urawa High School’s boys’ team, he used to coach in Spartan style:

ところが、それが一女では通じない。戸惑いながら、やがて「女子サッカーは男子サッカーとは別の競技。指導法も違って当たり前」と開き直った … 驚いたのは、女子の方が男子よりも闘争心が強く、負けず嫌いだったことだ。 … 練習も「ゆるく、長く」。女子選手たちはお菓子を食べながら、いつまでも飽きずにボールを追った (But it didn’t work in Ichijo [Urawa Daiichi Girl’s
High School]. Perplexed, he eventually decided, “Girls’ soccer and boys’ soccer are different sports. Of course the coaching method should also be different” . . . What surprised him was that girls are more aggressive and competitive than boys . . . The practice also goes “loosely for a long time” . . . Having snacks, female athletes never get tired of chasing the ball). (p. Saitama2-26)

In these discourses, the meaning of female peculiarity has clearly shifted. The training environment, attitudes to the sport, and effective coaching style are used to demarcate women from men. The demarcation forges a dichotomy between women and men and maintains female athletes within the heteronormative femininity and patriarchal gender hierarchies. It also attributes the female athletes’ success to their feminine qualities of purity, perseverance, and loyalty. These qualities cannot be possessed by male athletes who have goals of becoming professional athletes and are able to train in a good environment that they deserve.

This discourse of female peculiarity in soccer resembles the discourses about the success of Japanese female wrestlers since the early 2000s. Unlike the women’s soccer team, Japanese female wrestling has been successful in international competitions long before the sport was added to the Olympics in 2004, and many of the athletes in the national women’s wrestling team have come from a famous female wrestling team in the Shigakukan University (former Chukyo Women’s University). In the University team, female wrestlers are trained by a male head coach, Sakae Kazuhito, who “knows” the physical and mental differences between women and men, and therefore is better able to train female athletes compared to gender mixed environments or compared to those coaches who train women and men in the same way (N61, 2007). A Number article asserted:

力だけ強くても、強いレスラーにはならないのと同じように、強い男子選手いくら練習をしても、
強い女子レスラーになれない。・・・男性では怪我をしてしまいそうな負荷が関節にかかっても、
As you cannot be a strong wrestler just because you have muscular strength, you cannot be a strong female wrestler no matter how much you train with strong male wrestlers . . . Even when so much stress is placed on the joint that could injure men, the joint could sometimes bend without pain for women. The flexible women’s body subtly distorts the center of gravity. The parts [of the body] where techniques can be applied are different from men. (M21, 2001, p. 54)

The discursive construct of the peculiarity of female bodies, training environments, and attitudes to sports are thus used in different historical moments to redraw the boundary between male and female athletes. When women’s soccer was a minor sport that was invisible and uncompetitive in an international context, their femininity alongside their minor status was interpreted as the cause their failure. Yet, as they became increasingly hopeful contenders on the world stage, it is precisely their difference, the same discursive resources, that are used to interpret their success. What is silenced or made invisible in this process of repair is the discussion of masculinity or man-like qualities suggested in the earlier years as a key for success.

What happens to female soccer players who have strong will and love to pursue their soccer career among boys? Do they acquire, or from the beginning possess, the “manliness” that was said to be essential for their success of their world cup champion title? Rather than constructing Nadeshiko Japan as a group of female athletes who have sufficient masculinity to shed the “nadeshiko” quality to succeed, nadeshiko was reinvented with new meanings in the late 2000s.

**Yamatonadeshiko and Nadeshiko Japan**

*Nadeshiko Japan* became an official nickname for the Japanese women’s soccer national team in 2004, after their surprising performance in the Athens Olympics. In the early 2000s, when the women’s soccer team was not yet internationally and nationally recognized,
yamatonadeshiko was used as a metaphor to describe the undesirable features of Japanese female athletes, such as: “日本人はちょっと優しすぎる” (Japanese are a bit too nice) (N6, 2003, p. Sakkāl-17); “体格のハンディ” (physically handicap) (N76, 2003, p. Supōtsu25); and female athletes “work on what was instructed, but they don’t know how to play it by ear” (M20, 2011, p. 25); and are too group-minded (M20, 2011).

Yet, the negative meanings given to yamatonadeshiko in masculine sports began to shift in the mid 2000s. Female athletes are praised as “seihin” (honorable poverty), whose virtues are perseverance, hard working and fair play, despite their marginalized and disadvantaged circumstances (M1, 2011; N12, 2011; N42, 2011; N69, 2011). As Kitamura (2009) argues, normative Japanese femininity is imagined through a Japanese native flower, yamatonadeshiko, whose flower word is “cheerful patience”. The floral metaphor of yamatonadeshiko has been used to represent Japanese women’s beauty, frailty, weakness, docility and innocence or pitifulness. Yet, Japanese female soccer players who have carried the name Nadeshiko Japan since 2004 have troubled the meanings and images through their strength, creativity, and athletic prowess. This troubling of “Japanese womenness” represented by yamatonadeshiko is clearly illustrated in some of the articles:

オリンピックは、女子サッカーの中で最高レベルの戦いです。その中で、原選手がトップアスリートとしての能力の高さと同時に、冷静で、美しい大和なでしこの姿をピッチで見せてくれたことに感激しました (The Olympics is the highest-level competition in women’s soccer. I was moved by Hara who demonstrated not only the high capability of a top athlete, but also the image of calm and beautiful yamatonadeshiko). (N24, 2008, p. Opinion2-12)
It [The flower] is also called *Yamatonadeshiko* and the name that praise Japanese women’s chastity and beauty has been familiar to people . . .

[When he saw the flower] It was different from what I thought might be weak and feeble. I was relieved by the beautiful *Nadeshiko* that live strongly even under the blazing sun). (N65, 2011, p. Opinion2-14)

Japanese *Nadeshiko* is strong. There are some athletes who worked 24-7 to earn fees for away matches). (N34, 2011, p. Oita2-28)

I want to rewrite an encyclopedia of flowers. *Nadeshiko* is already beyond the name of a flower . . . Before I say congratulations, I want to say thank you. Thinking back, after the earthquake, Japan would have sunk deeper without their success. I think about the power of sports that turn a name of flower into the source of energy. *Nadeshiko* is now a shiny nickname). (N59, 2012, p. Sōgō1)

In these discourses, the meaning of the word, *yamatonadeshiko*, has clearly shifted to represent what has gradually been constructed as “female peculiarity”. This shift enables a national identification with *Nadeshiko Japan*, who demonstrate the nation’s might, while resituating them within the boundary of Japanese femininity. I will examine this collision of nationalism and gender trouble in more detail in Chapter Five.
Normalizing Female Masculinity: Recitation, Trouble, and Repair

In this section, I shift my analytical focus from the heteronormative constructions of female athletes and its shifting meanings to the process of “gender trouble” and “repair”. I borrow the concept of repair suggested by Morison and Macleod (2013). They explain that the concept of repair “encompasses various narrative strategies, like the use of rhetoric or argumentation . . . When interactional trouble occurs, speakers may re/construct their positions in order to be “interactively useful” (p. 571). It can also be conceptualized as “the tactical and situational improvisation of existing discursive resources so that they are adapted to the current context and according to particular ends” (p. 571).

As I am examining the media discourses rather than the interview data Morison and Macleod used, it is necessary to slightly modify the concept to be useful in my analysis. I reconceptualize repair as narrative strategies that adopt existing discursive resources in order to normalize the masculine female athletes, whose physicality, sporting performance and gender expression fall outside of gender norms. I argue that these discursive strategies enable the masculine female athletes to be spoken into existence, into the normative imageries of Japanese womenness. This repairing or normalization is essential when incorporating these athletes into imagined Japaneseness and resituating them into heteronormative, patriarchal gender orders.

Nimensei (Two-facedness): Separation of Masculine and ‘Natural’ Feminine Self

The first discursive strategy to “repair” gender trouble that I examine is the tactical juxtaposition of two “different” and “contrary” aspects of a person in a narrative of female athletes. This nimensei, or two-facedness, refers to the two different faces the female athletes are supposed to have: the athletic/masculine face and the non-athletic/feminine face. In this discourse, the “masculine face” and the “feminine face” are constructed as separate and contradicting elements, and the athletic/masculine face stays within sporting spaces and does not
spill out into the non-athletic, “ordinary” world. By containing their masculinity within sporting spaces, this discursive strategy makes athletic and masculine women more acceptable, and less threatening to a heteronormative patriarchal society. In other words, their athletic prowess and masculinity are acceptable only insofar as their normative femininity outside of sporting spaces can be assured.

Feminine norms and athletic prowess of female athletes are variously juxtaposed in the media. Some illustrating examples are found in the cover titles of *Sports Graphic Number* for a special issue for female athletes, such as “Really Beautiful, Truly Athletic” (M15, 2001) and “More Strong! More Beautiful!” (M16, 2008). In these titles, the athleticism and strength of these women are presented together with the epitome of normative femininity—beauty. In these discourses, “beauty” comes with athleticism and strength. This juxtaposition of femininity and masculinity is important in the process of repair since these female athletes are an essential part of Japanese identity, especially when Japanese women often do equally well, if not better than, male athletes in the key international sporting events.

In the life narrative of female athletes who are constructed as hardworking and perseverant, their femininity and masculinity are written as separate aspects that appear in separate spaces. Isozaki Hiromi, a captain for the national team in the Athens Olympics works for a pearl jewelry company as a craftsperson while playing soccer at the elite level. She was a captain of the national team and lead the team to a historical advancement—the final tournament in the Athens Olympics in 2004. As Isozaki finishes off her work and moves onto soccer practice in the afternoon, a magazine article wrote, “真珠球ではなくサッカーボールを操る戦士に変身する” (She transforms into a soldier who maneuvers soccer balls instead of pearl balls) (M2, 2004, p. 70). In *Asahi* articles, high school female soccer players are portrayed to have a ‘natural face’ that is of “a high school girl who likes chocolate” (N3, 2004, p. Fukui1-30). The words *joshikōsei* and
chocolate are used as symbolic for their normative femininity links to their “natural” face. In other words, their extraordinary athletic abilities and dedications are unnatural. The potential gender trouble is repaired by their “natural” femininity. In a similar narrative, a male coach of a high school girls’ soccer club was quoted: “普段はみんな普通の女の子。練習前なんかキャピキャピしていますよ” (At ordinary times, everyone is a normal girl. Before practice, they are acting all cute and charged up) (N8, 2005).

The same discursive strategy is used for the narrative of female wrestlers. The narratives are often supported and reinforced by testimonies of athletes themselves and people who are close to them. As Iida (2003b) points out, female athletes often appear in the newspaper article genre called “human drama”, in which athletes’ behind the scenes stories are told. These behind the scenes stories are told outside sporting spaces, which is the place where their “real” feminine face can be observed.

In an Asahi article, Hamaguchi Kyoko, five-time world champion and Olympic bronze medalist, was interviewed about her life outside the wrestling mat, to which she responded, “枕元に置いている熊のぬいぐるみ、遠征にも必ず連れていきます。あと、ディズニー映画が大好き。マットを降りるとけっこう、子供っぽいかも” (I always take the stuffed animal bear that is by my pillow to away matches. Also, I love Disney movies. I might be quite childish once I get off the mat) (N40, 2002, p. Supōtsu3).

In another article, a wrestling star, Yoshida Saori, was reported at an event at a baseball stadium to see Ibata Hirokazu, a professional baseball player, who Yoshida was rumored to be in love with. The report described: “この日の吉田はベージュのワンピース姿。「今度、焼き肉を食べに行く約束をしました」とはしゃぎ、マットの上での勇ましい姿とは違う一面を見せた” (Today, Yoshida was in beige one-piece and in high spirits saying, ‘I made an appointment [with Ibata] to go to BBQ together next time’. She showed a different aspect from the courageous one on the mat)
In this quote above, not only does wearing a beige skirt signal femininity, but also her act of visiting a male professional athlete, rather than being visited by one, was used to situate her in a heteronormative gender order. Similarly, the “feminine face” of wrestlers situated within a patriarchal family structure is used to repair not only heteronomativity, but also the patriarchal family. A 61-year-old woman, Hayashi Sachiko, has prepared meals for female wrestlers at the training camp for 21 years. Hayashi gave a testimony about the hardworking wrestlers:

選手たちのことなら、たいてい知っている。野菜のから揚げや小芋の煮っ転がしが、みんな大好物なこと。異性の話になるとやっぱ盛り上がる(She [Hayashi] knows almost everything about the athletes. Things like, everyone loves vegetable karaage and nikkorogashi. They are after all animated when talking about opposite sex. After loosing a match, they cry on the staircase in front of the kitchen… “Everyone is like my daughter”). (N13, 2012, p. Niigata1-23)

In the training camp called, “a mecca for female wrestling” located in a remote place in the countryside, top Japanese wrestlers gather to go through notoriously hard training. In a Number article titled “山奥道場に咲く花” (Flowers blossom in dōjō deep in the mountains) the camp was described as a place where it is so remote that “ファッション雑誌やお菓子がいつでも手軽に買えるコンビニは、車で何十分も走らないとたどりつけない” (one has to drive a long way to a convenience store where they can always easily buy fashion magazines and snacks) (M21, 2001, p. 54). The description is followed by statements that show the athletes’ strong trust in their coaches. It explains that the training is so hard that sometimes they want to be resentful to the coach, “でも彼らほど自分たちのことを、女子レスリングのことを本気で考えてくれている人はいないこともよく知っている。だから、全てを信じてついていきたいと思う” (but there is no one else who thinks about women’s wrestling so seriously. That’s why, [wrestlers] want to follow [the coach] believing
everything) (M21, 2001, p. 54). In this article, female wrestlers who come to the dōjō deep in the mountains for national training camp, are still associated with snacks and fashion magazines, items that recall normative feminine interests while their subject positions are quickly summarized as followers in relation to their coaches.

It is important to note again that the description of their normative femininity is placed side by side with their strength and masculinity. The above article title is followed by a subtitle written in small letters: “コンビニ無用！ケータイ不通！恋愛…ひとまず自粛!? 女子レスリング界を背負って立つ、世界最強の女の子たちは、戦う相手を求めて今月もまた山道をたどる” (No convenient store! No cellphone connections! Romance… self-restraint for now!? The world’s strongest girls who carry the female wrestling world on their shoulders follow the mountain path this month again seeking the opponents to fight) (M21, 2001, p. 52). The female wrestlers shoulder the world of female wrestling, as the top athletes in the world. They are disconnected from snacks, fashion magazines, cellphones, and even romance to follow the mountain path to the dōjō. Their strength, masculinity, and abstinence are, however, symbolically associated with the space of the dōjō, a far remote place from the ordinary world where their “natural” feminine desires can be fulfilled. Thus, the geographical location of the dōjō is associated with the space of wrestling and is used to separate it from the ordinary world where their feminine selves usually reside.

While these discursive strategies construct female athletes as daughters and ordinary girls with feminine interests, masculinity is maintained in their subjectivities by conceptualizing masculinities as their separate face that only emerges in sporting spaces. While female masculinity and athleticism are not denied, they are, in these discourses, limited to sporting spaces, and their femininity is constructed as their "natural", true self that we can find outside sporting spaces. To put it other way, while femininity is associated with "ordinary" spaces, their masculinity is associated with "extraordinary" spaces, which is sports.
What is silenced in these discourses is the possibility of their masculinity outside of sporting spaces. The possibility of these athletes being masculine both in and out of sporting spaces is effectively omitted from the narration of female athlete’s life narrative. By limiting their athleticism and masculinity within sport, these discourses reinforce the originality of men, whose masculinity is not isolated from their “natural” selves outside sporting spaces. Thus the discursive resources of normative femininity, patriarchal family and male originality or legitimacy in sports are taken up in the normalizing discourses of nimensei to contain masculinity of female athletes within the sporting sphere.

**Dedication, Abstinence, and Assumed Heterosexuality**

In this section I start again by examining the subtitle of the Number article examined above, with a different focus. The subtitle, “No convenient store! No cellphone connections! Romance… self-restraint for now!?” raise three things athletes need to refrain from in order to succeed: “feminine” interests, supports from and connections to the outside world, and literary romance. This discourse of hard training, and abstinence from feminine interests and romance, is another discursive “repair” tactic I analyze in this section. This discursive strategy attempts to repair the gender norm troubled by the female athletes’ ability and will to play, train, and succeed in the masculine sports as well as their physicality, gender expressions that do not conforming to heteronormative femininity, and disinterest in heterosexual relationships through the logic of dedication or devotion to the sport.

As I discuss in more detail in the next section, this discursive strategy creates a chain of meanings starting from female athletes in masculine sports like soccer and wrestling, to the love of the game, dedication, devotion, lack of time for pursuing feminine interests and all the way to abstinence from romance. This discursive construction of female athletes in masculine sports silences or makes invisible those female athletes whose gender expression is masculine or who
are not interested in heterosexual relationships or romance in general, regardless of sports
participation. As the photos of female athletes in soccer and wrestling national teams show, there
are many athletes whose physique, mannerisms, and gender expressions in terms of their dress,
facial expressions, and hairstyles are quite masculine. But in the mainstream media discourses,
these masculinities are neither connected to their (homo)sexuality or (masculine) gender
identities, nor are they directly mentioned.

The female soccer players’ and wrestlers’ “single-minded” pursuit of their athletic success
is repeatedly mentioned when the life narratives of the athletes touch upon their relationship with
friends and the opposite sex:

練習で友だちと遊べない日々が続く。安藤選手は「日本代表で中国に行くために、今は頑張らなきゃいけない時期」と、わき目もふらずに世界レベルを追い求める” (The days they cannot hangout
with friends because of practice continue. Ando single-mindedly pursuing the world level
saying, “Now it is the time I have to try hard in order to go to China as a member of the
national team). (N1, 2001, p. Ibaraki1-33)

—練習や試合のない日には何を？「何もしない日もあるし、ちょっと街に出て買い物とか。服を買うのは好きです… チームメートと、グルメプラス温泉のちょっとした日帰り旅行もします。ボーイフレンドですか？ 時間的に難しいですね」 (What do you do on days without practice and a
competition? “There are days I don’t do anything, or go to city to do some shopping. I like
buying clothes . . . I sometimes go to a day-trip for gourmet and hot springs with my

結婚や出産も意識しないわけではない。でも、サッカーが出来るのは今という。「目標に近づくほど
女っ気はなくなりますね」(It’s not that she does think about marriage and having a child. But
[she said] it’s only now that she can play soccer. [She said] “As I get closer to my goal, I become less womanly). (N22, 2005, p. Sōgō2)

学校は仙台市近づくだが、放課後のカラオケや、おしゃれに興味を示さなかった。「余計だと判断したものはそぎ落とす。ストイックだった」と阿部監督 (The school is near the city center of Sendai-city, but she was not interested in after school karaoke and fashion. “She scraped off things she judged unnecessary. She was stoic”, says Coach Abe). (N66, 2011, p. Supōtsu2-24)

— 五輪の先、人生の目標というと? (Interviewer: What is your life goal after the Olympics?).
澤: 分からないです (Sawa: I don’t know).
— 女性として、でも(笑) (Interviewer: What about as a woman? [Laughs])”
澤: 結婚できればいいな、とは思いますけど。今はアテネのことでもいっぱいいっぱい (Sawa: I wish I could get married, but now I can’t think about anything other than the Athens). (N52, 2004, p. Supōtsu13)

In the above quote, the interviewer assumes that Sawa’s life goal is different from the “goal as a woman”, which implies a heterosexual marriage. The assumption can be observed from the fact that Sawa mentions marriage even though she cannot think of anything other than going to the Athens Olympics at the moment. However, in the Number article published in 2012, Sawa reflects on one of her life changing moments in 2003 when the American professional soccer team she was playing with at that time was suddenly disbanded (M11, 2012). According to the article, because of her sudden unemployment, she considered getting married to the American boyfriend she was dating, perhaps to give up playing professionally and to settle in the U.S. with her boyfriend. This narrative fits into the construction of devoted female athletes who put their
athletic career before their personal life, that is, playing sports at the elite level, which means “no romance”. Underlying assumptions of this construction of a female athlete’s life include: having a boyfriend hinders their performance; and once married, they should devote their time and energy to their family. This reinforces the construction of nimensei, while at the same time makes queer athletes invisible, demonstrating how patriarchy, homophobia, and heterosexism in Japan prevents the media from, at least at the surface level, making the connection between their masculinity and possible masculine gender identities and/or homosexuality.

The same discursive strategy is also observed in the media narratives of female wrestlers. What is distinct about wrestling discourse from soccer is the forged connection between physical strength and heterosexual relationships. In an interview, Ichō Chiharu, two-time Olympic silver medalist and the world champion was asked if she has time for a boyfriend:

— 彼なんかつくる暇もない (Interviewer: No time to have a boyfriend).
千春: 今は目標があるので考えていませんね。そういう気持ちになると、なんか体に表れてくるんですよ。筋肉が落ちたり、集中できなかったり。そんな選手を何人も見てきましたから (Chiharu: I’m not thinking about it now because I have a goal. When a female athlete starts thinking about that, it somehow shows on the body. They lose muscle and cannot focus. I have seen many like that). (N30, 2003, p. Supōtsu13)

Citing a word of Hamaguchi Kyoko, another Asahi article wrote, “「今はレスリングが恋人」という彼女の言葉にも真実味がある” (Her words “At this moment, wrestling is my lover” is plausible) (N40, 2002, p. Supōtsu3). The narrative of Yoshida Saori’s family’s support of her wrestling career also revolves around the exclusion of feminine interests from her life: “吉田が「ピアノを習いたい」と言ったことがあったという。しかし父は「ピアノが弾けてもレスリングはうまくならない」と強い口調で言った” (Yoshida said she had said she “wanted to learn piano,” but her father said in a strong tone, ‘Piano doesn’t improve your wrestling’) (N70, 2004, p. Gorin1-19).
In these discourses, the direct talk of the women’s masculine appearance is avoided, but often implied in a phrase such as they are “not caring about their appearance” and “short hair is a sign of devotion.” The possibility that these athletes actually do care about their appearance, choose a masculine appearance, and want to have short hair “like boys” is silenced. Yet, “feminine” athletes are not necessarily criticized for their lack of devotion, as long as their performance can be maintained. The media praises and focuses on athletes who look feminine and show interest in “feminine’ interests such as fashion and make up. Among the members of Nadeshiko Japan in 2011, athletes with long hair and more “feminine” looks, such as Kawasumi Nahomi, Maruyama Karina, and Samejima Aya, received significantly more media attention than the others, who look more masculine like Kaihori Ayumi, Kinga Yukari, and Takase Megumi, despite their equally, if not more visible contribution to the team’s victory.

This discursive strategy to repair gender trouble involves two moves: on the one hand, their masculinity and lack of interest in heterosexual relationships (and silenced homosexual relationships) is understood as a necessary devotion for their success, which constitutes their “athletic face”. On the other hand, female athletes whose gender expressions conform to the normative “femininity” in these sports are given extra attention for their heroic performance and their femininity, despite their excellence in masculine sports. Heterosexism and silent homophobia are certainly at work in this double discursive movement. At the same time, however, this double discursive movement opens up a “third”, middle space between normal and abnormal, for those masculine women or women who do not conform to the heterosexist expectations to be feminine and who are not interested in men until they retire. In the next section, I investigate a subject that emerges from this “third” sporting space by examining the discursive construct of taiikukaikei women.

Taiikukaikei Women
The word *taiikukaikei* (体育会系) is composed of three parts: *taiiku* (体育), *kai* (会), and *kei* (系). *Taiiku* literary means physical education, *kai* is a party or club, and *kei* means system, course, or organization. *Kei* is also popularly used to refer to a group of tendencies and characteristics. Together, *taiikukaikei* is often used to refer to the field of study related to physical education and sports, as well as a person or institution that posses the characteristics of *taiikukai* (an athletic club). A dictionary definition of *taiikukaikei* is “characters that are often found in school athletic clubs, such as fighting spirit, die-hard spirit and absolute loyalty to hierarchy, as well as a person and institution that strongly has the characters” (Weblio Dictionary, 2014).

The discursively constructed *taiikukaikei* subject is still deeply rooted in the imagery of Japanese society, particularly in relation to the myth of an employment practice that favors a *taiikukaikei* employee because of their stereotype as “being perseverant, cooperative to do well in an organization and having “challenging spirit” that won’t be discouraged even after defeat,” while at the same time not having a “comprehensive ability, creativity, executive ability, and unique character” (Tsukahara, 2008, p. 21). As Tsukahara (2008) points out, however, the discourse of the *taiikukaikei* “personality” as disciplined but homogenous has received almost no scholarly attention, in terms of its history, genealogy, and how people’s experiences in athletic clubs during schooling years influence their lives. Furthermore, both women and men can be placed in a subject position of “*taiikukaikei,*” the implication of gender to the subjectivity of the *taiikukaikei* person has not been investigated. That being said, the focus of this section is not to investigate the genealogy or the discursive construct of the *taiikukaikei* subject per se. Rather, I focus on the utility of the discursive resources that construct a *taiikukaikei* subject in the reincorporation of the masculine women into the heteronormative and patriarchal society.

The following quote from a *Number* article utilizes multiple discursive resources to
construct a *taiikukaikei* woman as a normative, useful and non-threatening feminine subject:

[みんな元気だよ!!] 今だから認める「体育会系なワタシ」。

強く、正しく、美しく！

「女の子がスポーツなんて」と顔をしかめる男性、親御さんはいませんか？何より、スポーツ選手の貴女、「練習がきつい」「コーチにおこられるのはもう嫌」「もっと他のことがしたい」なんて思っていませんか？でもちょっと待って！かつて、10代の青春をスポーツに捧げ、汗と涙にまみれた元美少女アスリートたちは、それを糧に素敵な大人になっているのです…

自己鍛錬、体力、精神力、向上心、探究心、忍耐力、組織力、対応力—彼女たちに宿る大きく、強いエネルギーは、アスリート時代に育てられた。

([Everyone is Well!!] Now I admit “Me who is Taiikukaikei”

Really Beautiful, Truly Athletic 2001

Aren’t there men and parents who frown at the idea that “girls play sport”? Moreover, you, who is female athlete, aren’t you thinking, “practice is too hard”, “I don’t want to be scolded by a coach anymore”, or “I want to do something else”? But wait a second! The former beautiful girl athletes who sacrificed their teenage youth for sports, covered with sweat and tears, have become lovely adults owning to the experience . . .

Discipline, physical strength, mental strength, will power, aspiration, inquisitive mind, perseverance, and organizational and application abilities—The large and strong energy in these women were nurtured during their athletic years). (M7, 2001, p. 68-69)

In this article, *taiikukaikei* women are defined as disciplined; physically and mentally strong; posses organizational and application abilities; and are perseverant who possess will power, aspiration, inquisitive mind. These are very similar characteristics to what Tsukahara (2009) defined as a *taiikukaikei* personality. This means that the *taiikukaikei* men and women are similarly constructed as “jocks”. The title of the above article, “Really Beautiful, Truly Athletic”,
expresses the gender anxiety around this construction of *taiikukaikei* women: they must be beautiful if they are athletic. Accordingly, this article includes photos of *taiikukaikei* women who used to be a high level athlete. All of them are feminine, attractive, and actively pursuing a professional career. Beauty and economic usefulness of these former female athletes lay the foundation of the author’s claim that the “masculine traits” of the *taiikukaikei* woman should be tolerated. This implies that the anxiety of men and parents who “frown at” the idea of girls participating in sports is justified if the female athletes are not beautiful and economically useful.

The gender trouble caused by female athletes who are not only athletic, but are athletic in the masculine sports like soccer and wrestling, and whose appearance is not feminine seems to incite another layer of discursive tactic for its repair—masculine dispositions and DNA. This discursive strategy narrates a tomboy childhood of the female athletes and emphasizes their competitive personality that is passed on and nurtured through their family. For instance, a high school female soccer player who is the only female player in the boys’ team could continue her soccer career because of her “持ち前の負けん気” (inherent competitiveness) (N32, 2005, p. Kyoto2-1). In another instance, a junior high school wrestler was said to be “naturally competitive” (N7, 2006, p. Osakashimane2-33). The *Asahi* article titled “How to nurture a genius,” used the voice of Yoshida Saori’s mother to narrate Yoshida’s childhood gender expression:

Although I made her wear feminine clothes like those with frills, she liked to play actively with boys. By the time she could remember, she began to say, “I want to have a penis. I want to pee standing”. When she became an elementary school student, she stopped wearing skirts. (N19, 2008, p. beDoyō1-5)
In the article, it explains that Yoshida began to practice wrestling because her father, a former elite wrestler, was teaching wrestling to his two sons at home. In this narrative, her masculine disposition is represented by her gender expressions and her masculine family traits—from her father who was an elite wrestler. It is intriguing how this narrative resembles a “transnormative narrative”, a short from for the “normative narrative of transsexual” of FtM transsexual people in Japan. The only difference between the two, perhaps, is Yoshida’s clear identity as a woman.

In an *Asahi* article, the author, who identifies as a *bunkakei* (a person with an arts background) writer, narrates his encounter with a *taiikukaikei* woman, a former soccer player in a bar:

I went to the bar two days in a row because the female bartender, who tucks up the sleeve of a black shirt, holds her head high, and talks bluntly in honorific language without any flirtation, aroused my interest. I guessed she used to be *yanki* [delinquent youth], but she turned out to be a former soccer player... Her father is a police officer and she grew up among male siblings, mostly playing baseball and soccer. Without change, she became a softball player and then soccer player. She had rarely mingled with *bunkakei* people, and when I frankly asked what kind of man she wants to
have as her boyfriend, I was surprised because without any hesitation she answered, “I like police officer” . . . It’s true there is a gap difficult to fill between taiikukaikei and bunkakei, and this gap comes from DNA. A daughter who received the DNA that desires strong man from mother and the DNA that cherishes friendship between men from father, also becomes a woman who can only love taiikukaikei man). (N46, 2004, p. beShumatsue7)

The female bartender was initially recognized by the author as a former yankī or delinquent youth. This means that her masculine bodily expressions (holding her head high), her clothes (tucked sleeves), and her speech (polite but blatant and non-flirting), were read as abnormal until she introduced herself as a former soccer player. From there, the author gives an analysis of taiikukaikei women, whose masculinity is passed on and nurtured through an athletic family. Her disinterest in the author and the type of man the author is—a bunkakei—is still interpreted within a heteronormative and patriarchal frame: a woman who can only love an athletic, taiikukaikei, man. Her masculinity, which caused her to be misrecognized as a former delinquent youth, is quickly brought back into the heteronormative and patriarchal discourse of gender and sexuality through her identity as a former soccer player. This quick re-recognition of a masculine bartender, to a taiikukaikei woman demonstrates a kind of discursive tactic used to repair the gender trouble caused by her masculinity. Rather than being placed in an ‘abnormal’ subject position such as lesbian, transgender, or delinquent youth, she was recuperated as a heteronormative subject who fits properly within a patriarchal order through the author’s imagined narrative of her mother’s desire for strong men, her father’s masculinity and homosociality, and her desire for a masculine man.

It is important to note that her identification as a soccer player is the anchoring point at which the bartender’s subject position is shifted from abnormal to normal. The author clearly
recognizes her masculinity, but it does not arouse the suspicion that she might be a queer subject. On the one hand, this points to a form of heterosexism in Japan that makes queer subjects unthinkable. On the other hand, this also points to the possibility of a sort of “third” gender space where female masculinity is tolerated and the suspicion of queer identity is suspended, insofar as they are athletic women and they do not come out. Yoshida’s childhood narrative of her masculine gender expression is also a good example of this.

These discourses of their tomboyness and “masculine DNA” seem to contradict with other “repairing”, normalizing discursive tactic, which emphasizes the “natural” feminine face and influence of their male family members. The contradiction and fragmentation of repairing discourses demonstrate the performativity of taiikukai women, the complexity of its construction, and the failure of its repair.

**Conclusion**

I have looked at multiple ways in which masculine female athletes are discursively constructed and how the gender troubles caused by these athletes are repaired in the Japanese mainstream media. The analysis demonstrated heterosexism and a silencing of homophobia and transphobia, which do not read masculinity of female athletes as a sign of their queer identity, but normalize it and incorporate these athletes into the imagery of normative Japanese women. Yet, heteronormativity and normative femininity are constantly troubled and subverted, and the relationship between masculine sports and Japanese women as well as the meanings of “Japanese women” are shifted. Furthermore, the discourse of taiikukaikei women, despite its function to normalize and situate female athletes within the heteronormative patriarchal gender order, I argue, leaves a murky third gender space in which female, sporting masculinity may be accepted.

Furthermore, the discursive strategy that separates masculinity from the ‘natural-self’ of
female athletes is an epistemological violence for female athletes and masculine identified transgender athletes. Their masculinity are deemed ‘unnatural’ or a sign of ‘immaturity’, which needs to be torn off from their identity and embodiment as they grow older or as soon as they retire from their sports. Their masculine gender identities and their masculine gender expressions as a *preferred* form of gender expression are rendered invisible and unthinkable.
Below is an excerpt of a long article from *Sports Graphic Number* published in August 2011, immediately after *Nadeshiko Japan* won the FIFA World Cup title. The Japanese media was filled with nationalistic celebrations of “hardworking, humble, perseverant” *Nadeshiko* whose decades of struggles and hard work were finally rewarded with the ultimate victory and recognition from the world. It was a significant moment of identification with these athletes and for the nation that was going through the biggest physical and psychical devastation since the defeat in the World War II, after two decades of economic recession since the early 1990s, which was further aggravated by the triple natural and human made disasters earlier in that year.

なでしこは、スポーツという枠を超えて日本に勇気をもたらした。国という枠を超えて、世界の女子サッカーに大きな影響を及ぼすことになる。だが、彼女たちが成し遂げたことはまだある（*Nadeshiko* brought courage to Japan beyond the frame of sports. They will have a big influence on the world women’s soccer beyond national frame. But there are still more things that they have achieved).

なでしこの優勝は、日本の男子サッカーをも変えることになる（*Nadeshiko*’s victory will even change Japanese men’s soccer too).

ほんの20年ほど前まで、アジアには壁があった。日本のサッカー界には到底超えることがで

きないと見られていた壁だった。そんなものを乗り越えてみせると宣言したオランダ人の言葉は、

失笑をもって迎えられた（Until as recently as twenty years ago, there was a wall in Asia, a wall that was deemed impossible to overcome in Japanese soccer world. The Dutch man who proclaimed to overcome such wall received a scornful laughter).

いわく、日本人にサッカーは向かないから（It’s been said that it’s because Japanese are not good for soccer).
いわく、日本の場合、運動能力のある少年は他のスポーツに捕われてしまうから (It’s been said that it’s because in Japan, athletically talented boys go to other sports).

いわく、肉体接触を伴う球技は日本人に適していないから (It’s been said that it’s because Japanese are not suitable to play the ball games that involve physical contact).

いくつもの理由によるいくつもの壁があった。いまになって見れば分かる。あれは、日本人による日本人のエクスキューズのために作られた壁だった。勝つことによっていとも簡単に消滅する壁だった (There are many walls with many reasons. Now I can see. It was a wall created by Japanese to give an excuse to themselves. It was a wall that easily disappears by winning).

なでしこは、アジアの壁を越えた男子サッカーが超えられずにいた次の壁を消滅させてくれた (Nadeshiko made the next wall that men’s soccer could not overcome after they got over the wall of Asia to disappear).

運動能力の差、である (That is a gap in athletic ability).

今大会で彼女たちが直面した身体能力、運動能力の格差は、これまでに男子が国際舞台で経験してきたものよりも、数段大きかった。男子の場合、少なくとも身長や体重といったカタログデータのうえであれば、大差ない数値を並べることができる。だが、なでしこが戦ったのは、ジャンプ力や走力といった数字で表すのが難しい分野はもちろんのこと、一目瞭然で体格の差が分かっててしまう相手がほとんどだった (The gaps in physical and athletic abilities that Nadeshiko faced in this World Cup was much bigger than what men have experienced in international stages. At least at the level of catalogue data such as height and weight, Japanese men can put up similar numbers. But almost all of those who Nadeshiko competed against were players who their physical difference becomes obvious at the first glance, not to mention the areas that are difficult to represent in numbers such as gaps in jumping and running abilities).
それでも彼女たちは負けなかった (Yet, they did not lose).

日本人の運動能力は低いという先入観で凝り固まっている世代は、もはやどうしようもない。しかし、女子サッカーという競技になんの偏見も持たず、男子と女子を差ではなく違いとして捉えるバレーボールのような感覚でみて、この奮闘に一喜一憂した幼い世代の意識は、それ以前の世代とは確実にちがったものになる。速さは、高さは、強さは、挽回不能なものではない。原体験そして克服の成功例が刻まれることによって、壁は、最初からそんざいしないものとなる (There is nothing we can do about the generation who are clotted with the idea that Japanese have low level of athletic ability. But the consciousness of the young generation who were genuinely excited by Nadeshiko’s fight with the similar feeling to watching volleyball in which male and female players are considered “just different” rather than being at different levels [emphasis added]. Speed, height and strength are not impossible to make up. The wall becomes nonexistent from the beginning when the example of success to overcome becomes engraved as a formative experience). (M3, 2011, p. 20-21)

“体格差をものともせず、日本はぶつかっていった”

*[In defiance of the gap in physicality, Japan went to tackle]*

(M3, 2011, p. 20)

The previous chapter looked at heteronormative and patriarchal discursive constructions of female athletes in soccer and wrestling, the gender troubles in this construction, the resignification of the meanings of these athletes, and the discursive tactics of repairing the trouble to re-incorporate the athletes into the normative imaginary of Japanese women. In this chapter, I continue my analysis of the discursive tactics of the re-incorporation into the normative national imaginary and the national identity, which is hinged on the shifting signifier of the nadeshiko.

This chapter is divided into five sections: 1) Colonial encounters and anxious body; 2) Strong spirit in small frame; 3) Women’s soccer and progressive America; 4) Moral Nadeshiko and colonial amnesia; and 5) 311 and Nadeshiko Japan. The first two sections focus on the ways in which ethnic and national identities as Japanese are constructed in terms of their bodies and physical/athletic ability through colonial and sporting encounters. The third and the fourth sections explore how “Japaneseness” is discursively constructed in relation to others, the US and Asia respectively. These sections talk about how Japanese colonial relations with the US and East Asia underpin the ways in which Japanese female athletes, as well as Japanese National identities, are constructed. In the fifth section, I examine how the discursive resources identified in Chapter Four and in the earlier section of this chapter are used in Japanese media discourses of Nadeshiko Japan’s success during the post-311 period, in order to reconstruct and remasculnize Japanese national identity through flexible deployment of Japanese women’s athletic
masculinity.

As discussed in Chapter Four, the masculinity of female athletes could position them outside the boundary of Japanese gender norms, but the meaning of masculinity and athleticism can also exceed or extend beyond the matter of the gender of the athletes as individuals when their athletic successes in the international competition boosts national pride, solidarity, and confidence. As Hogan (2003) points out, discourses of national identity are “constantly shifting and constantly shaping and being reshaped by changing social conditions” (p. 102). In the time of the “crisis of national identity” (p. 103) in the globalized world, the articulation of national identity in international sporting events reflects both the anxieties over the domestic patriarchal gender order and an international hierarchy of racial and ethnic masculinities. This chapter explores the ways in which the Japanese national identity is constructed against the perceived physical inferiority as a pure, hardworking, stoic, disciplined, altruistic, loyal ethnic group whose strength comes from their non-physical, ‘ethnic’ attributes. Constructions of Japanese national identity of ‘a strong spirit in a small frame’ recuperates the emasculated nation with an identification with the masculine performance of their female athletes, while at the same time making the athletes safe through the patriarchal and heteronormative discourses.

Furthermore, the Japanese identification with female athletes through ‘a strong spirit in a small frame’ mirrors Japanese history of imperialism and colonialism, which places Japan between a ‘modernized’, superior West and a ‘lagging behind’ Asia. On the one hand, the success of Japanese female athletes is attributed to their superior morality, skills, and discipline of not only other Asians, but also to Westerners. On the other hand, the West still occupies the location of hegemonic masculinity and modernity through its imagined physical superiority and social progress reflected in their gender equity in sports. Historical investigations of Japanese physical education and women’s sports shows the genealogy of the contemporary anxiety over
and the imaginary of the “Japanese body” (Irie, 1984; 1988; Nishio, 2003; Suzuki, 1984). Such anxiety over the bodies of Japanese, since the time of Japanese colonial encounters with the West, still haunts and shapes the contemporary discursive constructs of Japanese female athletes in soccer and wrestling today.

The complicated ways in which the “masculine” female athletes are incorporated into Japanese national imaginaries demonstrates the subtleness, flexibility, and permeability of the boundary of gender and sexual norms, when they intersect with constructions of national identity in sports. By carefully contextualizing the moments in which masculinity emerges, shifts and disappears in the discursive construction of female athletes, I hope to deepen the understanding of discursive constructions of female athletes at the intersection of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and nation.

**Colonial Encounters and Anxious Body**

The anxiety around the body has been an important political concern for the Japanese government since the end of the 20th century, when Japan began establishing capitalist economic and social systems and a western/modern school system. There were two ways in which this anxiety was articulated in the Japanese adaptation and incorporation of Western sports: the Japanese body in relation to a racial and ethnic other, particularly Westerners, and Japanese men’s body in relation to the internal other, particularly women.

Scholars have investigated how Western sports were rapidly incorporated into Japanese schools and society in its modernization effort, which was in reaction to the threat of a Western, American in particular, invasion in the late 19th century. Physical education became a part of the school curriculum as soon as the modern school system was established in the 1870s, as one of its primary purposes was to develop healthy and strong bodies with improved physique and
health to meet the need of the capitalist society and the military preparation (Irie, 1984; 1988, Kietlinski, 2011; Nishio, 2003; Suzuki, 1984).

What is revealed in these historical examinations of Japanese sports and physical education is not only a form of ‘biopolitics’ (Foucault, 2003) of the modern Japanese government, but also the anxiety over the bodies of the Japanese population, particularly physique or taii/taikaku [体躯/体格], in Japanese since its modern encounter with the West and throughout its colonial expansion. At the height of Japanese empire building, the discourse of Japaneseness seems to be haunted by its perceived smallness of their bodies. Inaba (1998) cites a speech made by Shiohara Tokisaburo (the Director of the Educational Affairs Bureau of the Governor-General of Korea established by Japanese Imperial Government) in June 1939 titled “国民精神総動員運動について” (Regarding the national mobilization of citizens’ spirit) in which Shiohara stated,

元来日本の軍隊は何故強いかと言えば、これは武器が特にいいわけでも体が非常に大きいわけでも何でもない。強い原因はただ一つある。それは何かと言えば組織が——組織分子が純一で無雑であるというふることである。全部皇国臣民である (The reason why Japanese military is strong by nature is not because they have strong weapons or their body is very big. There is only one reason. It is because the institution is pure and unadulterated. They are all subjects of the Empire). (p. 201)

On the surface, this text emphasizes the identity of the Japanese as a ‘pure’ ethnic group that is attributed to the strength of its military; however, in making the claim, Shiohara also mentions the size of the Japanese body that is not ‘very big.’ Here, we can observe the construction of a national identity around the ‘purity’ of ethnicity and its spirit against its less emphasized, but nonetheless as significant—the inferiority of the physique in the strength of the military.

Scholars also revealed the second layer of ‘anxiety’ over Japanese bodies, which
concerned the domestic patriarchal social order, in the modernizing society. In the process of modernizing the educational system and the incorporation of Western physical education programs and sports, girls and women’s participation in physical education and sports also drastically increased since the end of the 19th century and throughout the 20th century (Kietlinski, 2011). The encouragement and acceptance of girl’s and women’s participation in physical education and sports in the 19th and the large part of the 20th century were firmly framed within the needs of the patriarchal family, in which strong bodies and the enlightened mind of mothers were seen to be essential for the production of strong and enlightened future generations. Yet, even within this careful framing of women’s participation in sports, within the patriarchal order and the necessity of the modernizing nation, the anxiety over the masculinity of female athletes has shaped the discourse of national sport heroines, particularly those who participate in ‘masculine’ sports.

Hitomi Kinue was the first Japanese female athlete to participate in the Olympics in 1928 and was the first Japanese woman to win an Olympic medal. While her international success made her a national celebrity, her large and masculine frame and athletic prowess in track and field, a sport that was considered too masculine for women at that time, caused social anxiety over her gender identity and sexuality. Frost (2010) analyzes the discursive construction of Hitomi and points out that her subject position fluctuated and shifted between that of a martyr, “moga” (modern girl),34 and man. The reception and the anxiety over Hitomi’s masculine physique and outstanding performance reflect the conflict between the desiring recognition for Japan from the world and the masculinity of a female athlete, in the midst of a the crisis of masculinity in the rapidly changing society (Frost, 2010; Kietlinski, 2011). Nonetheless, in the social image of Hitomi, she was “first and foremost, an athlete”, who “single-mindedly focused

34 For a detailed analysis of the ‘moga’ discourse in Japan, see: Shigematsu (2012).
on practice, completely eschewed alcohol for most of her life, and regularly wore sweatbands, shorts, and jogging suits” (Frost, 2010, p. 136). Her achievement and legacy, despite the controversy over her gender and sexuality and her premature death at the age of 24, was useful for boosting national pride and demonstrating the masculine presence of the Japanese state. More than seven decades later, discourses of “a strong spirit in a small frame” and “first and foremost, an athlete” continue to haunt the discourses of female athletes today.

**A Strong Spirit in a Small Frame: From Yamatonadeshiko to Nadeshiko Japan**

“*Even if you are Japanese, you can still be the World Player of the Year like this.*”


A kind of masculinity celebrated in modern sports is represented by the Olympic motto—*Citius, Altius, Fortius* (Faster, Higher, Stronger). National prowess, masculinity, and the ‘progress’ of modernization have been displayed in international sporting events, particularly in the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup. For Japan, the successful hosting of the three Olympics in the latter half of the 20th century in Tokyo, Sapporo, and Nagano and the co-hosting of the FIFA World Cup with South Korea in 2002, as well as the numerous Japanese Olympic medalists and world champions, have boosted Japan’s national confidence. However, a close examination of the discursive construction of female athletes in masculine contact sports, like soccer and wrestling, in which physical strength plays a significant role, reveals the haunting image of the smallness of the Japanese body.

Earlier in the 2000s, when the Japanese women’s soccer team was struggling in international competitions, Japanese women’s petite size compared to the taller more muscular form of foreign players was emphasized in the analysis of the game (M10, 2004; M22, 2008; N1, 2001; N4, 2005; N16, 2004; N41, 2008; N51, 2003; N55, 2002; N76, 2003). When Japan lost to
Germany in 2003, *Asahi* wrote an article titled, “風上の前半、先制許す　ドイツの壁、日本を拒む　女子サッカーW 杯” (Allowed the first score in the windward first-half: German wall rejects Japan) (N76, 2003, p. Supōtsu25). In this article, the “German wall” has both literal and metaphorical meanings. ‘Tall’ German players physically block Japanese players from receiving balls, while the difference in physique blocked the Japanese team from advancing to the final tournament. The article cites the German head coach in interpreting the German team’s first score against the wind, “先発11人の平均身長差は11センチ。「体格の差」と、ドイツのトーネメイヤー監督の説明は明快” (The difference in the average height of the eleven starting members is eleven centimeters. “It’s difference in physique,” German head coach Theune-Meyer gave a clear explanation). Athletes interviewed after the game were also quoted to say: 

フィジカル面では世界と差があった。優勝したドイツとも当たりましたが、高くても長い。ヘディングで競い勝ったと思ったら上からたたき付けられたり。日本はつないで形を作れるので、もっと落ち着けばよかったと思いました (In terms of physical, there was a gap from the world. We also played against Germany, who won the championship, and they are tall and their legs are long. Even when I thought I won the struggle for heading, they struck the ball from above. I thought I should have been calmer since Japan can pass the ball to form [an attack]). (N51, 2003, p. Hyogo2-29)

This article shows that the idea that Japanese are “small” is shared by the author, the player, and Theune-Meyer, demonstrating the global circulation of the discourses that Japanese name themselves and are named by others about their small bodies.

Even when introducing Sawa Homare, the most outstanding female soccer player of the generation, her strategy and efforts to overcome ‘Japanese physical inferiority’ are considered a key for her success. A *Number* article in 2001 introduced Sawa as the only Japanese woman to play in the Women’s United Soccer Association (WUSA), the “best” women’s soccer league in
the world that was starting in the spring. The author emphasizes how using her muscle “softly” is the key for a small Japanese to move fast and compete against her taller and stronger foreign players (M8, 2001). In the article, Sawa is quoted to say, “体が大きくない (164cm, 54kg) から、相手は当たってくるでしょう。それに対抗してぶつかっても無理だと思った” (Since my body is not large (164cm, 54kg), the opponents come to hit. I thought it’s not possible to counter it by hitting back) (M8, 2001, p. 5). The article interprets her insights as a strategy for Japanese athletes in general to compete against the world. Also in an Asahi article Sawa is quoted to say, “欧米選手に体格やパワーではかなわないけれど、技術やスピードでは負けない” (Although I cannot compete with European and American players with physique and power, I do not lose in terms of skill and speed) (N55, 2002, p. Sunday1-41). At this point, her success was simply attributed to her exceptional background (being the only girl who played among boys in boys’ soccer teams), efforts, and skill to “relax” the muscles to increase her speed, a rare skill to possess, despite her small size. In other words, while her struggle was attributed to her Japaneseness (small body with less power), her success was attributed to her exceptionality, which is nonetheless framed within a normative gender regime. Her exceptional ability was formed through playing among boys and her speed comes from the ability to relax the muscles, not to flex the muscles.

Yet, this discursive construction of the Japanese small body as a source of the “gap” between Japan and the world, and the few successful female athletes as exceptions, begins to shift after the Athens Olympics in 2004. While the smallness of the Japanese body is still emphasized, their skill and discipline to perform complicated and organized attacks began to be added to the interpretations of their performances. In the Athens Olympics in 2004, the Japanese women’s soccer team defeated Sweden, who was considered as one of the top contenders. It was also the first time the Japanese women’s soccer team won a game in the Olympics. In response to this historical victory, a Number article wrote, “欧米チームの高さとスピードに、ボール扱いの巧さと
組織力で対抗するというチームコンセプトと、それに基づく強化策が正しかったことを証明した” ([This victory] Proved the correctness of the team concept of opposing the height and speed of European and American teams by skillfulness of ball control and organizing ability as well as the training strategy based on the concept) (M9, 2004, p. 108). Asahi also wrote, “体格では劣ったが、技術で組織力で相手を圧倒” (Though physically inferior, [the Japanese team] overwhelmed the opponent with skill and organizing ability) (N16, 2004, p. Supōtsu4-13). The article also added how the chief umpire who requires “clean” soccer, helped “physically inferior Japanese” (p. Supōtsu4-13).

As the success of the Japanese women’s soccer team became increasingly visible and recognized, this discourse of skill and discipline in small bodies also became dominant in the narration and interpretation of Nadeshiko Japan’s performance since the mid 2000s. Yet, until their ultimate victory in the FIFA World Cup in 2011, the anxiety over the body continued to underscore the discourse.

体格で上回る相手にどう戦うか。そうして考えたサッカーは成就しつつある (How to fight against physically superior opponents. The soccer that thought this way is in the process of being complete). (N25, 2007, p. Supōtsu3-17)

サッカーの質の高さをどれほど自負していても、勝利できなければ負け犬の遠吠えでしかない。もちろん澤も、それは承知している。「彼女たち（アメリカ人）は高さや速さや強さに頼りきったサッカーしかできないんだけれど、その長所が図抜けているから技術や組織力の不足をカバーできてしまう。で、終わってみればいつも日本が負けてる。そこが悔しいんですね…」 (Even if they take pride in high quality soccer, it’s only grumbling of a loser if they cannot win. Of course Sawa acknowledges it. “Though they (American players) can only play the soccer that is relied on their height, speed, and strength, they can cover the lack of skill and organizing
skill because the physical strength stands out so much. Then, at the end of the day, Japan always loses. That’s mortifying. (M5, 2011, p. 98-100)

速さも、強さも、高さもない。ここの選手のアスリートとしての能力やサイズならば、日本は出場12カ国中で間違いなく最下位レベルにある。だが彼女たちはどんな強豪国にも通用する武器を持っている。ショートパスとドリブルを組み合わせての、切れ味の鋭いアタックだ (They don’t have speed, strength, nor height. These players’ ability and size as an athlete, they are certainly the lowest level among twelve countries participating. But they have a weapon that works against any strong countries. It is a sharp attack combined with short passes and dribbles). (M22, 2008, p. 71)

The discourse of the small Japanese with skill and discipline also appeared in the discourse of women’s wrestling. Even though wrestling has weight divisions that make the ‘gap’ in physique less visible on a mat, the discourse persistently appears. If the foreign wrestlers are not bigger, they are more powerful. If the Japanese wrestler is powerful, they are exceptional. Hamaguchi Kyoko, a world champion in the heaviest weight class, was interviewed before the world championship in 2002. She talks about her struggle in gaining weight to compete in the weight class while European athletes lose weight to compete in the same division.

五輪の一番重い階級が 72 キロ級に決まって、75 キロ級から変更されたのも私にはよかった。去年までは「増量」が大変で。1 日 7 食、無理やり詰め込んでた。同じ体重でも、減量して出てくるヨーロッパの選手たちがすごく重く感じていました (It was beneficial for me to move from 75kg [to 72kg] since the heaviest weight class in the Olympics was decided to be 72kg. Until last year, I had hard time “gaining” weight. I forced seven meals a day. Even in the same weight class, I was feeling that European athletes who come after losing weight were very heavy). (N40, 2002, p. Supōtsu3)

今回、[浜口は]メダルは逃したが、浜口は体格のいい外国選手相手に力負けしない (Although she [Hamaguchi] lost this time, she doesn’t loose by strength against foreign athletes with good physique). (N68, 2012, p. Gorin1-25)

48 kg級では外国人選手でもあれだけ[伊調千春ほど]のパワーはない…練習量では世界ナンバー1の日本代表チーム…スタミナには絶対の自信を持っている (In the 48kg class, even foreign athletes do not have as much power [as Ichō Chiharu]… Japanese team is number one in the world in terms of the amount of training… They have absolute confidence in their stamina). (M13, 2008, p. 99)

In these quotes, the smallness of the Japanese body is not as emphasized as in soccer, perhaps due to the fact that there is a weight division. Body size is obviously not a useful ‘explanation’ when interpreting the competition and performance in wrestling. However, powerful Japanese women are still constructed as exceptional, while foreigners are assumed to be larger, heavier, and more powerful. Foreign wrestlers come into the same weight class by losing weight, but Japanese must gain weight, and the strength of Japanese wrestlers is attributed to their stamina that is nurtured through their hard training. Despite Japanese female wrestlers’ constant domination of the world championship podiums, the anxieties over the Japanese body seems to remain deep in the discourse.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, however, this discourse gradually shifted during the later 2000s, until the FIFA world cup in 2011 and the London Olympics in 2012. When applied
to sports, the word *yamatonadeshiko* previously connoted the weakness of Japanese women (lack of training environment, small physique, group-mindedness, dependency, and lack of creativity). This normative Japanese femininity has shifted to what I called ‘female peculiarity’ of “honorable poverty” (*seihin*), whose virtues are perseverance, hard working and fair play, which is complimented with their high quality ball handling skills and organizing ability to execute complicated game strategies. As I argued, this shift of focus resonates with the ‘nostalgic’ Japanese national identity of hard working, strong spirited, and the sacrifice of individual for the group. The re-construction of Japaneseness and re-signification of *yamatonadeshiko* enables national identification with *Nadeshiko Japan*, who demonstrated the nation’s strength in the recuperation of Japanese masculinity while resituating female athletes within the boundary of Japanese femininity. The following are some of the examples of this discursive shift observed during the period after the 2011 FIFA World Cup.

技術の高さが際だつ。スウェーデンとは平均身長の差が 10 センチあった。国際舞台では常に背負う体格差を、献身的な運動量と持ち味のパスワーク、俊敏性、組織力でカバーした（Their high level skill stands out. There was 10 cm difference in average height against Sweden. They covered the burden of gap in physique that they always carry in the international stage with committed amount of movement and their strength of pass work, agility, and organizational ability). (N42, 2011, p. Opinion2-14)

[戦後の日本と重ね合わせて] 体力とパワーに恵まれた列強国に対していかに対抗するか。当時どこの国もやっていなかった回転レシーブを開発し、ボールを拾い続け、隙をみつけてアタックするスタイルを身につけました。それは諸外国から「東洋の魔女」と評され、驚きの目で見られたものでした ([Comparing to Japanese women’s volleyball team during the post WWII period] How to oppose to the Great Powers of the world. [The Japanese team] developed a rolling
receive which no other country had done at the time, and acquired the style that players
keep picking up the ball and find an unguarded moment to attack. It was recognized by
foreign countries as “Witches of the Orient” and surprised them. (N73, 2011, p. Opinion2-14)

[Message from Ivca Osim からのメッセージ] 「自分たちより20 cmも背が高く、20 kgも重い相手に立ち向かっていくのは、壁にぶつかりに行くようなものだ . . .」

だが、彼女たちは、勇気を持ってアグレッシブにプレーすることで弱点を克服した。そこが男子との大きな違いで、実際に彼女たちは勝つために必要なことをすべてやってのけた。すなわちモビリティとテクニック、コレクティブティといった、日本人の特徴を生かした自分たちの戦い方を貫き通した . . .

彼女たちがコレクティブなディシプリンを徹底させて、チームを前進させた。男子とは異なりなでしこには、個人主義に走る選手はひとりもいなかった

([Message from Ivca Osim] Going against the opponent who is 20 cm taller and 20 kg heavier than yourself is like going to crush into the wall . . .

But they [Japanese female soccer players] overcame the weakness by being brave and playing aggressively. That’s the biggest difference from men. They actually did everything they need to do in order to win. In other words, they persisted their strategy to use Japanese characters like mobility, technique, and collectivity . . .

They advanced the team by thorough collective discipline. Unlike men’s team, there was no one in Nadeshiko Japan who went individualistic. (M17, 2011, p. 73)

[澤は] 15 歳で代表デビューした。日本は当時、体格やパワーで勝る欧米に跳ね返され続けていた...
...「日記に『白人選手は格好いい』と書くくらい、みんな外国へのコンプレックスあった。試合前
from a feeling of losing, ... no longer lose physically, the gap in physique and power could not be filled. After suffering and struggling, they found the answer, “I must persist on my play.” ... After Sawa, many juniors jumped out to foreign countries and the level of Japanese women’s soccer is also going up ... the complex against European and American is a thing of the past). (N47, 2011, p. Gurōbu8-8)

Regardless of gender, Japanese athletes tend to be ridiculed like “there is no special athlete. All the same type, like a cookie-cutter.” But in London I feel like it will add to their strength). (M19, 2012, p. 22)

These quotes seem to show that Japan has overcome a ‘complex’ about their body against that of Europeans and Americans by winning the World Cup. Yet, the haunting image of physical inferiority keeps seeping into the discourse. After the celebration of the FIFA World Cup was over and the media’s attention shifted to the London Olympics in 2012, the anxious body began to preoccupy the prediction and the interpretation of the game again. Within a few months
leading up to the London, I observed that the media’s confidence in their skills and discipline was repetitively shaken up by this anxiety. In April 2012, Nadeshiko Japan won the Kirin Challenge Cup by drawing with the U.S. and defeating Brazil. Yet, an Asahi article warns that this victory would not necessarily predict the Olympic medal for Nadeshiko Japan. Continuing to brush up their skill and strategy is essential for Japan since:

日本のメンバー23人の平均身長が163.4センチだったのに対し、ブラジルは約4センチ、米国は6センチも上回る。体格で優位に立つ欧米、南米勢に、ゴール前での競り合いで勝てる確率は低い（ Compared to the average height of 23 Japanese members that was 163.4 centimeter, Brazilian team was four centimeter, and American team was 6 centimeter taller. It’s less likely to win in the struggle in front of the goal against European, American, and South American). (N48, 2012, p. Supōtsu1-17)

Before a friendly match against France in July, Asahi wrote, “[フランスは]我々のスタイルにフィジカルが兼ね備えられていて、レベルが高い...（だが）体格差や身体能力の差をパスワークで埋め、先に世界の頂点に立ったのは日本 ([France] has both our style and physical so their level is high. [But] It’s Japan who stood at the top of the world first by filling the gap in physique and physical ability by pass work) (N49, 2012, p. Supōtsu1-13). Japan lost this friendly match against France. The next evening, the same author wrote another article titled “仏に力負け” (Defeated by France by strength). The article describes that:

完全な力負けだった。象徴的なのは後半28分の2失点目だ。CKを身長187センチのルナールに頭でたたき込まれた。「次元が違った。3階の高さからヘディングされたようなもの」と佐々木監督。突破を阻もうとした澤や阪口がはね飛ばされた。（It was a defeat completely by strength. The symbolic moment was when [Japan] allowed the second point at 28 minutes in the second half. Renard drove a corner kick into [the goal] by the head. Head coach Sasaki says, “It was a different level. It’s like getting a heading from the third floor.” Sawa and Sakaguchi
who tried to stop their break through were knocked down. (Asahi, 2012 July 20, p. 1-2)

These quotes demonstrate how body size continued to haunt the interpretations of the Japanese athletic performances. This is not surprising given that the history of modern Western sports has been developed as a competition of masculinity, racial and ethnic ‘superiority’, in sports where body size, height, strength, and power are emphasized and become advantageous. Thus, international sporting events become an occasion for Japanese teams to encounter ‘big’ and ‘strong’ foreigners, in which the Japanese embodied identity as of ‘small’ framed bodied is reinforced and, subsequently, the masculinity of Japanese men is challenged. At the same time, ‘petite’ Japanese women’s successes in ‘masculine’ sports like soccer and wrestling, in which body size and power have been considered to be essential for success, have become an occasion to reconstruct and celebrate Japaneseness that, nonetheless, focuses on their work ethic, the morality of honorable poverty, and their strong and pure spirit, that is ‘Japanese’.

The discourse of the ‘pure’ and ‘moral’ Japanese female athlete repeatedly appears throughout the rest of the 2000s, up until the London Olympics in 2012. This imaginary plays an important role in the discourses of Nadeshiko Japan in re-constructing not only normative Japanese femininity, but also ‘Japanese ethnicity’ as a whole, particularly during the post 311 period. As the excerpt in the prelude shows, Nadeshiko Japan’s players were imagined as national heroines who cared, encouraged, and helped the nation to ‘recover’, recuperate, and reconstruct the Japanese nation, national identity, and confidence that had been threatened by the two decade long economic recession, the rise of neighboring Asian countries, and the 311 triple disaster, all through the nostalgic discourse of the country’s rise to economic superpower through “collective action, the sacrifice of individual needs to the needs of the group, and a strong work ethic” (Hogan, 2003, p. 109).

As the ‘inferiority’ of the Japanese body was perceived less in comparison to the “taller,
bigger, stronger” foreigner, Westerner in particular, the imaginary of ‘pure’, ‘moral’, and ‘hard working’ Japanese is constructed through differentiation of itself from foreign others. In the case of soccer especially, this reflects the colonial order in which the West is constructed as progressive and modern, while other Asian countries are ‘lagging’ behind. The shifting discourse of Japanese women’s soccer demonstrates not only these colonial racial and ethnic ‘hierarchies’ constructed in colonial relations with Asia and the West, but also the discursive strategies that continue to produce and reinforce Japanese national identity through encounters with others in sports and its shifting meanings. In the next section, I focus on the discursive construction of women’s soccer as the index of social progress and of the US as a modern progressive country.

**Women’s Soccer and Progressive America**

As I analyzed in the previous section, European and American culture constantly appear as a superior other against the image of the Japanese self, which is constructed in terms of the body and athletic ability. It is not only hierarchies of the body and athletic ability that are re/produced in the discourse, but also that of ‘social progress’ or ‘modernity’. During the early 2000s, Japanese women’s soccer was receiving very little social and media attention, and the discourse of soccer as a ‘minor’ women’s sport positioned men as the original and women as the other. In the same discourse, the US and its ‘progressive’ environment for women’s soccer also became a reference point against which Japan’s ‘progress’ is measured.

As described in Edwards’ (2003) detailed account of Japanese Lady League (L-League), the development of Japanese women’s soccer is not linear. When Japan’s economy was still strong before the collapse of the bubble economy in the early 1990s, Japanese companies offered one of the most lucrative playing environments in the world for professional female soccer players. As a result, many of the world top players came to Japan to play professionally in
L-League. Once in economic recession, however, L-League could not sustain corporate support and popularity. Contracts with foreign players were terminated and Japanese top players also had to seek opportunities overseas. Yet, as the history of prosperity and the decline of women’s soccer leagues in the US demonstrates, the US also did not always provide a promising career or the best training environment for female soccer players. This means that even though the population of female soccer players in Japan was small, the idea that the US is the best place for women’s soccer and the Japanese playing environment is poor was not always the case. Nonetheless, in the discourse of female soccer in the 2000s, after a decade of economic recession and the ongoing lack of support for women’s soccer particularly after elementary school, the US continues to occupy a position of a ‘progressive’ country where female soccer is widely accepted and supported.

In the common narratives of Japanese athletes moving to the US to play in American professional leagues like the NBA, MLB, PGA, and WPGA, the American professional sports leagues are where the world’s best athletes and money are, and playing in the league is a “dream come true”. Also, in the narratives of women’s soccer in the media since 2001, the US has been a symbol of advancement and the dream for Japanese athletes. This positioning of the US reflects Japan’s century old desire to be recognized and to become like the West. An Asahi article introduced Ando Kozue, a young hopeful who at the age of 16 played for Japan in the FIFA U18 World Cup: “一昨年の女子W杯で、女子のサッカー大国・米国を肌で感じた。そんな米国の女子プロリーグでプレーすることが夢だ”(In the women’s World Cup two years ago, she experienced US, a superpower of women’s soccer. Her dream is to play in the women’s professional league in US) (N1, 2001, p. Ibaraki1-33).

Also in a Number article, the desire for, and to be like the West, is articulated in the positioning of WUSA as the best league in the world and also as Sawa’s desire to ‘internationally’
merry.  

数年前から、「将来は外国に住みたいし、国際結婚もしたい」と話していた彼女が、アメリカへ渡ったのは一昨年の7月。その一ヶ月前に開催された女子W杯で、日本は予選リーグ敗退だったが、澤の柔らかな動きと確かなボールコントロールが、関係者の目に止まった。話はトントン拍子で進み、コロラド州デンバーのクラブチームへ移籍。憧れだった外国暮らしを実現した (She [Sawa], who was telling since a few years ago that “In the future I want to live in a foreign country and also want to have an international marriage”, moved to US in last July. In the women’s World Cup held a month prior, Japan had lost in the preliminary league. But Sawa’s soft movements and accurate ball control caught the eyes of the officials [of WUSA]. The negotiation went quickly and smoothly, and she transferred to a club team in Denver, Colorado. She achieved the dream of living in a foreign country). (M8, 2001, p. 5)

The next year in 2002, an Asahi reporter visited Sawa in the US, described the popularity of women’s soccer in the US, and explained how Sawa is thriving in the environment where both her athletic and private life are respected.

米国で女子サッカーに注がれる目は、温かい。99年に地元で開催された第3回女子ワールドカップ(W杯)の決勝戦は9万人を超える観衆を集めた...

私が澤さんを訪ねたのは、プレシーズンマッチ1カ月前の2月。まだチーム練習はなく、親しい仲間で集まって練習するくらい。渡米直後の澤さんがホームシックに陥ったのは、この自由時間をもてあましたからだ。運転できる車はなしと、親しい友人もいなかった。

でも、今は違う。パートナーのジェームズさんと昨夏、出会った。元選手で、仕事の合間に子どもたちにサッカーを教えてくれる。オフにはランニングやジム通いにつき合ってくれる。

「アメリカではまず個々の生活があって、その中にサッカーがある。アメリカ代表には子供が3人いる選手も。結婚しただけで引退か？とか言われる日本とは大違いですよね」体力の続く限りは選手でいたい。結婚しても子どもを産んでも、それは変わらないはずだと思う。

米国で女子サッカーに注がれる目は、温かい。99年に地元で開催された第3回女子ワールドカップ(W杯)の決勝戦は9万人を超える観衆を集めた...

私が澤さんを訪ねたのは、プレシーズンマッチ1カ月前の2月。まだチーム練習はなく、親しい仲間で集まって練習するくらい。渡米直後の澤さんがホームシックに陥ったのは、この自由時間をもてあましたからだ。運転できる車はなしと、親しい友人もいなかった。

でも、今は違う。パートナーのジェームズさんと昨夏、出会った。元選手で、仕事の合間に子どもたちにサッカーを教えてくれる。オフにはランニングやジム通いにつき合ってくれる。

「アメリカではまず個々の生活があって、その中にサッカーがある。アメリカ代表には子供が3人いる選手も。結婚しただけで引退か？とか言われる日本とは大違いですよね」体力の続く限りは選手でいたい。結婚しても子どもを産んでも、それは変わらないはずだと思う。
(In the US, the eyes watching women’s soccer are warm. In the third Women’s World Cup held in the country since 1999, the final game attracted 90,000 spectators . . .

It was in February, a month before the pre-season match began, when I visited Sawa. There was still no team practice and they just get together with close friends to practice. The reason why Sawa became homesick right after she moved to US was because she didn’t know what to do in this free time. There was no car she could drive and there was no close friends.

But it’s different now. She met her partner, James, last summer. He is a former player and he teaches soccer to children between his work. On off-days, he goes running and does gym together to support her.

“In America, there is an individual’s life comes first, and then there is soccer in there. One of the players in American national team even has three kids. It’s so different from Japan where only getting married triggers a question of retirement.” [Sawa] wants to be athlete as long as her physical strength can last. She thinks it won’t change even after getting married and having a child). (N55, 2002, p. Sunday1-41)

It is important to note that in the common narrative of the dream of living in a “foreign country”, ‘foreign’ means the ‘West’ and that international marriage often means marrying a white man. The US in particular is constructed as a place of progress and social mobility where Japanese women who are not provided with a good training environment in their own nation can find a dream-like playing environment, excel in a sport that is considered too masculine for women, and climb a social/racial hierarchy by marrying a white man. In the above article, Sawa’s soccer skills are too good to stay in Japan and her wish to have both a fulfilling private and athletic life would be out of reach if she were to marry a Japanese man. In other words, while the article recognizes the small ‘box’ Japan has for women, it reproduces the ‘box’ of
normativity by ejecting Sawa out of the boundary. She is not only physically outside of Japan by playing in the US, but she is also seen as a non-Japanese woman who is expected to marry a foreign man.

Furthermore, while this article recognizes the athleticism and skills of Sawa, it does not critique the poor domestic playing environment for women. By situating American leagues as a dream place for Japanese athletes and a progressive country where women are welcomed in conventionally masculine sports, these articles avoid the critique of Japanese patriarchal gender norms and their lack of systematic support for female soccer players. As discussed in the previous chapter, when the Japanese women’s national team struggled to advance in international competitions, women’s soccer was deemed a minor sport with a very small playing population, while women who excelled, like Sawa and Ando, were exceptional minorities. Thus, the “lack” of a domestic playing environment does not need to be discussed. If they are too good to stay in Japan, they can go to foreign countries where the environment already exists.

This logic doubly marginalizes female athletes by evading the critique of Japanese patriarchy that is at the foundation of the issue as well as by putting on responsibility on women’s shoulders. Providing a good environment for the ‘minor’ women’s sport is not Japan’s responsibility, as it is the female players’ responsibility to do well and gain recognition and support from the nation. Sawa’s own critique of Japanese women’s teams reflects the prevalence of this ‘self-responsibility’ discourse of women’s soccer. In an interview for Asahi, she is quoted to say, “シドニー五輪出場を逃したことにも、日本の女子サッカー衰退の要因があると思っています。五輪の切符を手にすることが、最低目標です” (I think that our having lost the chance to go to the Sydney Olympics is also a part of cause for the decline of Japanese women’s soccer. The minimum goal is to win a ticket to the Olympics) (N6, 2003, p. Sakkā1-17).

Honda Midori, the first female head coach for the women’s national soccer team for the
Universiade in 2005, goes even further. Her admiration for the US women’s soccer team takes the form of importing homophobic practice into Japanese soccer culture in her effort to promote Japanese women’s soccer. Honda is reported to say that if there are players with the same level, she would choose ones with long hair. The reason she gave was her encounter with American soccer players when she was still a player on the active list.

“If with the same ability, I choose athletes with long hair”, she declared when she assumed the position of a head coach for women’s national team for Universiade in 2005. Although there was a critique, she doesn’t bend her conviction.

She has had the belief since a friendly match against the US in which she took part in when still on the active list. American players looked fashionable, strong, and cool. She realized, “Athletes must become an object of admiration. Otherwise, the range of women’s soccer wouldn’t expand.” In Okayama Yugo, she has actually taken out the athletes who cut their hair short from the bench). (N56, 2007, p. Supōtsu1-3.)

Honda Midori was the head coach of one of the strongest women’s soccer club teams in Japan, located in Okayama prefecture since the founding of the team in 2001 until 2010. I do not know how much influence she had in choosing the name for the club team, but its official name “Okayama Yugo Belle” (Belle is a beautiful person in French) and the team’s motto, “Be beautiful and strong” reflect her view quite well. On the team’s emblem, the letter “B” is designed to symbolize a woman with a ponytail and a soccer ball (see Figure 5.1). In order to be
popular and gain support, Japanese women’s soccer must become like the US, where all players are fashionable, strong, and cool, which is embodied by the “long hair” of athletes. I cannot know if Honda knew the history of the strong homophobia that has characterized American sports, homophobia that is reflected in (normative) ‘pony tails’. Nonetheless, the Japanese colonial relationship with the US that has constructed the US as a model and the place of dreams for athletes, became a pathway through which American heteronormative and feminine gender norms and homophobic culture embodied in the “ponytail” policy are forced on Japanese female players. In this discourse, Japanese “masculine” soccer players who sport short hair are not only “uncool” and not admirable, but also are responsible for the struggle of Japanese women’s soccer as a whole. In this discourse, the admiration for, and desire to see, female ‘masculine’ soccer players are not recognized and are silenced.

Figure 5.1. Okayama Yugo Belle’s team emblem.

Japanese women’s participation in soccer is also discursively constructed as a sign of Japanese social progress and Japanese “women’s” progress as its visibility has increased in the society from the mid 2000s. As the Japanese bubble economy collapsed and the society rapidly moved toward an aging society with decreasing birthrates, women’s participation in the wider social sphere has become a more pressing social need and issue. Women’s participation in more diverse sports is also viewed as a reflection of such social changes. The discourse of “taiikukaikei” women analyzed in the previous chapter is symbolic of how women’s
participation in sports is normalized through the social needs for a disciplined and efficient work force, as heteronormative women who at the same time do not threaten the patriarchal gender order.

In *Number 527*, the same issue that included the article focused on “*taiikukaikei*” women in 2001, the history of women’s participation in increasingly diverse sports is chronicled with an analogy of revolution. The two-page article is titled, “From the dawn of Japanese women’s sports to its modernity” (Ishiguro, 2001, July 26, p. 66). In the chronological table that spreads across two pages, they have hand-drawn figures of female athletes, time periods, names of famous athletes, and descriptions. Above the column for the 1920s and 1930s that includes Hitomi Kinue, there is a figure of a small short-haired runner in a crouching start position, which also looks like a *pithecanthropus*. The size and the pose of the figure that makes it look like an ape is no accident. Next to the figure is a word, “ラマテクス”, perhaps a misspelling of “ラマピテクス” (*Ramapithecus*), a species that was once thought to be the first direct ancestor of modern humans. The chronicle ends with the most recent period of the 2000s, in which the figure is the biggest (tallest) and given a more ‘human like’ posture. Next to the figure, there is a word, “現代人” (modern person). Thus, women’s participation in diverse sports appears to be an index of their revolution and modernization. In the Japanese imaginary, the West, the US in particular, sits at the most ‘modernized’ end of the chronological table.

After *Nadeshiko* won the World Cup title in 2011, this location of Japan as smaller and lagging behind the West began to shift. The increasing visibility of female soccer players and their successes began to be interpreted as a sign of social progress and an indicator of how far Japanese sports had come. The media frequently mentions how Japan has become a model, which the world will follow (Kaneko, 2011; N28, 2011; N27, 2009). An *Asahi* article wrote,
た米国のスンダーゲ監督も「日本のサッカーは女子サッカーの模範となるようなプレーだった」(In the Beijing Olympics, the Japanese playing style that passes a ball one after another to close in on the goal was highly appraised. Sundhage, head coach of the US national team that Japan played against in semi final, also said “Japanese soccer was like a model play for women’s soccer”). (N27, 2009, p. Supōtsu1-3)

In these articles, an increasing confidence in Japanese women’s soccer can be observed; however, as the above quote shows, the US is still a reference for measuring Japanese success. It is the recognition of the US and the appraisal of the American coach that Japan continues to seek.

The discourse of Japanese female soccer players whose value is constantly measured by and against Japanese men and Western women demonstrates a sort of “epistemic violence” (Spivak, 1988, p. 84) in modern sports, in which Japanese female athletes cannot become their own referent. Domestically, their achievement is either symbolic of their latent arrival to modernity, a position that has been occupied by Japanese men for a long time, or the reflection of social change in Japan as a whole, rather than as subjects who demand, negotiate, and open up spaces to play the sport and achieve excellence in their own right and effort. Internationally, they are a medium through which the Japanese nation is able to overcome its physical inferiority and to reinforce national identity. In short, the meanings of their existence and achievements are made and measured by their proximity to (or distance from) Japanese men and Western women, rather than simply as a *sign* of societal change.

In these discourses, the masculinity of these female athletes becomes invisible as it is either silenced and ignored, or appropriated and absorbed, into the more general discourse of Japanese masculinity. Thus, female masculinity becomes invisible against the backdrop of “national masculinity.” When their masculinity is directly mentioned, it is in the context of the ‘uncool’ short hair that prevents the development of Japanese women’s soccer; a sign of devotion to
sports that disappears outside the sporting space; or as useful qualities of an effective labor force at best. Thus, the discourse of the West, the US in particular, as a progressive society in which the best athletes of the world gather and women’s sports thrive, demonstrates how modern sports function as a medium through which colonial racial, ethnic, and gender hierarchies and norms are reproduced and reinforced in Japanese media.

**Moral Nadeshiko and Colonial Amnesia**

While Western countries constantly appear as a reference for Japanese athletic achievement and social progress, Asian countries, especially China and South Korea, also appear as the “opposite” reference point against which the Japanese media constructs its national identity as “more modernized and progressive” than *other Asians*. In these discourses, the construction of pure, devoted, hardworking, and ‘moral’ Japanese female athletes who play fairly and selflessly functions to establish the identity and image of a ‘moral’ and ‘progressive’ Japan.

In this section, I analyze the incidences that occurred during the FIFA World Cup and the Olympics in the late 2000s, around the banner that the members of *Nadeshiko Japan* displayed on the field after games to show their appreciation to the hosting nation and to the world audience. In these incidents, Japanese media interpreted the banner as a sign of Japanese morality and progressiveness, while constructing the ‘anti-Japan’ behaviors by Chinese and South Korean spectators and audiences as symptomatic of their ‘behindness’, by playing down or silencing the memory of the Japanese colonial violence and the contemporary Japanese government’s revisionist politics that have angered Asian countries affected by Japanese imperialism.

As Marouf Hasian (2012) argues, “Selective remembrances of (post)colonial presents and pasts” (p. 476) enables the participants of the “colonial amnesia” to enjoy the fruit of colonial
violence and exploitation “as they forget about the sacrifices that were made by” the colonized (p. 487). On the one hand, the banners are constructed as a symbol of Nadeshiko Japan’s morality and as an embodiment of the spirit of modern sports—fair play and friendship—that leaves politics outside of the sporting arena. On the other hand, the Japanese media reported that Chinese and South Korean audience members who displayed “disrespectful”, “anti-Japanese” behaviors and banners were called to become self-reflexive as a result of Nadeshiko Japan’s demonstration of gratitude and sports-personship. I argue that this double construction of Japanese female athletes and Chinese and South Korean audiences is a form of Japanese ‘colonial amnesia’, in which the memory of Japanese colonial violence is silenced and the sacrifice of Asian peoples are forgotten through the “politics-free” space of sports. Moreover, the discourse positions Japan as a moral and progressive country by differentiating itself from the ‘lagging-behind’ China and South Korea, who cannot “separate” politics from sports and leave the history behind.

The 5th FIFA Women's World Cup was held in China in 2007. In the preliminary league, Japan played against Germany in the city of Hangzhou as their last game of the World Cup because they could not advance to the final tournament. The Japanese media also reported that the spectators did not stand for the Japanese national anthem and also booed the anthem. The intense booing continued throughout the game. After Japan lost the game, the members of the Japanese team spread a banner that said “ARIGATO 謝謝 CHINA” (Thank you, Xie Xie, China). Asahi reported this incident with an article titled, “日中 35 年 「なでしこ」の精神で” (Japan and China 35 years [since rapprochement]: With “Nadeshiko” spirit). It describes how the Chinese spectators kept booing the Japanese team while cheering and handclapping for the German team, which reminded them of the incident in the men’s AFC Asian Cup in 2004, in which a similar “anti-Japan” conducts of spectators was reported and critiqued.
年のサッカーアジア杯を思い出させる光景のなかで、なでしこは善戦むなしく敗れた。

だが、ここから意外なことが起こる。なでしこは試合後、「ARIGATO 謝謝(シェエ) CHINA」と書いた横断幕を広げ、並んでおじぎをした。淡々とホスト国に感謝を伝えたのだ。すると、このことが中国国内で反省の声を呼び起こした。「彼女たちは感情を乗り越える勇気を持ったが、我々は以前のままだ」と、中国紙は論評を載せた...

国民感情が悪いままだと、信頼は生まれず、猜疑心ばかりが先行する。それは両国だけでなく、アジアや世界にとってもマイナスであり、改善の努力を重ねなければならない。

(In the scenery that reminds of 2004 Asian Cup, Nadeshiko lost after a good fight.

But from here, a surprising thing happens. After the game, Nadeshiko spread a banner on which “Thank you, Xie Xie, China” is written and lined up and bowed. They conveyed their appreciation to the hosting nation in a matter-of-fact manner. Upon this, occurred the voice calling for self-reflection within China. A Chinese newspaper put a critique, “They [Japanese female players] had a courage to overcome the emotion. But we are same as before”...

When national sentiment remains negative, trust cannot be born and only suspicious mind would precede. It is minus not only for the two countries, but also for Asia and the world. The effort to improve this must be accumulated). (N44, 2007, p. Sōgō3)

In this article, the colonial history, revisionist politics of the contemporary Japanese government, and Japan’s own lack of “self-reflection” about colonial violence that lie behind the Chinese “anti-Japan” sentiment, are not mentioned. The Chinese audience quoted acknowledges Japan’s courage to overcome the emotion, as if the negative emotions toward each other are on the same plane. This is not only a forgetting of the Japanese colonial violence that is behind Chinese people’s anger and “anti-Japan” behavior during the game, but it also silences Chinese people’s expression of anger and disappointment towards the Japanese government through the logic of
‘sports-personship’. According to the article, Chinese people are expected to stand up and be respectful to the Japanese national anthem, which even until this day continues to celebrate the Japanese Emperor who was a symbol of the Japanese Empire. Their disrespect to the Japanese team is interpreted as their lack of manners and sports-personship expected in the ‘modern’ international sports competition.

The Japan Football Association (JFA) president Kawabuchi Saburo wrote an article on the JFA website about the incident and shared the same narrative about Nadeshiko Japan, who he explained expressed gratitude to China with the banner despite the “disrespect” shown to Japan and their athletes during the game. The article mentions how Nadeshiko Japan’s behavior stirred a debate on the Internet in China, as some of the comments critique Chinese fans’ behavior while others counter such critique. JFA emphasizes how the banner was the ‘pure’ expression of their appreciation to the Chinese Football Association and fans:

我々としては、試合開催にあたって力を尽くしてくれた中国サッカー協会や観客の皆さんに感謝の気持ちを表したいという、本当に素直なスポーツマンシップから出た行為であり、そこに意図なものなどあろうはずがありません…

2004年のアジアカップを皆さんもよく記憶されていると思いますが、その時の状況と比べたら、中国のファンの意識は随分、変わったという印象を持ちました。あの時は、日本に対する激しいバッシングはとどまることがなく、やむなく政府筋が動いて鎮静化させたという経緯があります。今回はそれと異なり、様々な声が出ております。賛否両論あるのは当然のことですが、結果的には、日本が示したフェアプレーの精神が、来年北京オリンピックを迎える中国に対して、スポーツマンシップやもてなし心、観戦マナーという点で問題意識を喚起するきっかけをつくりだすのではないかと思っています。論争はまだ続くかもしれませんが、いずれそれがプラスに影響してほしい。スポーツを政治や宗教などの問題と切り離して考える契機にもなるだろうと考えています (For us, it [the banner] was out of our really honest sportsmanship that wanted to express our gratitude to
Chinese Football Association and the spectators who made efforts to host the game, and there cannot be any intent . . .

I think everyone remembers the Asian Cup in 2004. Compared to that time, I had an impression that the awareness of Chinese fan changed very much. At the time, there was no end to the severe bashing against Japan and Chinese officials inevitably took action to cool it down. This time is different from then and diverse voices are coming out. It’s natural to have both agreement and disagreement, but as a result, I think the spirit of fair play demonstrated by Japanese created an opportunity to raise an awareness of the issue in terms of sportsmanship, welcoming mind, and spectator’s manner to China who is hosting the Beijing Olympics next year. The controversy might continue for some more time, but I hope it will have a positive influence. I also hope that it becomes an opportunity to think about sports separately from the issues of politics and religion). (Kawabuchi, 2007, September 28)

In this article also, Japan is positioned as a model of “sportsmanship” who helps China to become aware of the manner and the spirit of sports-personship that is necessary for a country that is hosting an important international sporting event like the Olympic Games.

This discourse of fair and moral Japan continues to appear since this incidence in 2007. In the following year during the Beijing Olympics, Asahi wrote an article, “(日中隣人: 5) なでしこ「謝謝」、心結ぶ 北京五輪” (Japan-China neighbors: 5) Nadeshiko Xie Xie, Connect Hearts Beijing Olympics). As the title shows, the message of the article is how the hearts of neighbors, China and Japan, are connected through the display of appreciation in the Olympics. This article also uses the words of the Chinese audience who encountered ‘fair’ and ‘well mannered’ Japanese in the sporting space.

この大会で初めてボランティアをした汪さんは、日本チームに驚かされた。日本の記者を誘導す
ると「謝謝」「サンキュー」と礼を言われた。転がってきたボールを拾うと、選手も「謝謝」と片言の中国語で返してきた。中学、高校と歴史の授業で習った日本軍の残酷な仕打ちに、恨みはある。小泉元首相の靖国参拝も「歴史を正視していない」と思う。でも、知っていたのはドラマや映画だけで、実際に日本人に接したことはなかった。「日本は試合に負けたけど、観客の尊敬を集めました。精神的には勝ったんだと思う。日本に学びたい」

同じ学生ボランティアだった馬悦さん(21)も「日本は思いやりを教えてくれた。歴史を忘れるつもりはないけど、そればかり繰り返してもしょうがない。もっと交流することが大切」と話す。...

スポーツは歴史や政治を乗り越える可能性がある (Ms. Wang, who volunteered for the first time in this Games, was surprised by Japanese team. When guiding Japanese reporters, she was thanked by saying “Xie xie” and “Thank you.” When she picked up the loose ball, athletes also responded “Xie xie” with broken Chinese. She still has a grudge against the Japanese military’s cruel acts that she learned in history class in middle school and high school. [S/he] also thinks that the former Prime Minister Koizumi “is not looking at the history straight.” But, what she knew was only dramas and movies, and had never actually met any Japanese. “Although Japan lost the game, they gained the respect of spectators. I think they won spiritually. I want to learn from Japan.

Another student volunteer, Ms. Ma Yue (21) also said, “Japan taught me compassion. Although I don’t intend to forget history, it is no use to only keep repeating it. It’s important to communicate more.”). (N36, 2008, p. Shakai38).

This Asahi article also relies on the discourse that sport is about fair-play, friendship, and respect, not politics, in constructing the Japanese as compassionate with a ‘strong’ spirit, from whom China can learn. Although this article mentions Japanese colonial atrocities, it is a history they learn in textbooks, not from actual encounters with Japanese. By emphasizing how they changed their feelings towards the Japanese through their ‘real’ encounters, it implies the falsity of their
previous learning, including their textbooks. Furthermore, in this article, Chinese people’s negative feelings towards Japanese is based on a history that happened in the past that they learn in textbooks, rather than the ongoing legacy of Japanese colonialism. It constructs the suffering of the colonized peoples as a thing of the past, rather than the very real physical, emotional, and economic damages and sufferings that have not been sufficiently acknowledged, compensated, or given apology from the Japanese government, if not further aggravated by the recent revisionist politics. Moreover, by making the history “as thing of the past”, the Japanese are able to evade the responsibility to deal with it. It has made it so that it is the Chinese people’s responsibility to overcome their negative emotions towards Japan since “it is no use to only keep repeating” the past memory. This discourse simultaneously constructs a convenient form of remembering/forgetting for Japan, while constructing Japan as the model for China to learn from.

311 and Nadeshiko Japan

The construction of Japan as a country of morality and sports-personship through Nadeshiko Japan is repeated again in the dramatic victory of the Japanese women’s team in 2011 FIFA World Cup. In the aftermath of the 311 disaster, Nadeshiko Japan once again carried a banner, this time after every single game with a message of appreciation to the world for their support in the disaster relief effort and recovery. The message on the banner read: “To Our Friends Around the World Thank You for Your Support”. This time, the message of the banner goes beyond the team’s simple appreciation of the hosting country and signifies the struggle of the people in the disaster-stricken areas and of Japanese nation.

The Japanese media’s construction of this particular event mobilizes the normative and normalizing discourses of female athletes that have been formed throughout the 2000s. The
narrative of an Asahi article about the banner demonstrates the accumulation of the discourse. It begins with the interpretation of how their high level skills (nurtured through their training with men) enabled them to overcome the ‘inferiority’ of physique (Japanese small body), how female soccer players have struggled with disadvantaged training environments (men as original), and how they constantly display their joy of playing soccer and appreciation of the people around them (silencing of sexism and re-construction of femininity). Then, the article concludes,

こうした厳しい競技環境を乗り越えて、なでしこたちのひたむきさはある。

女子サッカーの人気は世界的に高まっている。日本でも、なでしこの活躍で認知度は大きく上がった。選手を取り巻く環境の向上につながって欲しい。

地元ドイツと対戦した準々決勝の前に、選手たちは大震災の映像を見て、自らを奮いたたせたという。試合後のピッチでは真っ先に横断幕を広げる。

「世界中の友人のみなさんへ。支援をありがとうございます」

ドイツで躍動するなでしこたちのメッセージを受けとめたい。そしてこの勢いで、頂点を極めてももらいたい（Nadeshiko’s single-mindedness exists after overcoming these difficult playing environments.

The popularity of women’s soccer is rising globally. In Japan too, the level of recognition in Japan also increased through Nadeshiko’s success. I hope this will result in the improved environment for the players.

Before the quarter final against the hosting nation Germany, the players are reported to have watched the video clip of the great earthquake to rouse themselves. After each game, they firstly spread the banner on the pitch.

“To Our Friends Around the World Thank You for Your Support”.

I would like to catch the message of Nadeshikos who are throbbing in Germany. With this momentum, I want them to reach the top. (N42, 2011, p. Opinion2-14)
Along with this display of the banner, another behind the scene story of Nadeshiko Japan became a focal point of the Japanese media’s reporting of the historic victory. It was reported that Nadeshiko Japan’s head coach Sasaki Norio showed video clips of the 311 disaster before the final three games. The purpose was to encourage the players to overcome the difficulties in the game by thinking about the struggles of people affected by the disaster. (M12, 2011; N42, 2011; N75, 2011). Asahi wrote,

3月11日に発生した東日本大震災。佐々木監督はW杯の準々決勝以降、被災地の様子などをまとめた映像を選手たちに見せ、気持ちを引き締めてから試合へと送り出した。被災地の人たちのために——。強い思いを胸に、選手たちは体格やパワーで勝る相手に必死に食らいつき、次々と打ち破っていった...なでしこたちの雄姿が、震災による沈滞ムードに包まれていた日本国内に勇気と元気を与えたのだ。スポーツの持つ力を改めて証明した功績は、今後も色あせることはない (The Great East Japan Earthquake that occurred on March 11th. Since the quarter final, the head coach Sasaki sent [athletes] out after showing videos that collected the scenes of the disaster-stricken areas to pull themselves together. For the people in the disaster area—holding the strong feeling in their heart, the players desperately biting at the opponents who have superior physique and power and defeated them... Nadeshiko’s gallant figure gave courage and energy to the nation that was covered by stagnated atmosphere by the disaster. Their achievement that demonstrated the power of sport will never fade away). (N75, 2011, p. Supōtsu2-23)

Japanese female players’ ‘small’ bodies, courageous play, ‘pure’ attitude toward sports, and a strong ‘spirit’ that never gives up in a desperate situation, was a perfect embodiment of the nation whose audiences wanted to strongly identify with the athletes and to experience their excitement, pain, joy, and pride through the screen. The story of Nadeshiko Japan watching the video of 311 and the display of the banner made direct connections between the struggles of...
players and that of the survivors of the disaster and of the nation, thus, making Nadeshiko’s victory more easily identifiable. Nadeshiko’s victory otherwise remains simply metaphorical connection for the Japanese audience.

Indeed, strong identification with Nadeshiko Japan frequently appeared in the media during the World Cup (i.e. N34, 2012; N43, 2011; N69, 2011). The identification goes beyond the story of the team’s long struggle and ultimate triumph. Their group-mindedness, selflessness, and other qualities that are constructed aspects of national identity also played an important role in these discourses. After the World Cup, Asahi wrote how Japanese “teamwork” and “kizuna” (bonds) are receiving attention from overseas,

(Many especially point out that the encouragement and behaviors of backup players who cannot take part in the game are maintaining the team’s sense of unity. My Korean friend gave me the complement saying, “Japanese mentality that both victims and non-victims of the disaster support each other even in such great earthquake is wonderful”. I think it’s ok to be more proud of the fact that the mentality of “never-give up”, “help each other”, and “support each other”, which we felt in women’s World Cup, are the main artery of the heart that Japanese take pride in). (N33, 2011, p. Oita2-28)

In this article, the discursive resources of ‘female peculiarity’ and ‘honorable poverty’ are transformed into a Japanese national identity, as the “main artery” of the heart, in which Japanese people take pride.

In this great moment of identification, the female athletes came to not only embody the
progress and modernity who knows sports-personship, but also the heart of selfless hardworking Japanese through the normative, normalizing, and nationalizing discourses. In other words, the discourses of ‘honorable poverty’ and ‘female peculiarity’ accumulated throughout the later half of the 2000s to underscore the discourse of ‘Japan as a model’ and to allow the great identification with *Nadeshiko*, the World Cup champion, in the post 311 period. These layers of discursive construction of *Nadeshiko Japan*, on the one hand, demonstrate the complicated, flexible, and multiple ways in which the masculinity of Japanese female athletes are made invisible, appropriated, and taken up in the recuperation of Japanese masculinity. On the other hand, the kinds of qualities, which were once constructed as normative Japanese ‘femininity’ in the early 2000s, are also actively utilized in the construction of national identity as a modern and progressive country.

**Conclusion**

In the Japanese national imaginary, anxiety over the body and athletic ability becomes a focus when the Olympics or other major international sporting events come around. In 2011, however, Japanese women overcame this “Japanese’s limit”, or inferiority, precisely by another set of “Japanese-ness”—a strong, pure, perseverant, loyal, and selfless mentality. As I examined in the previous chapter, these are the gender norms used to distinguish Japanese women from Japanese men when they entered into masculine sports such as soccer. However, in the discourses analyzed in this chapter, these Japanese ‘feminine’ gender norms turned into a Japanese nationalist identity and mentality, which helped the nation shed the “clotted” idea—Japanese people have small bodies and thus low levels of athletic ability—and recuperate Japanese masculinity.

Furthermore, the imagery of Japanese female soccer players as individuals with ‘honorable
poverty’, who are pure, fair, hard-working, and moral, shapes the nationalist discourse of ‘progressive’ Japan against ‘lagging behind’ Asia. The discursive resources constituting Japanese female athletes are also utilized in Japanese ‘colonial amnesia’ when encountering the legacy of its colonial past at international sports events. In the politics of selective remembering/forgetting, the discourse of the separation of politics from sports is enabling Japan to continue to turn their attention away from the memories and responsibilities of the atrocities Japan has committed in Asia.
INTERLUDE 2

How did you start your sport?

Aya (wrestling)

She began wrestling in grade one. At the time, her older brother was going to a wrestling club and she sometimes went to see him train. Having seen at her brother training, she also wanted to try. Aya also started judo in junior high school because she loved martial arts.

Yuki (wrestling, judo)

Her parents put her brothers in a wrestling team to help develop their bodies. Yuki went to see them practice when she was six years old and decided to join the team too. Her middle school did not have a wrestling team so she enrolled in a judo team where her father was coaching, but she did not enjoy judo. In high school she returned to wrestling, when women’s wrestling became an Olympic sport.

Mio (wrestling)

Born into a wrestling family, she started wrestling in grade four. Her father was a wrestling coach, but her mother was also a successful wrestler. It was her mother who brought Mio to the wrestling dōjō and continued to encourage her when she struggled.

Sanae (soccer, swimming, kendo, basketball, volleyball)

Asked by her female friend, Sanae joined a girls’ soccer team in grade four. Having moved to different regions of Japan, she recalled that Kanagawa Prefecture, in which she resided at the time, had a relatively better environment for girls to play soccer. In her city, there was even enough girls’ soccer teams to have their own tournament independently from boys’. Yet, she was the only girl in a boys’ soccer team in her middle school.

Rina (wrestling)

Her father was a wrestler. Although he was not a coach, he took his son to a dōjō. Rina “just
followed” them when she was in grade three. It was Rina, however, who decided to start wrestling instead of her older brother who did not want to be involved in any sport.

Ai (wrestling, basketball, dodge ball, tug-of-war)

Her mother and some of Ai’s friends’ mothers decided to send their daughters to a sport class together. Wondering which sport their daughters should take up, the mothers took Ai and her friend to the Budōkan (martial arts stadium) in their neighborhood.

In there, judo, kendo, and wrestling-like-things were going on, and then, among them, you know I was still in grade one, and wrestling doesn't need any equipment. You can do it if there is a pair of shoes, t-shirt, and short pants. So, and because it even looked like mat exercises, she decided with her friends’ mothers to let their daughters try it. Then, she was like, you should try it because it’s just like mat exercises. I was recommended, by my mom. Even grade one can understand if it’s mat exercises, you know . . . When I first started, they explained like we first do forward somersault, forward roll, and back roll. We indeed did that at the beginning, in the warm up. After that, we were taught things like tackle, tackle cut, and ready position. I was wondering what it was all about . . . Even before I knew that
the sport was called wrestling. But then the parents also didn’t know anything about wrestling, so parents, they didn’t know what we were doing).

Throughout the interview, Ai made jokes about how she always wanted to quit wrestling but her mother never allowed.

**Ryo** (soccer, trampoline, softball, basketball, track & field)

Soccer had been in their life even before they officially joined a team. Ryo had a younger brother, with whom they always played various sports, including pick up soccer in a park. Influenced by the very popular soccer themed comic-turned-TV animation, Captain Tsubasa, they began playing soccer in elementary school. A flier by a local girls’ soccer team was distributed to their house by chance, and Ryo asked their mother to let them join the team. Although Ryo experienced various sports and demonstrated rich talent in many, Ryo chose soccer for their career.

**Misa** (wrestling)

Misa was brought to a wrestling practice with her brother at the age of four by her mother. Misa thought that was the way her parents tried to keep her safe after school hours without parental supervision. She did not like wrestling because she thought wrestling was “not a sport girls do” and because boys teased her. But she continued, following the wish of her family. Misa also did not want to quit things half way. Today, she is one of the world’s top athletes with corporate sponsorship.

**Shoko** (wrestling)

Her father was a wrestling coach. Her mother was not a wrestler but one of her older sisters was. Shoko remembered that her father founded a dōjō for her sister and even before she can remember, at the age of three, she was already competing in wrestling bouts.

**Kana** (wrestling)
Kana came from Aomori Prefecture, where women’s wrestling is relatively well known because of their three Olympic medalists in women’s wrestling, Ichō Chihiro, Ichō Kaori, and Obara Hitomi. Yet, wrestling was still not easy to access for everyone. Kana’s mother had a coworker who was coaching a children’s wrestling class. Since Kana’s body was weak when she was very young, her mother placed her in the wrestling class. Kana soon found wrestling was very fun. When she lost a match against a boy in grade two, she was determined to become a strong wrestler. She still clearly remembered the frustration of the loss.

Shun (soccer, softball, track & field)

He began playing soccer in grade six. Shun first explained his motivation to start playing soccer was the J-League, Japanese men’s professional soccer league, which started when he was in elementary school. Shun then added that he did not want to play a girl-dominated sport. Soccer clubs, where all players were boys, gave him a sense of playing a “men’s sport.”

Jリーグが好きで...とかやっぱり何だろう、女子の中で部活に入りたくないから、男子サッカー部に入ってて（I liked J-League... And also, how to say, because I didn’t want to do club activity among girls, I was in a boys’ soccer club).

Azusa (wrestling, judo)

Following her friends and the neighbor senior students, she joined a judo team in her middle school. She did not start wrestling until high school, when her friend requested her to join the team together. Even with the late start, she quickly joined the ranks of the top high school wrestlers. Although she did not plan to go to university, she followed her high school teacher’s advice to continue her wrestling career in one of the nation’s leading women’s wrestling teams in university.
PART III: DISCOURSE, NEGOTIATION, SUBJECTIVITY

Chapter 6. Interviews 1: Navigating Sexism and Feminine Norms

*Always already a cultural sign, the body sets limits to the imaginary meanings that it occasions, but is never free of an imaginary construction.* (Butler, 1999/1990, p. 90)

In the previous chapters, I have examined the media constructions of Japanese female athletes in soccer and wrestling in order to identify the socio-historical discourses that are used to mediate a “dialectical process of self-making and being made” (Coloma, 2008, p. 20). In the following two chapters, I shift the discussion to the subjectivities of the athletes in these sports. I analyze how these subjectivities of the athletes are formed through the ‘dialectical processes’ of being-named and self-naming ‘within and against’ the discourses of gender and sexuality in their local communities and wider Japanese society. In this chapter, I focus on the experiences of ten female identified athletes to examine how participants negotiate sexist discourses and feminine norms through their careers in “masculine” sports. In the next chapter, I continue these analyses with two non-cisgender, masculine identified athletes, with an additional focus on the negotiation with cisgenderist, homophobic, transphobic, and ‘normative’ transgender discourses in Japanese society.

In my analysis of “negotiations with discourses”, I draw on José Muñoz’s (1999) theory of *disidentification*. With this theory I analyze the ambivalent, fracturing, and shifting processes of the formation of subjectivity that works “on and against” the dominant ideology about Japanese women’s bodies and feminine norms. Muñoz asserts that disidentification is the “third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor
stricly opposes it” (p. 11). It is a strategy that is “working on and against” the dominant ideology that “tries to transform a cultural logic from within, always laboring to enact permanent structural change while at the same time valuing the importance of local or everyday struggles of resistance” (p. 11-12). Interviews with the athletes provided great insights into the diverse and powerful ways in which female and non-cisgendered athletes related to normative discourses of gender, sexuality, and women’s bodies in continuing their sport careers. Their narratives were rich in description of their disidentifying relationship with normative, often discouraging and hurtful, discourses about their sports and women’s bodies.

Butler’s (1993) theory of the “abject body” offered me important theoretical lenses to analyze the meanings the athletes’ bodies are given in different times and places in Japanese society. I conceptualize female wrestlers and non-cisgender soccer players as abject/subject bodies whose intelligibilities and meanings are shifted and mediated through the discourse of female sporting masculinity. By weaving these two theories, Muñoz’s disidentification and Butler’s abject body, together, I attempt to capture the intricate process of negotiation and formation of the subjectivities of athletes that goes between subject/abject and are mediated but also working on and against the normative Japanese discourses of gender and sexuality.

This chapter consists of four sections, and in each, I focus on different aspects of “being-named” and “self-naming” to the formation of gendered subjectivities within and against the masculine constructions of sports and gender norms. In the first major section, I analyze: how others “named” participants’ involvements in “masculine” sport and their bodies and physical abilities; how such experiences of “being-named” affected participants’ understandings of themselves; and how they identify, counter-identify, and disidentified with such ‘naming.’ In the second section, I extend the discussion to consider how normative constructions of “masculine” female athletes as ‘devoted’ athletes (the discourse of normative female sporting masculinity)
affect the process of this negotiation. The third section examines: how the discourse of normative female sporting masculinity is underpinned by sexist and heterosexist assumptions about female athletes; and how it is articulated as a discourse to prohibition of femininity—“Don’t be a woman.” The fourth and final section interrogates how the gendered materials, the designs and sizes of clothes and jewelry in particular, affected participants’ understanding of themselves in relation to Japanese gender and sexual norms. Each of these sections explores the ‘sedimentation’ of discourses in the athletes’ daily lives that shaped their gendered subjectivities.

I had the privilege of meeting and interviewing twelve athletes who were competing in or had competed and recently retired from women’s soccer and wrestling. As shown in Table 6-1, List of Participants, participants include ten cis-gendered\textsuperscript{35} women, one FtM transsexual, and one person who was unsure of how to identify or categorize their gender identity. The participants’ competition backgrounds were also diverse, ranging from national to international level competitions. Some of them experienced international competitions as early as in middle school while some began their training in their current sport in high school. All of them achieved the status of an elite athlete in Japan, and some even held this title in the world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender Identification</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>When they started the sport*</th>
<th>Level of competition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ryo</td>
<td>Not specified/“GID?”</td>
<td>Early 20s</td>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanae</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Early 20s</td>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{35} Cisgendered woman is a self-identified woman who was assigned a female gender at birth.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shun</th>
<th>FtM Transsexual/GID diagnosed</th>
<th>Late 20s</th>
<th>Grade 6</th>
<th>National (retired)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mio</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Late 10s</td>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoko</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Late 10s</td>
<td>3 years old</td>
<td>International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aya</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Late 10s</td>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rina</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Late 10s</td>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kana</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Early 20s</td>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ai</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Early 20s</td>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>International</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Misa      | Woman                         | Mid 20s  | 4 years old | International/Professional
| Azusa     | Woman                         | Late 20s | Grade 10 | International/Professional |
| Yuki      | Woman                         | Late 20s | 6 years old | International/Professional (retired) |

*Note.* This list is created based on the participants’ information as of March 2013.

*Participants remember the beginning of their involvement in their sport by their age or grade level. Since some of them could not remember the exact age, I use both age and grade according to participants’ descriptions.*

---

**Self-Naming and Being-Named: Formations of Gendered Subjectivities of Female Athletes in Wrestling and Soccer**

*The naming is at once the setting of a boundary, and also the repeated inculcation of a norm.* (Butler, 1993, p. 8)

Although their beginnings and paths to their elite status were diverse as shown in the *Interlude II*, all participants were aware of the masculine image of their sports through various episodes in their lives. In this section, I focus on the ways in which the participants formed their

---

36 I consider Misa and Azusa as professional athletes since they are sponsored by companies in a system called *jitsugyōdan*. They are still ‘amateur’ wrestlers and are different from wrestlers in *puroresu* (professional wrestling). The status of athletes in *jitsugyōdan* is different from North American professional athletes who have endorsement based contracts or belong to professional leagues. Some athletes in *jitsugyōdan* work a part of their day in their company’s office or factory when they are not in training. Some do not have office work at all, but their company often continues to hire them as an office worker after they retire from the sport.
gendered subjectivities through and against the masculine constructions of their sport and the gender norms of what women’s bodies should look like and be capable of. In the first half of this section, I analyze how the participants learned the masculine constructions of wrestling and soccer, as well as the gender norms through the discourses in their local communities. In the second half of this section, I examine the processes in which the participants learned about their body’s relationship to Japanese gender norms. Also examined in this section is the diverse ways in which the participants negotiated, resisted, and subverted the gender norms.

**Subject Formation through and against Masculine Constructions of Soccer and Wrestling**

Through their sporting careers, participants had met with varying, and shifting, reactions from people. “Opposition” is one of the clear examples of people’s reaction that demonstrates gendered constructions of soccer and wrestling. In the interview, I asked participants if someone had ever opposed their participation in the sport. While most participants had supportive family and friends, opposition most often came from their grandparent/s or people in that generation. Shoko, Rina, Misa, and Shun mentioned that their grandparents wanted them to take up more “feminine” activities, rather than “dangerous” contact sports such as soccer and wrestling. While increased media exposures of female athletes in these sports have helped gradually change such attitudes in Japanese society, gender norms around “appropriate” activities for girls and women seem to remain strongly, especially among older generations.

Shoko, who started wrestling at the age of three due to her father’s and sister’s influence, left her hometown to enter the middle school famous for women’s wrestling, which was located in the prefecture far away from her hometown. In her home prefecture, there were very few girls wrestling and most wrestlers, including boys, quit before middle school. Thus, in order to continue wrestling, not to mention pursuing an elite career, she had to move to another prefecture. Perhaps also due to her young age at the time, her grandmother strongly opposed for Shoko
Itani: 今までの中で、なんか誰かがサポートしてくれない、じゃないけど、そういうことってあった？こうなんか否定的な態度をとってる人とか (Was there anyone who didn’t support, or something like that? Like someone who showed negative attitude towards it).

Shoko: お婆ちゃんは、やって欲しくなかったみたいです (My grandma seemed not to want me to do [wrestling]).

Itani: そう？お婆ちゃん？なんかそういうこと言われた？(Yeah? Your grandma? Did she say something like that?)

Shoko: いや、地元離れ、中学校ん時に、[監督の名前]さんのとこに行くってなった時に、すごい反対してました (Well, when I decided to leave my hometown, that was when I was in middle school, when it was decided that I would go to [name of a wrestling coach]’s place, she opposed really strongly).

Itani: あれ、そう。それは家を離れることから？それともレスリングだから？(Oh I see. Was it because you were leaving the house, or was it because it was for wrestling?)

Shoko: 家を離れることもあったし、中学校で続けるっていうのが、自分[の出身地]は[県名]って言ったんですけど、[県名]あんまりなかったんで、女の子らしい生活を送って欲しかったみたいですね (It was also because I was leaving home, and as I said I’m from [Name of a prefecture], and there were not many [girls wrestling] in [a name of Japanese prefecture] Prefecture. So she seemed to have wanted me to have a feminine life).

Itani: なるほどね。でも今はそっからね、世界に羽ばたいていって、そうやって活躍していく中でお婆ちゃんの態度とか変わってきてる？(I see. But you started from there, and now you are going to the world. In the process of becoming more successful, has your grandma’s attitude been changing?)

moving out of her home in order to continue wrestling.
Shoko:  Though she supports me, when I go home, she seems not to want me to come back to here, and tells me to come back home soon.

Itani:  Is it largely because she wants you to be near you? But is she supportive of wrestling itself?

Shoko:  Is, completely [supportive of wrestling]).

Although Shoko grew up in a wrestling family, Shoko still became aware that some people think wrestling is not ‘appropriate’ for girls. While she acknowledged her grandmother’s shifting attitude towards women’s wrestling, she was still negotiating her family members’ different ideas about her wrestling career. For her grandmother, even though she now supports Shoko’s participation in wrestling, it still seems difficult to accept her granddaughter living far away from home for a career in sport.

Misa and Shun also talked about how their family was supportive, except their grandparents. Shun recalled that people often used to ask him why he played soccer saying, “Girls usually don’t play soccer.” Shun considered that Nadeshiko’s success and visibility had increased the social recognition of women’s soccer and contributed to the change in people’s attitudes towards women’s soccer. Both Shun and Misa, however, thought that their grandparents’ generation still often had a firm attitude against women participating in conventionally male dominated sports.

Itani:  Do you think it [Nadeshiko’s success] will significantly change [people’s attitude]?

Shun:  大体お婆ちゃん世代が言うんですよ。女の子なのにサッカーなんかして一、
つって (I think so. It’s usually grandma’s generation who says like, why do you play soccer, you are a girl!)

Itani: [笑] あ、ほんと？ ([Laughs] Oh really?)

Shun: お婆ちゃんに言われました [笑]。親とかは、うちはもう全然オープンな親だったらから、何やっても何も言わないんですけど、婆ちゃんには言われましたね。危ないとか (I was told by my grandma [Laughs]. Parents, my parents are very open and they don’t say anything no matter what I do, but my grandma told me. It’s dangerous or something).

Itani: 危ない？ (Dangerous?)

Shun: 蹴り合いするから、みたいな [笑] (Because we kick each other, or something like that [Laughs]).

Itani: 女の子なのって？ (She said because you are girl?)

Shun: 何やっても一緒だろうにみたいな [笑] (I was like, it’s same for any sports [Laughs])

…

Itani: [Misaに話かける]レスリングでも一人言ってたよね。お爺ちゃんお婆ちゃん世代。Rinaさんだったかな？なんか爺ちゃん婆ちゃんが女の子なのに可哀想って言うって ([Speaking to Misa] One wrestler also talked about her grandparents’ generation. Was it Rina? She said something like, her grandpa and grandma said that she was poor because she was a girl).

Misa: あー、言ってきますね (Ah, they say that).

Itani: 言ってくる？ (Do they say that?)

Misa: なんでそんなことやるの、みたいな (Like, why do you do such a thing?).

Shun: たしかに [笑] (True [Laughs]).

Itani: なるほどね。でもそれは好きだからしょうがないでしょ、みたいな感じ？ (I see. Do you
react like, you can’t help it because you like it?)

Misa: 自分は好きじゃなかったんですけど、親がやれって言ったから、しょうがないじゃんみんなみたい。でもやっぱりお爺ちゃんお婆ちゃんは女の子らしいものを、やっぱ、ピアノとか、そういうのを続けて欲しかったみたい (I didn’t like it, but I was like, I can’t help it because my parents told me to do it. But my grandpa and grandma still seemed to have wanted me to continue more feminine things, like piano or something).

Not all participants had experienced direct opposition against their sporting career from their family or friends. Rather, they all had enough support to continue until university and beyond. All participants, nonetheless, learned the masculine constructions of their sports throughout their sporting career. Even if people around them do not explicitly voice their oppositions or ‘name’ wrestling as a ‘boys’’ sport, the lack of girls’ teams, small number of female athletes, and small comments and jokes made about their participation spoke much about gendered constructions of their sport.

Aya, for instance, made a clear connection between her involvement in wrestling and people’s perception about Aya’s masculinity. When Aya started wrestling in grade one, there were no other children in her elementary school who also practiced in wrestling, including boys. Having trained in the environment where all the practice partners were boys, Aya considered that practicing wrestling itself was masculine and, thus, she was different from ordinary women. She said, “レスリングをやってること自体、が、なんかもう、こうなんか、男まさりっていうかなんか、普通の女性とはちょっと違う、かな、みたいな” (Doing wrestling itself, is already, it’s like, *otokomasari*, or how to say, different from ordinary woman, maybe). *Otokomasari* literary means “exceeding man” and refers to girls and women who are considered strong-minded or mannish, and who engage in the activities and professions that are conventionally considered for boys and men. For Aya, wrestling is a masculine sport and those women who engage in it were *different* from
ordinary women—they are *otokomasari*. At the same time, Aya also received ‘complements’ and admiration from her peers because of her involvement in a masculine sport. She takes pride in being a rare woman in a male dominated sport, even if she sometimes received comments on her gender.

Aya: 高校はま、そんなでも無かったんですけど、小学中学ん時に、まぁその、学校の中でレスリングをやってる人が、一人自分だけで、で、まして女、女で、そん時に、ま、男子からも、女子からも、やっぱ、そういうなんか、かっこいいとか。女の子なのに、なんか…自分男の子とずっと練習してたんで、主打、それ、すごいよね、とか。ま、大会出たら、成績残したら、もう、頑張ってね、とか…こう、見てるからね、とか応援してる、のはありますね。 (It wasn’t like that in high school, but in my elementary and middle school, well, um, I was the only one, who was doing wrestling, and, I was even a girl, and then, um, both boys and girls said, well, something like, you are *kakkoii* (cool) or something like that. Even though I was a girl, like… I was always practicing with boys, so um, [peers said] it’s awesome or something. And when I went to competitions and did well, they were like, keep it up or… they said like, I’m watching you, or I’m cheering you).

Itani: それは自分で、自分について考える時にそれはプラスになっている？ (For you, when you think about yourself, does it affect you positively?)

Aya: はい, おります (Yes, it does).

Itani: じゃあ自分を肯定的にとらえていく、大事な要素なわけやね (Then, is it an important element to develop a positive self-consciousness?)

Aya: はい (Yes).

Itani: なるほどね。それは別に男っぽいねって言われても、かっこいいねって言われても、(I see.
Then, even if people say you are like man or kakkoii (cool)--)

Aya: もう全然、 (Not at all--)

Itani: 詫りに思って (--you take pride in it).

Aya: はい (Yes).

Aya identified the term “kakkoii” as a “gendered” but complementary response to her involvement in wrestling. Kakkoii is commonly translated into English as “cool” or “handsome”, but its meanings and gendered connotations are flexible depending on the context, and it is used to describe both women and men. In her participatory observation of the Japanese women’s soccer league, Edwards (2003) explains that kakkoii could mean many things, from “she is so stylish,” “she is so good looking,” to “she is so cool” and the comments like kakkoii were “typically reserved for those players with the shortest haircuts and the most masculine appearances” (p. 315). Edwards also points out that those athletes who are stylish in a more mainstream feminine way, were usually described as kirei (pretty), but “rarely, if ever, as kakkoii” (p. 315). Furthermore, “kakkoii also was reserved primarily for those players who were most readily subverting and playing with dominant notions of femininity and masculinity” (p. 315-316, emphasis in original). It is important to add that the term kakkoii is more commonly used for boys and men who embody the ideal masculinity—handsome, athletic, and stylish or they are capable of something extraordinary, even if it is not necessarily considered a masculine pursuit, such as art, music, cooking and so on. The comment, “kakkoii”, was a compliment to Aya’s success in a masculine pursuit. Thus, Aya was aware that her involvement and success in wrestling meant that she was subverting feminine norms. She identified with the masculine constructions of wrestling and took pride in it. She also disidentified with some of the teasing comments about her masculinity, and saw it as a compliment for her extraordinary ability and skill for a girl.
Other wrestlers also remembered small comments and jokes they received, but they were also able to push such comments aside and continue their sport career. Yuki didn’t think she had been ever told that wrestling was a “men’s sport” but remembered comments like, “女の子なのにやってるの？” (Are you doing it even though you are girl?). Though these others’ curiosity about her involvement in wrestling was enough to give her the feeling that she was practicing a “masculine” sport.

Itani: その当時レスリングは男子のスポーツだっていうイメージはあった？ (At the time, did you have the image that wrestling is a boys’ sport?)

Yuki: あー。でも、あー、男子のスポーツっていう…か。でもそういう感覚ですね…なんだろ…「女の子なのにやってるの？」みたいな。…か、「男のスポーツでしょう？」とかじゃないで、「女の子なのにレスリングしてるんだ」みたいな、周りの反応？ (Ah. But, Ah, Rather than... boys’ sports. But yeah, that kind of feeling... What is it... Like, “Are you doing it even though you are girl?”... or, it wasn’t like, “Isn’t it boys’ sport?”... or, just about others’ reactions like, “Oh you are doing wrestling though you are girl”?)

Rina’s new friends were surprised to hear Rina was a wrestler when she entered university, even though her university was quite famous for women’s wrestling. Having a supportive family and access to a girls’ wrestling club early on, the surprised reactions of her friends in university was a reminder that it is not common for girls to be in wrestling when they are outside of a wrestling community. Misa also remembered the moments when she became more conscious about the masculine image of wrestling, which in return taught her the feminine norms.

Misa: 今はここは結構女の子集まってるんですけど、やっぱり地元は男の子ばっかりで、んー、なんか、なんか、レスリング自体が、私もレスリング自体が女の子がやる競技じゃないって思ってたんで、ずっと嫌だったんですけど。で、ずっと行って、中学とかもあった、結
構男の子とかから大会とか出ると学校で表彰してもらうのはいいんだけど、からかわれることもあって（Now this place gathers quite many girls, but in my hometown, there were only boys and, um, like, like, because I was also thinking that wrestling itself wasn’t a sport for girls, I always didn’t like it. But then, I continued, and in middle school for example, it was nice that they did award ceremonies at school when I went to competitions, but I was sometimes teased).

Itani: んー、からかわれる？どういう風に？（Hmm, teased? In what way?）

Misa: なんか、レスリング階級制だから、やっぱり体重とかもわかるんですよ（Like, because wrestling has weight divisions, they can also know my weight）。

Itani: あー、そうかそうか（Oh, I see, I see）。

Misa: だし、なんでそんなのやってんのみたいな。えっと、ひどい言い方じゃないんですけど、ちょっとからかわれる感じで、冗談半分で言われることもあって。で…でもまぁ色んな所に練習に行くようになって、あ、女の子結構やってる子いるんだなって思ってて、そういう思いはなくなって。で、まぁ中学卒業ぐらいで、ここに見学に来た時に、たくさん、女の子ばっかりだったし（And, [they said] like, why do you do such a thing. Well, it wasn’t a cruel way, but it was like a bit of teasing, half joking. Then… but I started to go to many places for training and thought, oh, there are many girls doing wrestling, so I no longer had the feeling. Then, when I came here to watch their training, when I was about to graduate from middle school, there were many, and only, girls）。

In the second interview, Misa added that it was not like bullying, but she continued to receive comments from boys in the middle school that negatively affected her relationship to wrestling.

Misa: また中学校なってもまたそういうの学校とかで、まぁそんなすごい、いじめって言うほど言われるわけでもなく、まぁ表彰式があったりしたら、なんか、「お前の体重〜キロなの。」
みたいなんか [笑]。やっぱに階級も発表されるんで。「お前何キロなの。」とか。と…
あだ名とかはなかったけど、こうなんかこう、男子と女子が、の意見が分かれると、「や
べえ、あいつにやられる。」みたいな [笑]。とか冗談で。そういうの言われたりはあります
したけど。そうですねー。けどまぁ中学校の時のそういうのがあって嫌だなって思いってた
けど、区切りいとこまでやんなきゃいけないから [笑] (Even in middle school, again, these things in school, well it wasn’t so serious, it wasn’t like bullying. When there was an award ceremony, they were like, your weight is this and this kilogram [Laughs]. And… there wasn’t any nickname, but it was like, when boys and girls, when their opinions split, they [boys] were like “Shit, she’s gonna kill us” [Laughs].
But then, though I didn’t like it because of those moments in middle school, I had to continue until I reach a good place to put a period [to her wrestling career]).

To the boys’ incitement, “Shit, she’s gonna kill us”, she responded with an aggressive joke, “やるぞ” (I’m gonna kill you). When Misa became more experienced and successful in wrestling and realized there were indeed many girls wrestling, she no longer felt negatively about her involvement in wrestling. She also added that as she started to go to higher competitions, boys gradually stopped teasing her. To my question, “Why did they stop teasing you?” Misa calmly responded, “Maybe those boys grew up too?”

Misa did not perceive such comments and teasing as bullying, but her experiences show how such teasing functions as “gender policing.” Such teasing inculcated gender norms: wrestling is a boys’ sport and girls’ weight is a source of shame. Although Misa formed an ambivalent relationship to wrestling as a result of such teasing early in her wrestling career, she was able to use her physical strength to deal with boys’ “immature” (yet powerfully sexist) reactions to her masculinity. She found a way to brush off the teasing, joke about it, and continued wrestling. Being accustomed to such “naming” today, she is no longer bothered by
such naming and is pursuing her dream to become a world champion as a rare power-wrestler in Japan.

Like Misa, most wrestlers said either they never cared or they no longer care about teasing and the ‘small’ comments by their peers. Although it may not be an assertive form of resistance and may appear to be “silencing” the athletes, ignoring other’s naming is an important resistance strategy against the dominant sexist and heteronormative discourses that question these women’s participation in wrestling. By ignoring the comments, they refuse to engage and to explain or be apologetic about their participation in their sport.

Since each of the three soccer players who I interviewed had different gender identities, their perspectives and relationships to masculine constructions of the sport varied significantly. Yet, all agreed that soccer tended to be viewed as a masculine, “boys’” sport. Even for players like Sanae, who had a relatively fortunate playing environment in Kanagawa Prefecture, it was not without challenges that she continued playing soccer beyond elementary school. Although in elementary school Sanae belonged to a girls’ team, in middle school, she had to join a boys’ team in which she was the only female player. Sanae was fortunately able to receive support from the understanding male coach whose daughter also played soccer. She was aware, however, that not everywhere had a girls’ soccer team or welcomed girls into boys’ teams. Sanae shared a story of one of her girl teammates in high school, who had also played in a boys’ soccer team in middle school as the only female player. The friend was even selected as a captain when she was in grade nine; however, it triggered serious bullying the from male players.

Sanae: 一番最初はやっぱりサッカー男がやるスポーツやと思ってたんで…ですけど、やっぱりなんか高校で会った友達とかの話聞いてると、あの、高校で部活一緒やった子とか聞いてると、やっぱりなんか高校で会った友達とかの話聞いてると、あの、高校で部活一緒やった子とか聞いてると、やっぱりなんか男子の中に入って、なんか女子結構いじめられること多いんです。
At the very beginning, I was actually thinking that soccer was men’s sport . . . but, hearing the stories of my high school friends, that’s, when I listen to the stories of my friends who I did the club activity together, it’s still common that girls get bullied if they play among boys, especially if they are alone).

Itani: あぁ (Ah).

Sanae: はい。で、それで、まぁ気強い子やったからいけたんですけど。とか、その中学校 3 年生の時に男子サッカー部から本格的にいじめを。でもキャプテンやったかなんかで、サッカー部のキャプテンを女の子がやってたから、そっからいじめみたいになって、ほんとにちょっとガチのいじめで可哀想やなみたいな思ったことあります (Yes. Then, she got through it because she had a strong will. And then, in the third year in her middle school, she was seriously bullied by the boys’ soccer club. But she was team captain or something, and because a girl was captain, it became like bullying from there. I felt sorry for her because it was really serious bullying).

Itani: そういうのが他のところであった？ (It happened in other place?)

Sanae: はい、あの本人から聞いて、あぁやっぱ女子がなんかするっていうのは難しいんかな、みたいな。自分があの、卒業して、自分の中学も、一個下のキャプテン女の子やったんけど、そこは全然良かったんですけど、やっぱ場所によってそういう差別的ななんかもされるんやなって思いましたね (Yes. I heard it from herself, and I thought like, it might be still difficult for girls to do something. Also in the middle school that I graduated from, um, though a girl was the team captain in the grade one below us, it was totally fine there. But I thought depending on a place you could still be discriminated like that).

Even in Kanagawa Prefecture, a place Sanae thought was one of the best for girls’ soccer players, she had to play as the only female player in a boys’ team in middle school. Her friend’s story
shows how male players are not always supportive or ‘helpful’ for the female soccer players’ growth as it is portrayed in the media.

Participants’ stories of the lack of training environment for girls, teasing, bullying, appraisal from peers and male teammates, and opposition from family members demonstrated various ways in which these sports are constantly reproduced as “boys’ sports” in their local communities. Such masculine constructions and male dominance in wrestling and soccer affected participants in many different ways. Some had ambivalent relationship to their sport while others identified with the masculine subject position that participation in the sport offered.

In the next section, I shift my analytical focus from the gendered constructions of the sports to the constructions of the “female body.” I look at how others reacted to the participants’ athletic bodies and physical abilities that shaped their understanding of their muscular bodies in relation to the feminine norm. Their stories illuminate the contour of the normative women’s body in Japanese society and how a female muscular body is an abject body that can be temporarily reconstructed as an intelligible body through the discourses of the normative female sporting masculinity.

**Negotiating Muscularity**

The wrestlers frequently used a word, “gottsui,” when we discussed about how they see their own bodies and how others describe and/or see their bodies. *Gottsui* was a descriptor used by others and the athletes themselves. In analyzing Japanese female professional wrestlers’ bodies and gender transgressions, Aiba (2007) explains that “gottsui” is used to describe the body that is “muscular and has a strong skeletal structure” (p. 12). In a sense, it could translate as “sturdy”, but it is important to note that this word is often uttered with a sense of awe or with the intent of teasing. Since muscular development is an important part of training and a sign of growth as a wrestler, participants related to the word differently depending on how and by whom
the word was used. Even in the interviews, wrestlers themselves often used the word to describe, tease, and compliment other wrestlers. For instance, Rina explained how gottsui can be a compliment when other wrestlers used it, but not by her peers and non-wrestlers.

Rina: 選手としては、嬉しい。まぁ、普通に生活してる […] で、毎日レスリングして、で、みんなすごいごっついとか、まぁけっこう言われるんですけど、自分。そういうのはけっこう嬉しいんですよ (As an athlete, I’m happy. In a daily life […] I do wrestling everyday, and I’m often told that I’m very gottsui by everyone. But I’m quite happy about it.

Itani: 競技の仲間からってこと？ (You mean from fellow wrestlers?)

Rina: そうですね。でもやっぱり学校、学校の友達からとか、普段学校の、生活として女の子として、その、こう生活してるうえで、「ごっつ」とか言われると、別に嫌じゃないんですよ。もう言われ慣れてるから。ただ、「だよねー。[少し嫌がる感じで]」みたいな。やっぱ絶対、ほそ、なんか、男から見ても、細い、子の方が自分は可愛いと思うんすよ。絶対に。絶対に可愛いんですよその方が (Yes. But when friends in school, or in the ordinary school, life, um, when I live as a girl, when someone says gottsui, I don't really feel bad about it. Because I’m used to it. I just say like, “Aren’t I?” [Gesturing her embarrassment].” But definitely, skinny, like, even from men’s perspective, I think skinny girls are cuter, definitely. That’s definitely cuter).

Itani: まぁそれは趣味があるから (Well, it depends on their interests).

Rina: はい。そうなんですねけどね、でもやっぱり、まぁ、レスリング、を、その競技、練習とかして、そういう時には全然ごっついいともいいんですけど、普段はやっぱり、あー細くなったりたいなぁとは思いますね (Yes, that’s right, but still, well, when I do wrestling, um, sport, training, when moments like that, I don’t really care about being gottsui, but in an ordinary time, I still think ah, I want to be skinny).
In these short passages, Rina demonstrated her ambivalent and fracturing relationship to the word, *gottsui*, and her muscular body. She no longer felt ‘bad’ about being told she was “*gottsui*” from her peers because she was *used to* it. But at the same time, she also ‘performed’ feminine norms by agreeing on the meaning her peers gave her body—*gottsui*—by performing her embarrassments. She pretended to be embarrassed when she was not. Her strategy to negotiate such naming also points to the discourse of normative female sporting masculinity. As I will further discuss in the later section, this normative discourse about masculine female athletes gives athletes a space to be masculine, while maintaining a socially intelligible body, insofar as their masculinity can be explained by their dedication to sport. In other words, Rina performed for her peers that she *did* feel bad about her body in order to activate this mode of negotiation that taps into the discourse of “devoted female athletes” to deal with feminine norms and sexist assumptions about women’s bodies. Rina consciously used the normative discourse of female sporting masculinity as a sort of ‘tool’ in her negotiation since she clearly understood that her strong body was highly valued in the wrestling space and not outside it. Her last word “I still think ah, I want to be skinny,” demonstrates the regulatory power of feminine norms that pressures female wrestlers, for whom the strong body is an important asset.

Other wrestlers also agreed with Rina’s ambivalent relationship with their muscular bodies to which contradictory meanings are given in and out of the wrestling space. During the interview, Ai’s and Kana’s feelings toward their bodies and others’ comments were wavering. Kana, for instance, told me that she did not like the skinny and undefined bodies of “ordinary girls.” She said she preferred her well trained and toned body. She was, however, concerned about a part of body, her abdomen, which has a symbolic value of masculinity.

*Kana:* あ、でも水着来た時に腹筋割れてるから、それはちょっとやだなーって、思いますけど (Ah, but when I wear a swimsuit, I don't really like it much because I have a six pack).
Itani: 腹筋がね (You mean the abdominal muscle).

Kana: はい。で、出るじゃないですか、ここが。それがすごい嫌だなって (Yes. This part [abdominal area] is shown, you know. I really don’t like it).

Then, Kana and Ai continued their conversation about her frustration towards their parents’ and friends’ comments about their bodies.

Kana: あと親に結構言われますね。「筋肉やばいね」みたいな。嫌じゃないですか、よく言われるの (And also, my parent often says it, like “Your muscle is too much.” It’s uncomfortable to be said so often, isn’t it?).

Itani: 親が？あ、そう？ (Your parent? Oh really?).

Ai: うちの親はなにひとつ言わないよ。「またでかくなった？」みたい (My parent doesn’t say anything at all. Just like, “You got bigger again?” [Laughs]. I just say, “Hmm, I don’t know!”).

Itani: それは、お母さん喜んでくれてるの？ (Is it, is your mother happy about it?).

Ai: いや、分からないっす。何にも急に、「ん？」みたいな (No, I don't know. It’s just suddenly, like, “Hm?”).

Itani: また大きくなっただって？ (Like you got bigger again?).

Ai: なんか幅増えたみたい (Your became wider or something).

Itani: そうなんだ。じゃあお母さんは、別に全然その娘さんが大きな筋肉だっていうのは (I see. Then your mother doesn’t really care about her daughter having big muscle).

Ai: 多分レスリングをしているから、何も言わないんじゃないですか (Maybe because I’m doing wrestling, she doesn’t say anything).

... 

Ai: と言われるのが、普通の人の肩幅の倍くらいあるね、みたいな (Another thing I’m often said is like, your shoulder width is twice larger than ordinary people).
Kana: 確かに… (That’s true…).
Itani: 確かに肩しっかりしてるもんね (It’s true that you have strong shoulders).
Ai: 友達に急に、「太い！」[笑] 「力入れて」とか [笑] (My friends suddenly say things like, “Big!” [Laughs] and “Flex your muscle” [Laughs].
Itani: 筋肉見せて、みたいな。それ言われたらどう？ (Like “show me your muscle”? How do you feel when people say that?).
Ai: 自分は「やめてやめて！」みたいな。 (For me, it’s like “Stop it, stop it!”).
Itani: でもその瞬間に、自分の体がまぁ、「そうだよ」って自分で、なんか、なんていうんだろう、誇りに思うというか。 (At that moment, do you feel like, “Isn’t it?” Like, inside yourself, how to say. Like, you feel proud of it).
Kana: うんうん (Yes, yes).
Itani: 思う？ (Do you?)
Kana: 思います (Yes I do).
Ai: んー、たまに (Hmm, sometimes).

Kana showed a more affirmative relationship with her body that is more developed and toned compared to “normal” girls than Ai did. Yet, even for her, certain muscles (her six pack) is problematic for her female identity when it is shown to others. Kana also showed her frustration to her parent who often ridiculed her about muscle development. This shows that even for elite level wrestlers like Kana, immediate family members may not always be supportive of their masculine embodiment.

Ai’s parent, on the other hand, does not talk about Ai’s body in a way that made Ai feel uncomfortable. Ai thought her mother did not say anything because she is a wrestler. The implication is that her mother may say something unpleasant, like Kana’s parent did, when Ai is not a wrestler. Like Rina, Ai was aware that her body is valued differently as a wrestler and as a
“normal” girl outside the sporting space. Although both Kana and Ai (sometimes) took pride in their muscular bodies, their relationships to the “naming” of their bodies by others were swayed as they navigate through the society in which their bodies are given contradictory meanings.

Misa, who had trouble with the masculine image of wrestling when she was younger, clearly remembered a moment in her middle school when she came to learn that her developing muscular body had different meanings. Misa described the scene:

あの、普通にこう制服着て、夏服、で、こう勉強っていうか休み時間とかなんかやってて、で前の男の子がこうやって後向きで話してって、で、「腕ふと！」って言われた時に、「はっ」と思って[
笑
]。
それ、すごく覚えてます。
…
でも中学ん時に、そのレスリングの先生も、こう、けっこう、あの、ま、これから先も続けていくのに筋力とか必要だからって言われて、けっこうウェイトトレーニングとかもしてたんですよ。そんな時に自分でもそんなに感じてなかった、なくて、太って[笑]。普通にやってて、でその男の子に、うん、「わ、お前腕ふと！」って言われた時に「は!?」と思って[笑]。そうなのか、って思って改めて。

(Um, I was wearing a school uniform as usual, the summer uniform, and then, when I was studying or doing something in recess, a boy in front of me had turned around and was talking. Then, when he said “Your arm is big!” I felt “Ha!” [Laughs]. I remember it really well.

…

But in middle school, the wrestling teacher also told me, like, um, that I needed muscle strength in order to continue [wrestling] in the future, so I was doing a lot of weight training too. Back then I wasn’t really thinking that, that I was big [Laughs]. I was doing it like a normal thing, and then, when the boy said, yeah, “Wow, your arm is thick!” I
thought “Huh!?” [Laughs] I realized once again, “Oh I see”).

Although Misa was aware of the masculine image of wrestling, it was the boy’s utterance that spoken Misa into a discourse of the feminine norm. Weight training was a “normal” part of training as a wrestler until that point. However, in that moment of being named, she understood that weight training was both giving her strength as a wrestler and placing her body outside of feminine norms. Since then, Misa added that such reactions became a normal part of her life and were no longer unsettling for her identity as a woman. She considered all the training that shaped her body ‘differently’ from ordinary women an essential and normal part of the sport.

Aya, Mio, and Shoko were also clear that masculine embodiment and strength are a necessary part of their sport and it is not even a choice to dislike the muscular development. For Aya and Mio, such comments are compliments as a wrestler.

Mio: 服入らない時には「くそ」って思うけど [笑]。まぁ、服のためにそんな筋肉付けない、とか言うって場合じゃないし。仕方ないかなと (When I cannot fit into clothes, I feel “shit” though [Laughs]. Well, it’s no time to refuse putting more muscle for clothes. Maybe we can’t help it).

Itani: そうやね。なんか他に自分が筋肉が付くことに関して抵抗がある時ってある？ (Right. Is there any other moments when you feel reluctant for your muscle development?)

Aya: 特に (Not really).

Itani: むしろ嬉しいとか (Or rather feel happy?)

Aya & Mio: うん (Yeah).

Mio: 太って言われると、太くなったりって言われると、なんか「えっ、えっ」 [照れた様子で]ってなる [笑] (When I’m told that I’m big, I got bigger, I feel like, “Eh! Eh!” [Bashfully] [Laughs]).
Aya: [笑] [laughs]

Itani: ちょっと照れる？ (You feel a bit shy but happy?)

Mio: うん (Yeah).

Aya: ちょっと嬉しい (I feel little bit happy).

Aya and Mio’s relationships to others’ comments were slightly different from the other wrestlers. In comparison, they rather positively identified with such comments and welcomed the type of 
othering away from feminine norms that other wrestlers had an ambivalent relationship with.

Participants also talked about the moments in which their behaviors or physical strength exhibited outside of the sporting space were named as “different” from others. Yuki, for instance, became more aware that her body and physical strength were outside the feminine norm when people looked at her doing physical labor, rather than just the appearance of her body. Yuki explained that when she carried things that are “normally” considered too heavy, people responded with surprise, sometimes even with sarcasm.

Yuki: なんか…あのけっこう力あるじゃないですか、当たり前だけど。それで荷物とか運んだりする時に、自分の中では普通だと思ってばっと持っていくのが、「えっ！」てなる。大丈夫とかなる時に、あ、って思います (How to say... I’m quite strong, you know, of course. Then when I carry things, in my mind it’s normal [size] so I just pick it up and carry, but when people are like, “Wow!”, when it’s like, ‘Are you okay?’, I think “Oh”).

Itani: それはどういう時に？ (What are those moments?).

Yuki: 例えば、米とか運ぶ時とか [笑] (For example, when I carry rice [laughs]).

Itani: 10キロひょいみたいな？ (Like you carry a 10kg sack easily?).

Yuki: 10キロ、10キロとか、20キロくらいのものをバッと持っていく、いっぱい言うんですよ。そうすると、「えーっ」と。普通1個だらけみたいな。とか、んーそう、なんだよう、そういう荷
物を運ぶのに、自分の中では別に普通に持っていこうとする時に「えっ！」ってな、ったりする時に、あ、普通の人とはこれ1個に、1個にするんだ、とか。あとめんどくさかったり、けっこうめんどくさかったりすると、荷物同様をいっぱい運ばないといけないとかあるじゃないですか。ならば一と重ねて持っていけるんだけど重ねて、重かったとしても、持って、いこうすると、「え、大丈夫？」みたいに(10kg, I just quickly carry 10kg or 20kg. Then they say “wow!” Normally it’s just one sack [10kg], or something. Or, um... yeah, those moments when I carry things, when I just try to carry as usual and people say “what!”, I realize oh, normal people carry just this one, just one. And when it’s bothersome to, you know quite, tiresome to, like when you have to carry many same things. So when I try to pile them up and carry even if it’s heavy, they are like “Wow, are you ok?”).

...  

Itani: その時には、別に特に良くも悪くも感じない？(In those moments, you don’t feel particularly good or bad?).

Yuki: なんか、その、何だろう…その人の、反応の仕方？人によって、何だろう…あ、なんか、「すごいね」、とか、「え、大丈夫？」っていう感じの、嫌みのない感じの時…は全然大丈夫だけど、たまに、え？っていう顔をされる時があるんですよ。なんだっろう。なんか、ちょっと、多分その人はそういうつもりじゃないんだろうけど、自分が勝手に感じてるだけかも知れないけど、なんか、感じ悪い時。感じ悪いっていうかなんだろう…く感じる時があって、その時は、な、なんか…あー…その、自分が力強いこととか、じゃなくて、そういう、そういう雰囲気を出す、出されることがなんか、ちょっと、嫌な、感じは。(Um, what is it... It depends on the way, the person reacts? Depending on the person, how to say... Ah, if it’s like, “You are amazing” or “Oh, are you ok?”, when it’s not sarcastic, it’s totally ok. But sometimes, some people make faces like “What?” Um,
like, maybe the person doesn’t mean anything negative, maybe I’m just feeling like that by myself, but when it has unpleasant feeling. Or, what is it... sometimes I get unpleasant feeling. In those moments, like, like... um... it, it’s not about me being strong, but it’s not, a good feeling, that someone creates that kind, that kind of atmosphere).

Here, Yuki articulated it as an “unpleasant feeling” when she sensed people’s negative attitudes towards her strength. For wrestlers like her who experienced extensive strength training, carrying two sacks of rice is “normal” and “usual”. Although it is not surprising that some people were amazed by Yuki’s strength, Yuki carefully distinguished the subtle differences between the reactions of people who are simply surprised, and of those who viewed her strength negatively. It might be “unintentional” as Yuki cautioned herself; however, their “unpleasant” reactions or way of showing their surprise indicated that Yuki’s ability to carry heavy objects and the very act of trying to carry more than what “normally girls” are expected to “attempt” defied the feminine gender norm. When people did not believe she was capable of safely carrying two sacks of rice, their reaction is shown as genuine concern for her safety or obvious surprise. Yuki, however, keenly observed that her exhibition of extraordinary physical strength also gets policed in very subtle but recognizable and uncomfortable ways. Such policing exposes the performativity of gender/sex. Gender norms encompass what is often considered a manifestation of the bodily truth as female—a weak body. Yuki is not only expected to be unable to carry two sacks of rice, but she is also expected not to try to carry them for the sake of efficiency. A weak body must be performed.

These athletes’ experiences offered important insights into the articulation of Japanese gender norms through the bodies of masculine female athletes. They demonstrate the contour of Japanese feminine norms about women’s bodies and how such gender norms are reproduced and
sustained through subtle and momentary yet recognizable and uncomfortable interactions in everyday life. Participants also demonstrated intricate processes of negotiation with feminine norms, sexism, and the demands of an athletic career.

Furthermore, in the interviews, participants used the discourses of “devoted athletes”, similar to what I discussed in Chapter Four, in order to explain how they related to their masculinity and Japanese gender norms. Their stories also suggest how the sporting space can be a place in which female athletes are temporarily, relatively free from scrutinization of their gender identity and heterosexuality, because their masculinity and lack of interest in men are a “normal” part of being a female athlete. In the next section, I examine how this normative discourse of female masculinity based on their devotion to sports works in people’s recognition and “naming” of masculine female athletes.

Normative Female Sporting Masculinity

In this dissertation so far, I have analyzed the discursive constructions of “masculine” female athletes and how their masculinities are normalized through the constructions of “devoted female athletes,” who do not spend their time and energy to attain the idealized feminine appearance, nor dating men. In the above, I have suggested that such a normative discourse about the masculinity of female athletes, which I call “normative female sporting masculinity,” was also mobilized by athletes themselves in order to negotiate feminine norms. In this section, I analyze how the discourse operates in the naming of masculine female athletes.

One good example that illustrates the work of the normative female sporting masculinity discourse is some of the wrestlers’ experiences in a public bathhouse. There is a popular bathhouse or hot spring near their university that is frequented by the members of the wrestling team, other students and faculty members, as well as local residents. When I asked participants if
or when they felt their bodies were looked at or commented on, several wrestlers mentioned their experiences in this bathhouse. Since this university is famous for sports, particularly for wrestling, the local residents recognized participants in the bathhouse not based on their face or name but on their athletic body.

Kana: なんかそこのお風呂行くんですけど、結構おばさんたちいるんですよ。したら、なんか「レスリングとか格闘技やってるでしょ？」みたいに、「そこの学生さんでしょう」ってよく言われるんですよ (I go to the bathhouse there, and there are many middle-aged ladies. Then, they often say like, “You practice wrestling or martial arts, don’t you?” or “You are student from there, aren’t you?”).

Itani: あぁ、じゃあこの辺りの人は良くわかってるんやね (Ah, then people around here know it well).

Kana: はい (Yes).

Itani: じゃあちょっと筋肉ある女性見たらレスリングって (So then, when they see a woman who is a bit muscular, they think she is a wrestler).

Kana: うん [頷く] (Yeah) [Nods].

Misa also shared a very similar experience.

Misa: 温泉行った時 (When I went to a hot spring).

Itani: 見られる？ (Are you looked at?).

Misa: ん、まぁこころ辺だから多分おばさんたちも結構レスリング有名っていうのがとか分かってるから、温泉に行った時に「あんたらレスリングやってる？」みたいね (Um, well, because it’s around here and old-ladies probably know that wrestling is quite famous, so when I went to the hot spring, they said like, “Do you do wrestling?”)

Itani: おお、分かるんだ (Wow, they can tell).

Misa: いい体してる、みたいな、言われますけどね (You got a nice body, they say things like
In the neighborhood community of their university, it is well known that women train in wrestling and that they are very successful internationally. Particularly in the bathhouse, since it is frequented by the members of the wrestling team, their muscular bodies are often seen. While customers still respond to the sight of the wrestlers’ bodies, they are often recognized as wrestlers or athletes, who are local and national heroines. As Kana described, her muscular body is recognized as an athlete, or martial artist even more specifically. In the local community around the bathhouse, muscular female bodies are intelligible as competitive athletes and are read as “nice bodies.”

The translation of the “nice body,” however, requires careful examination. In the second quote above, Misa described how older ladies often told her, “You got a nice body”, which in Japanese is, “ii karada shiteru ne.” I literary translated “ii karada” into a “nice body” because “ii” means “nice” or “good” and “karada” means “body.” However, in this context, ii karada also means a big, sturdy, and muscular body, rather than the skinny and narrow body idealized as the feminine body in Japanese society. The body is “nice” in a sense that it is strong and sturdy. This comment is an interesting example of the Japanese discourse on women’s bodies, in which a big and strong body is, at least at the level of language, considered a “good” body. In the moments of these utterances—“you got a nice body” and “you are an athlete, aren’t you?”—the female athletes were put in a subject position that is outside a simple masculine-feminine or male-female dichotomy. They are positioned as a female athlete. Masculine female bodies are intelligible as the female athlete, not an abject body.

This point is well illustrated by the initial puzzlement of the participants when I asked if they have received or seen any homophobic or transphobic remarks made against female athletes’ masculinity. Most wrestlers initially could not understand why I asked such question, or they
could not understand why the masculinity of wrestlers had anything to do with the issue of homophobia or transphobia. As a result, I explained to each participant how my interview questions were constructed based on the observations and theorizations in North American society, in which masculine female athletes, or female athletes in masculine sports, had long been threatened with homophobic labeling. Their puzzlement cannot simply be dismissed as their ignorance of the experiences of lesbian and transgender athletes. Most cisgender, heterosexual participants had lesbian or transgender friends and were well aware of homophobia and transphobia in Japanese society.

After explaining my intentions behind the questions about homophobia and transphobia, Azusa remembered that she and her close female friend were once rumored to be a lesbian couple in her university. She emphasized, however, that it was not because of her masculine appearance or masculine image within wrestling at all. Instead, it was because they had spent a lot of time together on campus and the friend often provided care for Azusa, who lived away from her family and trained very hard for wrestling. Another participant also remembered that one of the wrestlers in her team was also rumored to be lesbian. The wrestler was rumored to be lesbian not because of her gender expression or sporting career, but because she was very close to one of her female friends, spending all of their time together.

Responding to Azusa’s story about the lesbian rumor, Rina remembered a female wrestler in another university who Rina considered very “masculine.” Rina described the wrestler, Kai, who had a very muscular body and also sported a buzz-cut hairstyle, which is quite rare for Japanese girls and women. Azusa added that Kai “didn’t seem to be interested in men.” Rina quickly responded to Azusa, “But she doesn't seem to be interested in women either. She is like, ‘just wrestling’.”

After the conversation about Kai with Azusa and Rina, I once again asked Rina and Aya
about Kai’s masculinity and what it means for them in the follow up interview.

Itani: れスリングの中で、そういう髪をめっちゃ短くする人が出てきたら、そういう人のイメージって、どういう感じ？なんか合いだって言ってたじゃない。それ以外に[どういう意味があると思う] (In wrestling, what are the images of those wrestlers who cut their hair very short? You said that it’s about [the demonstration of] fighting spirit, didn’t you? [Do you think about] anything else?).

Aya: あー。気持ち… (Oh… It’s fighting spirit…).

Rina: 気合いとしか思わない (I only think it’s fighting spirit).

Aya: 気持ちを新たにして、なんか頑張るみたいな (It’s like, turning over a new leaf and try hard).

Itani: あー。じゃまぁ試合とかそういうレスリングに向けた気持ち。じゃそこでさ、この人もしかしてジェンダー・アイデンティティ男なのかなとか、そういう風にはならない？ (Oh, then it’s about the demonstration of their feeling towards a competition or wrestling. So then, it wouldn’t raise a suspicion like this person’s gender identity might be male or something?)

Rina: んー。ならん (Hmm. No).

Aya: そういう風にはならないですね (No, it won’t be like that).

Itani: なんかその人、筋肉もかなり、多分体脂肪率が低かった？ (The person, her muscle was quite [large], she probably had a very low percent body fat?)

Rina: そうですねえ (Yes, yes).

Aya: ごつい、ほんとにごついよね (She is gottsui, really gottsui, isn’t she?)

Rina: もうやばい (Yeah, too much).

Itani: あー、そういうのってやっぱりレスリングの人って、自分の中ではみんな鍛えてるから、それなりに、ごついと言えばごついと思うんだけど、その人は違った？レスリング界
でも（Oh, I thought all wrestlers train hard and everyone is in some ways gottsui, if you say so, but was the person different? Even in the wrestling world?）

Rina: 違うよね。なんかもうレスリングのためだけに、もう、周りにあんまこう、彼氏とかそういうことは興味なさそうな、本当にレスリング一本っていう人だと思うんですよ（Different. She is like, only for wrestling. She doesn’t seem to be interested in things around her, like boyfriend and things like that. I think she is a kind of person who really only focuses on wrestling）。

Itani: それはその見た目以外にも、そういうなんか（Is it something about the person, other than her appearance?）

Aya: しゃべんないよね。（She doesn’t talk much, does she?）

Rina: 合宿とかの、行動とかの日誌とかも毎日つけて、細かく（She also writes a training journal about training camps and about her daily life everyday, in detail）。

Aya: 常に自分のペースで、こうご飯の時間とかも、自分でちゃんとして（She always keeps her own pace, and she takes care of herself well, like meal time etc.）。

It is important to note that in Japan, a woman’s shaved head or buzz cut hair has unique cultural meanings, as it is often associated with Buddhist nuns who shave their hair before entering a life as a nun in order to symbolize their separation from the earthy life. Today, for both women and men, shaving one’s hair is often interpreted as a punishment or a symbolic act of the renewal of one’s will. It is still a common discourse among boys’ sport teams, for example, that players may be forced to shave their hair for their bad performance. In turn, people may voluntarily do so in order to demonstrate their seriousness to achieve a goal. It is a symbolic act of devotion and commitment. Today, some women choose to have a buzz cut for fashion, but it is still largely considered unusual or even “inappropriate” for women. For instance, when Shun and some of his female soccer teammates had a crew cut in his middle school, the school
principal scolded them for their choice of hairstyle. Shun’s homeroom teacher harbored them by saying “この子たちは暑いから大変なんですよ” (It’s hard for these students because it gets so hot). Despite the teacher’s support, the principal kept checking on them to make sure that their hair grew long enough to be “properly” feminine.

Aya’s and Rina’s reading of Kai’s hairstyle and Shun’s homeroom teacher’s justification for their short haircut are good examples of how a shaved head may be read as a sign of devotion, or even as a necessity for female athletes, while such a hairstyle is considered inappropriate, if not “abnormal,” outside the sporting space. In these “productive” tensions between feminine norms and a devotion to sport, multiple meanings are given to women’s buzz cut hairstyles. Shun’s middle school principal read it as “inappropriate” or a “deviation from the gender norm,” while his homeroom teacher read it as their athletic need. Kai’s shaved head, muscular body, and her perceived lack of interest in men were juxtaposed with her disciplined behaviors as an athlete to produce a meaning of the “devoted wrestler.”

Once again, the wrestlers’ interpretations of the masculine appearance of female wrestlers as “devotion” does not mean that they are unaware of the athletes who are lesbian or transgender and thus such cases are unthinkable. Rather, what their interpretations suggest is that female athletes’ “masculine” appearance and their “lack of interest in men” do not constitute a “sexually deviant” subject. These athletes are put in a subject position of ‘devoted female athlete’ through the normative constructions of female sporting masculinity. The tension between the feminine norm and the construction of the “devoted” female athlete opens up a gap—a sort of “third space”—that is outside of “normative femininity” but within heteronormativity.

This normative discourse of female sporting masculinity has important implications to various issues related to gender and sexual politics in Japanese society. On the one hand, athletic masculinity and their gender and sexual identities are not conflated, as the case of North
American discourses on athletic women in masculine sports shows. As Edwards (2003) observed in the Japanese professional women’s soccer league, the Ladies League, this enables women to experiment with gender expressions. Female athletes can focus on their training without being concerned about becoming “too masculine” or being scared of ‘lesbian’ labeling. On the other hand, however, female athletes are still assumed to be heterosexual and cisgendered; therefore, they are still expected to be feminine outside of the sporting space or become feminine upon their retirement from their sport. This point has strong resonance with the media constructions of Japanese female soccer players and wrestlers as dedicated athletes. In the media, female athlete’s masculinities ‘made sense’ and were ‘made safe’ through normative and normalizing discourses that were underpinned by sexism, heterosexism, homophobia, transphobia, and nationalism. At the edge of the construction, the masculinity of these athletes as the ‘preferred’ mode of a gender expression is made invisible and unthinkable. As Edwards (2003) observed, this discourse of devoted athletes meant that femininity or even femaleness could be an expression of lack of devotion—femininity and athleticism are rendered incompatible.

“Don’t be a woman”

In my desire to know how the masculinity of female athletes in “masculine” sports is discursively constructed and may be policed in the Japanese sporting community, I created a set of interview questions about the participants’ experiences of being commented on regarding their masculinity. In the interview, however, I quickly learned that these questions were not prepared for different ways in which the athletes’ gender and sexuality may be scrutinized in Japanese sport—policing of femininity. Participants shared many experiences that their femininity was policed as much as their masculinity in a sporting space, if not more. In the follow up interview, Misa hesitantly changed the course of our conversation by saying, “Um, this might not be so
related, but . . .”, and she shared her experience of being told not to be a “woman” by her coach.

Misa: あんまり関係ないかも知れないですけど、なんかそのスポーツをやってて、たまに男女を意識をするのが、監督に「女になってんじゃねえよ」って言われることがあるんですよ、よく。(This might not be so related, but being involved in sport, the moments that I sometimes become conscious about gender is when, my coach says, “Don’t be woman”, quite often).

Itani: 何それ!? (What is that!?).

Misa: [笑] やっぱり大学生になったりしたら、髪の毛もちょっと染めたいし、とか、まぁちょっとパーマ当てたりとか、そういう学生もいて。あと、足とか見えないところだけマニキュア塗ったりとか。で、やっぱそういうの見ると、監督としてはレスリングだけに今は集中して欲しいから、「女になってんじゃねえよ」ってよく言われるんすよ。その時に、まぁ学生とか自分たちも、「いや、女だし。」みたいな [笑] ([Laughs] Well, once become a university student, some students want to dye their hair, get a little bit of perm and things like that. And, well, like they put pedicure, only on places they can hide. Then, when he sees those things, as a coach, he wants them to just focus on wrestling for now, so he says you can do such a thing anytime once you quit. We are often told, “Don't be a woman.”

And then, well, students and we too are like, “Well, we are women” [Laughs]).

Yuki also remembered the moments when she was told not to be a woman by her coach rather than when people made comments about her masculinity.

Yuki: どっちか…っていうと、練習中とかに、よく、その、何だろう。監督とか、監督とかになんか、だから女こうこうこうだみたいな風に言われるのがすごい嫌だったのは、覚えて… っていうのの方が強いかな (Rather than that, during a practice, oftentimes, the, what
is it. Our coach, I remember more strongly… that I really disliked it when our coach said something like that’s why women are this and that).

Itani: それはどういう時に言われるとか覚えてる？(Do you remember when he said that?).

Yuki: えっと…なんだろう。技とか、その、なん、練習してる時に…なんて言うんやろう…うーん、女はとろい的な。な、なんて言うか、覚えが悪い的な (Well… what is it. When we are practicing techniques… how to say it… hmm, something like, women are slow. How to say, [women] don't learn well or something like that).

…

Itani: 女になるなっていうのはどういうことを言ってるんだと思う？具体的に (What do you think he meant by saying don’t be a woman, specifically?).

Yuki: えっと、例えばこういうのとかです(ピンクのネイルアートを見せてくる)[笑] (Well, for example things like this [showing me her pink nail art] [laughs]).

Itani: え、それはなんでダメなの?(Oh, why is it not ok?).

Yuki: え…なんだろう…意図は、自分達は、その、本当のところの意図は理解…理解っていうか、分かんないけど、勝手に自分達で解釈してるのは、一つは、こういうのをすることで、生活の乱れ？的な (Well… what is it… the meaning is, we can’t really understand… or know his true intent, but how we interpret it by ourselves is that, one thing is, life becomes disarrayed? by doing things like this).

Itani: それに時間がとられるからってこと？(Do you mean it’s time consuming?).

Yuki: なんか、意識がそっちに行き過ぎるみたい。自分がえっと…強くなろうとか、どうしたら次、あ、そのレスリングを考える時間よりこっちに行き過ぎる。あ、っていうか行き過ぎることで、こっちに走っていく？その、あ…どう言えばいいんだろう…。例えば練習してて…練習終わった後1時間ウェイトしてから帰るのと、練習終わってすぐに、もうすぐにもう化粧して遊びに行くっていうのと、なんか多分そういうちょっとした… (Something
like, don’t focus too much on that. Rather than thinking about how to be stronger, or what to do next, um, rather than spending time thinking about wrestling, the time is used to think about this kind of things. Ah, it’s like if you think too much about it, you start doing only that? Um, how can I explain… For example, when we practice, instead of doing weight training for an hour after practice, wearing makeup and going out right away, probably those little things).

Itani: イメージが監督の中にある (He has that image).

Yuki: ある…とか、男に走る？で、なんか、[笑] これもなんかちょっと言われたのが、「女は」なんか「男にハマる」みたいな。その男できたら、そのそっちに重点がいくみたいな (Yes… or run to a man? Like, [laughs] this is also something I was often told, “Women fall into a man” or something. Once you have a man in your life, it becomes more important or something).

Both Misa and Yuki interpret their coach’s remark, “Don't be a woman”, as his way of asking them to focus on wrestling rather than spending time and energy on the things that are unnecessary for wrestling, such as their appearance, fashion, and men. As Misa jokingly pointed out, however, they are women and it is nonsense to order them to be otherwise. Right underneath such a remark, as Misa, Yuki, and other wrestlers interpreted, there is a coach’s demand for athletes to make wrestling the most important part of their lives.

Digging into the word deeper, however, there is a sexist construction of women as well as the coach’s patriarchal desire to control the female athletes’ lives, including their sexuality. The fact that the coach’s remark, “don't be a woman”, was interpreted as “focus on your sport”, means that being a woman and being an athlete is not compatible. There is an assumption that female athletes are more likely to succeed if they are less “woman”. Edwards (2003) also observed a very similar discourse in Japanese Ladies-League.
Time and again, L-Leaguer’s deficiencies are attributed to their femaleness and treated as a natural outgrowth of their sex. The characterizations are similar to stereotypes leveled against women in other social spheres in Japan. One could suggest then that with their admonitions, L-League coaches are requesting that their players become unfeminine and in a sense, less female. (p. 121)

The wrestler’s experiences and Edwards’ observations show a peculiar articulation of sexist and heterosexist assumptions about a woman’s ability to control their life inside and outside of sporting spaces. I argue that this discourse also underpins the discourse of ‘masculine appearance’ of ‘devoted female athletes’. Since women are assumed to “fall to men” or spend too much time taking care of their appearance, being a devoted female athletes means to be interested in neither men nor fashion. Since the demand of being a competitive athlete is to be less feminine, or less female, it is “normal” that female athletes look masculine. Their apparent “lack of interest” in men, therefore, is not a sign of their homosexuality or queer gender identity.

Furthermore, the male coach’s demand “not to be a woman” is an articulation of patriarchal control of female athletes’ sexuality. Iida (2003b; 2007) critiqued that in Japanese media, female athletes are often constructed as daughter and wife, while their coaches are positioned as a patriarch. As shown in the above quote, Yuki keenly observed this patriarchal control of female athletes’ sexuality that is underneath the discourse of “don’t be a woman”. His demand was not only to become less feminine, but also not to have romantic relationships with men. Rina, who trained in the same team with Misa and Yuki, also remembered how her coach was very sensitive to the dating status of the wrestlers in the team. He often made comments about dating a man, regardless of the wrestler actually having a boyfriend or not.

Rina: 頑張ってる分には、「[監督の真似をして茶化すように] なんかあったのか？男でもできたのか？」みたいな感じでそれで終わるんですけど、調子が悪くなってきたりすると、「お
前は男に走ってんじゃねぇ」みたいな (When I’m doing well, he would say “What happened? Did you get a boyfriend?” and that’s all, but when I’m not doing well, he is like, “Don’t you dare run to a man”).

Itani: 本当に本人に彼氏がいるかどうかに関わらず? (Regardless of whether or not the person actually has a boyfriend?).

Rina: 関わらず、です (Regardless).

... 

Rina: ほんとに、レスリングだけをやって欲しいのに、そういう服とか化粧とか、そういうのがね、嫌なんだよね、多半 (He wants us to really just do wrestling, so he probably doesn’t like those things like clothes and make up, does he?).

Aya: レスリングだけ、今は、レスリングだけ頑張ってればいい、みたいな (Only wrestling, it’s like we should just focus on wrestling for now).

Rina: もうレスリングのために練習して、レスリングのためにオフの日も休んで、その遊びに行ったりも多分あんまりしてほしくないと思うんですよ (We should practice only for wrestling, and take a rest on off-days for wrestling, and he probably doesn’t want us to go out).

The coach’s frequent comments about boyfriends is not only an invasion of privacy, but also a policing of their dating status, as well as an expression of a sexist construct of female athletes—regardless of whether or not female athletes do well, their success or failure is always because of men in their life. Also, since women tend to “fall to a man” and are unable to focus on training after all, it is better not to date or go out at all even on their off-days.

In this discourse, female athletes are reminded that they are women while, at the same time, are denied their womanness. In other words, female athletes are trapped in this appraisal of self-denial. They must refuse their femininity or “feminine interests” in order to perform a
subject position of a “devoted” athlete. For instance, both Azusa and Misa, the most senior wrestlers among the participants, mentioned that they do not do anything that might incite the coach’s comments on dating status or womanness. As such, the normative discourse of female sporting masculinity that is hinged on the female athletes’ devotion to sport above their feminine interests has a regulatory power to limit the athletes’ gender expressions, behaviors, and the lives on and off sporting spaces. Furthermore, the discourse also renders unrecognizable some athletes’ masculinity as a gender expression, thus making *queer* athletes invisible.

As I suggested earlier, this “invisible” effect of the discourse may also offer a sort of a “third space” in Japanese gender norms, in which female athletes are able to express masculinity without fearing their gender identity or sexuality being scrutinized. When I shared my story as a queer athlete who used this “third space” as a “livable” space in a homophobic and cisgenderist society, Shun agreed that the discourse helped him in negotiating the increasing demands to be feminine in his puberty. Juxtaposing different signifying chains that construct the “masculine” female athlete, however, demonstrates that this “third space” is a highly complicated and conflicting terrain in which a queering possibility is produced within a very small rupture opened up by, and sometimes through, sexist and heterosexist discourses about female athletes and women in general. Through this productive tension between the feminine norm and “athletic norm”, between sexism and the demand of athletic success, participants formed diverse relationships to their masculine body and physical abilities.

In the next, and final, section for this chapter, I shift my analytical focus to ‘another’ dimension of being-named—athlete’s becoming aware of their relationship to gender norms through “materialized” gender norms. My analytical focus shifts from “being-named” through spoken language to “materiality.” This is one of the significant ways in which participants came to realize or were reminded of their body size and its meanings in relation to Japanese feminine
norms.

Subjectivity and Materialized Gender Norms

*What I would propose in place of these conceptions of construction is a return to the notion of matter, not as a site or surface, but as a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effects of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter. That matter is always materialized has, I think, to be thought in relation to the productive and indeed, materializing effects of regulatory power in the Foucaultian sense. (Emphasis in original, Butler, 1993a, p. 9-10)*

So far, I have analyzed what participants have been “said” and how they have negotiated the naming through language. In this section, I shift my analytical focus to that of “material”—the ways in which the participants’ interactions with ‘materials,’ such as clothes, uniforms, and jewelry in their life, affected their gendered subjectivity. Having this separate section on “material” does not mean that I do not talk about body as material and does not mean that this section is not about discourse. Rather, as Larsson (2014) explains, my aim is to “re-inscribe matter in the concept of discourse” (p. 637) in the discussion of the body.

In her theorization of performative sex/gender, Judith Butler discusses *body as matter*, as materialization, or as a “sedimented effect” (1993a, p. 10) of a reiterative practice. Borrowing the both Butler’s and Foucault’s theorization of material and discourse, or materialization of discourse as an effect of ‘regulatory power’, I analyze how participants’ subjectivities were formed through interaction with the ‘materialized’ gender norms. Their experiences illuminate how materials, such as clothes and jewelries, which are “always already discursively produced” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 111), work as a sort of “boundary event” (Minh-ha, 2011, p. 60) in which athletes bodies are included and excluded from feminine norms.
Wrestlers shared more stories about their experiences with “material”, particularly clothes and jewelries, which often reminded them of their body size and shape that are “outside” of the Japanese feminine norm. Soccer players also talked about material conditions that shaped their understanding of themselves and others in terms of their gender and sexuality. But since two of the three soccer players in this study, Shun and Ryo, are non-cisgendered persons, they shared unique experiences with materials that affected their subjectivities and sport experiences in different ways than cisgendered female athletes. I will discuss their experiences with material in the following chapter.

As I discussed in the previous section, the wrestlers were not hesitant to put on more muscle in order to be stronger wrestlers. They, however, remembered many moments in which “the limit” set by the size and the design of clothes and jewelries made them aware of their body size and shape. In those moments, they experienced their body as inconvenient, a nuisance, and a source of discomfort, frustration, and disappointment. In answering my question regarding their thoughts about their trained body, Ai answered,

やっとり服が入らない時。邪魔だって思う...レスリングしてる時は全然気にならないんですけど、服は「はぁーやっぱり入らない」みたいな (When I can’t fit in clothes. I think it [the muscle] is nuisance... When I’m doing wrestling, it doesn’t bother me at all, but clothing makes me feel like “Ah, it doesn’t fit as expected”).

She explained how she always had difficulties finding clothes, shoes, and jewelry that fit her size. Ai exclaimed, “スーツすらないんですよ！” (Not even a suit!).” She also jokingly told me about one incident with a necklace (I later found out this kind of “problem” with necklaces was a common experience among female wrestlers through interviews). Ai and her teammates received a gift of a necklace from a company for their achievement in one of the international competitions. The moment when she tried to put it on, she realized that her neck was ‘too thick’.
Ai: ネックレスみたいの、そのプレゼントみたいなので、レスリング部の子何人もらってたんですよ。みんなこう着けられるんですよ [首からネックレスが下がる様子を手でジェスチャー]。自分だけ付けられなくて！ピーン！みたいな！[笑] (It was like a necklace, it was some kind of gift, and some girls from my wrestling club received them. Everyone could wear it like this [gesturing a necklace loosely hanging from her neck]. Only I couldn’t wear it! It was like, so tight! [Laughs]).

Kana: 絞まる絞まる！みたいな [笑] (It was like choking, choking! [Laughs]).

…

Ai: 首だけ苦しいよみたいな [笑]。細いからぬ、ギリギリギリと。その時に、自分は首が太いんだって思いました。そこまで考えたことなかったんですけど、実際に着けられないものを現実に見ると、あー！みたいな (Like, only the neck is difficult [Laughs]. Because it’s thin, it was grinding against my neck. That was the moment I realized that my neck is thick. I have never thought about it that much, but when I actually saw things I couldn’t put on, it was like, ahh!).

Other wrestlers also mentioned about the size of their neck when comparing to other ‘ordinary’ girls. Ai’s case, however, was perhaps exceptional even for wrestlers. Through this incident, Ai realized that her neck is thinker even in comparison to her teammates, as she was the only one who could not wear the necklace. It was the materiality, the physical boundary or the limit set by the necklace that caused discomfort in Ai’s body. It excluded Ai’s body from the normative female body, for which the necklace was designed. Ai shared this story with a fun, exuberant tone mixed with a lot of laughter. She had turned this experience of a “boundary event” (Minh-ha, 2011, p. 60) through which her body was othered and its otherness was exposed to others in a very visible manner, into a funny story. While such an incident did not affect her relationship to wrestling, her laughter and clear memory of the moment demonstrated the
significance of the event for the formation of her gendered subjectivity.

Misa also talked about how clothing made her conscious about her body, and shopping for her clothes became an ambivalent, not so enjoyable experience.

Misa: そうですね、服は感じますね。もう店員さんが来るだけでもういいやってなります (Yeah, clothes make me think about it. I feel discouraged only by being approached by a sales staff).

Itani: 「来ないで」って思う？(Do you think, “Don’t come”?).

Misa: はい[笑] (Yes) [Laughs].

Itani: やっぱり店員さんとのやり取りが？(Because of a conversation with a sales staff?).

Misa: うーん (Hmm).

Itani: 賦められるから？(Because they recommend you something?).

Misa: 賦められるし、いや試着しても無理だせっていう感じですね (Because they recommend something, and also I feel like, well they won’t fit me even if I try).

Itani: 「試着して下さいっていうな」みたいな (Like “Don’t tell me to try”).

Misa: [笑] [Laughs].

Itani: 試しに着てみて下さいって言うもんね (Yeah, they tell you to try).

Misa: うん (Yeah).

Itani: 放っといて! (Leave me alone!).


Yuki agreed that she could never trust the recommendations by sales staff in clothing stores because they do not know her actual body size. She moaned that the clothes “generally” sold on the market did not fit her.

Yuki: 肩幅とかが。あと太ももとかが。服が入らないんですよ。市販されている、市販の、一般に
売られてる [笑] (My shoulders, for example, and my thighs. The clothes, sold on the market, the ones generally sold on the market don’t fit me [Laughs]).

Itani: あ、肩ってやっぱりここ？[肩周りを指して] (Oh, shoulders mean here? [Pointing at the shoulder joint]).

Yuki: はい。ここと、あと太ももとか、あとふくらはぎ？とかが。あと膝上とかあればで。だから、あと首？ (Yes. Here, and also thighs, and calves? And also above knees. So... and the neck?).

Itani: 首？ (Neck?)


Itani: あ、やっぱり絞まるんだこうやって (Ah, so it chokes like this).

Yuki: [笑] 苦しくて ([Laughs] It’s suffocating).

…

Itani: ショッピング、楽しい？皆でもないけど、あ、Misa さんも言ってたんだけど、筋肉ってさ、しっかりついてたら締まってるから、外見分からないじゃない。どれだけ太さがあるかって (Do you enjoy shopping? Not everyone but, ah, Misa also told me that, when you have a lot of muscle, because muscle is tight, you know, it’s hard to see the actual size from outside. How thick it actually is).

Yuki: はい (Yes).

Itani: だからなんか、販売員の人がやってきて、これ大丈夫ですよって言うんだけど、分かってないんだ、って (So she said, though salespersons come and say this fits you ok, they don’t really know her size).

Yuki: そうそう！分かってない！ [笑] なんかだいじ、あ、これ、多分こっちいえますよ、とか絶
I never trust it when they say like, it’s ok, or this one, maybe this one would fit. I always choose by myself, and when I go to a fitting room, I bring three or, two or three, sizes, that I think might fit).

For Misa and Yuki, salesperson are considered not only unreliable when it comes to choosing appropriate clothes, but also a burden, who would potentially embarrass them by suggesting a ‘wrong’ size. Yuki even gave up shopping, just by being approached by a staff member. It suggests the level of frustration and embarrassment she had experienced through her interactions with salespeople and with the clothes that do not fit her body.

Other wrestlers also talked in length about their experiences with clothes and accessories. Mio loved collared shirts but she could not wear them since her neck and arms do not fit in. Shoko had to wear much larger rings than other girls because her fingers became thicker after spraining them many times. Azusa could not wear the most common type of earphones called the “inner-ear type”, which are designed to fit the shape of the year, because she had suffered “cauliflower ear” on both ears. This injury is common for male wrestlers too, but some participants were concerned that cauliflower ear made female wrestlers look less attractive, while it could be a positive symbol of masculinity for male wrestlers. Thus, material conditions and the physical limits they impose often became a moment of realization for many wrestlers. In some cases, the materiality of clothes, as Misa and Yuki recalled, provided participants more clear ideas about the relationship between their bodies and gender norms than what salespeople would

---

37 Cauliflower ear is a common type of sport injury many martial artists suffer. It is a condition that occurs when the external portion of the ear receives a strong blow, resulting in internal bleeding and an accumulation of blood clot and other fluid under the perichondrium. As a result, the outer ear becomes permanently swollen and deformed, resembling a cauliflower.
tell them about clothes designs and fittings.

Furthermore, ‘materials’ shaped the participants’ choice of clothes beyond selecting a fitting ‘size’. Rina and Misa talked about their desire to wear “cute” clothes, but when they put on those clothes, or even before putting on the clothes, they thought those ‘cute’ designs were reserved for ‘skinny’ feminine girls. ‘Cute’ clothes are not for them. Rina explained in a despondent tone,

もう雑誌とかで、ダボダボのその服とか、あ、これがわしいって思ってそのイメージの物があって、あ、可愛いて思って着てみるとやっぱ違う、みたいな。やっぱ細くないと、可愛くないんすよね (On magazines I see loose-fit design clothes, and I think it’s cute, and when I find the clothes that match the image and think oh it’s cute, but when I try it, it’s different, you know. It’s not cute unless you are skinny after all).

In this case, it is the visual image of her body inside the “loose” clothes that made her think she was different from the “cute” image she was imagining. Even if her body “fits” in the clothes, it is not loose enough. The clothes visually showed the discrepancy between the “cute” body in the magazine and her body. For a similar reason, Misa avoided “cute” design clothes. She felt like she should not wear something ‘feminine’, the kinds of clothes with frilly decorations for example, even though she has a desire to wear them one day.

Misa: なんか、そう、フェミニンなのっていうか、これは自分は着ちゃダメだろみたいなのにはありませんね。[笑] (Um, yeah, feminine one or, there are clothes that I feel like I shouldn’t wear. [Laughs]).

Itani: どういうの？ (What kind?)

Misa: なんかフリフリした感じとか。それはなんか自分が良くても…うん、ちょっと周りから見たらダメだろ、みたいな。[笑]「お前着んなよ」とか思われるんだろうなぁとか。[笑] (Like frilly ones. Even if I’m ok with them… yeah, like if other people look at it, it’s not
okay [Laughs]. I think like, people would think “You shouldn’t wear it” [Laughs]).

Itani: そう？なんかイメージが合わないってこと？(Really? Do you mean the image doesn’t match you?)

Misa: そうですね、もうなんかこう、ほんとに、華奢な子が着たらすごい似合うけど、なんかそういう服けっこう多いから (Yeah, how to say it, seriously, slender girls look very good in them but, you know there are a lot of clothes like that).

Itani: なるほどね。でも着たいと思う？（I see. But do you want to wear them?）.

Misa: 着たいなっていう願望はあります。いつか着たいなっていう [笑] (I have a desire to wear them. I want to wear them some day. [Laughs]).

Misa predicted what others would think about her if she wore the “cute” clothes that she thought were reserved for slender girls. It demonstrates the layers of regulatory effects of the discourses about how feminine bodies should look and who is expected to wear certain line of clothes. Misa internalized the gaze of imagined others and the clothing industry, and self-surveilled what she should and should not wear regardless of her desire. Misa’s self-surveillance placed even more limits on her choice of clothing, which is already limited by size.

Participants had to negotiate with the materialized gender norms in their daily lives and sometimes they experienced their bodies as a nuisance or frustrating, but it did not stop them from training hard for their sport. While some wrestlers maintain their desire to wear and fit into the “cute” clothes some day, they neither attempt to change their body to fit into the feminine norm nor see their wrestling career in a negative light. Wrestlers made jokes about their experiences with clothes and accessories and made fun of each others’ strong, gottsui bodies. They all agreed, however, that they did not really worry about it because their athletic career is more important than what kinds of clothes they can fit in or what others might say about their bodies. They laughed at each other’s otherness and went on with their sporting career.
Close analysis of the cisgendered athletes’ experiences of negotiation with gender norms around the female body also offers interesting insights into the performative constructions of gendered/sexualized bodies. Their negotiation with the discourses of normative femininity and sporting female masculinity, as well as the athletic demands and their desires to be strong, demonstrates both the regulatory power of gender ideology that produces female/feminine bodies and its failure to do so. The intelligibility of their muscular bodies and strength as female and heterosexual is mediated through the repairing/normalizing discourse of sporting female masculinity that materializes as taiikukaikei women. As participants described, a “female” body is a small body with a small amount of muscle that fits into “feminine clothes” and cannot lift heavy objects. The participants’ bodies fail to recite the phantasmatic “women’s body” or feminine norm. Yet, the normalizing discourse of taiikukaikei women not only hides this failure, but also produces a particular kind of normative heterosexual female body—muscular, short hair, and no sign of heterosexual interests—in and through sports. The discourse of taiikukaikei women, the idealized female athletes produced through the negotiation between feminine gender norms and the celebration of female athletes, materializes as ‘masculine’ ‘female’ athletes such as Kai and the ‘female’ soccer player bartender depicted in an Asahi newspaper article, who “tucks up the sleeve of a black shirt, holds her head high, and talks bluntly in honorific language without any flirtation” (N46, 2004, p. beShumatsue7). It is a different kind of performative construction of gendered/sexualized bodies that is specific to the locality of Japan, yet has vital importance to the theory of performativity of gender and sexuality.

Conclusion

The participants’ diverse stories demonstrated the local Japanese and regional specificities of gendered constructions of wrestling and soccer, and of female athletes in these
sports. Participants provided rich descriptions of the events in which they formed their understanding of gender norms, normative female sporting masculinity, and their subject positions in relation to such norms. Those events demonstrated the contour of Japanese norms about women’s sport participation, body, strength, and behaviors, along with the ways in which gender norms are reproduced and sustained through sometimes obvious and violent, sometimes subtle and momentary yet recognizable and uncomfortable interactions in everyday life. Their stories also illustrated the intricate processes of negotiation with male domination of their sport, feminine norms, sexism, and the demands of an athletic career. Some formed ambivalent subjectivities through conflicting demands of sports and the society. Some disidentified with such sexist discourses and experienced their bodies with confidence and pride to survive and succeed in their sports and in their lives.

In the next and final data chapter, I add the analytics of cisgenderism, transphobia, and the “normative” trans/GID discourse within Japan to the discussion of this chapter. I consider how these discourses are intertwined with Japanese gender and sexual norms and influence the ways in which non-cisgendered athletes in “masculine” sports negotiate Japanese society and sporting spaces.
Chapter 7. Interviews 2:

Negotiating Cisgenderism, Transphobia, and Transnormativity

Is sexuality so highly constrained from the start that it ought to be conceived as fixed? If sexuality is so constrained from the start, does it not constitute a kind of essentialism at the level of identity? At stake is a way to describe this deeper and perhaps irrecoverable sense of constitutedness and constraint in the face of which the notions of “choice” or “free play” appear not only foreign, but unthinkable and sometimes even cruel. (Butler, 1993a, p. 93)

In the previous chapter, I analyzed how cisgendered female athletes negotiated sexism, and feminine norms through their career as a wrestler or a soccer player. Their sport participations, trained bodies, and physical strengths were variously “named” by their family, peers, and teammates. Having to negotiate feminine norms, the demands of sport, and the desire to be strong, the female identified athletes enacted various negotiation strategies and relationships to their bodies and sports. In this chapter, I continue with the analysis of the negotiations with masculine constructions of sports and Japanese gender and sexual norms, with particular focus on cisgenderism, homophobia, transphobia, and ‘trans-normative/Gender Identity Disorder (GID)’ discourse within Japanese society.

In the above quote, Judith Butler (1993a) is concerned with the allure of the normalization in identity politics, within mainstream gay and lesbian movements, in North America in particular. While the normalizing politics of bringing queer identities into the sphere of intelligibility may be sympathized in the face of cruelty of the phobic society, queer scholars
such as Butler and Muñoz insist on *queerness*, which celebrates fluidity, hybridity, instability, and openness of identities to resist the stabilizing, excluding, sometimes comforting but suffocating normalizing impulses. In this chapter, following the lead of these queer theorists, I examine how cisgenderist and trans-normative discourses in Japanese society influence the ways in which the non-cisgendered athletes narrate their experiences of their bodies, gender identities, and sports.

As I introduced previously, I met two non-cisgendered athletes in this research study—Ryo and Shun. Ryo avoided identifying with one gender category, while Shun was relatively clear about his identity as a transsexual male. Although I put both Ryo and Shun together in a category of “non-cisgendered”, my intention is not to generalize their experiences. Their relationships to feminine norms, transphobia, and trans-normative/GID discourse differed in many ways. Yet, their positionality differences from female participants illuminate more clearly the contour of cisgenderism and transphobia in the Japanese sporting space and the society at large. Furthermore, the differences between Ryo’s and Shun’s narrations and experiences also demonstrate the effects of the power/knowledge of the medicalized ‘GID’ identity and the limitations of normative ‘trans’ politics based on the medicalized identity. While the normative discourse enables certain negotiations with a cisgenderist and transphobic society, it also closes down certain queering possibilities.

I begin this chapter by examining how the Japanese “transsexual/GID normative” discourse, which legitimizes ‘trans’ identities based on the medicalized notion of gender identity as a *disorder*, affects Ryo’s and Shun’s narratives of their identities. In the second section, I look at how their gender identities shape the narrative of their beginning as soccer players through identification and disidentification with the masculine constructions of soccer. In the third section, I shift my focus to the ways in which they negotiated the homophobic, transphobic, and
Identification, Disidentification, and Resistance to Trans-normative/GID Discourses

Both Ryo and Shun used the word “GID” to describe their masculine gender identities. Shun, however, had a more clear identification with the word than Ryo, perhaps because he had already been diagnosed with GID and had been on the hormone replacement therapy (HRT) for five years at the time of the interview. Shun was also scheduled to travel to Thailand in a month after the interview took place to receive gender reassignment surgery (GRS, also known as Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS)) and to start the legal process of changing his gender on the family register. His relative comfort in speaking about his transsexual/GID identity was demonstrated in his ‘smooth’ narration of his memories related to his masculine gender identity. To his admission, this smoothness was partly the result of the GID counseling processes, in which ‘trans-questioning’ persons are required to write an extensive life history of their ‘trans’ identities. This interview was not the first time he spoke extensively about his gender identity and life history.

On the other hand, Ryo’s narrative of their gender identities was fragmented and hesitant, and it resisted easy comprehension. While Ryo questioned and guessed that they probably were “GID”, they had not received any counseling or diagnosis. Ryo neither presented their “coherent” masculine identity nor closed down the possibilities to live in a ‘female’ body and with the sign of the female gender, “女”, on various documents. By examining how Ryo and Shun differently

---

38 As discussed in The Emergence of ‘Transgender’ Communities section in Chapter 2, since the mid 1990s, the mainstream Japanese ‘trans’ community expanded as the medialized notion of transgender as Gender Identity Disorder permeated the society. As a result, GID as a diagnostic category came to be use as an identity category by those who experience gender dysphoria and seek medical treatment such as GRS and hormone therapies. In this chapter, I use “transsexual/GID” or “trans/GID” as an identity category when “GID” was used by participants as identificatory category.
mobilized the “trans-normative” discourse as discursive resource, I could observe the ways in which the normative discourses constituted and enabled a subject to come into being, to become recognizable, while troubling the identity by its instability and slippage at the same time.

**Power/Knowledge: Performative Transsexuality and the Production of the Intelligible Subject**

Ryo and Shun’s relationships with the GID diagnosis demonstrate the effect of power/knowledge in relation to the diagnosis and identity of transgender, or transsexuality more specifically. Interestingly, both of them learned the word and concept from their soccer teammates who identified as GID. Before they were introduced to the concept, however, both Ryo and Shun similarly struggled to identify who they were as they grew up with masculine gender identities. Without identifiable or livable identity categories offered by the society, Shun remained unrecognizable to himself and to others until he was spoken into existence through the GID discourse.

Itani: 性自認みたいなものは割と早い段階で？(You had a kind of gender identity early on?).
Shun: そうですね、小学校の時から(Yes, since elementary school).
Itani: そう(I see).
Shun: 名前とか、スカートはくのとか、ランドセルの色とか嫌で(I disliked my name, wearing a skirt, color of *randoseru* and so on).
Itani: あー。それなんで、どのぐらいの時から？記憶してる限りでは(Ah. Why did you, or since when? As far as you can remember).

---

*Randoseru* (ransel, satchel) is a firm-sided backpack made of leather commonly used by elementary school children. In recent years, a variety of colors became available and the color choice is no longer so binary: however, red colors are still often sold for girls and black for boys. Particularly for Shun’s generation, there were perhaps almost no other color choices but red or black colors, which almost automatically were assumed to be for girls and boys respectively.
Shun: それは、どうかな...もう小学校で最初ランドセル買ってもらった時とかで、赤が嫌だったんで。あと保育園の時からスカート嫌だったんで (That’s, I’m not sure... I already didn’t like the red color of my randoseru when [his parents] purchased it. And I didn’t like skirts since kindergarten).

Itani: そっか、よう覚えてるなぁ (I see, you remember it well).

Shun: けっこう前から。そうですね...。なんていうんですかね、こっちの話と全然関係ないんですかけど、その、GID のカウンセリングとか通ってて、一応自分史みたいの作るんですよ。それで、いつからそういう風だっていうのを、掘り起こしてこうやってから、一応自分の中でも考えてたから、これくらいかな、みたいな、のは一応あるんです。本当に確かかどうかは覚えてないんですけど (Since quite awhile ago. Yeah... How to say this, this is unrelated to this conversation, but, I’ve been going to the, the GID counseling, and we make a kind of a life history there. Then, I dug out [my memories] about since when I was like that and so on. And also because I had thought about it in mind too, I kind of have the idea, although I don’t remember if it’s really sure).

Itani: うーん、微妙、難しいよね (Yeah, it’s delicate, difficult, isn’t it?).

Shun: なんかそうですね (Yeah).

Itani: 小さな出来事は残ってても、それが具体的にどう繋がるのかっていうのは (Even if you remember small events, how they are actually connected.).

Shun: そこで、性自認があるかどうかは分からないです (I don’t know if there is a gender identity there).

Itani: うん (Yes).

Shun: 完全に思ったのは中学校ぐらいの時ですね (When I thought for sure about it was around the time I was in middle school).

Itani: 確信したっていうかね (You mean, when you became quite sure about [the gender
identity].

Shun: 確信した (I became quite sure).

Itani: そういう言葉、GID なり、まだ日本語だったら性同一性障害っていうけど (The word, like GID, well in Japanese it’s called seidōitsuseishōgai).

Shun: はい (Yes).

Itani: は、いつ頃知った？ (When did you learn the word?).

Shun: 知ったのは大学ん時です。(I came to know it when I was in university).

Itani: あーじゃあけっこう後になってからだね (Ah, then it was much later).

Shun: けっこう後ですね。はい (Much later, yes).

Itani: じゃあそういう言葉を知らないうちは、自分の中でどういう風に理解してた？ (Then, when you didn’t know the word, how did you understand yourself?).

Shun: その時は、自分が何者か分かんなくて、自分はずっとこうなんなんか、こう、女の子と付き合うと、レズって言われるじゃないですか？でもそこじゃないんだ、みたいない。それはなんか違うけど、自分の位置づけはどこなんだようなってずっと思ってて、大学入る前くらいかな、丁度高 3 の受験ぐらいの時に、丁度高校のサッカー部の先輩で自分みたいな人がいて、その人がそういう話をしてくれて。で、それなら合うかも知れて思ったのが GID なんですよ (At that time, I didn’t know who I was, I was always like, um, when you date with a girl, people called you lesbian, you know? But I was like, it’s not that. It was somehow different, but I was always wondering my positionality. I was maybe before I entered university, when it was about the time of university entrance exam in the third year in high school, there was my soccer club senior who was like me. The person told me a story like that, and then, what I thought might fit me was GID).

To my question, “... you had a kind of gender identity early on?”, Shun answered yes,
although he also mentioned that he was unsure if his childhood counter-identifications with things that were ‘feminine’ (i.e. red colored randoseru and wearing skirts) meant that he already had a masculine gender identity. He became very sure about his different gender identity from other girls in middle school, but he was unsure of his “positionality” until he learned the concept of GID at the end of high school. Shun was somewhat critical of the “counseling” process which requires transgender subjects to tell a coherent narrative of their consistent gender dysphoria (“I don’t know if there is a gender identity there”). Yet, his narrative also demonstrates that it was the best way he could understand and explain his masculine identity and his interest in women. Until his soccer team senior indirectly named him with GID, he did not know exactly how to explain his discomfort with feminine gender norms. He named himself not as a lesbian or girl, but something else that was unrecognizable for himself too. Even though the medicalized discourse of transsexual identity, or GID, is harmful and put Shun into a marginalized subject position as a person with a “disorder”, within the transphobic Japanese society, the category was necessary for Shun to come into existence, to be recognizable to others and also to himself. For him, a type of social recognition offered by GID was more livable than being rendered unrecognizable or misrecognized with other queer categories such as lesbian, onabe,40 or just a masculine heterosexual female athlete. Furthermore, such a recognizable subject position opened up a way for Shun to negotiate with his family and Japanese society in his medical and legal gender reassignment processes.

Shun was able to use his GID diagnosis as an uncontestable fact, a truth, in persuading his family to understand and to accept his decision to start the medical gender reassignment processes. When Shun first came out to his mother, his mother questioned the legitimacy of his

40 See the section, “Social construct of ab/normal sexualities in Japan” in Chapter Two for a detailed discussion of other queer identity categories in Japan.
Shun’s mother initially resisted Shun’s coming out by attributing his masculine gender identity to his FtM transsexual friend, questioning the legitimacy of his identity. When the medical certificate was presented to her, however, she could no longer argue. With the diagnosis, the certificate of GID, Shun could speak through the “voice” of the medical authority that his ‘trans/GID’ identity is the truth and undisputable. Shun’s description of his coming out to his
mother demonstrates the circulation of the effect of power/knowledge in the emergence of a performative ‘trans/GID’ identity. Shun’s ‘trans/GID’ identity came into existence and was stabilized through his recitation and repetition of the trans-normative narrative: ‘trans’ people were given a ‘recognizable subject position as GID by the Japanese medical authority; the normative narrative was recited by other ‘trans’ people (his team’s senior and friends) that called Shun into the recognizable subject position as ‘trans/GID’; Shun then narrated his life history as a masculine identified person that was recognized by the medical authority, thus provided with the certificate; it was then used by Shun to come out to his family and friends and to start gender reassignment treatments. While his mother’s power as an adult and parent had certain influence on Shun’s decision to transition, his mother’s resistance to his gender identity was deflected by the voice of medical authority. Thus, the recognizable ‘trans/GID’ identity and subject position is the effect of the power/knowledge of the Japanese (and Western) medical and legal authorities. The identity is maintained through the dialectical process of being-named and self-naming, which is the recitation of the normative ‘trans/GID’ discourses.

The important work of the power/knowledge in the production of a recognizable ‘trans/GID’ subject is also demonstrated by Ryo’s contrary identification with GID. Unlike Shun, Ryo had not been diagnosed with GID; thus, their identification with GID remained as a possibility.

Ryo: 自分、このインタビュー受けたんは、あのジェンダーとかそういうの、を、性認識？とか書いてあって、で、自分もそういうので結構悩んでて。性同一性障害、かな？みたいな。でも多分そう、みたいな (The reason why I accepted this interview is because, um, it[the call for participants] said gender or something, gender identity? And then, I’m also struggling with those things. I’m thinking like, I might be, seidōitsuseishōgai? Maybe I am).
Itani: うんうん。なるほどね（Yes yes. I see）。

Ryo: まだそんな詳しくはやってないんですけど。自分も、好きやなって思う人は女性ですし。そういうの、含めて、このインタビューが、すごい、興味があって、受けた感じなんで（I haven’t done anything specific. But, the person I like is a woman. Including these things, I was interested in this interview, very much, so I accepted it）。

Itani: あぁ、ありがとうございます（Ah, thank you very much）。

Ryo: はい（Yes）。

Itani: じゃあ今は性自認については分からないけど、迷ってる、自分でもちょっとこう、何かなって?（Then, right now, you are not sure about your gender identity but wondering, like who you are?）。

Ryo: そうですね。そ、ま、あんまり気にしてないっていうか。そこまで（Yes, but, um, I don’t really worry about it, so much）。

Itani: んー、なるほど（Umm, I see）。

Ryo: はい、そこに囚われずにちょっと今は…考えてないですね、それについてはあんまり深くは。将来どうしようとか（Yes, I’m not tied to it now... I’m not thinking about it so deeply, like what I should do in the future）。

Without a GID diagnosis, Ryo could only refer to GID as a possibility, but not as a stable identity or certain reference point for their narrative of a ‘trans’ identity. Ryo’s “subject position” is constituted by a series of negations: not a woman, not a man, not a lesbian, not sure about ‘trans/GID.’ In other words, Ryo was casted out of intelligibility to become an abject.

In the first interview, Ryo mainly spoke about how they did not think too much about their gender identity anymore, and shared with me the stories about how he had been relatively successful in negotiating with his family and schools about his masculine gender identity and expressions. In the second interview, however, when I expressed my admiration for their courage
to negotiate and live just the way they are, Ryo began to talk about similar struggles to Shun’s to fit into the social norms and defining who they were within the limited frameworks offered by Japanese society.

いや、そんな言えますけど考えますよ、めちゃめちゃ。めちゃくちゃ深く考えて、もう迷宮入りしちゃうんで。まぁ、で、迷宮入りして、辿り着いたんが、そこなんですね、もう… (Well, although I say it like that, I think about it a lot. After thinking so much, it gets so complicated that I cannot find a way out. After getting lost, that’s where I arrived at...).

完璧に、悩み始めたんが高校2年生？…中学校は、思ってたけど隠してたんです、自分。で、周りに合わせようと必死で。っていう、時期ですね。高校、1年生の頃もそうだし。もんなか、思ってたけど、なんか違うなって思ってたけど、そんなこと周りに言えないし、あとは、それを隠し、自分を変えれるのに必死で、時期で、で高校2年生になって、「あ、変えなくてもいいんだ。」って、そん時に付き合ってた彼女、が、いて、で、その彼女と付き合う時は、自分はそうやっていう風に分かってなかったんですけど、その子が、こうなんか言ってきてくれて、なんか付き合いそうみたいになって、完全に関係的には自分は女っぽくは一切しないし、そんな感じで男っぽく、そこであぁそうなんやって気づいたぐらい (It was in the second year in high school? when I started to be seriously worried about [their gender identity] ... In middle school, I was thinking about it but I was hiding it. It was the period that I was desperate to fit in. My first year in high school was the same. It’s like, I was thinking, I was thinking that something was different but I couldn’t say it to people. I was desperate to hide it, to change myself. That kind of phase. Then, when I became the second year in high school, I realized, “Oh, I don’t have to change myself.” There was a girlfriend, who I was dating with at the time, then, when I started dating her, I didn’t know I was like this, but she came to tell me, and then it became like we were going to date, and in terms of the
relationship with her, I don’t act like woman at all, I was like a guy just like this, and at the moment, I realized, oh I’m like that).

Butler (2004) argues that social recognition, or being recognized as a person, is a condition of a livable life. Through interpellation, which is conditioned or framed by the preexisting discourses, one becomes a recognizable subject as it offers terms that enable one to see their relationship to the society. When a subject finds that they are outside of the dominant social norm, this is experienced as abjection. If we cannot be recognized as a legitimate human being in the terms offered by a society, Butler argues, “if there are no norms of recognition by which we are recognizable, then it is not possible to persist in one’s own being, and we are not possible being” (p. 31). Although Ryo was named variously in their life as a girl, woman, lesbian, and so on, Ryo did not have a name of their own to dialectically constitute a socially recognizable subject; thus, they remained unrecognizable for others and for themselves. As I will discuss in the following sections, Ryo’s unrecognizability poses various challenges in their narration of their identification, counter-identification, and dis-identification with feminine and masculine objects. Their narrative shifts, gets fragmented, and slips, exposing the performativity and instability of gender identity categories, including ‘trans/GID.’

Ryo and Shun’s different relationships to the ‘trans/GID’ discourse were also reflected in the ways in which they related themselves to a particular “trans-normative” narrative: identification with famous ‘trans’ people in Japan. In our conversation, Shun agreed with me that the change in the mainstream media discourse on GID and ‘trans’ people since the year 2000 has had a significant impact on the “recognizability” of ‘trans’ subjects. In 2003, in one of the episodes in a popular television drama series called Kinpachi-sensei (Teacher Kimpachi), a FtM transgender character, Tsurumoto Nao, was included as a main character. In addition to the popularity of the TV series, because Tsurumono’s role was played by a popular actress, Ueto
Aya, the series was viewed by the significant population in Japan, making the term, seidōitsuseishōgai, widely known in the society. An increasing number of male-to-female (MtF) transsexual (both preoperative and postoperative) TV personalities also started to appear in the mainstream media. In our interview, Shun explained how his friends often tried to understand his gender identity through the stories of these TV personalities and celebrities when he came out as a ‘trans/GID’ man.

Itani: 性同一性障害とかトランスのことについては、あの金八先生がやっぱり大きいっていうの聞いて (I’ve heard that Kinpachi-sensei’s influence was significant [in making the issue visible in Japan] in relation to GID and trans).

Shun: あぁ! (Ah!).

Itani: やっぱり大きかったと思う? (Do you think it was significant too?)

Shun: そうですね、確かに、あれ見たときは、もう、なんか最初…見てました? [I think so, indeed, when I saw it, like at the beginning... Did you watch it?]

Itani: 後で見た。YouTubeで (I watched it later, on YouTube).

Shun: シャワーのシーンがあって、(There was a shower scene.)

Itani: はいはいはい (Yes yes yes).

Shun: 上戸彩が。で、なんか最初はロングスカを履いてくるから、足に傷があるって言って話してて、たしか。でもシャワーしてたらどこにも傷が無くて、で丁度うちは家族で見てて、自分はすぐ分かったんですよ。あ、多分そういうことだみたいな。分かって、一緒に見るのが気まずくなるくらい [笑]。でもみんな言いますね、あれ、あの子と一緒なんですね！ (by Ueto Aya. Then, at the beginning, she came [to school] with a long skirt and said there was a scar on the leg, I think. But when [Ueto Aya] was taking shower, there was no scar. I was watching it with family, and then, I quickly realized that. Like, oh, it is probably
about it. I realized it and became so awkward to watch it together [Laughs]. But everyone says that, like, “You are same as that person, aren’t you?” So when I come out, I talk about the story, the story of Ueto Aya.

Itani: じゃやっぱりあれによって日本全体の認識がだいぶ変わった感じがする？ (Then, do you think that the perception in Japan has changed a lot because of that?)

Shun: はしますけど、でも一番変わったのはやっぱりカルーセル麻紀とか、はるな愛じゃないかなと思うんですよ (I feel that way, but I think the biggest reasons is probably Karūseru Maki and Haruna Ai).

Itani: あぁー (Ah).

Shun: 大体みんなあれの逆だよって話すると、「あ、そういうことね」みたいな (When I say that I’m opposite of them, almost everyone would be like, “Oh, I see”).

Both Karūseru Maki and Haruna Ai are MtF transsexual entertainers. When seidōitsuseishōgai was not a fully recognizable term in Japanese society, the citation of the TV personalities and a drama character that have already been established in the society enabled Shun to talk about and negotiate social recognition of his gender identity. Yet, none of these characters fully represent who Shun is. Karūseru Maki and Haruna Ai are both postoperative MtF transsexual entertainers, who use various identity categories to present their TV personalities such as onē (sister) and nyū-hāfu (new-half). Seidōitsuseishōgai is a “non-entertainment” identity category that was used to describe who Karūseru Maki and Haruna Ai are in more recent years. But onē does not necessarily mean ‘trans’ or person with “gender dysphoria”; it could be used for feminine gay men as well. Thus, while there is still an ontological blurriness between feminine gay men and

41 Both Karūseru Maki and Haruna Ai are Japanese popular entertainers and TV personalities. They identify and present themselves as women and openly talk about their gender transition from male to female. Their genders have been variously labeled as nyū-hāfu (new-half), onē, okama, or seidōitsuseishōgai on the TV as well as by themselves.
MtF transgender folks, *seidōitsuseishōgai* or GID seems to erase all the different nuances and social meanings to produce a simplified ‘trans’ subject. Shun is neither onē nor *nyū-hāfu*. Even Tsurumoto Nao, a FtM transgender character in the *Kimpachi Sensei* drama series, does not fully represent Shun because Tsurumoto Nao receives neither GID diagnosis nor gender reassignment treatments in the story. Yet, identification with and recitation of these ‘trans’ personalities enabled Shun to speak himself into existence as a ‘trans/GID’ person in a way recognizable to others.

Unlike Shun, Ryo went through their puberty after *seidōitsuseishōgai* gained certain social recognition and the appearance of Karūseru Maki, Haruna Ai and other onē TV personalities became a daily scene in Japanese society. Ryo, however, did not immediately identify with either *seidōitsuseishōgai* or onē.

---

**Ryo:** 性同一性障害も知ってて、言葉、的には。言葉的には知ってたんですけど、自分、まさか自分に当てはめることができるかどうか、自分と当てはめることが、なかったっていうか。自分と当てはめることが、そこで、照らし合わせたっていうか。その、高校の時に（How to say, I knew *seidōitsuseishōgai*, as a word. I knew it as a word, but, I didn’t really apply it to myself, kind of. I didn’t apply to myself, and then, I compared it to myself, um, when I was in high school).

**Itani:** あー、なるほどね。そういう言葉ってテレビで結構聞く？(Oh I see. Do you often hear these words on TV?).

**Ryo:** いや、テレビでは聞かなかったです。自分は (No, I didn’t hear it on TV).

**Itani:** あ、そう？ (Oh really?).

**Ryo:** テレビ、ではそんな時は聞かなかったです。はるな愛とかも出てくる、前っていうか、やと思うんですけど、多分自分はそんな時知ってたから。でも男、男から女になる人見てても、自分と一緒やなっていうのは感じなくて。だからかもしれないですけど (Not on TV
back then, I think it was before Haruna Ai and others started to appear on TV, because I probably already knew [seidōitsuseishōgai] when they came. But when I see people who become woman from man I don’t feel like they were same as me. It might be why).

Ryo became aware of their masculine identities and differences from their female peers since grade five or six, in terms of their lack of interest in boys and dislike of feminine clothes. Ryo also knew onē TV personalities and seidōitsuseishōgai “as a word”; yet, as they put it, Ryo did not put “them”, the knowledge, and their gender identities, together to name themselves through the existing ‘trans’ discourses. Thus, the knowledge was not mobilized in Ryo’s negotiation with others for recognition until later in their life.

Thus, Ryo’s different process of “self-naming” troubles the normative ‘trans/GID’ identity and discourses by refusing the stable, coherent explanation. Falling through the fissure opened up between the cisgenderist, heteronormative, and trans-normative frames of recognition, Ryo remained unrecognizable to themselves and others. Floating between signifiers that are not them, Ryo’s subject position is a series of ‘neither this nor that,’ constituting a queer subject.

Languages and Intelligibility Before GID

The queer subject position of Ryo that is experienced as abject is also demonstrated by Shun’s experiences before his encounter with GID discourse. As demonstrated in Ryo’s difficulties in speaking about themself, the lack of ‘language’ or ‘words’ to speak about different gender identities posed difficult challenges for Shun’s process of “self-naming.” While the English “LGBTQ” categories have been adopted into Japanese and have had some circulation in the Japanese “queer” communities and beyond (see the section “Brief History of Queer Gender and Sexual Practices in Modern Japan” in the Chapter Two), neither the word “transgender” nor its concept have permeated to the large part of Japanese society. Even the cisgendered and
heterosexual participants in this research study avoided using any “category” terms such as rezubian or gei in the interviews, despite their support for LGBTQ athletes and friends. The participants frequently referred to ‘lesbian’ or ‘trans’ people as “sōyū hito” (that type of person) or “socchi no kata” (a person on that side), demonstrating the strong taboo in Japanese society of talking about non-heterosexuality and non-cisgender identities. In the homophobic and transphobic Japanese society, LGBTQ people are still literally cast out to “the other side” of speakable gender identities and sexualities even today. Furthermore, as Pak (2007) argues in her analysis of the silencing of zainichi identity in Japanese society, the act of not mentioning other’s identity “categories” means that the “category” is considered inferior—a taboo. The ones, whose identity category is not said, “must recognize their own attribute as ‘inferior’” (Pak, 2007, p. 364) through the avoidance of speaking about the identity category. The category itself is not “inferior”, rather, by not speaking about it, by making it a taboo, the identity category “is made” inferior (p. 364). Even those participants who actively talk about their support of gay and ‘trans’ athletes avoid using “LGBTQ” identity categories. It seems that only the identity categories for queer entertainers’, such as okama, nyū-hāfu, or onē are more casually and comfortably used in their conversations. In that environment, it was perhaps an inevitable consequence that many ‘trans’ or non-cisgendered people had to resort to the medicalized concept of seidōitsu seishōgai (GID) that came to be more recognized and spoken, if not more accepted, when it was introduced by the medical authority with the stamp of legitimacy.

Shun began to recognize his difference from other girls and became more conscious of his masculine gender identity before the seidōitsu seishōgai (GID) discourse became prevalent in Japan. Shun remembered that as a “pre-GID” closeted ‘trans’ person, he recognized the taboo of homosexuality as well as cross-gender identification; thus, he had to perform as a cisgendered heterosexual woman. Despite his effort to perform a hetero-woman, however, Shun’s friends
kept raising the question if Shun liked women in middle school and high school.

Itani: 「お前女好きだろ」って言ってきた人、自分の何を見てそういってるんだと思う？(The person who said to you, “You like women, don’t you?” what do you think the person saw from you?).

Shun: どうなんですかね、だって自分も自分の中で一応取り繕ってるんで、好きな芸能人聞かれたら必ず男応えるようにしてたりとか、そういう意識はあるんすよ、自分の中で。隠さなきゃみたいな。だから絶対、中学校の時にも言われてるのもあるから、あ、中学校の時は ELT が好きだって言ってて、それもあって持田が好きで、みたいに言われてて [笑]。「そういう系の女の子が好きなんでしょう」みたいな [笑] (I don’t know, because I patch things up in my own way. If I was asked my favorite celebrity’s name, I gave men’s name, for example. I was conscious about these things in my mind, like I have to hide it. So I must, because I was told in middle school too. Ah, because I was saying I like ELT\[42\] in the middle school, [his peers] said I like Mochida [Laughs]. They were like, “You like that type of girls” [Laughs]).

Itani: なるほど [笑] (I see [Laughs]).

Shun: だからもうなんか格好いい俳優言ってけっぱいよいみたいな。言ってるにも関わらず言われるから、何ですかね、どこ見てるんだろう。自分もそれ考えたことないっすね。何で言われるんだろうって、ずっと短髪だからと思ってて。女らしくしないとか。私服で会うじゃないですか、あの学校の友達と。でそんなときにやっぱり私服見て、「なんでそんな男っぽい格好するの」とかは言われたことがあるって、「いや、ズボンが好きだから」とか。「スカートなんて履いたことない」みたいな (So I felt like I should just give the name of a

---

42 ELT (Every Little Thing) is a popular Japanese band that gained significant followings in the late 1990s and the early 2000s. The band was originally a trio with Mochida Kaori as the singer, Ito Ichiro as the guitarist, and Igarashi Mitsuru as the keyboarder. The band later became a duo in 2000 when Igarashi left the group. Mochida is the only female member of the band.
cool actor. But even though I was saying that, I was still said to be like that. So I don’t know, I don’t know where they are looking at. I haven’t thought about it. I always thought it was because I had short hair, or I’m not feminine. You know, when I meet my friends from school in plainclothes, they looked at my clothes and said, “Why do you dress like men?” So I said like, “No, I just like pants”, or “I’ve never worn skirts”).

Shun tried to hide their masculine identity and interest in women by preparing ready-made answers that fit into cisgenderist and heterosexist norms. This strategy resonates with the experiences of some of the Japanese masculine identified transgender authors (i.e. Torai, 1996; Sugiyama, 2006). At the edge of the Japanese cisgenderist and heterosexist gender and sexual norms and the intelligibility of a “trans” identity, Shun attempted to protect his masculine identity (wearing men’s clothes, having short hair etc.) while performing as a ‘hetero-girl’, who prefers pants over skirts and has interests in male celebrities but is not dating boys “yet” in order not become the abject. Despite his effort to balance his identity and intelligibility, “something” about Shun, perhaps his “short hair” and non-feminine mannerisms raised the suspicion that he might be interested in women. Yet, before the GID discourse was introduced, the ‘suspicion’ did not extend to his gender identity, despite his masculine gender expressions.

It is noteworthy that when Shun’s friends’ interrogated his sexual orientation, they avoided the use of terms such as gei, rezubian, onabe, homo, and so on. Since it was his friends, they might have avoided using the stigmatized categories against their friend to scrutinize his sexuality. It is another example of how Japanese homophobia and transphobia are often observed in the avoidance of the ‘naming’ or the speaking of the identity categories, rather than in physical and verbal violence or in treating ‘LGBTQ’ people as nonexistent. ‘LGBTQ’ people are ‘talked’ without their ‘name’ (i.e. “a person on that side”). I do not mean to say that there is no
violence or bullying against ‘LGBTQ’ people in school and the society. As researchers (Inaba, 2010; Kato, 2008; Kazama et al., 2011) have shown, such violence based on gender expressions, identities, and sexualities unfortunately are still very much part of the reality for Japanese ‘LGBTQ’ people. Instead, what I highlight here is that even when “queer” people do not experience overt violence and abuse, the “avoidance” of naming conveys the clear message that non-heterosexual, non-cisgender identities are unspeakable; thus, such identity categories are unlivable. Shun knew he had to “hide” his interest in women even though he was unsure exactly who he was. He could not be a lesbian, both because of his identity and because of homophobia.

In addition to the lack of “categories” to identify and speak about one’s self, the Japanese gendered “first-person” is also a complicated and difficult issue to negotiate for non-cisgendered persons. As I wrote elsewhere (Itani, 2011), Japanese first persons are gendered unlike the gender neutral English “I”. There are numerous first persons, each of which has different connotations regarding the speaker’s positionality such as class, formality, gender, and even sexuality. For instance, “watashi” is the most commonly used first person pronoun used for girls and women. Adult men may also use watashi in a formal context, but boys and men are usually expected to use “boku” or “ore” in a casual or even in a formal conversation.

In the interviews, both Shun and Ryo used the first person “jibun”, which literary means “oneself”. Although jibun is not a common choice of first person for either women or men, it is perhaps even more rare for women, unless it is in the specific conversational context in which one must emphasize the “self”, or to lower oneself in a conversation against the other who is older or in a higher position. “Jibun”, in turn, is commonly used by military personnel and some boys and men who may be identified as “taiikukaikei” (athletic), who must lower themselves
against higher ranked officers or coaches. For *taiikukaikei* girls and women, however, it is *not* common, but it is possible. If girls and women use other masculine first persons such as *boku* or *ore*, it is considered strange, if not abnormal. But for *taiikukaikei* girls, the use of “*jibun*” may be tolerated since it signals a more athletic identity as much as, if not more than, a masculine gender identity.

Shun explained that before he learned the concept of GID and formed a more stable gender identity around the discourse, he used the first person, *jibun*.

**Itani:** 位置づけが分からない時でも自分なりになんとかしよう、なんとかどっかにフィットさせようとするじゃない？(When you don’t know your positionality, you still try to do something, try to fit somewhere, don’t you?).

**Shun:** はい (Yes).

**Itani:** 自分が何者なのかって。どういう言葉を使ってたか覚えてる？(About who you are. Do you remember what kind of word you used?).

**Shun:** スポーツやってたから、体育会系だってたい自分っていうじゃないですか。だから自分って言ってたと思います (Because I was playing sport, you know, *taiikukaikei* people usually say *jibun*. So I think I was using *jibun*).

**Itani:** あー、自分のこと呼ぶ時にはね。私とは言えなかった？(Ah, when you call yourself. You couldn’t say *watashi*?).

**Shun:** わたし、使ってないですね (I didn’t use, *watashi*).

Living through puberty in the “pre-GID” era, Shun had to negotiate the everyday demand of performing as a woman without a clear ‘category’ he could comfortably fit in. He resorted to the first person pronoun, *jibun*, which his involvement in a sport offered him.

---

43 See the “*Taiikukaikei* Women” section in Chapter Four for a detailed discussion of the use and the meaning of *taiikukaikei* women.
After finding an identity category they might be able to identify with—GID—Ryo and Shun followed different paths in terms of going to counseling, receiving the diagnosis, and following through with the medical and legal gender reassignment processes. Yet, Shun’s past struggle and Ryo’s ongoing challenge in ‘self-naming’ demonstrate the crucial role of language in the formation of subjectivity and the negotiation of subject position. In order for the ‘negotiation’ to be possible, a queer subject also has to employ the discursive resources offered by the society. Yet, Ryo and Shun’s insistence on masculine gender expressions and not dating with men, demonstrate the subtle but fascinating ways in which they ‘negotiated’ within the cisgenderist and heteronormative school and sporting spaces. In the following sections, I focus on how the sporting space posed challenges to Ryo and Shun and offered them a space to negotiate the social norms. Their different relationships to ‘trans/GID’ identities and discourses affected the ways in which they negotiated the Japanese norms of gender and sexuality differently. Their trajectories, however, demonstrate the profound continuities both in the challenges non-cisgendered athletes experience and in their employment of the normative sporting female masculinity discourses in their daily negotiations with the Japanese gender norms.

**Negotiating Cisgenderism, Transphobia, and the Masculine Constructions of Soccer**

In this section, I focus more closely on Ryo and Shun’s experiences of sporting spaces and how they negotiated the gender and sexual norms in and through their involvement in sports. In the first sub-section, I look at their beginning as soccer players and examine how gendered constructions of sports limited their choices of sport, while the masculine constructions of soccer helped them in negotiating masculine gender expressions and the forming of their gendered subjectivities. In the second sub-section, I focus on their negotiation with the gender norms by
mobilizing the school jersey, the only gender-neutral clothing in school. In the final subsection, I examine how sport participation remained a difficult issue for non-cisgendered athletes, even in the “post-GID” era, in which some ‘trans’ people gained social recognition and terms to negotiate their gendered subject positions.

**Identifications, Counter-Identifications, and Disidentification with Gendered Constructions of Sport**

Compared to wrestling, soccer has enjoyed more visibility and popularity in Japanese society. Although the access to an official soccer club or school team is still limited for girls and women, there is no lack of visibility for soccer. It is played in parks and schoolyards, and the games in the J. League, European Professional Football Leagues, and various international tournaments are constantly on the Japanese television. In recent years, especially since the popularity of Nadeshiko Japan soared in 2011, female role models and super-heroines in soccer became a reality. Before the rise of Nadeshiko Japan in the latter half of the 2000s, however, female soccer players hardly appeared in the Japanese media. In such a “pre-Nadeshiko” era, Ryo and Shun grew up watching two major Japanese cultural icons that led the “soccer booms” in the 1980s and 1990s—Captain Tsubasa and the J-League.

*Captain Tsubasa* is one of the most popular soccer themed comics in Japan. It was originally published as a comic series from 1981 to 1988, but became so popular that it was turned into three TV animation series and five movies. The success of *Captain Tsubasa* resulted in the explosion of the popularity of soccer and it turned what was once considered a minor sport in Japan into one of the most popular sports among boys and men. The *Captain Tsubasa*’s latest comic book series is still ongoing as of July 2014, and continues to support soccer popularity in Japan today. In addition to *Captain Tsubasa*, the Japanese men’s professional soccer league, J-League, started in 1993 to trigger the second wave of the soccer boom, firmly establishing
soccer’s popularity in Japan.

Ryo was one of the many children who were influenced by Captain Tsubasa and began playing soccer. Ryo started to play soccer with their brother in their neighborhood park. When a flier about a local girls’ soccer team was distributed to their house by chance in grade six, Ryo grasped the opportunity and officially started their soccer career. Although the club team was a non-competitive, recreational team, Ryo continued playing throughout middle school until they entered a more competitive team in high school. Before starting soccer, Ryo was also trained in trampoline. As Ryo grew older, they became aware of the discrepancy between their masculine gender identity and the feminine attire and long hair required for girls in trampoline.

小学校1年生の時、髪の毛伸ばさないとダメなんです。髪の毛結ばないと、なんかダメって言われて。[Inaudible]めっちゃいたってことは、結ってられると思うし、思わなかったですし。まぁ伸ばせって言われてたから伸ばしてて。でも、嫌やなって思い始めたんが、小 5、か、小 4 か、6くらい。小4か、小5ぐらいかな (When I was grade one, I had to grow my hair. They told me that I had to tie my hair. [Inaudible] but I stayed [in trampoline] for a long time, and it means I thought I could tie my hair and I didn’t feel [bad about it]. Well, I grew my hair because I was told to do so. But I started to dislike it in grade five, or, grade four, or six. Maybe grade four or five.)

Since I was not familiar with trampoline, I asked how Ryo thought about its gendered constructions. They explained the gender differences in the uniform.

Itani: トランポリンってでも男女のイメージある？私は全然ないんだけど (Is there a masculine or feminine image for trampoline? I don’t really have it).

Ryo: ありがちなんですよ。着る服が。男の子は白いしゅっとした、ま、それもレオタードみたいなんですけど、ここまでのん、着て、女ののは、女はレオタードこんなんで (It tends to have one, the clothes they wear. Boys wear a white, straight, well, it’s still like leotard,
but it goes down to here [Gesturing the length of boys’ pants reaching the ankle].
And for girls, girls leotard is like this [Gesturing a leotard cut at hip joints]).

Itani: タイツみたいなん？(Was it like tights?).

Ryo: そうそうそう。だったら、まぁ嫌でしたね、それ着るのは (Yes yes. So yeah, I didn’t like wearing it).

Ryo discontinued trampoline when they entered middle school and experimented with different sports. While practicing soccer in a “recreational” club team a few days a week, Ryo also tried out track and field, basketball, and softball. Athletically gifted, Ryo succeeded in both soccer and softball, but they eventually chose soccer according to others’ recommendation to continue playing the sport Ryo had played for a longer period.

Their mother was supportive of soccer, but their grandmother strongly recommended volleyball instead of soccer. Ryo refused her strong recommendation to play volleyball because of its feminine image and continued with their soccer career.

婆ちゃんがバレー好きで、バレーボールやりなさいってめっちゃ言われてたんですよ。絶対嫌だって言ってて。それは、自分のイメージ、パッてイメージが、女の人のスポーツっていう。女らしくしないといけないスポーツみたいながあって。でも、まぁ実際高校とかで見てたら、全然、バレーボールとか楽しいし、やっとても良かったかなって思いますけど (My grandma liked volleyball and she kept telling me to play volleyball. But I was telling her that that’s absolutely no way. That’s because, in my image, its first impression was like, it’s women’s sport. I had the impression that I had to be feminine. But, I also think it was probably fine to play volleyball because when I actually saw it in high school, volleyball was actually quite fun).

Retrospectively, Ryo thought volleyball could have been a fun sport they could have played, rather than a feminine sport they had not wanted to be involved in. When Ryo was becoming more aware of their gender identity and was sensitive to the gendered constructions of sport,
however, volleyball was not an option for Ryo.

Shun was also clearly aware of the masculine constructions and men’s domination of soccer when he started playing, and it was one of the important reasons why he chose soccer over other sports he considered. Before he finally found GID as an identifiable category, Shun was slowly forming his gendered subjectivity against feminine norms and alongside the things that were constructed as boys’. Soccer was one of them. By the time Shun started playing soccer in grade six, Shun already had had the image of soccer as a boys’ sport, and indeed, there were no girls around him who played soccer. Not wanting to play sports among girls, soccer offered him satisfaction as he felt like he was playing a boys’ sport.

Shun’s ‘identification’ with the masculine construction of soccer was quickly challenged when he entered middle school, in which there was no soccer team. Shun attempted to create a soccer team in his school, but the attempt was not successful. One of his female friends from their elementary school came to his rescue by finding a small women’s soccer team in his community that was open for girls and women of all ages and was practicing for recreational purposes. Even though Shun was no longer able to resort to the all-boys environment for his gendered identification with soccer in a women’s soccer team, he was still able resort to its masculine image and the less feminine uniforms compared to other sports.

Shun: ほんとはバスケもやりたくて。でもバスケをやると、なんていうんですっけ、ノースリーブじゃないですか。だから脇を剃らないといけないとか、そういう外観上が嫌で (I actually wanted to play basketball too. But if I play basketball, how do you call it, it’s no-sleeves, you know. So I had to shave my armpits and things like that. So I didn’t like the appearance).

Itani: たしかに (That’s true).

Shun: だからあれはできない、みたいな。ほんとは、サッカーも好きだったんですけど、そのた
またま好きだった先生がバスケ部の顧問だったんで、バスケ行ききたかったんですよ。でも、あのユニフォームは着れないと思って。しかも自分らの時代って、ああいうバスパンって大きいいやつじゃなくて、ミニパンじゃなかったですか？ [笑] ブルマに近いような (So it was like, I can’t do that. I actually did like soccer too, but at that time, the teacher I liked happened to be a basketball team’s coach so I wanted to play basketball. But I thought I couldn’t wear that uniform. Besides, in our generation, basketball pants weren’t the loose ones but mini-pants, were they? [Laughs] Like similar to bloomers).

Itani: あぁ！(Ah!).

Shun: だからバレーボールもナシだったんですよね (So volleyball wasn’t an option either).

Itani: バレーボールもそうだったね (Yeah, volleyball was like that too).

Shun: バレーボールも誘われたんですよ。中学の時。でもそのユニフォームは着れないと思って (I was asked to join a volleyball team too in the middle school. But I thought I couldn’t wear the uniform).

Itani: ブルマはあり得ないよね [笑] (Yeah, bloomer is impossible [Laughs]).

Shun: 絶対、絶対嫌だと思って。もう大体ブルマが嫌で、いつも忘れ物してって、ジャージで体育やってたんですよ。だから絶対あの、あのユニフォームあり得ない (Absolutely, I absolutely hated it. Because I didn’t like bloomer, I always pretended that I forgot to bring it to school and did PE class in jersey to begin with. So, that, that uniform is absolutely impossible).

Itani: あ、じゃあ学校ブルマだったの？中学校とか (Ah, then your school used bloomer? Was it in middle school?).

Shun: あ、中学校違うんですけど、小学校の時 (Oh, not in middle school, but in elementary school).
Itani: 履かされてたわけね (So you had to wear it).

Shun: もう嫌でしょうがなくて、あれが。そう、だから、ユニフォームで選んだのもあります。サッカーってけどこ、パンツともかもでかいじゃないですか。あの頃腰パン系が流ってたから。体型も分かんないしね (I couldn’t help hating it. Yeah, so uniform was part of the reason. Soccer is quite, you know the pants are large too. And at that time sagging pants were in trend. And also because it doesn’t reveal the body shape).

Itani: 確かに確かに (That’s right, that’s right).

Shun: そうなんですね。だからたぶん水泳とかだったらできないから (Yeah, so I probably couldn’t do things like swimming).

In middle school, since he could neither have access to a men’s soccer team nor disclose his masculine gender identity with ‘GID’ diagnosis, he had to settle with a women’s team. Thus, Shun’s strategy to stay connected to soccer through its less revealing uniform and the masculine impression it carried can be considered a one form of what Muñoz (1999) conceptualized as disidentification. In cisgenderist and transphobic Japanese society in which his gender identity was rendered intelligible, Shun utilized the masculine constructions of soccer and its women’s, but unfeminine uniforms, to sustain his masculinity without risking becoming abject by joining other men’s sports teams in middle school.

Shun’s strategy to navigate the cisgenderist and transphobic society was also demonstrated during our interview. When I asked Shun why he started playing soccer at the beginning of the interview, he immediately answered, “I liked J-League.” He later added, however, that it was just one of the reasons among many, but it was the only one he could tell others.

Itani: [サッカーを始めた理由を聞かれた場合に] 人に予め用意しとく言葉とかあった？ ([In case
you are asked about the reasons why you started soccer] did you prepare any answer?)

Shun: あぁー。なんでサッカーやるのって言われたら Jリーグ好きだからっていう、言ってたんですけど ... とかやっぱり何だろう、女子の中で部活に入りたくないから、男子サッカー部に入选して (Ah, I always said that I liked J-League when someone asked me why I play soccer, but ... And also, how to say, because I didn’t want to do club activity among girls, I was in a boys’ soccer club”).

When Shun started playing soccer in grade six, J-League was enjoying enormous popularity among girls and boys, as well as with adults. While the actual soccer playing population was still small for girls, it would not be too surprising that some girls that liked the J-League so much they also actually wanted to play soccer. Therefore, Shun used his interest in J-League as a “ready-made” explanation to others when someone inquired about why he started playing a “boys’ sport” like soccer, rather than explaining his identification with its masculine image and unfeminine uniforms. Attempting to explain his identification with masculinity and counter-identification with femininity would have expunged him from intelligibility in the “pre-GID” Japanese society in which “cross-gender” identities were given only stigmatized labels such as onabe, okama, or nyū-hāfu. The “J-League” explanation was his strategy to camouflage his masculine gender identity, while at the same time maintaining his identification with masculine sports and remaining in the sphere of gender intelligibility.

Furthermore, growing up with a masculine gender identity, Shun hated bloomers, which not only distinguishes girls’ and boys’ bodies even in co-ed PE classes, but also may bring unwanted attention to their bodies as bloomers are often a fetishized object as a symbol of schoolgirls in Japan. It is quite understandable then, why Shun, as a masculine identified trans
youth, had difficulties wearing bloomers and sport uniforms that symbolized femininity, revealed body figure, and attracted fetishizing gazes towards schoolgirls. In addition to their often difficult and sometimes devastating process of dealing with their growing bodies during puberty, trans-youths like Shun have to navigate through binary-genders and gendered uniforms in PE and sport clubs. For Shun, even though he wanted to play basketball with the teacher he liked, the uniform did not allow him to join the team in order to protect his masculine identity. Volleyball and swimming, which use revealing and tight uniforms, were not even thinkable.

As Kazama et al. (2011) pointed out, Ryo’s and Shun’s beginnings as soccer players demonstrate how gendered constructions of sport, particularly the revealing and sexualized uniform designs in women’s sport, may limit or make it more difficult for non-cisgendered athletes and students to participate in sports and physical education. Non-cisgendered students and athletes have to navigate through cisgenderist and transphobic schools and physical education spaces by compromising their interests in sports while, at the same time, carefully protecting their gender identities and expressions in subtle but livable ways. By identifying with masculine constructions of soccer and disidentifying with the girls’ soccer team and its uniforms, Ryo and Shun found a livable space within the sexist, cisgenderist, and transphobic sporting spaces. Ryo’s and Shun’s narratives also demonstrated that gendered constructions and its materializations are an important part of their narratives of their gender identity. Ryo’s ambivalent relationship to feminine constructions of trampoline attire and volleyball, and Shun’s counter-identification with female dominated sports and feminine uniforms, for example, are not only the ‘expression’ of their gender identity, but also constitutive of their gendered subjectivities. Small pieces of identification, counter-identification, and disidentification events were knitted together into the “trans” narratives of their experiences with their body, gender, and sport.
In the next section, I extend the discussion of the “gendered” constructions of exercise uniforms to the ‘school jerseys,’ that are often worn in physical education classes and sport club activities in Japanese grade schools. School jerseys are often the only uniform in Japanese schools where the same or very similar designs are used for both girls and boys. As one of the rare ‘gender neutral’ clothes and as an athletic gear, school jerseys helped Ryo and Shun having a little relief time away from wearing the highly gendered and fetishized girls’ school uniforms.

**Negotiating Gender Expressions: Jersey as Gender Neutral Clothes in Cisgenderist School and Society**

When I asked Ryo and Shun if and how the sporting space offered them a sort of “safe” space, their answers were ‘yes’ because they were able to better express themselves than in the skirt school uniforms. The highly gendered designs of school uniforms and the rules about when and how they should be worn are often strictly enforced in Japanese schools. Not surprisingly, the emotional torment of wearing a school uniform is a part of the common narrative of ‘trans’ students’ experiences. An increasing number of Japanese schools are offering some forms of accommodations to school uniforms for ‘trans’ students (i.e. allowing them to wear plainclothes, a uniform of their self-identified gender, or a school jersey in a classroom). According to a report published by the Japanese Ministry of Education in 2014,

[A report](http://www.mext.go.jp/component/a_menu/education/micro_detail/__icsFiles/afieldfile/2014/06/20/1322368_01.pdf) however, 40 percent of the Japanese schools in which students disclosed their gender dysphoria or diagnosis of GID did not offer any accommodations.

---

44 According to this report that was published on June 13, 2014, 606 students disclosed their gender dysphoria or the GID diagnosis to their schools in Japan (elementary, middle, and high schools) in the period during April to December 2013. For 37.6 percent of the students, their schools did not offer any accommodations such as allowing them different uniforms, hairstyles, use of bathrooms and change rooms, use of gender-neutral pronouns, students' preferred name and so on. For the report of this research, see:

http://www.mext.go.jp/component/a_menu/education/micro_detail/__icsFiles/afieldfile/2014/06/20/1322368_01.pdf
accommodations. This is the first research of its kind conducted by the Japanese government even though the issue of GID has been highly publicized by the Japanese media since the late 1990s.

For Shun, who finished his high school at the beginning of the 2000s, it was perhaps almost unheard of that schools made such accommodations for students. Consequently, rather than negotiating with his school to allow him to wear different uniforms or school jerseys, Shun was looking forward to the time in school when students were allowed to remain in a jersey before or after physical education classes and during their club activities.

Itani: ジャージ着れる時間っていうのは自分の中で貴重だった？ (For you, was the time you could wear jersey precious?).

Shun: あ、貴重でしたね！だから体育が6時間目とかだと、昼から着替えとけるとか、その帰りそのままジャージで帰れるとか (Ah, it was precious! So if the sixth period is physical education class, we can get changed from lunch time, and you can also go home in jersey).

Itani: あー、そういうことができたんだね (Oh, you could do it like that).

Shun: あと一時間目が体育なら、朝からずっとジャージでいれるな、とか。そういう楽しみはありましたね。なんか、ジャージでいれるっていうのが (And if the first period is physical education, I can wear a jersey from the morning. I was looking forward to those things, like I can stay in a jersey).

Itani: じゃあ体育の空間は少しそういう制服とかのしがらみから、 (So then, physical education was a space where you could escape from the,).

Shun: そうですね (That’s right).

Itani: 抜けられる時間 (restrains of the school uniform).

Shun: はい (Yes).
Contrary to Shun, Ryo negotiated with their middle school to allow them to wear a school jersey instead of the girls’ uniform since it allowed Ryo to express themself better than a skirt. Ryo, however, said that he did *not* dislike wearing the skirt uniform so much; but since they had disclosed their trouble with gender identity to the school community, wearing a jersey was a more “coherent” presentation of the self.

Itani: スポーツのスペースに来たら気が楽になるとか、そういうような変化はなかった？ (Was there any difference, like you feel better when you come to sport spaces?).

Ryo: 中学校の時はありましたね、でも、はい。セーラー服着てて、自分も。で、別にそれがまあめちゃくちゃ嫌、っていうわけではなかったんですよ。それは、多分周りと合わせるためっていうか、自分だけ浮いてたら…っていうのがあったと思うんで、めちゃくちゃ嫌っていうのはなかったと思うんで。でもまぁ…ジャージ着てる方が楽っていうか、その方が自分らしさ出せるっていうか、のはやっぱあったと思ってて。で、高校の、その、めっちゃ考えた時期の、時に、先生に、担任の先生にも言って、色々話、生徒指導の先生とかと色々話して、制服で学校来るのやめたんですよ。で、ジャージ、色々条件付きで、ジャージで、通わしてもらえることになってて (It was like that when I was middle school, but, yes. I was also wearing sailor uniform. But then, it wasn’t like I really hated it. I think it was maybe because I was trying to fit in, or I worried about standing out… I don't think I really hated it. But then… it was like, wearing a jersey was easier, or like I could express myself better that way. I think these were factors. Then, in high school, when I was really worried about this, I told a teacher, my classroom teacher and had lot of conversation. I also talked with a student counselor, and I was allowed to go to school with jersey, with lots of conditions).

Itani: なるほどね (I see).

Ryo: はい。で、そういうのは…だからまぁ、そう、まぁスカートはくのとかをめちゃくちゃ嫌
Ryo emphasized that they did not hate wearing a skirt, unlike the common narrative of the Japanese FtM ‘trans’ community. While Ryo identified more closely with the jersey and did not like wearing a skirt so much, it was more a matter of having a coherent gender expression. For many students in Ryo’s generation, schools’ accommodating different uniforms or clothes in school, not only for gender identity but also for various health reasons, was perhaps not totally unheard of. Yet, the common ‘trans’ narrative was based on the narrow and rigid definition of GID, disclosing their masculine gender identity and being ok with wearing a skirt uniform was a contradiction.

Ryo’s negotiation with the school uniform also demonstrates the performativity of a ‘trans’ identity. The normative ‘trans/GID’ narrative quickly closed down different possibilities of queer gender identities as soon as one identifies as “trans/GID.” If one presents oneself as “trans/GID,” it is expected to have a stable and coherent gender identity as either a man or woman, along with the “matching” gender expressions. If Ryo did not express distress in wearing a skirt or anything symbolizing femininity, they are no longer ‘trans/GID.’ To fit into the narrow window of recognition, ‘trans/GID’ subjects must present themselves according to the norm set by the normative ‘trans/GID’ discourse, which was ironically formed through the early struggles by the Japanese ‘trans’ community for social recognition.

It is important to note how both Shun and Ryo resorted to a school “jersey” as a livable option in their schools. In many Japanese schools, the design of school jerseys for girls and boys
are often the same or very similar; it means that ‘trans’ students are able to avoid highly
gendered uniforms without wearing a uniform for the “opposite” gender from the one assigned at
birth. As I mentioned above, the school may not accommodate the request to wear the uniform of
the identified gender. Even if the school permits, it virtually becomes a public “coming out” for
the student. For those students with a “masculine identity” but not quite sure of a “male identity”
or those without a GID diagnosis, the jersey allows them to be somewhat in the middle, leaving
more space to mix in with other students.

For Shun, school jerseys also had important meanings beyond his life as a student. Shun
was pursuing a career as a physical education teacher, and he explained that the jersey was a part
of the reasons why he chose the profession, in addition to his passion for sports and love of
people. For him, being able to wear a jersey for his job seemed very attractive, compared to
wearing feminine suits or skirts commonly worn by Japanese female workers.

Itani: [体育の先生になることの]何が魅力だったのかなって (I’m wondering what was
appealing [about becoming a PE teacher] for you).

Shun: 多分小学校の時に、の、憧れてた先生がいて。ま、好きな先生が。その人が体育の免許持
ってる先生で、で部活教えてたりして。かっこいいなって思ってたんで (Maybe because,
there was a teacher that I admired in, in elementary school, well, a teacher I liked.
The teacher had a teaching license in PE and was teaching sport clubs. I thought it
was cool).

Itani: なるほどね。それ男の先生？女の先生？(I see. Was it a male teacher or female
teacher?).

Shun: それ女の先生なんですよ。そう、で、いいなって思って。とか体育の先生ってジャージ
でいられるじゃないですか？なんか、その時から考えてたのが、大人の、大人になって、ス
カートとか履きたくないと。体育の先生はジャージでいる。超いいなみたい。そうい
う、そういう思考もあって（It was a female teacher. Then, yeah, I thought it was nice.
And also, PE teacher can stay in a jersey, you know. So I have been thinking since
then that when I become adult, I wouldn’t want to wear skirts. PE teacher can stay
in a jersey. It would be so nice. I was thinking like that too).

As Ryo expressed their concerns about their future and their career, for trans youth who
do not know about the options or are not ready for gender reassignment treatments, finding an
occupation that may accommodate their gender identities and expressions is often difficult and
an agonizing issue. Fortunately for Shun, the female physical education teacher whom he
admired became his role model: although she was a female teacher, she was cool and wore a
jersey all day. Through his disidentification with the athletic female teacher in a jersey, Shun set
a goal to become a physical education teacher. Having a career goal in mind, Shun continued his
soccer career in the women’s university that provided an option to get a teaching license in
physical education.

In the last section of this chapter, I will discuss what challenges Ryo and Shun were
facing in continuing soccer and visioning and constructing their future career as physical
education teachers. Before moving onto to the discussion, however, I revisit the “third space”
opened up by the normative discourse of female sporting masculinity and analyze how the
discourses influenced Ryo’s and Shun’s negotiations with the cisgenderist and transphobic
society and sporting space.

**Normative Female Sporting Masculinity and Trans Invisibility**

In Chapter Six, I discussed how the construction of the “devoted female athlete” through
the normative discourses of female sporting masculinity opened up what I call “third space.” I
argued that this “third space” is opened up by the tension between feminine norms and the
construction of the “devoted” female athlete that is underpinned by sexist, heteronormative, and
cisgenderist discourses. For the female identified athletes, such a “third space” provided a room to be free from the pressure to conform to feminine norms and to experiment with masculine gender expressions. In this sub-section, I examine how this “third space” influenced Ryo and Shun’s negotiation with cisgenderist and transphobic schools and Japanese society.

As I briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, Shun and his female soccer teammates had a crew cut in his middle school. The school principal scolded them and ordered them to grow their hair longer. In this incident, Shun’s homeroom teacher attempted to justify their choice of hairstyle by appealing their ‘athletic needs’—“この子たちは暑いから大変なんです” (It’s hard for these students because it gets so hot). In this discourse, the masculine hairstyle (crew cut) that is outside of the feminine norm is considered necessary for them to make their training more comfortable.

Interestingly, Ryo and Sanae, the cisgendered female soccer player participant, also mentioned that there were many ‘female’ teammates who sported very short hair cuts and used the masculine first persons pronouns such as ore and boku. I asked Ryo if there was any factor they could think of that made such masculine gender expressions more acceptable or common in their soccer team. Ryo did not think the masculine expressions were more accepted in soccer, but there were many who were ‘like’ Ryo.

Ryo: 中学校の時に、中学校の私立のトレセンの時は、[Inaudible] に自分みたいな人がめっちゃいっぱいいたんで、[Inaudible] とかいっぱいいたんで、言ったのではないかんですけど、もっと女らしくしなさいみたいな感じのことを言ってましたけど (In the middle school, when I belonged to the private training center, there were many people who were like me. Maybe because there were many people like [Inaudible], [the coaches] said something like “Be more feminine”).

Itani: あ、そう (Oh, yeah?).
Ryo: 「あなたたちは女の子なんだから」って。けっこう「俺」とか言ってる子ばっかだったんで (They said, “Because you are girls.” Because there were quite many of them who said “ore”).

Itani: サッカー部に？ (In the soccer club?).

Ryo: そうっすね。トレセンの中のチームメイトにいて。それとか、「私って言いなさい」みたない。(That’s right. They were among the teammates in the training center. They also said like, “Say watashi”)

Neither Ryo nor I know the gender identities of those teammates who had very short hair and used the first person pronoun “ore.” Ryo, however, explained that soccer requires masculine ‘personalities’ like men (not identities) in order to be successful; and that is why there are many masculine female players in soccer.

Ryo: サッカーっていうのは男っぽくないとできないんですよ。女々しかったら、考えとかが、絶対できないっす。この子ってなんかめっちゃ女の子やって思ったら、その子絶対活躍できないんですよ。(Soccer requires masculinity. If you are effeminate, like the way you think, you definitely can’t play. When I think this person is very girly, the person can never be successful).

Itani: そう。当たりが強いとか？ (I see. They are able to hit hard or something?).

Ryo: もう負けん気とかそういう、すごい、負けたくないとか…負けたくないとかそういうのはけっこう抽象的ですよ。なんていうかな。ガツガツいくとか、そういう所とかも。なんか、このボール取りに行くのに、怖がってたらもう絶対無理ですし。ほんまになんか、そういう、プレーとかに、すごい男っぽさがすごい出るなと思いましたね (It’s like being competitive or really not wanting to lose... Not wanting to lose is very abstract, but. How can I say. Going [to the ball] aggressively or maybe those things. You know like if you are scared about going to take a ball, you can never play. I think,
masculinity is shown in those plays).

Ryo believed that masculinity is a necessary asset for soccer players in order to be successful. Ryo did not elaborate further to explain how a short hair cut and the use of the masculine first person is connected to the masculine ‘personality’ required in soccer. They thought, however, that masculine gender expression is an extension of the masculine ‘personality’ of those who are attracted to and succeeded in soccer, and Ryo was one of them.

To explain the reasons why there are many masculine female athletes in soccer, Ryo made an opposite connection between the masculinity of female athletes and their participation in masculine sport from the normative discourse of female sporting masculinity. For Ryo, the masculinity of the “female” soccer player is not because of their sacrificing feminine interests in order to succeed in the sport, but because “girls” with masculine personalities chose the sport.

Ryo’s construction of the masculine female athlete is in a sense opposite of the dominant construction of the “devoted athlete.” Yet, in both cases, there are underlying sexist constructions of women and sport—athletes must be less feminine, or less female, in order to succeed. It could be argued that Ryo did not equate effeminacy and femaleness if one looks at the above interview segment in English. In Japanese, however, the connection between them becomes obvious. The Japanese word that I translated to English “effeminate” is “女々しい” [memeshii]. The first two characters “女々” means “women” and “しい” means “like.” Together, memeshii means “like women.” Effeminate means being like a woman, and Ryo believed that the effeminate players, the players who are more “like women,” can never succeed. In either construction, the normative female sporting masculinity or female athletes with masculine personalities, and their effects on the ways in which Ryo and Shun negotiated cisgenderism and transphobia are very similar. These discourses help explain the masculinity or masculine “personalities” of female athletes within the sexist, cisgenderist, and heteronormative discourses about women and sport, while
making the athletes with masculine “identities” invisible or unthinkable.

While the discourse of normative female sporting masculinity makes ‘trans’ athletes invisible and unthinkable, the erasing effect also functions as the “third space” for Shun. In the same way I did with other participants, I explained to Shun how homophobia and transphobia are articulated in the “lesbian labeling” of female athletes in masculine sports in North America, and how it was not my experience in Japan as a masculine identified athlete. As an athlete, I was rather relieved to not have to conform to the pressure to becoming feminine. Shun agreed that he was also using the normative construction of masculine female athletes to negotiate feminine norms.

Shun: 親もカミングアウトするまで、スポーツやってる子はこんなもんなんだって思ってたらしいです。自分は変わってるな、じゃなくて。あ、うちはお母さんはスポーツやってないんすよ。お父さんはスポーツやってたけど。でも男の中でスポーツやってきてるから女子のスポーツ分かんなじゃないですか (Until I came out, my parents too were thinking that girls who play sport were like this, instead of thinking that I’m strange. Ah, my mother didn’t do any sports, though my father did. But because he played sport among men, maybe he doesn’t know how women’s sports are like).

Itani: うん (Yeah).

Shun: で、スポーツに、髪が、けっこう短い髪の子が多かったりとかジャージ着る子多かったりとか、私服もボーイッシュな子多いっていうこうイメージらしくて。こういうイメージがあるから。やっぱそこはありますよね。こう髪の毛短くしてる時とか、女らしくしないこととがスポーツでちょっと正当化されるっていうか (And then, they have the image that, in sport, there are many girls who have short hair and wear jersey, and their plain clothes are also boyish. They have these images. Yeah, I think that’s a factor. It’s like when I had short hair and not being feminine, playing sport justifies it a bit).
As Shun clearly put it, the normative constructions of women who play “masculine” sports could be used as a justification for ‘trans’ athletes like Shun, who need to negotiate feminine norm while maintaining his masculine gender identity and expression.

This “third space,” however, is limited, temporary, and problematic because of its underlying sexist, heteronormative, cisgenderist, and transphobic discourses. As Ryo’s construction of successful soccer players with masculine ‘personalities’ demonstrated, attempting to ‘justify’ their masculine expressions through the discourse runs the risk of reproducing a sexist discourse about women and sport. Such a “third space” also quickly disappears when the athlete retires from the sport or when they reach adulthood, when female athletes are expected to grow out of the sporting masculinity to become feminine women.

The transition from youth to adulthood could become a difficult decision-making period for ‘trans’ athletes in Japan. They have to start thinking about their lives beyond school and sporting careers. Once they reach eighteen years old, they can also begin the medical and legal gender transition processes, if they are aware of such options. In the next and last subsection, I examine how Ryo and Shun’s sport participation affected and was affected by this difficult period of transition from youth to adulthood. Ryo and Shun were on different paths towards adulthood as a non-operative, non-cisgendered person and a post-operative, transsexual man respectively. Yet, the cisgenderism and transphobia in Japanese society posed various challenges to their passion for soccer and their goals to become a physical education teachers after they came out as “trans/GID.”

**Challenges in Coming Out from a “Masculine Female Athlete” to ‘Trans’ Intelligibility**

For many Japanese youth, the third year in high school is a critical time for planning their future. The results of the university entrance exams tend to over-determine their future occupations and the course of their life; therefore, students are often pressured hard to choose
their paths and prepare for the exams or other career paths accordingly as early as when they are fifteen or sixteen years old. For the ‘trans’ youth in Japan, this difficult process of thinking and selecting their life course could become even more difficult and painful given the inadequate legal and medical systems to assist ‘trans’ individual to live as their identified gender. The lack of gender-neutral infrastructures in school and society, support groups, and role models certainly do not help in this challenging task of envisioning their future.

Even for Ryo, who had already negotiated with their family and school to respect their masculine gender identity since middle school, envisioning and preparing for the future was an agonizing process. Although Ryo wanted to continue playing soccer beyond high school to eventually become a professional player, they knew that there was no system in place to welcome ‘trans’ athletes if they chose to transition.

Itani: どういうことが心の中で引っかかったとか、やっぱり自分の中で克服するのが難しかった？やっぱ恐怖とかあるじゃない？不安とか (What bothered you, or what was difficult to overcome in your mind? There was fear or anxiety, wasn’t there?).

Ryo: そうすね、なんか見えないじゃないですか、先が。もう、高校３年生の時ともか、けっこう悩んでて、むちゃくちゃ。そういう一生ずっと考えてて、考えて、で、就職するのも、就職っていうか将来どういう感じに進んでいくかみたいな [Inaudible] かんじの時間があって。で、自分はこう、ま、とりあえずサッカーして、サッカーしながら男になっていくって無理なんだ、無理っていうか難しいっていうのがあって、すごい思ってて。で、でもサッカーしたいしと思って (Yeah, I can’t really see it, the future, you know. When I was in the third year in high school, I was quite concerned, really really concerned. I was always thinking about those, about the future. And even to get a job, or rather than a job, I was thinking about how I should move forward in the future [Inaudible]. It was that kind of phase. And for me, I wanted to play soccer
above all, but then I was thinking about it really hard that it’s impossible, or
difficult to become a man while I’m playing soccer. But I still wanted to play
soccer).

Without a FtM ‘trans’ role model in sports or a system that allows ‘trans’ athletes in the
elite level of sports in Japan, Ryo was faced with the difficult binary choice between the dream
of continuing to play soccer at the elite level or to live as a man. There was no choice to do both.

In such a difficult time, Ryo received a suggestion from their homeroom teacher in their
third year of high school when the class was writing down a plan for their future on a sheet of
paper. Ryo had discussed their gender identity with the teacher, but when Ryo wrote that they
would live as a man, the teacher asked them to think about ‘other things’ rather than which
gender they were going to live as, such as a specialization in university or an occupation. Ryo
struggled to accept the teacher’s advice since the gender identity issue was blocking their way
toward the livable future. To be able to think about which university to go to or what occupation
to pursue, before thinking about which gendered body they were going to live in, was a luxury a
person in an abject position like Ryo could not afford.

The homeroom teacher’s advice certainly lacked the understanding and sensitivity to the
layers of oppressions ‘trans’ youth have to deal with in Japanese society and its crushing effects
on youths’ ability to envision their hopeful future. And yet, Ryo began to find a meaning in the
teacher’s “insensitive” advice after surviving their difficult high school years. Ryo was slowly
coming to terms with the indeterminacy of their future and their inability to categorize themself
within the terms given by the society. They were taking a step-by-step approach to prioritize
what was most important for them in each stage of their life, painfully forgoing the desire and
needs to have a clear vision of their future.

Ryo: その自分は、まぁ体を変えたいと思えば変えればいいし、もうこのままでやっていけるんだ
ら、ちょっとでも我慢できるんなら、まぁこのままでやってた方が、楽だしこれかかんな
いし [Inaudible] みたいな感じですよ。 (Um, for me, I’m thinking like, I can change my body if I want, but if I can keep going as I am, if I can bear even a little, it is easier to stay as I am now, [Inaudible] and it won’t cost money too).

Itani: でも具体的に就職ってなったらね、体変えるってなったら、ホルモンやらなきゃいけない
し。その辺については考えてる？ (But when you have to find a job, if you want to change your body, you will have to do hormones too. Are you thinking about these things?).

Ryo: 今は考えてないです。正直、このままでいいかなって思って (I’m not thinking about it now. Honestly, I think it’s maybe okay as I am now).

Itani: 今のところは？ (For now?).

Ryo: 今のところは (For now).

Itani: このままで生きていくだけの環境は、ある？(Is there an environment that you can live as you are?).

Ryo: そうですね、別に今のままで…でも、女ものスーツは着たくないっす (Yeah, I think it’s okay as I’m now... But, I don’t want to wear a women’s suit).

Itani: その辺のバランスは難しいよね。思い切ってもうトランスだって割り切ってき、なんかホ
ルモンもって手術もやってしまえば、男もの完全にいくわけじゃない？で、完全に男
に変わる限りは、社会にはそういうスペースもある。でも、本当に徹底的に中間を貫くっ
ていというのは、むしろないよね。性同一性障害あろうとなかろうと (It’s difficult to balance those things, isn’t it? If you can clearly decide that you are ‘trans,’ and do hormone and surgeries, you can wear men’s clothes without problems too, you know. And as long as you completely transition to a man, there maybe a space in the society. But it is probably even more tricky to be completely in the middle, regardless of being
GID or not).

Ryo: あ、でも企業行こうか、企業に就職しようかなって思ってたんですけど、なんか先生やったら、なんとかなりそうな気がするんですよ。こんな状態で男もんのスーツ着て、そういう入学式とか出ても、なんか、なんか行けそうな気がするんですけど、企業とかになるともっと堅いイメージがあるんで (Ah, I was thinking about going to a company, finding a job in a company, but I feel like there may be a way around it if I become a teacher. I feel like it would be okay even if I wear men’s suit in this condition and attend an entrance ceremony for example. But I have an image that companies tend to be more rigid).

In the midst of uncertainty, Ryo is finding hope in the occupation as a physical education teacher.

As Shun shared a similar sentiment, a physical education teacher allows them to sustain their “athlete” identity, which may function as an affective buffer for other’s to make judgments on their attire and gender expressions, even in the adulthood.

Shun on the other hand, had been taking steps towards a gender transition since their university years. Shun did not start any physical transition until he graduated from university, when he came out to his friends and teammates. With their support and understanding, Shun started to live as a man before he graduated from his “women’s” university. Even though his gender identity was well respected by his team members, he had to continue participating in games and the training camps for selected players as a woman. When he traveled as a part of the women’s squad, his women’s university soccer team jersey put him into a dilemma. When I asked if and when he worried about other’s gazes as he started to live as man, he quickly answered that it was in the women’s bathroom, where he had to go in with his team.

もう大学はオープンにしてたから[Inaudible]とかは個人的には男子便に出てたんですけど、でも、みんなでサッカー部の、このネーム入りで行ったらいけないじゃないですか。だからもうそ
ういう時はもう我慢して入るじゃないですか。だから、そういう時が一番。トイレじゃないかな。おばちゃんとめっちゃ怒られましたもん。駅のトイレとか入ってて、「あんたどこ入ってんの！」みたいな。「ええ、いや、違うんですよ、女ですよ」みたいに言っても「何言ってんの！？」みたいな感じでけっこうまた怒られて (In university, because I was open about [his gender identity] [Inaudible], I personally went to men’s bathroom. But when I’m with everyone, when I have this name [of the university team] on, I cannot go to men’s bathroom, you know. So in those occasions, I just suck it up and go into women’s bathroom. So those moments was the most, yeah I think it’s bathroom. I was scolded by aunties really harshly. When I was in the bathroom in a train station for example, they were like, “Why are you in here!” Even if I said, “No, it’s a misunderstanding, I’m woman,” they scold me again saying, “What are you talking about!”).

After graduating from the university, Shun officially retired from the elite level of soccer and started HRT to live fulltime as a man. Now, his voice has lowered, his facial hair has grown, and he no longer has access to gender segregated, women’s-only spaces. Yet, when he applied for jobs as a physical education teacher, the discrepancy between the gender he identified as and the one on his resume, which has to be the same as on the family register, became an issue for the schools. Even though the so-called Japan’s GID Law was passed in 2003, which allows some ‘trans/GID’ people to change their gender on the family register, one of its conditions requires GRS. Since Shun had not had the surgery necessary to have “male” written on his resume, when he had interviews as a male teacher, schools turned him down. As a result, he had to hurry the GRS even though he probably could have waited a bit longer to think about his different options.

Shun: 職業的なもんもあるんですよね。自分一応教員免許取って、去年かな。中学校とかから話きたんですよ。でも話しに行って、で、なんか大体性別見てないんですよ。向こうの学校の先生って ([His decision to have the surgery] was also related to a job. After I got
a teaching license, some middle schools were interested in hiring me. I think it was last year. But then when I went there to talk, well they, the teachers in schools usually don’t look at gender [on application]).

Itani: 履歴書に書いてあるけど？ (Though it’s written on your resume?).

Shun: 履歴書には書いてあるし、向こうの講師登録してある場所にも書いてあるんですけど。登録する場所があって。でもスーツ着て行って、ネクタイして行って、面接して、で普通に男性だと思われてで、で、最後になんか話すことあります？みたいなかんじで、「実はあの戸籍上は...」みたいな話をすると、断られちゃって (It’s written on the resume and it’s also written on the record as a registered lecturer. There is a place to register. But then, when I went there in a suit and tie, had an interview, they still thought I’m male. And at the end of the interview, they asked me like is there anything I want to discuss, and when I talked like “On the family register, I’m actually...”, they declined the offer).

Itani: ん!? (Huh!?).

Shun: 「ちょっと教育委員会と話していいですか」とか。って感じでそこで引っかかるんで、だからもう戸籍を変えるしか、こうやってく道はないかなぁって思って (They said like, “Can we discuss with the board of education?” I get caught at the stage like that, so I thought there is no other way than changing the family register).

Itani: なるほど (I see).

Shun: このままでいくにはちょっと、まだ公では認められないんでっていうのもあるから、ちょっと急いだんですけど。(I hurried up a bit because it’s still not publicly accepted to continue as I am now).

Itani: なるほどね (I see).

Shun: じゃなかったらこんなに急いでなかったかも知れない (Otherwise, I might not have
hurried up this much).

Growing up in the cisgenderist society, he kept his hope for his future by pursuing a career as a physical education teacher, which might enable him to be connected to his passion for sports and the education of children, while sustaining his gender identities and expressions. He even completed a teacher’s degree and practicum as a male student teacher; however, his dream ran aground when he was faced with the cisgenderist and transphobic schools and the legal system.

After he began HRT and living as a man fulltime, finding a place to play soccer also remained challenging. He was facing multiple dilemmas in transitioning from being a female to male player. As an elite level soccer player, he had experienced the national level competitions and had an identity as a top-level player. He was concerned, however, that playing soccer as a male player meant that he would only become a mediocre level player since his physical ability would not be good enough to be a top level male athlete even if the hormone therapy helped him in gaining some strength.

Shun: 自分はなんかその逆に今この状態でまだサッカーとかもしたいんでけど、やる場所がなくて困ってます (Now, though I want to play soccer in my current condition [after starting the hormone replacement therapy], I have trouble finding a place to play).

Itani: あぁ、そのこと聞こうと思ってたんだけど、やっぱり場所がない？ (Oh, I was thinking about asking the question. There is no place to play?).

Shun: ないって感じますね (I feel there is no place).

Itani: そっかー (I see).

Shun: どう属してやればいいのかっての悩みますね (I don’t know where I should belong in order to play).

Itani: 自分の中で希望はある？ (Do you have any preference?).

Shun: 男子の中でやりたいんですけど、実的に...こうなんか今までやっぱり全国大会とか出て
やってきて、でもそれは女子の実力で、男子に入ったら県大会レベルか下手したら市大会レベルなんですよ (I want to play with men, but in terms of my ability... Until now, how to say, I played in places like the national competitions, but it’s my ability as a woman. If I play in men’s game, I’m probably at the provincial level or it could be even the city level).

Itani: うん (I see).

Shun: だから全然通用しないんで。身体能力も全く、通用しないのが、痛いところ、ですね... 注射打って筋肉ともか大分付くんですよ。で、体格は良くなったりするんですけど、でもやっぱりどうかなー。男子の世界入って一流でやってる人たちにはついていけないんで (So I’m not good at all. It’s painful, that even my physical ability isn’t good at all either... Because now I’m getting the [hormone] shots, I gain quit a bit of muscle. And the physique improves too. But, I don’t know, because I cannot keep up with the top level male players).

Itani: うん。じゃあそこでやっぱり自分が期待してるレベルにはいけないっていうことに対する、(I see. So when you cannot reach the level that you expect, you feel.) .

Shun: 葛藤はありますね (Yeah, I feel conflicted).

Itani: 現実的な制度としてはどう？自分が本当にやろうと思ったらそこに入れる、そういう社会的な準備はある？ (What about the actual system? If you really want to play in men’s team, is there a social system prepared for you?)

Shun: あー、どうかな。それもちょっと分かんなくて。今ちょっとほんとはやりたくてチームを探したりしてるんですけど、やれる自信がそこまでないのと、あとはその、チームに飛び込んで...不安の方が大きくて。ミックスで大会に出たりしてるんです。ミックスで男として出てはいるんですけど、もうほんっとに男の大会には、なんかもう友達の誘いがあって入ったりしてこう出たりしたことあるんですけど、ほんとに本格的にチームに入ってっ
ていうのは、そこまでちょっと自信がなくてやってないですね。ただやりたいんですけどね (Ah, I don’t know. I’m not sure about it either. Right now, I want to play and I’m looking for a team, but I don’t have enough confidence. And also, to jump into the team... the anxiety is stronger. I do play in mixed competitions. Though I participate as a man in the mix games, though I have played in men’s games because my friend asked me to join for a game, to seriously join a men’s team, I’m not confident enough. I want to do it though).

Shun was also concerned about the fact that because of his past as an elite level player, even after he physically transitioned to male, people in the soccer community may recognize him as a “former female player.”

Shun: あとはなんていうんですかね。その女子のサッカーでっこうその、中学校くらいからもう10年くらいやってるんで、顔も知ってるんで (And also, how to say, um, because I have played for about ten years in women’s soccer since middle school, my face is known).

Itani: なるほどね (I see).

Shun: 大会に出て、例えば女子の大会と男子の大会が一緒にやってる大会とかに行くと、そうすると「いや、あの人」みたいな (When I participate in a game, when I go to the tournaments where women’s and men’s games are held together, then it becomes like, “Wait, that person”).

Itani: 見たことある、みたいな？ (Like, I’ve seen the person?).

Shun: 男子の監督とかでも、知ってたりとかする人がいたりとかして、こう、面が割れちゃうと、「あ、元女の人の」みたいになると居心地的も悪いし、っていうので困ったりもしてるんです (I even know some of the coaches in men’s team. So if people recognize me and become like “Ah, the person who used to be a woman,” it’s uncomfortable. I
concern about those things too).

Itani: なるほどね。でもそれはあだだよね、先にやってる人がいない限りは自分が切り開いていかなければならない世界だよね (I see. But if there is nobody who did it before you, it’s the world you have to carve out for yourself, isn’t it?).

Shun: そうなんですねよ (Yeah, that’s right).

Itani: なんとか勇気を振り絞って行ってみようとは思ってる? (Are you thinking about mustering up the courage to try?).

Shun: そうですね、だから手術とかが終わって戸籍を完全に変えたら、もう、飛び込んでみようかなと思ってるんですけど、この今の中途半端な状態で、飛び込むのはちょっと…ずっとこう機会を狙ってたけど、結局入ってないですね (Yeah, so I’m thinking about jumping in once I finish my surgery and completely change the family register. But to jump in my current vague status... I have been looking for an opportunity, but I haven’t done yet).

The medical and legal gender reassignment processes may help him to live as a man in the new era. The place of his passion—soccer—however, continues to haunt him with his past as a female player. Having started HRT, he was no longer eligible as a female player, but his “vague status” of being “female” on the family register was causing too much anxiety for him to try to play in a men’s team. In order to have a livable life, Shun made an important and difficult decision to transition, but the transition was, as a result, also keeping him out of the spaces of his passion—a teaching job and soccer.

Ryo’s and Shun’s multiple dilemmas and struggles highlight how cisgenderism and transphobia in Japanese society oppresses ‘trans’ people and forces them to make a cruel binary choice between their sport and gender identity. While the discourse of normative sporting female masculinity may open up a small gap in gender norms to take a small breath from the pressures
to conform to feminine norms, it is only a temporary ‘safe’ space. Demonstrated in one of the articles in *the Sports Graphic Number* (M7, 2001), even the *taiikukaikei* women are expected to grow out of their young female sporting masculinity. As they enter their adulthood and make decision about their occupation and the life beyond their sporting career, they are faced with the binary choice of going through a complete transition to live physically and legally as a male or female. And there is a very small space for them to maintain the gender expressions of their identity without the medical and legal gender reassignment. The ‘livable’ space sports may offer for the masculine identified non-cisgendered person is, thus, temporary and precarious.

Faced with the decision as an adult, Ryo and Shun negotiated and navigated the cisgenderist and transphobic Japanese society and sporting spaces in creative and brave ways. Ryo and Shun walk different paths as a non-operative, non-cisgendered person and a post-operative transsexual man respectively. Ryo was playing in a university women’s soccer team and hoping to become a professional soccer player in the *Nadeshiko* League. Shun, on the other hand, completed the GRS and successfully changed his gender to male on the family register a year after the first interview. Having ‘matched’ his gender presentation and the gender on the family register as man, Shun found a part time teaching position. He was working as a physical education teacher in his hometown as of April 2014.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I extended the discussion from Chapter Six by focusing on non-cisgendered athletes’ experiences. I analyzed how their gendered subjectivities were formed within and against the medicalized ‘trans/GID’ discourses and the gendered constructions of sport. Ryo’s and Shun’s stories showed both the hurting oppression of cisgenderism and transphobia in Japan, and the subtle and creative ways they negotiated the cisgenderism,
transphobia, and trans-normativity in Japanese society within and through sport. Although the attitudes and the recognition of ‘trans/GID’ people are gradually changing in Japan, Ryo and Shun’s ongoing struggles in their adulthood also shows how little such change did to open up a space for ‘trans’ people in Japanese society. Their difficulties in continuing soccer without sacrificing their gender identities and expressions shows how the sporting world is not ready to welcome ‘trans’ or non-cisgendered athletes.

Shun was finding hope in completing the legal and medical gender reassignment processes in order to continue playing soccer and to become a physical education teacher as a man. Ryo was staying in the space of women’s soccer with a lot of ambivalence and hopes to continue pursuing their dream to play soccer professionally and to become a physical education teacher. Ryo’s insistence on a masculine gender identity and expressions, without resorting to the normative discourse of “trans/GID” identity, poses a difficult but important question for Japanese society and the sporting world at large. What are the queer sporting spaces Ryo was hoping to live in? What kind of politics might open up more livable space for athletes like them? In the next concluding chapter, I consider these questions Ryo and Shun left with me.
Chapter 8. Conclusion

I started this research study, while keeping in mind the gap between North American theories of homophobia in sports and my own experiences in Japan as a closeted gender-queer, masculine identified athlete. Why did I feel that my masculine gender expression as an athlete enabled the avoidance of the scrutinization of my sexuality and gender identity, within the highly sexist, homophobic, and transphobic Japanese society? If the sporting space in Japan indeed provides such a ‘safe’ space, what are the discourses that constitute such a space? What are the limits and the hopes of the small and precarious space that nonetheless had a vital importance on my own survival?

I approached these questions by examining the articulation of sexism, homophobia, transphobia, cisgenderism, and transnormativity in sports within Japan. In the first two data chapters, I analyzed Japanese media constructions of female athletes in soccer and wrestling in terms of their gender, sexuality, and nation. The analysis revealed the chains of significations that constituted the subject position of “masculine female athletes” or taiikukaikei women, where such constructions are underpinned by the sexism, heteronormativity, cisgenderism, homophobia, and transphobia of Japanese society. The analysis also demonstrated how different meanings were given to the shifting signifier of nadeshiko, a term that symbolizes Japanese women in order to normalize them or make them ‘safe’ within the Japanese patriarchal gender and sexual norms. At the same time, especially after the year 2011, the masculinity and success of Japanese female soccer players and wrestlers in international competitions were appropriated within the constructions and recuperation of Japanese national identity and masculinity.

In Chapters Six and Seven, I shifted my analytical focus to the local, day-to-day experiences of Japanese female and ‘trans’ athletes in soccer and wrestling to examine the
processes of the formation of their gendered subjectivities and their negotiations with Japanese gender and sexual norms. I explored how their masculinity as elite athletes was scrutinized and how they negotiated the social norms of gender, sexuality, and body throughout their sporting careers. The stories of cisgendered female participants demonstrated the intricate processes of negotiation with the male domination of their sport, feminine norms, sexism, and the demands of an athletic career. Some athletes formed ambivalent subjectivities through the conflicting demands of their sports and society, while some athletes took pride in their masculinities and differences from the “ordinary” non-athlete women.

One of the key insights that cisgendered athletes’ experiences provided was the discourse of ‘female sporting masculinity.’ The construction of the female athletes’ masculinity as a sign of “devotion” to the sport and the wrestling coach’s demand “not to be a woman” have strong resonance with the media constructions of taiikukaikei women, or the devoted elite female athletes who ‘sacrifice’ their ‘feminine’ interests such as fashion and dating with men. What these discourses suggest is that the construction of female masculinity that is demonstrated by athletes—female sporting masculinity—both provides and closes off different ways of being a woman. The “third” gender space, or small affective buffer, which is provided by the discourses of female sporting masculinity, tolerates a certain level of masculine gender expressions and the absence of heterosexual relationships, while feminine expressions and interests may be policed. It also makes female masculinity as the expression of their gender identity unthinkable.

This unthinkability of a queer identity for the masculine female athletes provided non-cisgendered, ‘trans’ athletes with a small and precarious yet important space to express their masculinity more safely, compared to other social spheres. Being made unrecognizable by the homophobic, cisgenderist, and transphobic Japanese society, Ryo and Shun entered into a masculine, male-dominated sport—soccer—in the backdrop of the popularities of the J-League
and Captain Tsubasa. They negotiated and utilized otherwise hurtful discourses of sexism, female sporting masculinity, and GID, by identifying and disidentifying with the discourses for their existence and survival in sport and in Japanese society at large.

Yet, their unrecognizability in the pre-GID era, Ryo’s current struggle to become recognizable, and Ryo and Shun’s ongoing struggles to continue playing soccer, raise a number of important theoretical and political questions. It is impossible to provide sufficient answers to them in the limited space of this dissertation; however, I conclude this dissertation by briefly discussing my current thoughts on these issues for my future research projects. What has also been lost while there has been an increased recognition of the ‘trans/GID’ subject in Japanese society? How do the queer sporting spaces, in which queer athletes like Ryo are recognized and celebrated, look like? What kind of politics might open up more livable space for queer athletes? How to theorize such queer or “third” gender space? Cisgendered female athletes’ ambivalent gendered subjectivities also demand answers to the issues of Japanese sexism and patriarchy that continue to marginalize women and femininity in male dominated sports and Japanese society as a whole.

Visible ‘Trans’/GID Athletes, and Invisible Bisexual, Lesbian and Transgender Athletes

(Silence is actually not the absence of language. Although it cannot be heard, it is the most powerful excluding language). (Pak, 2007, p. 366)

‘Transnormative’ narratives helped to increase the social recognition and visibility of ‘trans/GID’ people. I have no doubt that such discursive changes around ‘trans’ people increased the options for medical and legal gender reassignment processes for some ‘trans’ individuals (i.e., the legalization of GRS; an increased number of medical clinics that have knowledge about GID
diagnosis; the legalization of gender change on the family register, etc.). Although far from sufficient, Japanese schools began to recognize the needs of ‘trans’/GID students, and some schools have begun to offer different options for the uses and assignments of gendered spaces and clothing in schools, such as uniforms, changing rooms, bathrooms, physical education classes and so on.\textsuperscript{45} Another important change is that this discursive shift offered a language to speak about ‘trans’/GID identities in a different way. As Shun’s experiences show, the ‘trans’/GID discourse offers a frame for social recognition in order to exist and to be recognized. For some ‘trans’/GID people, it was a desperate way out of an abject position, in which one cannot recognize oneself or be recognized by others. No matter how ambivalent such medicalized identity categories might be, the increased coming out of ‘trans’/GID people and publications of autobiographies by ‘trans’/GID authors speak volume to the importance of the subject position offered by the medicalized GID identity.

At the same time, the hyper-visibility of ‘trans’/GID subjects casts a concerning shadow over other queer folks, who have not been offered as much social recognition or visibility as ‘trans/GID’ identified people. Those who used to be categorized outside of ‘LGBTQ’ conceptualizations such as onabe, okama, and nyūhāfu, for example, are losing their different meanings to the medicalized ‘trans’/GID identity. Even though people in such categories such as entertainers still face prejudices, it is important to note that they existed in a different ontological space than ‘LGBTQ’ identities: the in-between space of queer performance and identity. In a sense, onabe, okama, nyūhāfu, and even onē, might offer away of being queer, flexibly deflecting the essentializing force of identity politics. As Jackson and Mazzei (2012) argued, when queer identity categories become so essentialized and the meanings get arrested, they lose

their queering possibilities. Ryo’s troublesome relationship with the ‘trans’/GID identity demonstrates how such a category failed to embrace queer folks. The essentialized category demands conformity, and Shun’s decision to hurry GRS shows how an essentialized discourse both opens and closes down options. As HRT and GRS are irreversible processes, the consequences of such essentialization and the pressure to conform are heavy.

Another concern related to the hyper-visibility of ‘trans’/GID in the sporting context is the continuing invisibility of bisexual and lesbian athletes. As I examined in Chapters Four and Five, the normative discourses of female athletes and the normalizing discourses of ‘female sporting masculinity’ demonstrate the forms of oppression that queer subjects in Japan face. Butler (1993) argues that the oppression works through the “corollary constitution of a domain of unviable (un)subjects-abjects . . . who are neither named nor prohibited within the economy of the law. Here oppression works through the production of a domain of unthinkability and unnameability” (p. 312). In the normative and normalizing discourses of Japanese media, it is rendered impossible that some of masculine female athletes have masculine gender identities or prefer masculine gender expressions, being constructed by the media as having a female gender identity.

In the interviews, many participants testified that their universities had many athletes and students with GID. The participants knew some of these GID identified individuals as friends and teammates, and some of them came out to the participants as FtM ‘trans’/GID. Yet, in other cases, my participants believed that they were ‘trans’/GID based on their masculine gender expressions and mannerisms, rather than their own identifications. When I asked the participants how they made judgments about who they thought was ‘trans’/GID, they equally answered that the judgment is based on the person’s masculine gender expressions, such as their uses of “men’s” hairstyles, clothes, underwear, perfume, masculine mannerisms, and/or having a girlfriend.
Interestingly, these criteria that the participants used were neither the “trans/GID” person’s own identifications nor part of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders for the diagnosis of GID (before it was changed to Gender Dysphoria). There are different possibilities in terms of ‘who’ might have such gender expressions. Those who identify as bisexual or lesbian with masculine gender expressions may also meet these criteria. There also may be heterosexual, cisgendered women who might buy products from the “men’s” section in stores. Yet, the continuing disregard for bisexuals and lesbians by Japanese society and the media, in addition to the peculiar social recognition of ‘trans/GID’ as the result of sensationalized media portraits, made different ways of being women and queer invisible and unthinkable. At the intersection of Japanese sexist, homophobic, transphobic, and cisgenderist, and normative ‘trans’ and ‘female sporting masculinity’ discourses, queer women and non-GID ‘trans’ athletes fall out of the “grid of cultural intelligibility that regulates the real and the nameable” (Butler, 1993, p. 312), thus, they remain abject.

Furthermore, my analyses in this dissertation show how deeply embedded homophobia and transphobia is in sport and in Japanese society at large. Yet, Japanese discourses about ‘trans’/GID and ‘female sporting masculinity’ have made the articulations of homophobia and transphobia quite different from that of North American sport communities. This study shows that sport as the “arena of masculinity” (Pronger, 1992) intersects differently with local gender and sexual norms and politics within different geopolitical locations. In each location, the intersection produces different effects on the subjectivities and participations of women and queer athletes. I hope this research study demonstrates that the scholarly inquires into this intersection of gender, sexuality, national politics and sport offer useful and much needed insight into the gender and sexual norms of a society and the formation of gendered subjectivities in and through sport.
Some may argued that sport is no longer the “last bastion of homophobia” in some communities within North America; however, such simplified analysis misses the complexities behind “homophobia in sport” itself. It also misses the much needed research into the other communities in North America that have not been included in the analysis, such as different ethnic and racialized communities, communities with different socio-economic statuses and immigration statuses. As I discussed in Chapter Two, this line of research in Japan has just begun, and I am cognizant that my dissertation examined only a small fraction of the sporting population in Japan. It is my goal to continue investigating how gender, sexuality, and national politics are articulated in sporting spaces within diverse communities in Japan, and also to contribute to the transnational and international scholarships within feminist, queer, and postcolonial studies through my future studies.

Queer/ing Sporting Spaces

What do the queer sporting spaces, in which queer athletes like Ryo are celebrated, look like? In some of the North American and international sporting communities, there have been different approaches to combat homophobia and transphobia in sports, such as campaigns and policies to combat homophobia and transphobia (i.e., Changing the Game [the GLSEN Sports Project], It Takes a Team [Women’s Sports Foundation], and Charter on Homophobia and Transphobia in Sport [UK Sport]). Some national and international sports’ organizations have also created guidelines for the participation of transgender athletes (i.e. “Stockholm Consensus on Sex Reassignment” [the International Olympic Committee], “Inclusion of Transgender Student-Athletes” [The National Collegiate Athletic Association]). Some organizations, sports clubs, and sports programs also have been created to provide alternative sporting spaces for ‘LGBTQ’ athletes (i.e., Gay Games, World OutGames, Russian Open Games [Moscow], and
TransAction [Toronto]). These approaches have resulted in the ‘coming out’ of some high profile openly gay, lesbian, and trans athletes who compete in the elite level of sport organizations and competitions, such as the Olympics and professional sports leagues. In addition to this, an increasing number of sports organizations in North American and European countries adopt and/or create anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia policies. The Gay Games attract thousands of athletes every four years, however, the most participants come from Australia, New Zealand, European and North American countries, while a small number of the participants come from other regions of the world. While these large-scale efforts to celebrate or include ‘LGBTQ’ athletes may gradually be shifting homophobic sport culture in some western countries, there is both a long geopolitical and cultural distance between these shifts and where Ryo and Shun live today. Simply adopting the frameworks created in North American or other western societies into Japanese sporting communities would not allow the complexities of the Japanese articulation of gender, sexuality, and national politics in sport to be addressed or bring about changes in meaningful ways.

Moreover, as long as sport is organized by binary gender categories and demands the participants to be either women or men, the participation of queer athletes like Ryo would always be ambivalent, if not hurtful to queer athletes. As Shun discussed, even for some of the very few FtM transsexual athletes who have completed GRS and HRT and are eligible to compete as men, the construction of female bodies as always being weaker than male bodies haunts, discourages, and marginalizes them. The essentializing constructions of ‘female bodies’ as inferior to ‘male bodies’ continues to negate the diversity within the category of women in terms of their body sizes, shapes, athletic abilities, and gender identities, and allows the male dominance and exclusion of queer bodies in sport. What is needed is not a dominant-centric additive of the marginalized, but a destabilization of the center—a deconstruction of women, men, sport,
nationalism, and colonialism.

Methodologically, one of the ways to deconstruct gender and sport is to reveal the diversities within what is considered the center, and make visible the experiences of athletes like Ryo and Shun, which will help to deconstruct the normative and normalizing discourses of women and female sporting masculinity. I hope this dissertation was successful in making a small contribution to such an effort. The histories of feminist and queer activisms and scholarship in North America show how exposing the systems and forms of sexism, homophobia, cisgenderism, and transphobia in Japanese sporting communities and Japanese society at large would be a difficult and long-lasting task. What the problematic history of the Japanese ‘trans’/GID discourse teaches; however, is that making available new discourses, new frames of understanding oneself, and new possibilities of gendered subjectivity is crucial for the daily survival of queer people and the social and political changes to bring about a less phobic and oppressive society. In addition, writing about queer genders and sexualities in Japanese society to break the silence is an important political and scholarly work. As Pak (2007) asserts, the act of speaking the names that are made taboo is a resistance against the “inferiority” imposed upon the unspeakable identity categories.

My participants’ stories demonstrated that the discourses made available by the society framed the dialectical process of ‘being-named’ and ‘self-naming’. Yet, each participant showed different ways they identified, counter-identified, and disidentified with such discourses to form their subjectivities. As the fragmentation, slippage, and incoherency of identity categories exposes the performativity of identity, the participants’ uses of discourses offered by the society were also fragmented and incoherent. Hence, in order to queer sporting spaces and society at large, in order to open up different ways of being a woman and different ways of being an athlete, diversifying the language and discourses used in the dialectical process of ‘being-named’ and
‘self-naming’ is a crucial task. Pedagogically and politically, it is also vital to acknowledge and insist that any category is always deficient and that because language always fails, it is important to insist on ‘self-naming’ in a different way, even if it runs the risk of becoming abject. Furthermore, as Japanese queer theorist Akiko Shimizu (2007) writes, in order to leave subversive possibilities of the “existing normative modes of signification and interpellation” open, we need to “use the signs, in spite of the inevitable catachresis and in spite of the fact that we are necessarily misaddressed” (p. 506). Shimizu argues that “[o]nly through the incessant and reiterative citation/miming can the signs be displaced to a new context so that new modes of beings totally unanticipated by the norms may be performatively constituted” (p. 506), as Nadeshiko Japan has demonstrated through their decade of persistence and efforts to play and succeed in the “manly” game of soccer at the level they did.

Deconstructing binary genders and categories of women and men is necessary in order for athletes like Ryo and Shun to thrive without hiding and compromising their bodies and identities. I assert that the discourse of ‘female sporting masculinity’ offers a beginning point for this task. If we can celebrate the masculinity of female athletes as what it is (this of course does not mean that it is not necessary to critically analyze the expressions of their masculinity) rather than as the result of sacrifices and compromises, different ways of being women and different ways of being gendered might open up. Like the research studies conducted by Aiba (2007, 2008, 2010, 2013), Kamei (2000, 2012), and Sasaki (2010) show, more detailed and persistent research on the different ways female bodies are constructed, performed, and celebrated in Japanese sport and physical culture could help bring such discursive diversity in scholarships and in the society as a whole.

Queer or “Third” Gender Space

Throughout this dissertation I used a descriptor, “third gender space”, for the in-between
gender space that allows athletes to express masculinity in sporting spaces without fearing that their gender identity and sexuality would be scrutinized. Yet, I have not expanded on the concept of ‘space’ so far. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to conduct the thorough spacial analysis of this “third space”. Yet, considering the theorization of sporting spaces as social space, offered by postmodern feminist sport geographers (i.e. Cathy van Ingen, 2003; Caroline Fusco, 2006, 2009), will be important and useful in order to extend the theoretical and methodological discussion of the “third” space in my future studies.

This space is obviously not a kind of physical space with ‘visible’ boundaries. Rather, the space becomes possible or ‘produced’ when certain sets of discourses enabled different ways of being woman or ‘trans’. Van Ingen (2003) explains that Levebvre’s (1991) conceptual triad consists of three forms of social space: spatial practices (perceived space), representation of space (conceived space), and space of representation (lived space). This approach allows the kinds of spatial analysis that consider “the ways in which socially constructed differences are produced and maintained, as well as concealed, erased and denied” (van Ingen, 2003, p. 207); thus helping to consider how “relations of gender, sexuality and race are produced, negotiated and contested in social space” (p. 211). Van Ingen also emphasizes that explicit attention should be paid to the “ways in which space not only represents power but materialize it” (p. 207).

With this social space approach, the “third” gender space can be conceptualized as the kind of social space in which different ways of being women is opened up within the discursive fissure between the sexist and normative discourse of ‘women’ and ‘devoted female athletes.’ It is a “conceived space” in a sense that the possibility of queer identity is left outside of the imagination, thus queer athletes could feel safe or express their masculinity without the fear of being ostracized. The conceived space, in return, produces lived spaces and “counterspaces” (Van Ingen, 2003, p. 204), in which diverse and resistant gender practices (i.e., masculine
embodiment and/or gender expression, player of a masculine sport, etc.) are made possible.

In a society, such as Japan, where the petit and fragile body is constructed as the ideal and as the normative feminine body, the space of ‘masculine’ sports itself is an alternative social space where female athletes’ masculine embodiment subverts and challenge gender norms. Yet, as van Ingen (2003) points out, marginalized bodies and spaces, such as the “third” gender space in sport, are “routinely ignored in mapping projects, as they are often not present in hegemonic discourses” (p. 206). As I examined in Chapters Four and Five, masculine identified or ‘trans’/GID athletes remain outside of the mainstream media discourses in Japan and are pushed outside the imageries of Nadeshiko Japan. At the same time, however, due to the importance and visibility of masculine female athletes (even if their masculinity is not ‘talked’ about, they are still there), the potential abject bodies continue to remain at the margin of ‘Japanese female athlete’, constantly destabilizing the subject.

Japanese Queer? Western Queer Politics and Translation

One of the methodological issues that became poignant in this research study was the issue of translation, both in terms of the translation of data and the translation and use of ‘LGBTQ’ categories in my analysis and discussion. As critics (McLelland, 2005; McLelland, Suganuma, & Welker, 2007) argue, the adaptation of English categories such as ‘LGBTQ’ runs the risk of erasing different ‘queer’ possibilities within the so called ‘native’ queer cultures. Yet, as Shimizu (2008) points out, there is no ‘native’ ‘queer’ culture or ‘native’ Japanese queer subject position in a contemporary society without the influence of the western LGBTQ discourses. There is a “post-colonial hybridity” (Shimizu, 2008, p.358), emerging from Japanese and western queer politics, which is the invocation of identity categories in Japanese and English. Such identity categories still carry the past and current stigma and taboos about queer gender and sexualities within Japan, along with the meanings produced within western LGBTQ politics.
While the excavation of ‘queer’ history is an important political project in itself, for the contemporary debate of ‘queer’ identities around the world, seeking the ‘native’ cultures that are free of homophobia for the advancement of current LGBTQ politics would amount to the colonial fetishism of others and the self. Thus, the important task in conducting and translating transnational and international scholarly works on queer communities is to carefully examine how ‘queer’ people utilize these hybrid, constantly emerging queer discourses and name themselves with the discourses, no matter how “ambivalent” the identification might be.

Furthermore, as Shimizu (2007) maintains, ‘self-naming’ is always already equivocal. Thus, “scandalous equivocation”, or the use of “scandalous” identity categories or names while running a risk of being rendered unrecognizable, misrecognized, or scandalized, is the ethical requirement “in order not to pursue inclusion and survival at the expense of those others” (p. 512). Those others would, otherwise, be further marginalized and stigmatized by refusing the use of “scandalous sign” (p. 513). Insisting on the different meanings that emerge from the use of the “scandalous sign” is also one of the “few survival strategies that enable the non-normative and the marginalized to remain viable” (p. 513).

Lastly, Ryo and Shun are carrying the burden and difficult task of negotiating and resisting both the western medical discourses of GID and the transphobia and cisgenderism in Japanese society. Ryo shared with me their dream about living in a “western” country, while they shared their difficult experiences of navigating through and resisting these complicated threads of discourses. Unfortunately, I could not tell Ryo that there was such a “free” and “open” place for non-cisgendered people like them in ‘western’ countries in which they imagined. Instead, Ryo and Shun helped me see the hopes and the ways in which to build a more livable and hopeful future through their stories of struggles and how they opened up livable spaces for themselves in a society against which I once turned my back. I started my academic career with a
goal of contributing to build a more livable and hopeful society for female and ‘trans’ athletes in Japan. Now, looking back on the journey at the end of this research project, I found that it was me, who was given the hope.
References


Gender and physical education: Contemporary issues and future directions (pp. 41-56).
New York: Routledge.


Ethics, 4, 383-393.
## Appendices

### Appendix A: List of the Cited Media Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In Text Citation Abbreviation</th>
<th>Newspaper Articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Magazines**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In Text Citation Abbreviation</th>
<th>Magazine Articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
<td>Title and Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Webpages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In Text Citation</th>
<th>Online Articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Appendix B: Call for Participants (English)

Call for Participants

My name is Satoko Itani. I am a graduate student from OISE/UT at the University of Toronto, and I am conducting a research project called “Discursive construction and subject formation of masculine female athletes in Japan.”

In recent years, Japanese women’s soccer and wrestling have received significant media attention due to their excellent performances in the international competitions, and it helped these sports to be recognized as “sports for women” in Japanese society. However, the social attitudes toward sports that involve strong physical contact and requires strong masculine body such soccer and wrestling has not completely changed. Thus, the purpose of this study is to deepen the understanding of experiences of female athletes in these sports in relation to gender and sexual norms in the society and its influence to female athlete’s identity. My hope is to gain insights into how the social environments and attitudes need to be changed in order to make these sports more welcoming and empowering experience for women and sexual minority people.

I would like to talk to female athletes who: belong to Japanese Collegiate soccer or wrestling team (if you compete in women’s division, gender identity does not need to be female); who is over 18 years old; and identify or have been identified by others as “masculine”, “boyish”, “tomboy”, and/or any other adjective that connotes masculinity. It will take 1-2 hours of your time at a day, time and location that is convenient for you.

This interview involves questions related to your sport experiences and gender and sexual identities. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to refrain from answering certain questions, to stop the interview at any time. There will be no negative consequences attached to either declining to participate or withdrawing from participation. Your name and identifying circumstances will be kept confidential. If you would like to participate or know someone who might be interested, please contact me.

Satoko Itani
OISE/University of Toronto
Tel (Canada): 1-(416) 978-0073
Tel (Japan): 81-(797) 62-0115
E-mail: s.itani@mail.utoronto.ca
カナダのトロント大学、オンタリオ教育研究所大学院に所属する井谷聡子（いたにさとこ）です。
現在博士論文のための調査を行っています。調査のテーマは「日本における女子選手のジェンダー・セクシュアリティの言語性構成とアイデンティティ形成」です。
近年、日本の女子サッカー、レスリングの国際大会での活躍がメディアで大きく取り上げられるようになり、女子のスポーツとして広く認知されるようになってきました。しかし、激しい身体接触を伴い強靭な身体を必要とするこれらのスポーツは男子の種目という社会の認識が完全に覆されたわけではないのです。本調査は、サッカーとレスリングなど、長く社会で男性的と考えられてきたスポーツに参加する女子選手の経験について、特に日本のジェンダーと性自認との関係性について理解を深めることを目的としています。女子選手が競技生活を通じて自身のジェンダー、セクシュアリティ、身体について感じること、その周りの人や社会から受けける反応、そして「男性的」とされるスポーツをプレーすることに周囲の人々がどのように反応し、またそれがどう変化してきたかなどを知ることで、より多くのスポーツに女性や性的少数者が参加できる社会的環境を整えるためのヒントを得たいと考えています。
本調査では、日本の大学のサッカーあるいはレスリング部に所属する18歳以上の女子選手で（女子として試合に出場する選手であれば性自認は問いません）、これまで周囲の人から自分のプレーするスポーツに関連して「ボーアイシュ」「男っぽい」「女らしくない」「たくましい」など、ジェンダー・性・身体に関わるコメントをされたことがある、あるいは他選手に対するそのようなコメントを聞いたことがある方に個人単位でインタビューをさせて頂きたいと思っています。時間は1〜2時間で、場所はインタビューさせて頂く方の都合に合わせて設定します。
このインタビューには、スポーツ経験、ジェンダー・性自認、身体に関する質問が含まれています。インタビューへの参加は任意です。特定の質問項目に回答しないこと、インタビューに中断すること、インタビュー後に回答の一部を削除することは自由です。また調査結果の公表は全て匿名で行い、個人が特定できる情報は仮名に置き換える、または削除します。本調査に参加して頂ける方、参加できる人を紹介して下さる方、また調査について質問がある方はぜひご連絡下さい。

井谷聡子（いたにさとこ）
トロント大学オンタリオ教育研究所 博士課程後期
Eメール：n.itani@mail.utoronto.ca
電話（日本）：（0797）62-0115、電話（カナダ）：1-(416) 830-8041
Appendix C: Information Letter (English)

Information Letter

October 10, 2012

Dear _________________,

My name is Satoko Itani, a graduate student from OISE/UT at the University of Toronto, and I am conducting a research project called: “Discursive construction and subject formation of masculine female athletes in Japan.”

This letter explains the purpose of the study and what participating would involve on your part.

In recent years, Japanese women’s soccer and wrestling have received significant media attention due to their excellent performances in the international competitions, and it helped these sports to be recognized as “sports for women” in Japanese society. However, the social attitudes toward sports that involve strong physical contact and requires strong masculine body such soccer and wrestling has not completely changed. Thus, the purpose of this study is to deepen the understanding of experiences of female athletes in these sports in relation to gender and sexual norms in the society and its influence to female athlete’s identity. My hope is to gain insights into how the social environments and attitudes need to be changed in order to make these sports more welcoming and empowering experience for women and sexual minority people.

This interview involves questions related to your sport experiences and gender and sexual identities. If you agree to participate, I would like to interview you for 1-2 hours of your time at a day, time and location that is convenient for you. If you would like, I can provide you with the interview questions ahead of time. The interview will be recorded using written notes and/or digital audio.

I will ensure your anonymity by not using your real name or any information you think might identify you. You will be invited to review and edit written transcripts of your interview. Also, I will ask you how I should use pseudonyms for names of other people, organizations and places to protect your confidentiality. There is a small risk that you may feel uncomfortable or become upset discussing stressful or difficult experiences related to your sport participation, gender and sexuality. During and after the research meeting, I will ask if you need any support.
As a participant in this project you would have several very definite rights:

- First, your participation in the interview, sharing materials or visiting any sites are entirely voluntary.
- You are free to refuse to answer any question at any time.
- You are free to withdraw from any aspect of the research meeting at any time.
- Excerpts from the transcript of this interview may be included in published accounts, but under no circumstances will your real name or identifying circumstances be included.

Should you have any further questions you are welcome to contact me by phone at (0797) 62-0115 (Japan, between July 15 and Aug 29th, 2012) or 1-(416) 830-8041(Canada, after August 30th, 2012) or e-mail (s.itani@mail.utoronto.ca). Also if you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Research Ethics at 416 946 3273 or by emailing ethics.review@utoronto.ca.

Sincerely,

________________________________

Satoko Itani
インタビュー調査についての説明

2012年10月10日

様、

カナダのトロント大学、オンタリオ教育研究所大学院に所属する井谷聡子（いたにさとこ）です。現在博士論文のための調査を行っています。調査のテーマは「日本における女子選手のジェンダー・セクシュアリティの言説的構成とアイデンティティ形成」です。

本調査の目的と内容についてご説明いたします。

近年、日本の女子サッカー、レスリングの国際大会での活躍がメディアで大きく取り上げられるようになり、女子のスポーツとして広く認知されるようになってきました。しかし、激しい身体接触を伴う強烈な身体を必要とするこれらのスポーツは男子の種目という社会の認識が完全に覆されたわけではありません。本調査は、サッカー、レスリングなど、長く社会で男性的と考えられてきたスポーツに参加する女子選手の経験について、特に日本のジェンダーと性規範との関係性について理解を深めることを目的としています。女子選手が競技を通じて自身のジェンダー、セクシュアリティ、身体について感じること、身の回りの人や社会から受けた反応、そして「男性的」とされるスポーツをプレーすることに周囲の人々がどのように反応し、またそれがどう変化してきたかなどを知ることで、より多くのスポーツに女性や性的少数者が参加できる社会的環境を整えるためのヒントを得たいと考えています。

このインタビューには、スポーツ経験、ジェンダー・性認識、身体に関する質問が含まれています。調査への協力に同意して頂ける場合、あなたのご都合の良い日、時間、場所で1～2時間程度のインタビューを行います。予めインタビューの質問項目をお知らせすることもできます。インタビューの内容は、あなたの同意にしたがってデジタルレコーダーまたは筆記で記録します。

研究成果の報告では、協力頂いた方が特定されないよう本名、大学名、その他個人が特定されうる情報は仮名を用いる、あるいは削除し、またあなたの自身や周囲の人、大学、チームなどにどのような仮名を用い
るか相談させて頂きます。このインタビューの中であなたのスポーツ経験やジェンダー、セクシュアリティについて嫌な思い出や辛い気持ちを思い出することで、気持ちの动摇する可能性があります。インタビュー中とその後でサポートが必要かどうかお尋ねします。

調査の参加として、あなたには以下の権利があります。

● インタビューへの参加は任意です。
● 質問に答えたくない場合には、お答えにならなくても結構です。
● インタビュー調査への協力を中断したい場合には、その旨お申し出があればいつでも中断します。
● 論文の出版にあたってインタビューの書き起こしが含まれる場合は、あなたの本名やその他個人が特定可能な情報が掲載されることはありません。

本調査に関して何かご質問があるときは、お気軽にご連絡下さい。

井谷聡子（いたにさとこ）
日本での連絡先（2012年7月15日~8月29日まで）：(0797)62-0115
カナダでの連絡先（2012年8月30日以降）：1-(416)830-8041
Eメール：s.itani@mail.utoronto.ca

調査協力者の権利についての何かご質問がある場合、以下のトロント大学の研究倫理オフィスまでお気軽にお連絡下さい。

Office of Research Ethics
電話：1-(416)946-3273
Eメール：ethics.review@utoronto.ca

ご協力ありがとうございます。

井谷聡子
Appendix D: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

By signing your name here, you acknowledge that you read and understand the details provided in the Information Letter, and give your information consent to participate in this doctoral dissertation study. You also acknowledge that your interview will be recorded using written notes and/or digital audio and that the interview will be developed as a doctoral dissertation and/or academic article.

Your participation in this project is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time. To withdraw, you simply contact me by email, phone, or in person regarding your wish to discontinue your involvement, and any information that you shared will be destroyed. There will be no negative consequences attached to declining to participate or withdrawing from participation in the project.

I would like to express my appreciation for your participation in this project. Should you have any questions you are welcome to contact me by phone (0797) 62-0115 (Japan: between July 15th to Aug 29, 2012) or 1-416-830-8041 (Canada: anytime after August 30th, 2012), or e-mail (s.itani@mail.utoronto.ca). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Research Ethics at 1-(416) 946-3273 or by emailing ethics.review@utoronto.ca.

If you give your written consent to participate in the research meeting and understand your rights as a participant in this project, please sign below.

_________________________________________  (Signature)

_________________________________________  (Printed name)

_________________________________________  (Date)

(Researcher: keep signed copy; leave unsigned copy with participant)
インタビュー調査協力の同意書

「日本における女子選手のジェンダー・セクシュアリティの言説的構成とアイデンティティ形成」の研究にご協力
くださり、ありがとうございます。

このインタビューには 1～2 時間程度の時間がかかります。インタビューへのご協力は任意です。このイン
タビューを通じて提供いただいた情報に、研究者以外の第三者が触ることはありません。また、研究成
果の報告では、個人が特定できる情報（氏名、大学名等）は匿名扱いとします。なお、研究データに誤りがない
よう、インタビューの内容は、あなたの同意にしたがってデジタルレコーダーまたは筆記で記録されます。この
記録は研究データとして慎重に扱い、第三者が聞くことはありません。また、インタビュー後に話し頂いた
内容の一部あるいはを訂正あるいは削除したい場合は、その旨お申し出であればいつでも訂正・削除いたし
ます。

調査に関するご質問は、下記の通り井谷聡子までご連絡下さい。

井谷聡子（いたにさとこ）
日本での連絡先（2012 年 7 月 15 日～8 月 29 日まで）：(0797) 62－0115
カナダでの連絡先（2012 年 8 月 30 日以降）：1－(416) 830－8041
E メール：sitani@mail.utoronto.ca

「インタビュー調査についての説明」にある説明事項を理解し、調査・研究への参加に同意します。

平成24年 月 日（曜）

お名前 ____________________________

サイン ______________________________________

（研究者：サイン入りの同意書を保存、サイン無しの同意書を協力者に渡す）
Appendix E: Approval of Research Ethics

PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 27813

July 5, 2012

Dr. Heather Sykes
DEPT OF CURRICULUM, TEACHING & LEARNING
OISE/UT

Satoko Itani
DEPT OF CURRICULUM, TEACHING & LEARNING
OISE/UT

Dear Dr. Sykes and Satoko Itani,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, "Discursive construction and subject formation of masculine female athletes in Japan"

ETHICS APPROVAL

Original Approval Date: July 5, 2012
Expiry Date: July 4, 2013
Continuing Review Level: 1

We are writing to advise you that the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board (REB) has granted approval to the above-named research protocol under the REB's delegated review process. Your protocol has been approved for a period of one year and ongoing research under this protocol must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

Any changes to the approved protocol or consent materials must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process prior to its implementation. Any adverse or unanticipated events in the research should be reported to the Office of Research Ethics as soon as possible.

Please ensure that you submit an Annual Renewal Form or a Study Completion Report 15 to 30 days prior to the expiry date of your current ethics approval. Note that annual renewals for studies cannot be accepted more than 30 days prior to the date of expiry.

If your research is funded by a third party, please contact the assigned Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Schneider, Ph.D.,
C.Psych
REB Co-Chair

Sarah Wakefield, Ph.D.
REB Co-Chair

Dean Sharpe, Ph.D.
REB Manager

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ETHICS
McMurtry Building, 12 Queen's Park Crescent West, 2nd Floor, Toronto, ON M5S 1S8 Canada
Tel: +1 416 946-3273 ● Fax: +1 416 946-3763 ● ethics.review@utoronto.ca ● http://www.research.utoronto.ca/for-researchers-administrators/ethics/
Appendix F: Semi-structured Interview Guides (English)

1. Could you introduce yourself particularly in relation to your sport?
2. Why did you choose to play the sport?
3. How long have you played?
4. What is your relationship to your sport?
   4.1 Do you like it or are you ambivalent? What makes you like or dislike your sport?
   4.2 What does the sport mean to you?
5. How do you describe yourself in terms of gender and sexuality?
   5.1 Why do you use the words and or categories to describe yourself?
6. Would you ever use the term ‘masculine’ to describe yourself? Why? Why not?
7. Have you ever been concerned or thought about the possibility of gaining masculine physique or appearance through sport participation? If yes, how so?
8. Have there been moments in your life when people made comments about your gender, appearance, or sexuality?
   8.1 If yes, can you describe those moments? What were the words or phrases used?
   8.2 How did you feel about it?
   8.3 Do you think there was a relationship between the people’s comment and your participation in your sport? How so?
   8.4 Looking back on this moment/event now, have your feelings and understandings of the moment changed? How so?
9. Were there moments in your life when people made comments about female athletes in your sport in terms of their gender, appearance, or sexuality?
   9.1 If yes, can you describe those moments? What were the words or phrases used?
   9.2 How did you feel about it?
   9.3 Do you think there was any relationship between the people’s comment and the athlete’s participation in the sport? How so?
   9.4 Looking back on this moment/event now, have your feelings and understandings of the moment changed? How so?
10. Do you think there is any conflict between how you identify your gender/sexuality and your participation in sports? Why or why not?
11. Could you tell me what kinds of things that might need to be changed in sport cultures and society at large in order to make women and queer people’s participation in so called “masculine” sport more welcoming and empowering experience?
12. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences in sport?
スポーツ経験と、ご自身のジェンダー・セクシュアリティ（あるいは性）について質問します。
1 ご自身がプレイされているスポーツとご自身について自由な形で自己紹介をお願いします。
2 あなたが（現在プレーするスポーツの名前）を始めた理由は何ですか？
3 どのくらい（スポーツ名）をされていますか？
4 あなたと（スポーツ名）の関係はどのようなものですか？
   4.1 （スポーツ名）は好きですか、それともアンビバレント（複雑）な気持ちですか？（スポーツ名）が好き、あるいは嫌いな理由は何ですか？
   4.2 （スポーツ名）はあなたにとってどのような存在ですか？
5 ご自身のジェンダーとセクシュアリティのアイデンティティあるいは認識についてお聞かせ下さい。
   自身のジェンダーとセクシュアリティを言葉で表現するなら、どのような言葉ですか？
   5.1 その言葉やカテゴリーを使った理由は何ですか？
6 ご自身について語る時、「男っぽい」「ボーイッシュ」「たくまさしい」など、男性性に関わるような表現を使うことはありますか？あるいはそのような表現は自分のアイデンティティと照らし合わせて適切だと思いますか？それは何故ですか？
7 （スポーツ名）をプレーすることで、一般女性に比べて男性的な体格や見た目になる可能性について心配したこと、あるいは考えたことはありますか？（if yes）その経験についてお話下さい。
8 今まで周囲の人々があなたのジェンダーとセクシュアリティ、見た目についてコメントしたことはありますか？
   8.1 （if yes）その時の様子についてお話下さい。そのコメントではどのような言葉が使われましたか？
   8.2 その時どのように感じましたか？
   8.3 そのような周囲の人コメントと、ご自身のスポーツ参加の間に何か関係があると思いませんか？あるとすればどのようなものですか？
   8.4 現在その時のことを思い出してみて、その出来事、あるいは瞬間に対する気持ち、考えは変わってきましたか？どのように？
9 今まで周囲の人々が（スポーツ名）選手のジェンダーとセクシュアリティ、見た目についてコメントしているのを聞いたことがありますか？
   9.1 （if yes）その時の様子についてお話下さい。そのコメントではどのような言葉が使われましたか？
   9.2 その時どのように感じましたか？
   9.3 そのような周囲の人コメントと、ご自身のスポーツ参加の間に何か関係があると思いますか？あるとすればどのようなものですか？
   9.4 現在その時のことを思い出してみて、その出来事あるいは瞬間に対する気持ち、考えは変わってきましたか？どのように？
ご自身のジェンダー・セクシュアリティ（性）と（スポーツ名）の間に葛藤・衝突などはありますか？それはどうしてですか？
一般のにまだ「男性的」だとされるスポーツに女性や性的マイノリティの人たちがもっと参加しやすくなったり、参加することでパワーや元気を得られるような環境を作っていくには、社会やスポーツの文化がどのように変わっていくべきだと思いますか？あなたの意見を自由にお聞かせ下さい。
あなたの（スポーツ名）経験について、他にご自身のアイデンティティに関わる思い出や出来事、あるいは現在考えていることなどがあればお聞かせ下さい。