Engendering Fashion: Gender Performativity, Fashion, and Formal Occasions in Japan

by

Iván Garcimartín Carmona

Bachelor of Asian and African Studies (Japanese), Autonomous University of Madrid, 2019

Master of Public Oriented Anthropology, Autonomous University of Madrid, 2020

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We acknowledge and respect the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and Xʷsepsəm/Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

The sartorial choices of individuals on formal occasions in Japan reveal the gender differentiation of clothing in Japanese society and how people utilize fashion to embody gendered norms. By examining non-normative experiences and representations of gendered individuals in Japanese media, this thesis addresses the question: How do Japanese individuals construct gender identities through fashion in relation to formality? To answer this question, this study combines Judith Butler's performativity with an intersectional, non-normative, and queer framework. It analyzes media representations– such as manga, movies, and images of other formal occasions alongside first-hand experiences from surveys and an interview. This thesis also examines coming-of-age ceremonies, an example of a formal setting in Japan where fashion is key in conveying and embracing gender norms. These highlight the tensions between expectations and individual aspirations regarding gender.

The analysis reveals that modernization from the Meiji period and the consequences of war created a differentiation between traditional and modern fashion, shaping gender binaries. While men gravitate towards Western-style clothing, women often use traditional garments such as *furisode* or *hakama*. Non-normative events, such as Kitakyushu's coming-of-age ceremony, reveal the fragility of gender norms and how individuals negotiate their identities, showing their contentious nature. Additionally, exploring diverse ethnic experiences, such as the *Zainichi* community, challenges the idea of a homogenous Japan and broadens the understanding of gender identities. Thus, this thesis aims to construct an inclusive space to examine experiences that fall outside of the norm and put them at the centre of the discussion while considering the role of material culture in understanding the intricate patterns of Japanese society.

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I

Introduction

Fashion in East Asia has been a widely researched and discussed topic ever since trends such as K-pop and styles from the streets of Harajuku started being more popular amongst the public. When one thinks about fashion, images such as runways, trendy outfits, or pret-a-porter shops may come to mind, but fashion is in everybody's daily lives. Even the most solemn occasions revolve around a dress code or some way of dressing that is considered proper for the specific moment or event. Before moving on to a deeper analysis of fashion usage in Japan, I want to share a personal story. I spent one of my undergraduate years living in Japan as an exchange student, a moment that brought me various opportunities to witness formal events. One special occasion that sparked my interest was the graduation ceremony of the university where I used to study in Tokyo. I noticed an evident difference between the participants' garments during this event. This university focused on international studies and languages around the globe, so many women decided to wear traditional clothes, specifically from the countries they were studying about. However, most female attendees wore *furisode*[1] and *hakama*[2] while men wore Western-style suits. Women proudly took pictures under the trees while men gathered in groups just conversing. Women's clothes were varied in colors, patterns, accessories, and combinations. The traditional garments featured intricate floral patterns

[1] A kind of kimono that is characterized for its long sleeves and its heavy and colorful patterns. To know more, please see Chapter 3.
[2] Long, pleated skirt that is usually worn by women over a *furisode* in certain occasions such as graduation ceremonies. To know more, please see Chapter 3.

or other colorful styles. On the contrary, men wore a more-or-less unified style with little difference in colors and forms.

Image 1 is an example of a graduation ceremony in Japan and the fashion featured by both women and men, showing the disparities between men's and women's fashion. The clear differentiation between what men and women wear for this event caught my attention and made me wonder about the gender binaries and how they are expressed through fashion. Thus, this thesis is based on a personal interest in diving deeper into understanding the social conventions around the usage of certain fashions in formal occasions and ceremonies. The key question of the thesis is how Japanese individuals construct gender identities through fashion in relation to formality. To answer this question, it is necessary to broaden the research and ask about the meaning of the concept of gender and the historical and social factors that influence the construction of gender identities. This thesis will explore a variety of non-normative events, people, and experiences that will be key to the understanding of how gender norms, social expectations, and individual aspirations influence the usage of fashion and the construction of gender within Japanese society. In the context of this thesis, as explored further in Chapter 2, non-normativity

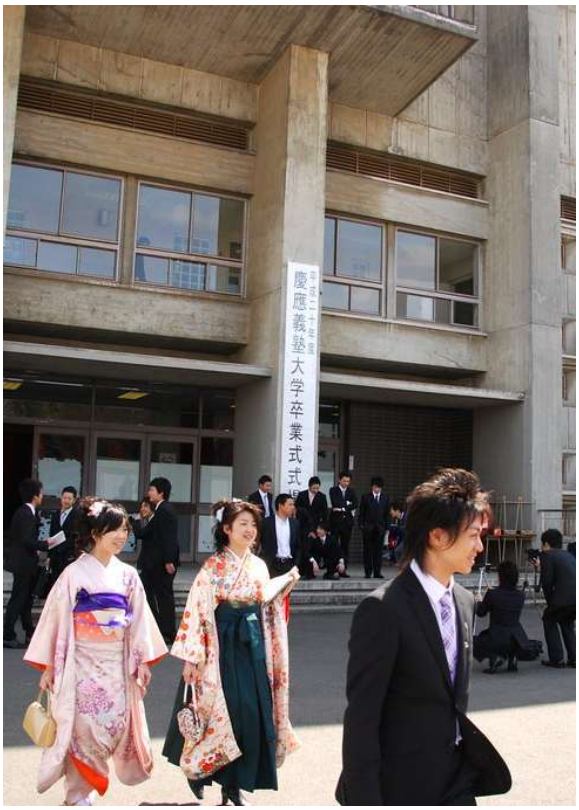

Image 1. Men and women at a graduation ceremony in Japan

.Source: Ken Lee, Graduation spring 2009 6, photograph, 1024 × 685 pixels, Openverse, https://openverse.org/image/dcf4fe16-951d-477a-ad52-3ae5103443e3?q=hakama

entails realities, events, and any experience that falls outside of the norms in Japan regarding gender, ethnicity, and style. In this sense, this thesis defines the norm in Japan as a set of elements that the general Japanese population considers common or expectable in society.

Clothing, garments, or regalia are words that will appear further on but ultimately refer to the same concept of fashion. Thus, it is necessary to note that I will use these words interchangeably throughout the thesis but refer to the concept of "fashion" when talking about the modern periods of Japanese history[3] and beyond. The need to differentiate these concepts arises from the very nature of the concept of fashion.[4] Generally speaking, the word fashion relates to trends and runways. However, the implications of fashion for this thesis are much broader. Talking about clothing would be essentially void, as it can only reflect a superficial understanding of what people use garments for. In his 2009 work, Toby Slade[5] argues that fashion is entangled in an intricate web of relations created by establishing a capitalist means of production and widened access to various materials for manufacturing clothing on a cheaper and larger scale. This created a suitable environment for converting clothing into a marketable product. Before the capitalist means of production were established in Japan during the Meiji period (1868–1912 CE), access to certain clothes, such as silk kimonos and the majority of

[3] The modern period comprehends the Meiji (1868–1912), Taisho (1912–1926), and Showa (1926-1989) periods.

[4] The importance of the usage of the word fashion over clothing or garment relies on the distinction between the concepts of modernity and tradition. As Calefato argues, societies are placed in a hierarchical distinction based on whether they have signs of "fashion" (or modernization) or "traditional costume" (an indication of premodern culture). This distinction is central for the purposes of this thesis as the usage of the word fashion is closely related to the power dynamics that exist between the concepts of modernity and tradition, implying that, after the Westernization of Japan, the nation held modern elements in high esteem in comparison to traditional or premodern ones, which transformed into being an antithesis to modernity. For more, see Patrizia Calefato, *Fashion as Cultural Translation : Signs, Images, Narratives* (Anthem Press, 2021), ix.

[5] Toby Slade, *Japanese Fashion: A Cultural History* (Berg, 2009), 63.

garments of a certain quality, was only reserved for the people who had the means to afford them being made and tailored to their figure and taste. Toby Slade helps us problematize what will be explored later on in this chapter and the following chapters: the differentiation between traditional and modern fashion, a consequence of the modernization of Japan, and the Japanese interest in the technological advancements from the West during the Meiji period. “Modern” and “traditional” clothes only exist after the nation's modernization. The changes in the means of production drew a boundary between what is traditional (local, indigenous, and ethnic) and what is modern (mostly Western-style clothing). This division places these two categories at different positions and makes one understand that fashion is a product of modernity.[6]

It is necessary, however, to understand the circumstances that led Japan to be open to the industrialization and what is commonly known as the Westernization process. The Japanese government, rather than being a passive agent that received influences from the West, actively pursued the modernization of its structures, institutions, and means of production. During the second half of the 19th century, the Japanese government reestablished the emperor’s power after the Meiji Revolution. This revolution entailed various changes to Japan's economic, political, and cultural institutions and elements from Tokugawa (1603-1868 CE). These changes included eliminating the aristocratic status of

[6] The term modern references the quality of being modern. Modern has been utilized by historians and other researchers as a manner to refer to European individuals and societies that have gone through Enlightenment throughout the 18th century. Thus, dress and clothing has been a visual mark of modernity in European societies. The changes in the European ways of dressing during the 18th century reflect a change in society and in people´s mindset. In all societies, changes in their clothing are an example of a similar phenomenon, drastic changes in cultural values. With the globalization of the world throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, fashion in Europe started adopting elements from other local fashions such as the Middle East and Turkey. This change of values in Europe led to the cultural colonization of other populations. To know more about this and how the changes in fashion and values in Europe affected the colonies throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, please see Amany Abdelrazek-Alsiefy, “Modernity, Fashion and Agency,” in *Modern Egyptian Women, Fashion and Faith* (Springer International Publishing AG, 2023), 21-30.

the samurai, centralizing the political institutions, creating a unified army, reestablishing the emperor's political power, and implementing mandatory education for all children, amongst other changes.[7] The main reason for this sudden change in Japanese politics was the fear of being colonized by the West and the fear of opposing political ideas from within the country.[8] For Western nations to recognize Japan as an equal, the Japanese government needed to modernize its institutions to improve technology, education, economy, and military. The political and economic elites understood that modernizing was the only inevitable solution for maintaining Japanese sovereignty.[9] In such a context, the modernization of clothing was necessary for the West to see Japan as an equal. This society had embraced enlightenment and left "barbaric and backward customs and institutions" in the past. The split between modern and traditional thus placed the more local and "traditional" aspects of culture and society on a second level, relegated to a sphere of society in which women were included, making the new modern adoptions associated with men prevail in the public sphere. In the twentieth Century, fashion became an indicator of social status and a manner of differentiating the colonial powers from the colonies, showing those in power using Western-style clothing. At the same time, the colonized people were depicted in media (usually art) using traditional regalia, as discussed in Chapter 5. As examined in later chapters, the question of modernity and tradition in Japan is directly related to the question of gender and the embracement of femininity and masculinity through fashion.

[7] Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan : From Tokugawa Times to the Present* (Oxford University Press, 2020), 62-70.
[8] Ibid., 62.
[9] Akihiro Ishikawa, "Chapter Four. Modernization: Westernization vs. Nationalism: A Historical Overview of the Japanese Case," in *East Meets West*, vol. 15, ed. Kyong-Dong Kim, and Hyun-Chin Lim (BRILL, 2007), 93-4.

To examine the intricacy of how gendered individuals construct their identities through fashion and how gender norms play a central role in their construction, it is essential to explore the importance of the concept of performativity. As examined by Judith Butler,[10] performativity understands that humans construct identities daily, repeating certain acts that congeal into an appearance of substance. In later instances in this thesis, I will examine the contentious nature of identity, a concept that modifies and further explores what Butler describes as performativity. The contentious nature of identity will help us reveal that, in the case of this thesis, gender identities are in a constant process of redefinition and reconstruction by gendered individuals. The examination of non-normative experiences will deepen the understanding of this concept. Non-normative experiences, people, or events serve as a tool for the deconstruction of gender norms and to reveal what is normative about gender in Japanese society. Performativity and the contentious nature of identity frame the thesis in the understanding that gender identities and fashion are in constant change. Thus, answering questions such as "What are the predominant gender identities in Japan?" or "Why does the gendering of fashion exist in Japan?" is impossible. This is because the answer to these questions would be ephemeral and thus inconclusive. The ultimate goal of this thesis is to examine what processes exist in Japanese society for the construction of gender identities among people of diverse backgrounds, how this construction exists in the intricate web of relations and changes that Japanese society experiences, and how it is related to the usage of fashion in diverse formal occasions. This thesis aims to build an open and broad understanding of how different gender identities are constructed through materials, precisely fashion, and how their contentious nature interacts with the expectations, aspirations, and hegemonic ideas of how one should exist in the fictive world of two sexes.

[10] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 1999), 45.

❖ The Chapters

The analysis of raw material is vital to understanding the puzzle that initiated this research project. However, before analyzing the primary and secondary sources, it is key to have a solid background and knowledge of what has been researched and discussed previously about the topic of investigation and related issues. Chapter 2 focuses on this very purpose. The chapter is divided into two sections covering different research areas: the methodology and the literature review. The first section of the chapter is dedicated to comprehensively understanding the methods I used to collect and analyze primary and secondary data and the main research questions that frame this thesis. The second section of this chapter reviews existing literature on the three main topics that frame this thesis theoretically: gender, fashion, and non-normativity. The examination of these concepts and main issues is central to the analysis of the data in the following chapters. While examining these three main topics, I will develop my understanding of other adjacent concepts such as style, performativity, or intersectionality. Reviewing this set of issues and concepts aims to create a basis for understanding how non-normativity can reveal certain normative aspects of Japanese society that may remain hidden otherwise. Thus, the analysis of non-normative events, usages of fashion, identities, and experiences will be the central element of discussion throughout the thesis and the reason for deepening my analysis of, as an example, the concept of intersectionality, further developed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3 analyzes fashion to embody and express certain gender and social expectations and aspirations. This chapter utilizes diverse primary sources such as interviews, films, or representations in *manga* to analyze how womanhood, manhood, and adulthood are constructed and understood in Japanese society as ideals that are expected

of individuals. This chapter is divided into two sections: the first section focuses on the meanings of becoming a man, a woman, and an adult and the social expectations and aspirations that are associated collectively and individually with these concepts; the second section examines different examples of media in which LGBTQ+ individuals are represented. The representation of queer individuals in the media illuminates how the social expectations in relation to gender norms are in constant conflict with the realities of a diverse population. Gender diversity exists in contrast to the social expectations of gendered individuals, a tension in which the contentious nature of identity reveals the fragility of gender norms in Japan. Finally, the lived experience of a queer individual that was interviewed for this project, in tandem with the media analysis, builds an understanding of how gendered identities are constructed and are in constant redefinition amidst the struggle for fitting into the societal standards inflicted upon gendered individuals.

Chapter 4 examines formal clothing in Japan and how non-normative events reveal the malleability of gender identities and social expectations of gendered individuals in Japanese society. Firstly, this chapter dedicates an introduction to briefly explain the history of the Japanese population's relatedness to gender, sex, and sexuality. Additionally, it also focuses on how different historical events have shaped the understanding of Japanese people's gender ideals and the expectations associated with them. The second section concentrates primarily on elaborating a comprehensive list of the different garments used on formal occasions in Japan, followed by a brief historical analysis of the development of their usage. The section features different public domain pictures collected through online archives and others provided by the participants in the research process. The images exemplify an accessible understanding of the garments

when I use their Japanese name or reference them throughout the thesis. The following sections focus on coming-of-age ceremonies and the specific case of Kitakyushu[11] as a case study. These ceremonies are well known to fall outside of the aesthetic and gender norms in Japan. Thus, examining this non-normative event helps analyze Japan's gender norms and illuminates gendered individuals in formal settings. Gender norms and social expectations of gendered individuals are the focus of the last section of the third chapter. I will expand the discussion by focusing on the concepts of hyperfemininity and hypermasculinity (or hypergender) and how they reveal the contentiousness of gender identities in Japan by exaggerating certain aspects of gender norms. Drawing upon the analysis in the previous section, Chapter 4 aims towards a comprehensive understanding of how gender norms and expectations are constructed in Japanese society while pointing out how different fashion styles reflect one's negotiation of their gender identity.

The analysis of fashion and the construction of gender would not be complete without building an intersectional and critical understanding of how this process occurs in the ethnically diverse environment in Japan. Chapter 5 examines the intersectional construction of gender, considering diverse social circumstances, specifically race. The examination of a particular group of racialized people in Japan, the *Zainichi*,[12] will provide a window to understand how gender is constructed in a multifaceted manner, considering the convoluted history between Japan and Korea and its implications on the reality and the identities of the Korean diaspora. After an introduction in which concepts such as intersectionality are explained in depth, the following section of the chapter delves into the history of the colonization of Korea as part of the Japanese empire and the

[11] City in the prefecture of Fukuoka, Japan. It is the second largest city in the prefecture and the Kyushu island, with an approximate population of 910,000 people.
[12] Individuals in Japan who relate to Korean culture and ancestry. For further details, see Chapter 5.

complex construction of a *Zainichi* identity. Subsequently, I will discuss the specific social expectations and ideas in relation to gender and how fashion plays an essential role in the embodiment of feminine and masculine ideals in *Zainichi* communities. To deepen the understanding of the lives of the *Zainichi* people, I will examine the movie *Chong*,[13] directed by Sang-il Lee in 2000, a movie that shows the lives of second- and third-generation *Zainichi* students in a Korean school in Japan, as well as their struggles and their relationship with Korean culture.

❖ The Importance of the Discussion

The purpose of this thesis, as stated at the beginning of this first chapter, is to build an understanding of how different gender identities in Japan are constructed through fashion in formal contexts. To solve such an intricate puzzle, the discussion will be based on a queer, non-normative, and intersectional analysis. These three categories will help me understand what the norm entails in the Japanese context. The analysis of these experiences and struggles is key for the understanding of how gendered individuals construct gender identities and transform them throughout their daily lives. Without these three concepts, certain elements regarding gender construction and formality would remain hidden. Only through the analysis of those people, elements, and experiences that fall outside the gender norms can we access what the gender norm entails and why certain individuals deviate from them. Finally, my intention with this thesis is to create a space where the analysis of non-normative experiences is central. It is common when reading texts on Japanese society that queer, ethnically diverse, and varied experiences are not included in the narratives. In other words, these texts failed to create an open

[13] Chong, directed by Sang-il Lee (PIA, 2000). 0:53:52.

understanding of Japanese society as a diverse space with a myriad of identities and realities. As a researcher, when speaking of a topic, I understand the necessity of including varied experiences and realities that usually remain unspoken. Without their examination, some aspects of Japanese society would remain hidden. Thus, I invite the reader to dive into the study of how fashion, an element that is present in our daily lives and that we sometimes take for granted, can be used as a tool for the analysis of how gender identities are constructed in formal contexts in the specific context of Japan. I will examine ceremonies, schools, graduations, war, colonization, rebelliousness, theatre, and many other topics that render relevant and interconnected like threads in a social fabric, creating a specific pattern worn over the gendered bodies and shaping each individual's unique experiences. The stories of these individuals will help us unthread the puzzle, examine the smaller pieces, and put them back together to illuminate how the different elements of the social fabric are interconnected.

To examine the question of the construction of gender through fashion in Japan, I have selected a variety of media representations along with first-hand experiences that delve into these topics. Among the media representations that I will analyze in the following chapters are Japanese comics (or *manga*), films and documentaries, images, and theatrical representations. The analysis of the representation of fashion rather than its usage in daily life adds a layer of intricacy to this topic. The representation of gender identities through fashion in diverse cultural media shows a narrative that the authors want to convey to the public. For example, the importance of the analysis of a theatrical play in this context is not the types of garments that the actors wear but the gendered elements that they embody through clothing and the performance of gender identities. For this, the analysis in the following chapters will be centered on examining media

representations, revealing the intricacies of the embodiment of gender identities for the public. In this sense, focusing on fashion as materiality loses value against the representation of fashion for the purpose of this thesis. The analysis of the construction of gender identities benefits from knowing how people show their embodiment of masculinity and femininity to the public and creating a hegemonic idea of what femininity and masculinity look like or, on the contrary, creating a space to defy gender norms.

II

A Research Process: Literature, Surveys, and Interviews

❖ Methodology

The construction of a thesis begins with the development of a research plan that is comprehensive and detailed. This implies a deep understanding of the various techniques, sources, and processes that support the project. Examining these processes and materials in a dedicated section is essential for the reader to comprehend how this research project has been built. Reflecting on these processes is crucial for affirming the unique nature of my work and how it may help broaden and enrich the field. The purpose of this project is not only to bring attention to an area of study that needs development but also to foster a deeper understanding of matters such as gender and fashion in the context of Japanese studies. The anthropological nature of this research has derived into the utilization of various research techniques and sources that have framed the text into specific understandings of concepts such as fashion or gender.

Even though the existing literature on the concepts of gender, fashion, or non-conformity is extensive, I suggest that further work is needed to deepen the understanding of the construction of gender identities, gender norms, and the gendered division of fashion (and society) in the Japanese context. To address this concern, I propose the following three research questions:

1. How are gender identities constructed through the usage of fashion in formal settings in Japan?

2. What do non-normative experiences, events, and identities reveal about the gender binary and social norms in Japan?
3. How can fashion be used as a lens to examine the intersectional complexities of Japanese society, and more specifically, gender identities?

By addressing these questions, this project aims to deepen the conversation on gender identities and fashion in the field of Japanese studies by offering a broad perspective.

Throughout this text, I will answer these questions utilizing diverse materials I gathered throughout the research process. The first method was creating and circulating a survey (see Appendix 1). This survey consists of 19 questions that aim to collect statistical data (such as age, gender, and ethnicity of the participants), as well as their opinions, experiences, and stories regarding fashion in formal settings in Japan or concerning Japanese culture. The aim was to gather participants who had lived in Japan for a period of their lives and had the chance to engage in formal occasions such as graduation ceremonies, high school daily life, or weddings. The survey and the rest of the techniques that involved interaction with individuals were directed under the approval of the UVic Research Administration Information System (RAIS). In this stage, the survey participants were asked to engage in further discussion by accepting a one-on-one focused interview (see Appendix 2). One of the participants, whose name was changed to Izumi to keep their privacy, decided to accept the invitation and engage in an individual interview. This semi-structured interview is formed by a selection of open-ended questions that aim to foster a dialogue that could raise further questions that may interest both sides. The purpose of these surveys and interviews lies in accessing the significance that certain items, moments, garments, or stories have in people who have experienced formality in relation to Japanese culture in diverse manners. All the participants in the

survey and the interviews agreed to participate under the conditions stated in the informed consent that I shared with them through the survey (see Appendix 3 and 4).

The interview and the survey included pictures I asked the participants to describe. Thus, media analysis has also been a central element in the development of this thesis. Throughout the text, I have included various pictures that I will analyze in diverse manners. Some of them have been used to show specific garments for the sake of comprehension. On many occasions, native words such as *hakama* or *furisode* are included in the text. Having a reference may help the reader understand the differences between garments and why these differences may be of importance. Similarly, I included other images to generate a debate and to serve as a complement to the analysis of other secondary sources. Other kinds of media, such as movies, documentaries, or *manga* introduce different perspectives and representations of fashion or identity that have rendered useful for the analysis and the creation of a multi-faceted discussion.

❖ Literature Review

Thorough research has been done to examine concepts such as gender or fashion. This section aims not to cover the entirety of the existing work on these concepts but to formulate a valuable framework for the research. Thus, I propose a multi-faceted research and framework that considers the specifics of the Japanese context and always has gender and fashion at the center of the discussion. This literature review is divided into three sections focusing on the three distinct concepts and topics that support the text. Thus, the subsequent chapters have been framed and constructed following certain considerations and understandings of the central concepts to answer the proposed research questions. In

this manner, I can create a proper discussion between different texts and build a unique understanding of the concepts that will fit the necessities of the thesis while examining the intricacy of how they could be interconnected.

✻ Gender and the Notion of Performativity ✻

The very nature of fashion in the contemporary world is gendered.[14] In the various parts of the world, clothmaking, embroidering, and fashion trends have been widely associated with femininity and have experienced transformation into interests for women. Accordingly, fashion is utilized in society according to the gender binary, tracing a line between what is considered masculine and feminine. The image presented in the first chapter depicts this gendered differentiation of clothing in formal settings in Japan: women wear traditional clothing while men wear what could be considered Western or even "modern" clothing. Although I will further examine this differentiation in the following chapters, it reveals that the gender binary is at the center of formal settings and in the utilization of clothing as a means to express one's gender identity in Japan. For this, I propose that gender is the first concept examined in this section.

Identities, such as gender, are often presumed and objectified as if they happened to exist as separate entities that humans put on as garments that stay with us for the rest of our lives. Others may argue that one is born with it as if it were a biological trait of human beings. These notions vary depending on time and location, which makes gender

[14] For further reading on the relation between fashion, gender, and the relation between institutions and standardized fashion for fostering a specific gendered ideal through clothing please see Alisa Freedman, "Romance of the Taishō Schoolgirl in Shōjo Manga: Here Comes Miss Modern," in *Shōjo Across Media: Exploring "Girl" Practices in Contemporary Japan*, ed. Kazumi Nagaike, Fusami Ogi, and Jaqueline Berndt (Springer, 2019), 27-30 & 34-8.

a highly nuanced concept that needs to be utilized with care. First, in order to address the wide array of understandings of this concept, it is necessary to differentiate between the concepts of sex, sexuality, and gender. Also, framing this differentiation in the context of Japanese history and society creates a nuanced first step to approach the topics of this thesis. Dr. Sabine Frühstück's book *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Japan*[15] addresses this differentiation in the context of Japanese society. In this book, Frühstück defines sex as the biological part of the triad, the chromosomes, genes, and physical differentiations, including the genitalia. Frühstück points out that these physical markers of the body can be subject to modification, opening the concept to the inclusion of transgender realities who have undergone physical transformations. The term gender refers to two categories: masculinity and femininity. These two categories exist in a binary and are associated with ways of behaving and existing in the world. Thus, they are categories that refer to the social aspect of the triangle. Finally, the term sexuality is related to sexual arousal, fantasies, and eroticism in general. However, this differentiation was not always alive in Japanese history. It was not until the first half of the twentieth century that the Japanese population started understanding these three terms as separate.[16]

The element that interests us for the purpose of this thesis is the concept of gender. However, it is necessary to consider the close relation between the three categories, especially in the context of Japanese society.[17] Gender, as previously said, can be categorized as an identity, but this categorization needs further explanation. Judith

[15] Sabine Frühstück, *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Japan* (Cambridge University Press, 2022), 1-2.
[16] Ibid, 9-10.
[17] For gender performativity on formal ceremonies such as weddings, please see Walter D. Edwards, *Modern Japan through Its Weddings: Gender, Person, and Society in Ritual Portrayal* (Standford University Press, 1989),14-5 & 108-9.

Butler[18] argues, introducing the concept of performativity, that gender is a construction rather than something necessary and immobile. Utilizing the example of "being" or "becoming" a woman, Butler suggests that gender identities are in a constant process of construction. Gender is an ongoing process of stylization of the body in a repeated manner and following a set of social norms and expectations that are associated with the gender categories that "congeal over time to produce an appearance of substance."[19] In other words, gender is constructed through the repetition of gendered acts on a daily basis. This repetition creates a sense of being, for example, a woman, but nothing substantial holds these acts together when analyzed closely. The substance that Butler mentions is "identity," a "sort of being" that is only an appearance. Instead, gender is closer to the idea of "becoming," although there is nothing to become in the endless repetition of gendered acts and the construction of a gender identity. This is the central understanding that will support the usage of the concept of gender throughout this thesis.

This conceptualization of the term gender may present certain troubles. Although Butler points out that gender is ingrained in a constant repetition of acts, construction, and resignification, the elements analyzed throughout this project have revealed that there is a broader terrain to cover. Non-normative experiences show us that the very nature of gender is ambiguous, malleable, and contentious. Gender can shift, different gender identities can coexist within the same body, and gender can be felt or not. I propose in this project that, by taking a step beyond, we can understand the concept of gender as a myriad of possibilities and experiences, as a category that we can use to defy the binary of man and woman. This category helps us realize that people can express diverse gender

[18] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 45.
[19] Ibid.

identities in various manners. Thus, I propose calling this "the contentious nature of identity." Gender identities are indeed constructed through the repetition of gendered acts, but this repetition is not necessary; rather, it can be contentious. One's affiliation with a particular gender identity can be fluid, change, or even cease to exist. I will utilize this concept to analyze the construction of gender through the experiences of non-normative individuals, events, and depictions in Japanese society, and it will serve as a basis to deepen the understanding of the construction of gender identities in Japan.

In the same vein, as much as I understand the concept of gender in this thesis as an identity in constant construction, it does not eliminate the validity of the individual sentiments or affiliations with particular gender identities. Such an understanding is necessary, especially when speaking of transgender individuals. Considering their experience just as a mere exemplification of the fluidity of gender is, in a sense, wrong. However, trans and non-binary experiences are the perfect example to understand that gender is indeed a category that is constructed socially rather than biologically. However, the conception of transgender realities within the Japanese institutions is not as open as what I propose in this thesis. The reality is that Japanese institutions consider transgender people as individuals who suffer from "Gender Identity Disorder," a term that medicalizes the experiences of transgender people and that puts doctors and surgeries in the center.[20] As shown in the 2019 documentary *Queer Japan*,[21] It is imperative that individuals who wish to change their legal gender undergo medical procedures and surgeries that take away their capacity to procreate and reproduce. Thus, it is necessary to consider gender

[20] S.P.F. Dale, "Transgender, Non-Binary Genders, and Intersex in Japan," in *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Japanese Culture*, ed. Jenifer Coates, Lucy Fraser and Mark Pendleton (Routledge, 2020), 60.
[21] *Queer Japan,* directed by Graham Kolbeins (HIROMEDIA8, 2019). 1:38:53.

as a concept closely related to social struggles and the circumstances of each group of people and individuals in society. To address such intricacy, the later examined concept of intersectionality will be vital for understanding how different gender identities are constructed in the context of social injustices or inequalities.

✻ Fashion, Style, and Modernity ✻

The ideas of fashion, runways, shopping, or clothwork are closely related to the gender binary. These items are commonly presumed to be part of what is socially considered feminine. Clothing stores generally target the female public, whereas sections dedicated to men are notably smaller. This differentiation is no different from the one in clothing that drove the interest for the construction of this thesis in the sense that the division is clear and binary. However, the difference between a runway or a clothing shop and a graduation ceremony lies in the quality of the differentiation. In a store, clothes are divided by gender. In contrast, in a formal setting in Japan, they are usually divided in a double manner: by gender and according to the binary of tradition and modernity. As explored in the first chapter of this thesis, there is a reason for choosing the word fashion over other words that, at first glance, may appear as synonyms. The word fashion holds a meaning that clothing or garments do not. This meaning is the very binary of tradition and modernity. The word fashion refers to clothing that has been produced after the introduction of capitalistic forms of production, access to new kinds of materials, and mass production. Using this concept, I argue that the adoption of capitalism in Japan created a differentiation between what is considered traditional and modern.

As Toby Slade[22] argues, the greater populace's adoption of clothing styles and clothing of nobility was a sign of modernity in Japan. In the case of clothing, sartorial modernity was achieved in Japan before modernization. As argued throughout Slade's book, modernization entails the diverse tangible elements adopted in Japan to achieve modernity. However, in cases such as fashion, modernity preceded modernization. This means that the adoption of capitalist modes of production opened the possibility for the lower classes of society to have a choice in their clothing. Fashion was more available and cheaper, which made it easier to replicate the noble styles among the general public, a sign of modernity. However, modernization would entail the adoption of Western-style clothing among the general population, something that did not occur during the Meiji period (1868-1912). Thus, both modernity and modernization must be considered separate categories that can appear together. This distinction and these nuances are what the term fashion holds in comparison with other terms such as garment or clothing.[23] However, I will use a combination of these words throughout the thesis to avoid redundancy.

The word fashion, other than being a sign of modernity in the case of Japan, is a useful tool for the analysis of gender identities.[24] Thus, fashion is also utilized as a codifier of gender identity. In the modern world, fashion is a marker of gender differences,

[22] Toby Slade, *Japanese Fashion: A Cultural History* (Berg, 2009), 41.
[23] Signs of modernity (such as a miniskirt, or in the case of this thesis, Western-style suits) were held at a higher esteem by the Japanese society than other premodern or traditional signs (such as traditional garments) in the process of Westernization. The divisin between premodern and modern elements in Japanese society often intersects with the gender binary. For more about the distinction between fashion and other words see Calefato, *Fashion as Cultural Translation : Signs, Images, Narratives*, xi.
[24] For the relation between institutions and the construction of specific identities through mandatory fashion, please see Tomoko Namba, "School Uniform Reforms in Modern Japan," in *Fashion, Identity, and Power in Modern Asia*, ed. Kyunghee Pyun and Aida Y. Wong (Springer, 2018), 93-103 & and Judy Park, "Do School Uniforms Lead to Uniform Minds?: School Uniforms and Appearance Restrictions in Korean Middle Schools and High Schools" *The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* 17, no. 2 (2013): 168-74, https://doi.org/10.2752/175174113X13541091797607.

although the line between the binary usage of fashion seems to be dissipating over time.[25] However, there are elements in fashion that remain as strong gender markers. The example McVeigh[26] uses in their book presents footwear as a strong codifier of masculinity. Similarly, throughout this thesis, I will examine certain clothes or usages of fashion that are associated with specific gender categories or the hyper representation of them. As an example, women's use of traditional clothing in graduation ceremonies, as examined in later chapters, reveals that *kimono* and other traditional fashions are strongly associated with femininity, while suits are with masculinity. For this matter, fashion needs to be examined under the lens of the concept of gender in order to understand how the binary divides fashion styles and their usages and how fashion is a signifier of gender identities in Japan.

Style and fashion are commonly associated terms that need to be examined together. In this thesis, fashion refers to the sartorial products of the capitalist market and modes of production. In this scenario, the term style needs to be examined as something else that complements the meaning of fashion. Observing the concept of style and using it to examine the raw materials, I will analyze categories of subculture that are central to the construction of this thesis. The stylization of the body can happen in diverse manners, and individuals use subcultural styles to embody rebellious ideas that reveal the nature of the gender binary in Japan. Subcultures and their styles are formed depending on the circumstances in which they are framed, and they exist in tension with the dominant form of culture. As defined by Dick Hebdige[27] style is a way of using objects, clothing,

[25] Brian McVeigh, *Sneakers: Fashion, Gender, and Subculture* (Bloomsbury,2018), chap. 3, https://www.bloomsburyfashioncentral.com/encyclopedia?docid=b-9781474262941.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (Routledge, 1979), 3.

accessories, and other elements for either contempt or defy the dominant form of culture. In the case of this thesis, I examine fashion in tension with the hegemonic conceptions of formality or gender, as well as with societal expectations and personal aspirations. The usage of fashion and the embodiment of subculture through clothing is done by referencing other styles or groups of people. As examined in Chapter 4, the gendered individuals reference other groups of people in a double manner: quoting an element (i.e., a brand, outfits, or poses) and at the same time leaving something meaningful behind. This something meaningful refers to the very act of quoting and reassigning meanings to the elements that are used.[28] For example, groups of people I analyze on Chapter 4 reference motorcycle gangs or the Japanese mafia. However, referencing the mafia does not mean that these groups of people are part of it; in fact, they use their style to make a social statement.

✻ The Meaning of Difference ✻

The analysis of heteronormativity, gender identities, and fashion in Japan may benefit from analyzing elements, occasions, and people who fall outside of the norm. As hinted previously, the examination of subcultural references can lead to revealing certain aspects of how normative hegemonic discourses and ideals are constructed in Japan. Thus, non-normativity is the third essential element that supports this study. The materials I have engaged with have shown that the reality of Japan is diverse and that the analysis of these diversities is beneficial as they reveal how they differ from normativity. Thus, while certain normative or hegemonic conceptions of society may appear hidden when looking at Japan as a homogenous community, they become evident when compared with non-

[28] Constantine V. Nakassis, "Brand, Citationality, Performativity," *American Anthropologist* 114, no. 4 (2012): 628-29, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1433.2012.01511.x.

normative societal elements. In this sense, the concept of non-normativity is broad and, indeed, diverse. First, I consider non-normative gender identities that fall outside of the heteronormative binary man-woman. Non-binary, agender, genderfluid, and other gender identities' realities render helpful for the interpretation of how society systematically imposes the binary on the gendered individuals and how they present as experiences that defy the norm.[29]

In the same vein, I consider transgender realities as non-normative. The gender binary assumes that the biological sex of the individuals matches their gender identity. In other words, the binary presumes that a person that is born with female genitalia identifies themselves as a woman. However, transgender realities reveal that this assumption is far from being correct, as the experiences of the gendered individuals are diverse. As examined before, I have divided the terms of sex, gender, and sexuality, and transgender individuals are critical to the understanding of how these terms differ from one another. Thus, dissenting bodies that defy the norm by not being part of the heteronormative cisgender binary are the key to analysis in the thesis. Similarly, non-normative sexualities serve the same purpose of revealing the nature of the gender binary in Japan. The assumption that the gendered individual is cisgender and heterosexual is troubled by the existence of these non-normative experiences. These non-normative realities can be used as a lens to analyze how they differ from the norm and the expectations over the gendered individuals in Japanese society.

[29] For the construction of subversive masculinities through their engagement with labor, please see Emma E. Cook, "Expectations of Failure: Maturity and Masculinity for Freeters in Contemporary Japan," *Social Science Japan Journal* 16, no. 1 (2013): 36-40, https://doi.org/10.1093/ssjj/jys022.

However, as examined before, I consider gender to be a fluid category that is malleable depending on the circumstances of each individual and occasion. The *kabuki*[30] theatre and the Takarazuka Revue[31] performing group offer examples of how gender is performed and fluid through aesthetics and, most importantly, fashion. In the *kabuki* theatre, the *onnagata* (as examined in Chapter 4) performs the role of a woman, while the Takarazuka Revue performing company is formed by women who interpret the roles of men on stage. These two examples reveal the fluidity and malleability of gender. When performing on stage, the *onnagata* and the performers from the Takarazuka Revue group leave their gender identity behind and embody femininity and masculinity through aesthetics and style. The audience, watching the performance, does not doubt the identity of the character at play and understands that the people before them are indeed women or men, respectively. This serves as an example of how the gender binary can be challenged with elements found in everyday life, represented by individuals that more or less comply with societal expectations.

Fashion can similarly be used in a subversive manner or to play with gender norms and expectations. As discussed in Chapter 4, Japanese individuals make use of certain aesthetics that are associated with (un)social groups in society, such as prostitutes, the mafia, or motorcycle gangs. These usages of fashion are similarly non-normative and can be a tool for analyzing how gender norms and identities are constructed, produced, and reproduced among individuals. Similarly, the gendered individuals use fashion on certain

[30] Classic form of Japanese theatre that originated in the 17th Century. In its earlier stages, this form of theatre allowed both women and men to perform, although in the second half of the century women were banned from performing. This led to men having to perform female roles, a custom that has remained until the present. Men who took on the roles of female characters usually focused only on performing these roles and received the name of *onnagata*.

[31] A Japanese theatre troupe that is formed only by women that perform any kind of role, from male to female.

occasions to exacerbate specific characteristics of their gender and the expectations associated with them. Also, in Chapter 4, I will examine the concept of hypergender and how it defies or complies with gender norms through fashion, aesthetics, and style.[32] While not adopting the meanings of what entails using mafia-related regalia, the gendered individuals create a non-normative space in which the production of new understandings and embodiments of gender can exist, revealing the nature of the gender norms and the heteronormative and hegemonic gender ideals within Japanese society.

Finally, the last element that forms the notion of non-normativity exists in relation to the conception of the ethnicity of the people in Japan. The general assumption that the average person who lives in Japan is ethnically Japanese creates a division that sets other ethnicities as examples of non-normativity. Examining the realities and experiences of different ethnic groups in Japan will reveal the nature of the construction of gender ideals in Japan, as they are constructed on the presumption that the average person is ethnically Japanese. Thus, the examination of the construction of gender identities amongst different ethnic groups is vital for understanding gender as a fluid and contentious concept, everchanging depending on the circumstances of the individuals. Not only the differences in ethnicity are central to the analysis of gender identities in Japan and their relation with fashion; the analysis of the struggles and difficulties in society of all of the aforementioned groups of people that fall outside of the norm in Japan is the central key to resolving the puzzle that this thesis presents. In this case, it is necessary to construct an

[32] For deepening knowledge on the aesthetics related to (un)social groups in Japanese society, please see: Philip Kaffen, "Image Romanticism and Yakuza Cinema," *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* 14, no. 1 (2022): 71-4, https://doi.org/10.1080/17564905.2022.2054084; Joachim Kersten, "Street youths, Bosozoku, and Yakuza: Subculture Formation and Societal Reactions in Japan," *Crime & Delinquency* 39, no. 3 (1993): 285-7, https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128793039003002; and Katherine Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies: Devising Kabuki Female-Likeness* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 219-32.

intersectional dialogue and research in which we consider the struggles and differences in society between groups of people. Thus, I use the notion of intersectionality to understand that identities are not separated but entwined and in constant interaction with one another. Gender identities and other categories, such as social class or race, are all shaped by oppression.[33] The experiences of each social group and how oppression operates in Japanese society, depending on the categories mentioned above, are fundamental for understanding the complexities of society and the differences in power between groups of people.

❖ Filling the Gap

The incommensurability of the concepts and topics pertaining to this thesis complicates the task of creating a meaningful work. However, the goal of this thesis is to present a new and fresh perspective for the analysis of the construction of gender in Japan. Fashion is used in conjunction with the concept of gender to analyze the diverse realities of Japanese society. In this manner, I will be able to understand how material culture is used in Japanese society as a gender codifier and a tool for the expression of one's identity. However, individuals also use fashion as a tool and a lens to look at the complexities of Japanese society and how Japanese people and other residents in Japan construct their identities. These complexities of Japanese society can be revealed by examining the realities and experiences of non-normative groups of people, events, individuals, and media. The examples provided by these non-normative experiences and stories will provide me with valuable tools for the further examination of the complexities of Japanese society and the construction of gender identities through fashion. As mentioned

[33] Patricia Hill Colins, *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory* (Duke University Press, 2019), 43-6.

previously, examples such as the *kabuki* theatre or the daily lives and experiences of diverse ethnic groups of people that inhabit Japan are essential for the understanding of how gender identities are varied and malleable depending on the context and the circumstances of each individual. Certain events that I will examine in later chapters, such as "uncommon" coming-of-age ceremonies in Japan, will reveal the nature of the gender binary and the societal expectations over the gendered individuals, as well as how the stylization of the body (and the fashion used) can be a way to contempt or rebel against the expectations.

Finally, one of the goals of this thesis is to create a space in which non-normative experiences are discussed and analyzed as the central key point to understanding the complexities of Japanese society. Works on gender in Japan usually feature normative realities that do not seek to challenge the gender binary and do not include diverse stories that defy the notion of gender. In this thesis, I aim to create a space for discussing transgender, agender, non-binary, and other gender identities in Japan that require representation. Similarly, I strive to convey that non-normative experiences can be essential elements of discussion and analysis as they help us reveal societal aspects that otherwise would remain hidden. The struggles of different groups of people help us understand how the expectations over the gendered individuals are unequal due to power differences between groups. Thus, the experiences of ethnic, gender, or sexual minorities in Japan need to be examined and addressed in order to put them at the center of the discussion in the field of Japanese studies.

III

The Contentious Nature of Identity

The nature of fashion is varied in colours, forms, and patterns, as are the usages humans give to it. This chapter will mainly focus on how individuals and collectives make use of fashion as a manner to express, embody, and internalize certain ideals: expectations, aspirations, gender identities, and political statements in relation to queer movements. These topics will be visited through the analysis of two pieces of media and the experiences of a particular individual and their relation to clothing in formal events and ceremonies. This person expressed valuable responses during the interview and on the survey. From now on, the participant's name will be Izumi. They identify as non-binary, have grown up in Japan, have spent some years living and studying abroad, and are 22 years of age. Izumi granted me permission to publish their responses and was aware that a pseudonym would be used to preserve their privacy.[34]

This chapter will be divided into three interconnected sections. The first section focuses on three main concepts: manhood, womanhood, and adulthood. This starting section aims to examine the different expectations and aspirations associated with these three elements and thus access the meaning of "becoming" in contemporary Japanese society. The second section is constructed around the question of what it means to be queer in Japan. The goal of the section is centred on answering the question of what is

[34] The importance of focusing on a single story of one person in particular comes from accessing knowing how the body politics and the stylization of the body are related to people who fall outside of the norm, and how they live their individuality in the binary. *Let Me Speak!: Testimony of Domitila, a Woman of the Bolivian Mines*, a book by Domitila Barrios and Moema Viezzer, serves as an example of how academic work can be done by examining one person's life story. In this book, the authors examine Bolivia's changing political and economic history through the testimony of Domitila Barrios, a Bolivian miner's wife, who narrates a story of suffering and oppression (Barrios de Chungara and Viezzer, *Let Me Speak!: Testimony of Domitila, a Woman of the Bolivian Mines*, n.p.).

expected of queer individuals in society in comparison to how people from queer collectives express their identity through fashion, as well as identifying how queer people experience their individuality within the binary and how it is portrayed to the public. This will be achieved by examining different experiences in Japan, such as the ones shared by Izumi, and a brief analysis of the documentary "Queer Japan," along with a presentation of the character of Isabella in the popular *manga* "Paradise Kiss" by Ai Yazawa.

With the introduction of the concept "the contentious nature of identity," this chapter aims to go beyond the ideas that Judith Butler presented during her career in relation to the performativity of identity and gender, more specifically. This chapter adopts the contentious nature of identity to understand the degree to which gendered individuals play with their identity(ies) to comply with societal expectations and aspirations. The concept of expectation is understood as, in Koichi Hasegawa's[35] words: "the general mood of a society about what people should do," concerning what is taken for granted for a person to live their life and the manners in which the public opinion is formed through "collective discussion." In other words, the expectation is an understanding of the world based on the public agreement that people should adhere to a common behaviour to be regarded as normal, or even functional, members of society. Similarly, and almost opposingly but not entirely, aspiration is a word that, in this project, indicates the wishes of an individual or a group of people who do not necessarily follow societal expectations. The concepts of adulthood and expectations work together in tandem with the concept of gender to shed light on the cases of study included in this chapter. As said previously, this chapter features analyses of two pieces of media: a *manga*,

[35] Koichi Hasegawa, "The Effects of 'Social Expectation' on the Development of Civil Society in Japan," *Journal of Civil Society* 3, no.2 (2007): 180, https://doi.org/10.1080/17448680701573811.

and a documentary, both featuring representations of queer individuals. The analysis of gender expectations, gender roles, gender and sexual diversity, and the fashion associated with them will serve as a bridge to understanding topics related to the notions of hypergender, performativity, and intersectionality that I will examine in the following chapters. The examples that I examine in this chapter serve as a basis to add layers of complication throughout the thesis. Only by understanding what is non-normative in terms of gender and sexuality in Japan can I reveal the meaning of hegemonical and normative experiences in Japanese society and how I can integrate different intersectional examples into the conversation.

❖ The Meaning of Becoming a Man, a Woman and an Adult

As will be discussed in the following chapter in depth, gender ideals and norms have gone through a constant process of change and redefinition throughout the modern history of Japan, from the Edo period to the contemporary era.[36] Formal events and fashion reveal the fact that proper garments are gendered and that there is a binary distinction between men's and women's regalia. The difference in clothing does not only attend to a mere aesthetic decision but also to multiple social and cultural factors. I will examine and analyze these societal factors in this section while discussing the expectations and aspirations that are factored into the decision to wear a particular garment. In later chapters, I will examine further examples of how gender and fashion are closely related and how the Japanese government and the various institutions police the bodies through the implementation of mandatory fashion. As discussed in previous

[36] The Edo period spanned from 1603 through 1868 when the Meiji period started. When I make a reference to the modern period in Japanese history, the aim is to cover the latest years of the Edo period until the end of the Second World War in 1945. The contemporary period refers to the era that follows WWII.

instances, the gender division of clothes in Japan before its modernization was not as evident as it is in the present. In the same vein, gender expectations and aspirations changed alongside fashion. To examine these changes, this section will discuss the consequences of the Second World War and how it impacted gender roles in Japanese society.

Before the end of the Second World War, the Japanese government benefitted from creating a masculine ideal that considered men to be tough warriors ready to serve their nation. Sabine Frühstück[37] argues that during the 1870s in Japan, the common aspiration for young boys was to become a soldier. Diverse institutions such as schools fostered, taught, and enforced these aspirations. Teachers used textbooks with particular military imagery to show a specific version of manhood to the Japanese children and thus create a whole generation that was ready to fight for their nation. This paradigm is still part of the social imagery embodied in the ultra-nationalist discourse deployed by political parties and individuals who want "real men" back along with the army.[38] As the Edo period ended, the samurai class started losing political power, and most of the population saw them as lazy individuals who did not engage in productive or economic activities. However, the samurai values remained alive within the Japanese society and were beautifully taught to young boys to keep alive their fighting spirit, thus reinventing an embellished samurai tradition.[39]

[37] Frühstück, *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Japan*, 19.
[38] Ibid, 20.
[39] Ibid, 25.

As the Second World War ended, leaving Japan on the losing side and preventing the Japanese nation from having an army,[40] what was expected of male individuals switched rapidly. This meant that the role of the masculine hegemony linked to the military, and thus aggressive, changed to the white-collar, middle-class salaryman who had a solid bank account to support his family and who had a wife taking care of him and his children at home.[41] This was the standard gender norm for boys, embodied through black or navy suits, a white shirt, and a tie. These salarymen are usually corporate office workers and were considered for a long while what the average boy would aspire to be after graduating from university. In graduation ceremonies, male students tend to attend wearing a black or navy suit, which is a reminiscence of the salaryman image that sprang after the war. Young adult men present themselves to their families and institutions as functional members of society, ready to start working and being what is expected of them. For this, clothing plays a vital role. In this context, fashion is understood as a means to project a particular set of values and ideas to the public and internalize them.

To illustrate the importance of the figure of the salaryman in Japan and how it has impacted the present society, it is essential to look at how rapidly the number of white-collar workers grew in the archipelago. According to Okura, the number of workers that were working for others by the late 1950s (this is, as the workforce of a company owned by a different person, in opposition to self-employed) reached about 53% of the working

[40] As a consequence of the Second World War, Japan was forced to dissolve its army and create a group of Self Defense Forces that is still active in the present. This pseudo-army cannot be considered as such as it can only act in the case that Japan's integrity is being attacked. In other words, as the title suggests, it is a special forces group of military-trained individuals who are only allowed to defend the country. This was established in Article 9 of the current constitution of Japan. To deepen the understanding of this topic, please see Sayuri Umeda, *Japan: Article 9 of the Constitution* (Law Library of the Congress, 2006).
[41] Frühstück, *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Japan*, 7.

force of the country.[42] Although this statistic includes a wide range of positions and types of workers apart from white-collar, it helps to picture how Japanese society adopted a more capitalist approach to labour. In 1993, the Labour Ministry released some data regarding the growth in the number of salarymen that formed the Japanese workforce. The number of white-collar male workers in Japan increased by 16.5% from 1960 to 1990, making up for the 46.1% of the male working population of the nation.[43] Media during the 1950s already started depicting salarymen, such as the film *The Flavor of Green Tea over Rice*, directed by Yasujiro Ozu,[44] and on to the 1960s with examples such as the TV series *It's Tough Being a Man,* directed by Yoji Yamada,[45] which aired until 1995. The data, combined with the media representation during several decades in the 20th century, is a sign of the increasing importance that salarymen had in Japanese society after the end of the war, as men shifted their expectations towards executive and clerical positions.

The case for women is stylistically different. The war brought a period in which women and girls needed to care for the country, and certain pieces of clothing became more common among them. That was the case of the *hakama*,[46] which was a piece of clothing worn by men until it was re-designed to fit schools' needs and to have women start practicing sports and engaging in physical exercise.[47] It was not until the 1920s that girls began wearing Western-style uniforms at school, almost three decades later than boys.[48] However, traditional Japanese clothing remained a staple for women on diverse

[42] Nana Okura Gagné, "Historizicing Japanese Workers and Japanese Capitalism," in *Reworking Japan* (Cornell University Press, IRL Press, 2020) 49.
[43] "Japan's white-collar work force increasing," UPI, Accessed April 24, 2024, https://www.upi.com/Archives/1993/06/25/Japans-white-collar-work-force-increasing/3710740980800/.
[44] *The Flavor of Green Tea over Rice*, directed by Yasujiro Ozu (Shochiku, 1952). 1:55:49.
[45] *It's Tough Being a Man*, directed by Yoji Yamada (Shochiku, 1969-1995). TV series.
[46] Long pleated skirts that women usually wear over a *furisode* in coming-of-age ceremonies in Japan. To learn more, please see Chapter 4.
[47] Namba, "School Uniform Reforms in Modern Japan," 98.
[48] Ibid, 92.

formal occasions. As seen in the previous chapter, *hakama* started being popularized among young girls attending graduation ceremonies. At the same time, other kinds of kimono are still being used in festivals, coming-of-age ceremonies, weddings, and other activities. The differentiation between men's and women's clothing in this regard suggests a gender binary that goes beyond aesthetics, and that is based on a varied and volatile historical context.

Kimono, as suggested by Goldstein-Gidoni,[49] after adopting Western-style fashion in Japan, began to symbolize "Japaneseness" (or *nihonjinron*[50]) to distinguish Japanese bodies from the rest. Magazines and other publications used the kimono to depict the core of the Japanese culture. This is especially noticeable in magazines and their covers before January 15th, the date on which most of the coming-of-age ceremonies happen across Japan, stressing the idea that women must dress in a specific manner for this special occasion. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, the idea of the coming-of-age ceremonies that was sold to young women and their mothers was to depict their longing for wearing a kimono in a photograph that was later shown to potential marriage candidates.[51] In recent years, fashion magazines have focused on the kimono as the

[49] Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni, "Kimono and the Construction of Gendered and Cultural Identities," *Ethnology* 38, no. 4 (1999): 351, https://doi.org/10.2307/3773912.
[50] A series of elements that, after the establishment of the Meiji regime, were designed and utilized to answer the question of "who are we the Japanese?" It is a nationalistic discourse that uses symbols such as the emperor, the flag, and the anthem as unifying for all the Japanese population. Not only about national symbols, but the discourse also centers in explaining how the Japanese are different from the 'others', even at a physical level, and in this context, discourses about kimono and how it fits the Japanese body were also mentioned (Goldstein-Gidoni, "Kimono and the Construction of Gendered and Cultural Identities," 362). For further explanation, see Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of "Nihonjinron,"* (Trans Pacific Press, 2001), n.p.
[51] Goldstein-Gidoni, "Kimono and the Construction of Gendered and Cultural Identities," 364.

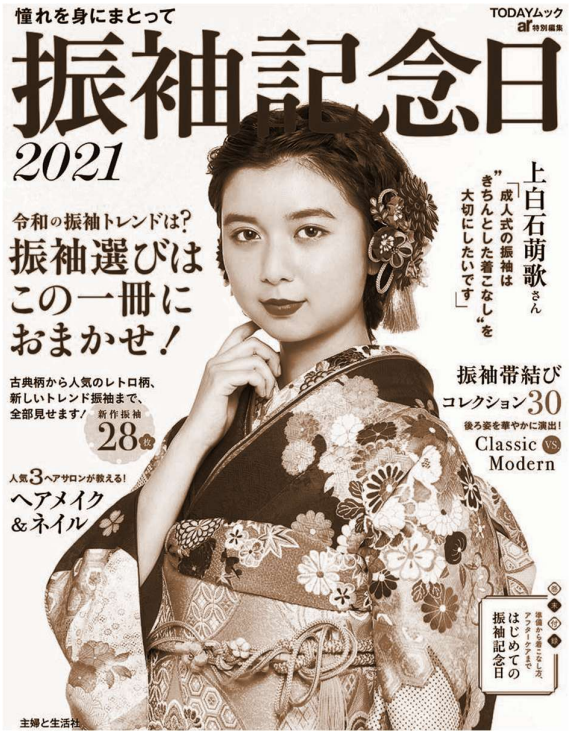

Image 2. Actress Moka Kamishiraishi on a furisode posing for the cover of the magazine "*furisode kinenbi*" (*Furisode* Anniversary) for its 2021 edition.

Source: Shufu to Seikatsusha, *Cover for Furisode Kinenbi 2021*, Magazine cover, Shufu to Seikatsusha, 2021. https://www.shufu.co.jp/bookmook/detail/978-4-391-64254-4/

appropriate fashion for a woman to wear to these kinds of events. As seen in Image 2, the phrase *seijinshiki no furisode wa "kichinto shita kikonashi" wo taisetsu ni shitai desu* (Eng.: the coming-of-age *furisode* should be "properly dressed") appears in the cover of a kimono and *furisode* [52] related magazine along with a famous actress. The combination of a renowned star wearing these particular clothes, along with a specific discourse, reinforces the idea of what is proper for women on formal occasions and helps the creation of heteronormative and hegemonic femininity that women must ascribe and aim for.

The normative ideas and expectations of men and women assume a hegemonic masculinity and femininity that is, in reality, only held by a select minority (which might not even exist). In the case of men, hegemonic masculinity entails a heteronormative man who exerts his power and superiority over women and that differentiates themselves from other subordinate masculinities (homosexual men, for example, or men who express more feminine traits or tendencies).[53] This ideal of masculinity, which is different depending

[52] A kind of kimono that is usually worn by unmarried women and which usually have floral and colorful patterns with very long sleeves. To learn more, please see Chapter 4.
[53] R. W. Connell and James Messerschmidt. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender & Society* 19, no. 6 (2005): 837. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639.

on the social context, is created in opposition to femininity. The Japanese figure of the salaryman entailed something similar: a heterosexual married man who is a breadwinner supporting his family economically while his wife takes care of his children. However, as Connell and Messerschmidt suggest, this is only an ideal represented by a small minority of society. In the present society, it is easy to come across different experiences of the concept of labour by men, especially after the bubble burst in Japan,[54] an event that generated a precarious economic landscape.[55]

The idea that certain identities are created in opposition to others has been studied in various disciplines. Donna Haraway, for example, in the book *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, identified that the binaries in society are created through an opposing tension between one of the parts that seeks to gain control of the other and its resources. One of the examples Haraway gives is the human-nature binary, which exists because humans need to separate themselves from nature to see it as an external entity from which to benefit. In this sense, any harm done to that "nature" was not accounted for, as it did not affect humans. Gendered binaries are established similarly. The binary man-woman exists because men needed to exert power over women's bodies and control their reproductive rights. These binaries exist because the hegemonic epistemologies in the world normalize such a difference. The objective of problematizing the binaries in society is to go beyond the hegemonic epistemologies and understand how power is exerted.[56] Furthermore,

[54] The economic bubble entailed the rapid increase of prices of housing and the stock market that led into its burst in 1991, causing a major economic and financial crisis in Japan.
[55] This is the case, for example, of *freeters*, people (usually men) who have one or multiple part-time jobs and who do not have a stable economic situation. For further information about this topic, please, see Yuki Honda, "'Freeters': Young Atypical Workers in Japan," *Japan labor review* 2, no. 3 (2005), n.p.; and Iván Garcimartín Carmona, "New identities generation processes on contemporary Japanese youth: freeters" (MA thesis, Autonomous University of Madrid, 2020).
[56] Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (Routledge, 1991) 183-7.

identities are constructed in opposition, in the way that a racialized person is differentiated from a white individual to essentialize whiteness as opposed to non-whiteness and a hierarchy between them.[57] Haraway's critique, as previously hinted, is not directed to the power holders (such as men, humans, or whiteness) but to the epistemologies perpetuating the idea that one part of the world holds power over another. Knowing this, Haraway suggests creating a new paradigm in which the binary is not at the center of human knowledge and understanding of the world. To understand the importance of the lived experiences of individuals who do not fall under the gender binary, it is integral to adopt Haraway's critical approach to binary oppositions.

As seen previously, women's and men's garments on formal occasions in Japan are highly differentiated. Based on Haraway's and Connell's ideas, this differentiation is based on the social binary between the two genders. Women and men wear these garments because they appeal to a heteronormative and hegemonic figure that they try to embody. Men present themselves as salarymen, a figure of a man who is a functional member of society and ready to work. On the contrary, women embody traditional values because they are expected to bear children and pass down the Japanese traditional values. As explained in the following chapter, *furisode* is usually worn by unmarried women. This reinforces the idea that a female individual is expected to marry an eligible bachelor when they become an adult, bear children, and look after their husband while he offers economic stability for the family as a breadwinner. As Japan modernized, the ideals associated with both males and females and the expectations around the gendered

[57] Haraway illuminates the case of black women specifically, and how their identity is constructed in opposition to the white women. White women are what black women are not, and in this manner, making assumptions, essentializing, and exerting power over the marginalized become normalized (Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, 144-7).

individuals started shifting as well. As explained in the following chapter, men embodied the idea of enlightenment, and the changes in their clothing represented Japan becoming modern, while women were relegated to the traditional sphere. After Japan lost WWII and strove to rebuild the national economy, men continued defending what was essential to the country in a new era: their families and an available workforce that could save the country from a deepening crisis.

It is easy, in this way, to fall under the wrong impression that identities, such as gender identities, are something homogenous and immutable when the reality is much more complex. Judith Butler argues that humans tend to define their gender very solidly as if being a man held any sort of meaning or as if being a woman could be a characteristic of a person that anybody could easily recognize. The concept of performativity assumes that individuals see their identities as something substantial.[58] The immutability of gender is thus achieved through the repetition of acts that are considered gendered in society, which reveals the performative nature of gender. Gender exists through this repetition and appears immutable. In other words, gender is something one wears or performs and is constructed daily through the repetition of acts that are considered gendered.[59]

Wearing these garments on particular occasions creates a sense of repetition and stability among young adults in Japan. This continuity generates an assumption of having, indeed, a particular, substantial identity that is associated with a specific gender. This idea

[58] Butler understands this substance as something that is immutable and that is a result of the congelation of the repeated stylization of the body (Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 45).
[59] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519-20, https://doi.org/10.2307/3207893.

of gender is, subsequently, associated with certain societal expectations of gendered individuals. Not only is wearing these formal garments the substance of constructing a gender identity, but formal events serve as a stage in which individuals show and perform their identity to the public in an official setting where they embody the expected ideals. However, the analysis needs to go further and be more profound. While Judith Butler's ideas are very helpful in understanding how gender identities are created, it is easy to fall under the assumption that these identities are immutable and homogenous, even if constructed through the continuous stylization of the body. To help clarify this problem, I bring a new concept to this thesis: the contentious nature of identity. This concept not only assumes that identity is created through the repetition of certain acts and the stylization of the body, as Judith Butler suggests, but that this repetition contributes to the constant definition and redefinition of one's identity. Furthermore, it understands that this identity is, in a way, being marketed to society in an attempt to fit within the standardized norms and expectations inflicted upon each individual. These tensions exist through a social bargain in which people constantly battle to fathom how much they are willing to relinquish their individualism to adhere to these social norms.

In this context, it is vital to closely examine people who fall outside of social norms and binaries. The following section will focus on stories and representations of queer individuals that do not comply with gender norms, what is expected of them as gendered individuals in Japanese society, and how this translates to fashion on formal occasions. Analyzing the experiences of non-binary, homosexual, trans, and queer individuals will help understand better the contentious nature of identity. Similarly, examining how individuals exist in constant tension to define their gender identities in a society based on a gender binary with strong social expectations associated with it is

another crucial element to understanding this construction. Through the experience of a particular individual and the analysis of two pieces of media, I will examine the subversive power of non-normative identities in Japanese society and how this is transferred to style and fashion.

❖ Queer Identities and their Representation in Media

Around the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Japan started being dominated by warriors or samurai. This, combined with a firmly established Buddhism that was less restrictive with homosexual relationships than other versions in the mainland, and the lack of taboos towards same-sex relations, created a new cultural landscape enriched with homoerotic representations, portraying mainly male same-sex desire. The fact that the number of soldiers started to increase exponentially during this period and the strong influence of the feudal system (whereby a clear power relation between the lord and his subjects was established) generated strong ties between male soldiers who had to spend most of their time among other men.[60] Male prostitutes[61] and male *kabuki* actors are another example of groups of people that participated in same-sex activities with other men during the thirteenth century. However, these last two were differentiated from the warriors in a way that gendered divisions played an important role. The loving adult would be socially accepted, whereas the *kagema* (usually with a more feminized appearance and necessarily younger) would not.[62] The case for same-sex relations between females was not the same. While the Japanese government did not sanction female same-sex activities, they were often portrayed for and consumed by the male

[60] Gary P. Leupp, *Male Colors: The Construction of Homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan* (University of California Press, 1995), 47-52.
[61] *Kagema* in Japanese.
[62] Sharon Chalmers, *Emerging Lesbian Voices from Japan* (Routledge, 2002), 18.

audience, creating a fantasy in which the male body and male sexuality were still at the center.[63] These male-centered same-sex practices during the premodern era were called *nanshoku*.[64]

With the start of the Meiji period, the samurai class and their customs started disappearing. This was the case with the *nanshoku* practices. Although they continued to exist during the modernization period of Japan, Japanese people from big cities started associating them with rural and underdeveloped areas of the country as opposed to modern(ized) places such as Tokyo.[65] To be seen as a civilized nation, Japan needed to refurbish and eliminate all the "barbaric" customs, which entailed embracing prudishness and establishing a centralized legislative power to be regarded as an equal by the West and to be a part of the enlightened nations. Prudishness was achieved by only recognizing male-female marriages and relationships, while same-sex activities and cross-dressing were heavily regulated. This could be achieved by enforcing laws such as the *keikan* (or sodomy) code. Under this act, individuals who practiced sodomy would serve up to 90 days in prison, as well as lose their social status. The *keikan* included the criminalization of *nanshoku* practices, along with incest and bestiality. However, in practice, the crime of same-sex sexual relationships was not widely spread in society and was rarely punished, which led to its removal from the criminal law at the end of the 19th century.[66]

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[63] Ibid.
[64] Umbrella term used to define different sorts of male-male loving or sexual relationships in Japan during the premodern era and that expanded during the Meiji period. For further information, please see Makoto Furukawa and Angus Lockyer, "The Changing Nature of Sexuality: The Three Codes Framing Homosexuality in Modern Japan," *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* English Supplement, no. 7 (1994): 99-100
[65] Ibid., 100-1.
[66] Gregory Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600-1950* (University of California Press, 1999), 170-2.

However, the social image regarding same-sex practices and people from the LGBTQ community in the present has changed significantly. The documentary *Queer Japan*, released in 2019,[67] illuminates the situation and circumstances of queer individuals in present-day Japan. Specific laws have suffered changes ever since the release of this documentary, such as the one that regulates the age of majority.[68] The change in this law has affected diverse elements of both Japanese society and legislation, such as the age at which coming-of-age ceremonies are celebrated and the requirements to be able to change one's gender officially. The documentary follows different queer, trans, and non-conforming people, creating a solid connection between gender politics and the stylization of the body. Numerous shots focus on the aesthetics, fashion, and other artistic elements that compose different performances and ways of living daily life. The documentary primarily focuses on performances and parties where drag queens, lesbians, gays, and transgender people gather to express their individuality and also share a sense of community. While fashion is presented in the film as a way of rebellion against gender norms, there are some worth-noting comments on formal and traditional occasions. Junko Mitsuhashi, a university professor and transgender activist, presents herself daily wearing a feminine kimono. Mitsuhashi reveals that, before her, in Japan, transgender people were already expressing their gender through clothing, and Japanese transgender women used kimono as a way to embody femininity.[69] As hinted earlier in this section, cross-dressing became taboo during the Meiji period, although it already had its detractors during the Tokugawa era.[70] This reveals the fact that, even with the lack of a specific word to refer

[67] *Queer Japan,* directed by Graham Kolbeins (HIROMEDIA8, 2019). 1:38:53.
[68] The legal age in Japan changed after 140 years from 20 to 18 on April 1st, 2022. "Japan's Legal Adult Age is Now 18 (from 20): 8 Things That Change, 4 That Stay," Japan Forward, accessed April 11, 2024, https://japan-forward.com/japans-legal-adult-age-is-now-18-from-20-8-things-that-change-4-that-stay/.
[69] *Queer Japan,* directed by Graham Kolbeins.
[70] Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600-1950*, 151-3.

to transgender individuals as such, there was still an existent tradition of individuals that used clothing to express their individuality and their gender in society.

At this point, it is pertinent to make a distinction between the meanings of cross-dressing and transgender identities. While cross-dressing may be regarded as a way of adopting another gender (or the aesthetics associated with it), it is not equivalent with form a transgender identity. Cross-dressing could be part of the transgender experience, but not every individual who dresses up as a different gender than the one assigned at birth is a transgender person. During premodern Japanese history, the representations of transgender people were obscure and limited, but there were individuals who partook in cross-dressing. Part of these stories and depictions can be regarded as a hint of an identity that can or cannot exist. However, the importance of talking about cross-dressing comes with the policies around it and its criminalization. Cross-dressers and transgender people were not distinguished in traditional Japanese culture, and those who did not conform to the gender binary were subject to policing and criminalization The idea of looking like the opposite sex and its criminalization reveal two elements of Japanese history: first, as Frühstück argued, sex and gender are terms that the Japanese population did not differentiate; and second, we can understand transgender identities as present throughout the Japanese history and that have been concealed and policed in different manners along with individuals who used fashion to express their identity in opposition to the social norms and expectations.

As seen in the documentary, homosexual and transgender experiences have been decriminalized and widely accepted as part of the diverse Japanese society in the

contemporary history of the country. Although the present circumstances and policies regarding queer individuals are not optimal, different municipalities across the country have enacted methods and procedures to recognize certain rights of homosexual couples, as well as laws that recognize the right of transgender individuals to change their gender in official documents if they meet certain requirements such as medically removing their ability to reproduce.[71] The inherently subversive nature of fashion is portrayed during the documentary in a way in which, for example, drag queens embody the idea of playing with the notion of gender and are, indeed, subversive and even seen as a threat to normativity. As Vivienne Sato said in the documentary, a feeling of sadness fills her whenever nobody complains in the streets while wearing her drag outfits.[72] However, the stylization of the body and the embodiment of gender identity through fashion is not only subversive in performances or when wearing eccentric wigs and outfits. An interviewee, towards the end of the film, makes a revealing comment:

> LGBT activism right now is totally about money and love and shit like that. I ain't got no time for love. Every time I go to the public toilet, I get in trouble. I don't feel safe. […] Some people call the cops. I feel like I'm an asshole invading their toilet. I don't feel like I'm a human being. It's not about common sense. It's about dignity.[73]

The experiences of this individual, who do not quite consider themselves as a transgender person, reveal the struggles that come with the usage of fashion and aesthetics to represent one's gender when it does not match their sex or whatever is expected of

[71] *Queer Japan*, directed by Graham Kolbeins.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.

cisgender people. Transgender experiences and cross-dressing still have numerous negative connotations associated in Japan, and it is exemplified, whether Vivianne Sato finds it funny or not, by how the average population reacts to them simply living their lives. Although the intention of the documentary is clear by presenting how diverse experiences of non-normative gender identities, their expressions, and sexualities are interpellated by the heteronormative society, it also entertains and reinforces the collective idea that queer people only exist within the frameworks of parties, cross-dressing, sad stories, and sodomy. In the same vein, the most significant representations of the LGBTQ community in Japanese media still are the so-called *okama*,[74] appearing in TV shows, video games, and multiple forms of media. This is the image that, for years, has been sold to the general Japanese public of how a queer person looks, heavily invisiblizing other possible expressions of similar feelings and identities.

The representation of people who fall under the queer umbrella is not only reduced to stereotypical images portrayed in the heteronormative society or by TV programs in which they are largely misrepresented. The representation is extended throughout every type of media, and *manga* is one of the examples of a popular media in which queer identities are constantly represented. For example, the popular manga *Paradise Kiss*,[75] written by Ai Yazawa, depicts Isabella, the figure of a transgender woman who works as

[74] The word *okama* has been used to express different ideas, but generally to refer to a man who dresses up as a woman. A possible connotation of this word could be "transgender," but given the usual negative connotations associated with it, it has been translated as weirdo, homosexual, *tranny*, or cross-dresser. "The Japanese Word "Okama" in Video Game Translations," Legends of Localization, accessed April 12, 2024, https://legendsoflocalization.com/okama-in-game-translation/.

[75] The version used for this thesis is the 20th-anniversary edition, published on December 3, 2014, a compilation of the 5 volumes that compose the original version of the *manga*. The original version of *Paradise Kiss* was published in Japan on the 23rd of March, 1999, and was serialized until the final chapter was released on the 22nd of March, 2023. The original version was published on a monthly basis in the popular fashion magazine *Zipper*. The story focuses on Caroline, a young girl who gets hired as a model by a group of fashion students (formed by George, Isabella, Arashi, and Miwako) and her struggles to find her individuality in a society ruled by solid gender norms.

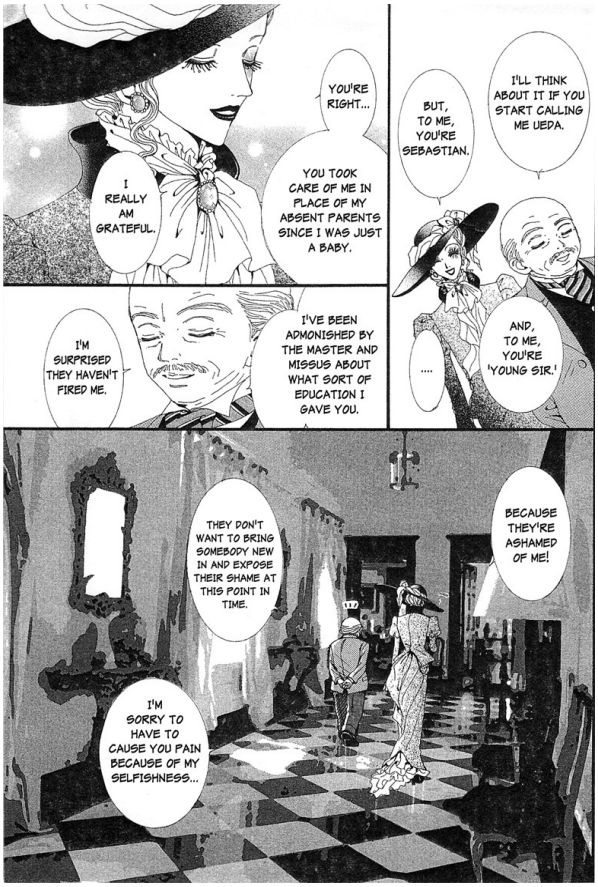

Image 3. Isabella having a conversation about her gender identity and life decisions with her butler.
Source: Ai Yazawa, *Paradise Kiss* (Vertical Comics, 2019), Ch. 34, page 5.

a motherly figure for the protagonist and the rest of the group. Isabella, rather than being a passive character who just happens to be transgender, presents to the readers the struggles that a transgender person has to go through in society and how the issue was viewed back at the beginning of the 21st century, all through the lens of fashion. As shown in *Image 3*, Isabella is (apparently in a joking manner) mistreated by her butler by calling her "young sir," to which she follows up and explains the struggles that her identity and her life decisions (such as studying fashion instead of adhering to what was expected of her) have caused to the family.

The misrepresentation and transphobia are presented in the *manga* as a real issue that is discussed and contested. In *Image 4*, Miwako[76] asks, surprised (and almost horrified), "*Isn't next door off-limits to men?*" suggesting that Isabella is, regardless of

[76] Miwako is part of the same group of friends in *Paradise Kiss*. She is one of Caroline's best friends and is in charge of sewing and styling at the fashion workshop. It is implied throughout the story that she suffers from depression and an unspecified invisible disability. She acts as the childish figure of the group that always tries to bring joy to the friend group.

how she wants to present herself, a man. However, George[77] (the man in a black jacket and a hat) contends Miwako. After this, Yazawa includes a panel featuring Isabella alone while explaining how she has felt since childhood. Isabella embodies her femininity with her clothing and aesthetics. She explains her story to the protagonist, to which she is never judgmental, normalizing Isabella's identity and issues (and thus transgender experiences in general) for the public. Isabella embodies femininity through fashion, and regardless of the judgemental gaze of part of Japanese society, she is recognized as an equal to all women. These representations are vital for transgender individuals in Japan to recognize themselves in the media and to see examples of successful transgender characters to whom they can relate.

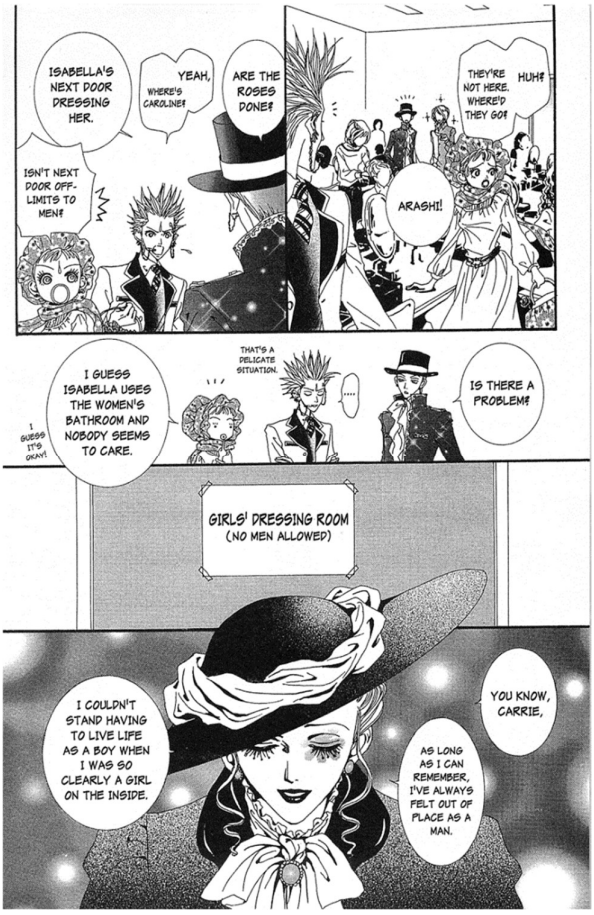

Image 4. Isabella reacting to a comment from Miwako about her gender identity.
*Source:*Ai Yazawa, Paradise Kiss (Vertical Comics, 2019), CH. 35, page 16.

[77] Acting as the leader of the group, George is the character who makes all the final decisions in the workshop, and is in charge of designing the clothes they make. He acts as the protagonist´s love interest, and plays a central role in helping Caroline discover and fight for her individuality.

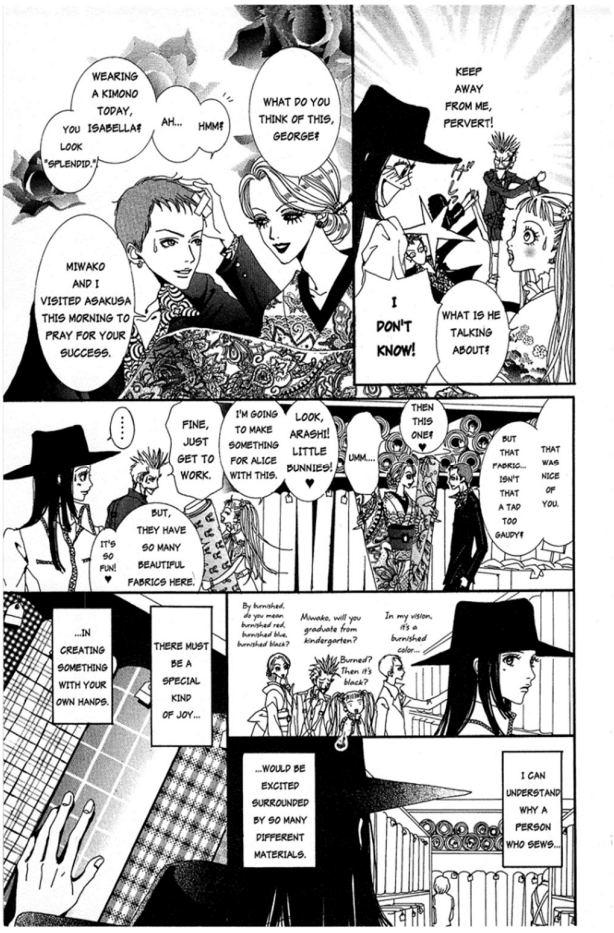

Image 5. Isabella telling George that Miwako and her visited a shrine while wearing a kimono.
Source: Ai Yazawa, Paradise Kiss (Vertical Comics, 2019), CH. 11, page 17.

It is worth noting the usage of fashion on formal occasions depicted in the *manga*. Isabella also helps the reader understand how she particularly expresses her identity within the frame of formality. In *Image 5*,[78] Isabella appears along with Miwako, wearing a kimono that they were using to visit a temple and pray for George's success. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the usage of formal regalia is indisputably relegated to the feminine sphere as, after the Westernization of Japan, women were assigned the social task of passing down traditions in the absence of men. Following Judith Butler's ideas, Isabella, like any other person who could define themselves as a woman such as Miwako, recognizes herself as such. Isabella acknowledges herself as a woman not for the fact that she, indeed, holds a substantial identity but for the constant repetition of acts that are considered feminine and the subsequent stylization of her body. This happens by using certain clothes, speaking in a particular manner, or doing specific actions which, when looked at from afar, seem to be examples and representations of an identity that appears to be substantial.

[78] Ibid, Ch. 11, page 17.

The experiences and stories that Isabella brings to the readers are indisputably valuable. However, it is essential to remember that the meaning of non-normativity is not equal to subversive. Transgender experiences and lives are non-normative in the sense that they do not follow the social standards and general assumptions of how a man or a woman looks. However, Isabella represents a reality that complies with the social expectations for women in Japanese society, regardless of how intricate and over-the-top her clothes might be. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the performance group Takarazuka Revue is another example. While all the performers are women in this company, they produce and reproduce heteronormative standards of how men and women look and perform their gender identities. For example, the performing company featured in magazines adopting poses and wearing clothes that idealized certain combinations that resembled heterosexual couples.[79] The contentious nature of identity suggests that identity is constructed through the repetition of stylized acts and is in constant reconstruction while embedded in the capitalist market of products and ideas. In a way, Isabella sells herself (or her identity) in a particular manner to the yet-lacking-of-acceptance Japanese society by embodying feminine ideals. However, looking back at *Image 5*, the conversation occurs inside a fabric store, where manufacturers and other intermediaries sell materials produced in factories after the modern sartorial advancements. By adhering to societal expectations, the gendered individuals participate in the capitalist system.[80] Gender is thus constructed not only by the repetition of acts but

[79] Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka : Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* (University of California Press, 1998), 309.

[80] It is important to note that the influences of the capitalist market in the construction of gender are crucial. In the case of this thesis, the gendered individuals express their gender identities through fashion within the limits of the capitalist market. Similarly, the capitalist market creates gendered necessities that the gendered individuals fulfill by the purchase of clothing among other elements. Thus, the access to economic resources and the (un)limited access to material resources is key for the construction of gendered identities and for the gendered individuals to express their identity. To expand on these notions,

also by the (un)limited access to certain materials and clothes that hold particular values in society.

Finally, it is essential to bring into the conversation the lived experiences of individuals that are not portrayed in media. By basing one's understanding on topics such as the one that this thesis is discussing, the risk of assuming that what is being represented is comparable to real and daily-life issues is inevitable. Art and depictions of queer individuals in media, as well as their ways of utilizing fashion, are only representations of their realities and lived experiences. In that sense, they are only a representation of reality, gender, and identity. To resolve this complication, one of the participants in the survey agreed to conduct a focused individual interview. However, by bringing the experiences of a particular individual, one may also fall under the wrong assumption that their experiences could be universal and comparable to any other person with a resonating identity. It is thus imperative to clarify that what I bring into this section is an individual experience that I use to explore how the construction of gender happens within the heteronormative and binary society and how it affects queer individuals.

Izumi is a 22-year-old, non-binary individual born and grew up in Japan. They emigrated to Canada after finishing high school to pursue an undergraduate degree. They attended an international school when living in Japan, in which English was the primary language, and there were people from all across the globe. Therefore, the exchange of cultural values was assumably inevitable. During the interview, Izumi provided personal

please see Joan Acker, "Gender, Capitalism and Globalization," *Critical Sociology* 30, no. 1 (2004): 35-7, https://doi.org/10.1163/156916304322981668.

stories and experiences to help develop certain ideas and the new concept I introduced earlier in this chapter. Izumi has attended numerous events in Japan and has taken part in others indirectly. As an example of the latter, the interviewee, due to the impact of the global pandemic of COVID-19 in 2020, was not able to attend the coming-of-age ceremony when they turned 20, but still took pictures with a *furisode*, which had been passed down to them by their mother. Izumi then added that they wore the *furisode* for two main reasons: the first one was to satisfy a personal interest in the event and for the clothing itself, as they had always wanted to wear one, while the second reason appealed to the wishes and expectations of their family, who believe that the usage of a specific garment that had been passed down holds a valuable meaning. As discussed earlier, the interviewee, amid different interests in their persona, has to decide how much of themselves they are willing to give away to comply with what is expected from the outside and their desire.

In addition, when asked about the possibility of wearing different styles associated with masculinity, Izumi commented that they would feel happy wearing a male kimono, as they have been wearing male clothes against the school's norms during their childhood. Later, when commenting on pictures about the coming-of-age ceremony in Kitakyushu,[81] the interviewee expressed their opinion about accessories such as piercings and tattoos and how they are not well regarded, especially among older generations. Izumi found the concept of rebellion necessary and found its importance in embodying one's personality. The rebellion against gender norms and social expectations can be done in multiple ways, but, as their story suggests, style and appearance play a central role. As I will discuss in

[81] This is a particular event that is widely known for the usage of over-the-top garments by both men and women. To learn more about this particular event, please see Chapter 4.

the following chapter, there is an inherent connection between particular aesthetics and disregarded (un)social groups in Japan, and by making use of different elements associated with them, one can rebel against societal expectations. However, as Izumi's story reveals, in their case, the simple fact of wearing trousers instead of a skirt and their desire to wear a male kimono show signs of rebellion that could be explored daily.

However, as one of the people interviewed in the documentary *Queer Japan* suggested, "LGBT activism right now is totally about money."[82] This statement helps reveal a circumstance in which rebelliousness, identity, and daily life are inserted in a reality in which, to express one's identity with objects such as fashion, one requires money. Fashion items are marketized and produced under the capitalist economic scheme. Izumi's *furisode* was passed down from their mother, but to access a male kimono, they would need to acquire it in the capitalist market, in which identity is reformulated in a constant battle with the (un)limited access to resources. Fashion (and gender) is also marketed in a dichotomy that entails the wish for recognition from the outside as an equal and the desire to embrace one's individuality and identity. This constant tension is what the concept of the contentious nature of identity helps us understand, and that will be used to explore and analyze further examples in the following chapters.

[82] *Queer Japan*, directed by Graham Kolbeins.

IV

Hakama, Gangs, and *Kabuki*: Formal Events and the Importance of Difference

As previously hinted in the introduction of this thesis, formal events in Japan are characterized by an evident sartorial duality on formal occasions. Women tend to put on kimonos, while men find in suits their choice for special occasions. At different events, attendees may wear a school uniform or a flamboyant kimono paired with multiple accessories. They may pose as a group reminiscent of disregarded figures from the margins of society. Through the analysis of different images, I aim to introduce the sartorial and gender differences during formal occasions in Japan. For this matter, I will introduce a selection of pictures featuring different garments and their usage. As discussed later in this chapter, deepening our knowledge of the specific fashion that Japanese individuals wear on formal occasions will help in two manners. First, this selection helps have a clear image when referencing pieces of clothing, usually named in Japanese. Secondly, it serves as a basis for understanding how Japanese people play with the concept of formality and create non-normative spaces by using garments that are not considered formal. A brief historical discussion accompanies the analysis of these images and how they have changed throughout Japanese history. This analysis is vital to understanding the changes in the gender binary throughout Japanese history.

The analysis of these non-normative occasions will help draw a line between the aesthetic elements that the attendees display in these events and the social expectations and implications of wearing particular garments. The attendees show themselves to their peers, families, and society during formal occasions. Thus, analyzing non-normative

events will reveal aspects regarding gender norms in Japanese society that may remain hidden if the analysis focuses only on normative experiences. This analysis will be supported by examining a particular event, the city of Kitakyushu's coming-of-age ceremony, unique for its over-the-top garments and the variety of elements displayed by the attendees. Before examining this non-normative occasion, the chapter will explore what attending a normative coming-of-age ceremony in Japan entails. This analysis will help us understand why the case of Kitakyushu is unique. Reviewing specific changes in clothes during the recent Japanese history will help us understand how this heavily gendered differentiation exists in Japan.

The images that I will examine in the first section, along with the analysis of how a normative coming-of-age ceremony looks, will set a base to explore the case of Kitakyushu and why it can render subversive to the gender norms. This, as explored later in this chapter, is achieved by embodying exaggerated traits of each gender through aesthetics and fashion. However, a question arises: what exactly does the Kitakyushu coming-of-age ceremony challenge when the attendees merely reference heavily gendered imagery? To answer this question, I examine the concept of hypergender, analyzing images of the Kitakyushu coming-of-age ceremony, where attendees reference certain disregarded groups[83] in Japanese society. The concepts of formality and what is considered normative in Japan will be examined in opposition to non-normative events and usages of fashion. This chapter serves as a different example of how the concepts of

[83] In later occasions in the chapter, I use the word (un)social groups, a combination of words that helps me grasp the ambivalence of groups of people that exist in the margins of society such as gangs, the mafia, or prostitutes. Mentions of the term (un)social are scarce in the existing literature. For limited social media usage and access in public spaces such as libraries, please see Fikiswa Masizana and Oghenere Salubi, "(Un)Social Media Services at the People's University: A Survey of City of Cape Town Public Libraries, South Africa," *Internet Reference Services Quarterly* ahead-of-print (2023): 257-61, https://doi.org/10.1080/10875301.2023.2233005.

gender, fashion, and performativity are entangled in the realities and daily lives of gendered individuals in Japan and how these experiences depict a concept of Japan as a diverse nation, a theme that will be explored in the following chapter.

❖ Uniforms, Sexuality, and the Military

The discussion in this chapter focuses on understanding the difference between different formal garments in Japan and how individuals use them to embody certain gendered ideals concerning formality. It is first essential to analyze the development and evolution of said gender norms and ideals to understand what happens at formal events in Japan. The notions of being a man or a woman have been (and still are) in constant change. As explored in Chapter 2, before the modern period, approximately starting in 1868, the separation between the concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality was almost nonexistent. Certain forms of art, such as *kabuki*, as explained later in this chapter, suggest a mutable character of human sexuality and gender. The exploration of the embodiment of gender through art and performance will reveal its malleability and how individuals constantly play with it to convey certain messages, gender norms, or acts of defiance to the public. The frugality associated with masculinity or the expectation of Japanese men to become functional members of society who are able to protect the country and their families are ideas that are represented in fashion. In this section, I will examine how the Japanese government systematically introduced certain changes to men's clothing to establish a hegemonic ideal of masculinity in a period of international conflict. These changes were essential to the construction of a unified empire with a unified army.

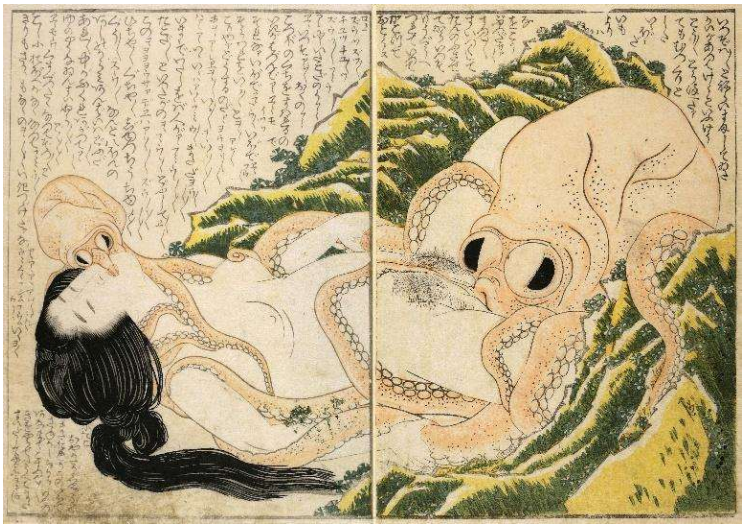

Image 6. *Ukiyo*-e depicting a woman having sexual relations with two giant octopuses.
Source: Katsuhika Hokusai, *Tako to Ama*, 1814, woodblock print, 7.4 × 10.5 in. (19 × 27 cm), Wikimedia Commons.

In premodern Japan, the public discourse of sexuality was not taboo. While seen in various art forms, the *ukiyo-e*[84] or *shunga*[85] (see *Image* 6) are examples of Japanese people's openness to depict sexual scenes in one of the most popular forms of media during the 17th century. However, as the Edo period (1615-1868 CE) ended and Japan saw its relations with Western forces strengthened, many of these aspects of Japanese culture started to change. Times were changing, and Japan desired to be recognized as a Western force; for that matter, some elements of Japanese culture needed to change. As an example of these changes, Toby Slade introduces the *rokumeikan*[86] as one of the pinnacles of the Japanese intentions to modernize its institutions and the channels through which this process of modernization was introduced in Japan and for the West to be a witness of it. [87]However, clothing was not the only element in Japan that changed. The nation transformed and adopted a new stance towards its neighbours with modern and violent tendencies such as colonization, beginning in what was formerly known as Ezo (currently Hokkaido). With this first

[84] Woodblock stamps that depict popular, oneiric, sexual, or fantastic scenes that became popular during the Edo period (1615-1868 CE).
[85] Erotic art, usually following the style and conventions of the *ukiyo-e*.
[86] A hotel for European and American ambassadors and diplomats that existed in Tokyo from 1883 until 1941, when it was demolished. The ballroom of this building served as a space to receive the newest sartorial trends from the West, trends that the Meiji authorities spread through the elites. This building is an example of the intentions of the Meiji government to show the West its intentions to modernize Japan. To learn more, please see Slade, *Japanese Fashion: A Cultural History*, 93-7.
[87] Slade, *Japanese Fashion: A Cultural History*, 95.

mission, the Japanese government took over the lands of the Ainu people[88] and annexed the new prefecture of Hokkaido to its territories.[89]

During the Meiji period, the Japanese government promoted a *haikara*[90] masculinity. This type of masculinity envisioned a man who is refined, fashionable, and embracing Western ideals and aesthetics,[91] such as heteronormativity, refinement, or rejection of explicit sexuality. This is an example of how the Western influence permeated various layers of society. However, it is essential to acknowledge Japan's agency in this process. Although the Western forces greatly impacted the changes in Japan, these happened within a mix of Western and Japanese ideals and aesthetics. Architecture in big cities developed using newer materials introduced by the new forms of capitalist production. The towns' authorities erected buildings that resembled Western ones but kept certain traditional Japanese spaces, such as the *chigaidana*,[92] and materials since wood was still one of the main elements in construction. All these changes, rather than being forcibly introduced by Western forces, were projects that existed during the Edo period and were enhanced by the West.[93] It is thus essential to understand Japan as a proactive agent during the process of modernization and the so-called Westernization.

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[88] Indigenous peoples to northern Honshu, Hokkaido, southern Sakhalin, and the Kuril islands, who established communities and relations with the lands around the 13th century.
[89] Sidney Xu Lu, "Eastward Ho! Japanese Settler Colonialism in Hokkaido and the Making of Japanese Migration to the American West, 1869–1888," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 78, no. 3 (2019): 528-32, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911819000147.
[90] Lit. high collar. A reference to the buttoned-up shirts with long collars that covered a big portion of the neck, a symbol of modernization and embracement of the Western values and aesthetics in Japan.
[91] Michio Kitahara, "Popular Culture in Japan: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation," *Journal of Popular Culture* 17, no. 1 (1983): 103, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3840.1983.1701_103.x.
[92] Uneven decorative shelves.
[93] Susan B. Hanley, "The Material Culture: Stability in Transition," in *Japan Transition, from Tokugawa to Meiji*, ed. Marius B. Hansen and Gilbert Rozman (Princeton University Press, 2014), 449-54.

As Japan started leaning into a more colonial and expansionist mentality, the expectations of Japanese individuals, and thus gender norms, also changed. The changes in school uniforms serve as a lens to understand the changes in gender norms visually. Towards the end of the Meiji period, the *haikara* masculinity started gaining more detractors as the country's militaristic objectives gained more importance. The *haikara* ideal was replaced by the idea of a man who defined himself as having a *bankara* masculinity,[94] which meant being rough, savage, and crude,[95] opposing what being a *haikara* meant. With the establishment of the first high schools in the country, around the early 1900s, Japanese officials found a way to spread the *bankara* ideals, aiming for an education centred on athleticism, violence, and militarism. Young Japanese men embodied these ideals through traditional Japanese dress that reminded them of the *bushi*[96] values and elements associated with the warrior class in Japan or samurai. High schools used different aesthetics and clothing during the first years of their existence in Japan. During the first half of the 1900s, Japan participated in a relatively large number of wars and armed conflicts: the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), Japan's invasion of Northern China (1931), and the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937), which eventually expanded into what would be considered the Pacific War (1941-1945). As military academies gained much more popularity and participation in the Second World War felt inevitable, the establishment of a militaristic masculinity became predominant among young men in Japan.[97]

[94] Yumiko Mikanagi, "Dominant Prewar Masculinity: Bankara vs. Kyōyōshugi," in *Masculinity and Japan's Foreign Relations*, ed. Yumiko Mikanagi (First Forum Press, 2011), 40.
[95] "4, Part 2: Before the High-Collar, The appearance of the High-Collar, and Uniform regulations," Hatena Blog, accessed November 5, 2024, https://sf63fs.hatenablog.com/entry/2019/02/01/111230.
[96] Mikanagi, "Dominant Prewar Masculinity: Bankara vs. Kyōyōshugi," 40.
[97] Ibid., 60-3.

Academic institutions made uniforms mandatory in 1879, although boys had to wait until the mid-1880s for schools to start embracing and establishing Western-style uniforms as compulsory. The case of women, however, took a different route, and their uniforms changed in a different and more volatile manner, as they changed approximately five times during the early stages of the Meiji period. The differences in the clothing used in schools revealed the differences in gender norms and expectations, as the general population associated men with ideas such as being "frugal and courageous,"[98] while expectations of women focused on becoming good mothers and wives for a nation that was entering into a war period,[99] starting with the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894-1895. Later on, in between the Russo-Japanese War and the start of the invasion of Northern China, there was a small portion of women whose ideas and lifestyles were urbanized, Westernized, and countering the state's motherhood ideology and the gender norms for women at the time. This group of women was called *moga* (a combination of the English words modern and girl), opposing the modern boys or *mobo*.[100]

❖ An Introduction to the Different Regalia in Formal Occasions

To deeply analyze Japanese individuals' fashion during formal events and how they construct their gender identities through its usage, it is necessary to show different examples of how formal dress looks. Thus, I dedicate this first section to understanding the differences in formal fashion in Japan and the evolution of their usage. Women commonly wear the majority of the garments that I include in this section for various reasons. First, men's clothes evolved to resemble the Western style. Second, the

[98] Brian McVeigh, "Learning to Wear Ideology: School Uniforms," in *Wearing Ideology*, ed. Brian McVeigh (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000), n.p., https://doi.org/10.2752/9781847888976/WEARIDEOL0007.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Slade, *Japanese Fashion: A Modern History*, 42 & 105-8.

expectation of Japanese women to pass down traditional values (and thus embody them through clothing). I will then discuss the consequences of the Second World War and how it impacted Japanese culture and fashion usage. The following description of garments is accompanied by pictures that serve as generalized examples, although they are all varied in patterns or colours. A brief historical analysis regarding the origin and evolution of each garment until the present also accompanies each description. Thus, the list focuses on the most common clothing that Japanese individuals (primarily women) utilize on formal occasions.

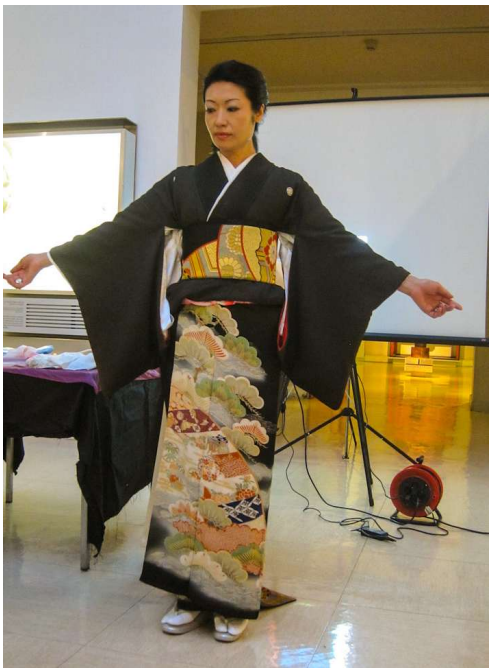

Image 7. Woman wearing a *tomesode*.
Source: Laura Tomàs Avellana, Woman wearing a tomesode, photograph, 754 × 1004 pixels, 2013, Openverse, https://openverse.org/image/cacab72e-3eb8-4ae3-922a-255ef91c58df?q=tomesode.

Kimono: Usually referred to as the most representative traditional garment of Japan. This word is, in reality, an umbrella term that englobes a great variety of clothes used on different occasions. These garments have their roots in what was known as *kosode*, which transformed into the multiple varieties of kimono that exist in the present. The *kosode* was primarily used during the Heian period (794-1185) as an undergarment.[101] With time, this piece of clothing started developing and diverging into diverse forms, englobed under the term kimono. In Japanese, kimono means "a thing to wear" or "clothing."[102] The

[101] Slade, *Japanese Fashion: A Cultural History*, 31.
[102] Tradition and modernity in fashion are elements that can be explored to further understand the implications of modernization in Japan. For more information on Japanese modernization, please see Naoki Sakai, *The End of Pax Americana and the Nationalism of Hikikomori* (Duke University Press,

differences among the various kinds of kimono come primarily from patterns, colours, and the length of certain elements, such as the sleeves. Some examples of this variety of kimono in Japan are *tomesode* (see *Image 7*), *komon*, or *furisode*. Although usually associated with female individuals, men wear this clothing on certain occasions and up to personal preference.

Yukata: This is the most representative garment during summer festivals. *Yukata* is a garment made of a single piece of cloth in various styles that differ in accordance with gender. Usually, the *yukata* for women has much brighter and patterned styles than the one for men, which tends to be simpler, as seen in *Image 8*. The *yukata* is also characterized by being tied with a simple *obi*,[103] while the kimono and other more intricate garments feature a multiple-ply *obi*. The *yukata* found its roots around the same time cotton cultivation developed during the Muromachi period (approximately 1336-1573 CE). During this period, nobles started using this clothing while bathing. Later, during the Edo period, its

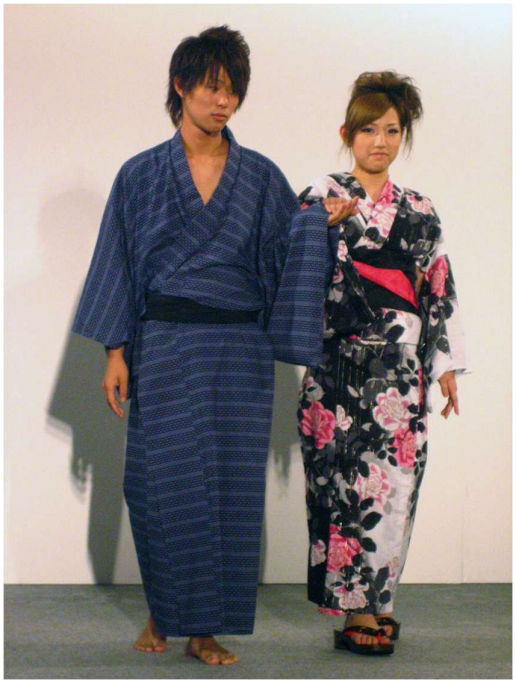

Image 8. A man and a woman wearing *yukata*.
Source: Corpse Reviver, Men's and women's yukata, photograph, 450 × 600 pixels,, Wikimedia Commons, 2009 https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=7117034.

2022), n.p., https://doi.org/10.1515/9781478022213 and Slade, *Japanese Fashion: A Cultural History*, 129-38.

[103] A wide belt made of fabric that is usually placed around the waist, although some people, especially men, wear it around the hips. This accessory can be seen in different traditional garments, and the manner in which it is worn around the body can signify a variety of things, from casual clothing (as seen in the case of *yukata*), to social status (as happens with the clothes worn by *geisha* or other kinds of courtesans).

usage was popularized among the general population.[104] The fabric tends to be lighter and, in most cases, made of cotton, a fresh fabric for hot summer days. It is usually accompanied by light makeup for women, as well as with small and simple accessories. This attire, especially for women, is finalized with other elements such as a *kanzashi* (hairpin), an *obedome* (a pin that hangs on the *obi*), and a pair of *geta* (traditional wooden or woven footwear, also standard for men).

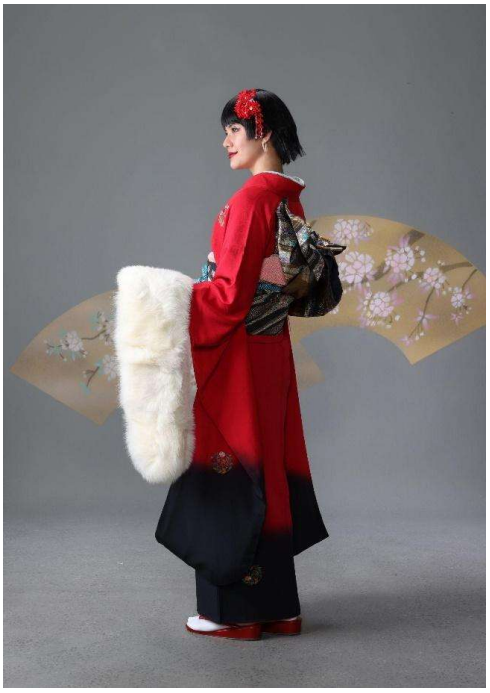

Image 9. Young adult wearing a *furisode*. *Source:* Provided by one of the participants of the survey with their consent.

Furisode: A particular variety of kimono that is distinct from the others for its colourful and heavily patterned fabrics. The sleeves of this piece are visibly longer than a common kimono, and it is usually accompanied by an array of accessories (see *Image 9*). There are multiple theories about the origin of this garment. However, it is commonly accepted that before it became a graduation attire for women, children (both girls and boys) from wealthy families started wearing it around the 15th century. In the present, this piece is usually worn by unmarried women due to its flashy colours and patterns, in opposition to the more modest *tomesode* or *homongi*, which married women use during special and formal occasions. This type of garment is also common during

[104] "What is the Yukata?" Bunka Fashion Research Institute, accessed November 12, 2024, https://kimono-bunka.ynu.ac.jp/yukatatoha_en.html.

weddings or other social events that are considered formal. In the present, it is also common to see examples of *furisode* with shorter sleeves and used in less formal events.

Hakama: A long, pleated skirt with a plain colour or an ombre of two different colours (see *Image 10*) commonly used by young women during university graduation ceremonies almost exclusively. However, the history of its usage is varied. Although the first uses of this garment are unknown, it was a very common attire for men before the modernization of Japan (around the 1880s) and consisted of a pair of long, pleated pants. Two decades later, when men started joining the war, *hakama* became a popular school uniform for women, who now needed a more comfortable attire to practice sports and physical education. Thus, this piece of clothing evolved into the long, pleated skirt that is widely known in the present.[105] The usage of *hakama* in graduation ceremonies started after the popularization of the *manga* "*Haikara San: Here Comes Miss Modern*" (serialized between 1975 and 1977 CE).[106] As shown in the image, *hakama* is commonly worn over a *furisode*, creating a combination of colours and patterns.

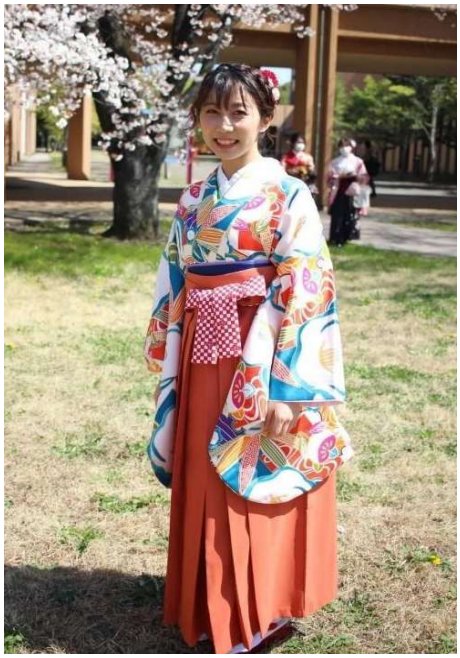

Image 10. Young woman wearing a *hakama* over a *furisode*.
Source: Provided by one of the participants of the survey with their consent.

[105] Namba, "School Uniform Reforms in Modern Japan," 98.
[106] Freedman, "Romance of the Taishō Schoolgirl in Shōjo Manga: Here Comes Miss Modern," 36.

School uniforms: Men's uniforms have also changed with time. The standard school uniform for boys before the 1880s was *hakama* when it still was a pair of pleated pants. From the late 19th century, educational institutions changed the school uniforms for boys to resemble those of the military. Similarly, military uniforms suffered changes to resemble Western military attire. At the same time, as previously mentioned, the uniforms for girls transformed from kimono to *hakama* during the early 20th century,[107] to finally transform into the Westernized navy-style uniforms commonly known as *serafuku*.[108] Although the variety of styles for these is relatively large, two still stand out as predominant in contemporary Japan: *gakuran*[109] (see *Image 11*) for boys and *serafuku* for women. As noted by a significant number of participants in the survey, students do not only use school uniforms to attend classes in high or middle school but also for graduation ceremonies in these educational levels. I will expand on the transformation of school uniforms later in this chapter.

Image 11. Young boys wearing *gakuran*.
Source: Adamanchester, Kyoto, school kids in uniform, photograph, 768 × 1024 pixels, Openverse, 2006, https://openverse.org/image/57287272-d925-4fbd-b25b-3a15e275fae8?q=japan+school+uniform.

Western-style suits and dresses: Suits are the most common garment for men on formal occasions such as weddings, graduation ceremonies, or coming-of-age ceremonies. This tendency started with all the changes in Japanese society during the 19th and especially the 20th centuries. It is also common practice for companies across Japan

[107] Namba, "School Uniform Reforms in Modern Japan," 98.
[108] A combination of the words 'sailor' and '*fuku*' (clothing).
[109] School uniform for boys which its style is taken from Prussian military uniforms.

to make suits mandatory in the workplace, turning them into corporate uniforms. The pieces for women usually come with a skirt and a pair of high heels. Navy and black are the most common colours for these clothes. Women have been increasingly wearing Western-style dresses at formal ceremonies. According to one of the survey participants, many girls decide to wear dresses at their graduation or coming-of-age ceremonies in present Japan.

To this point, I have examined the various attires that Japanese individuals wear on formal occasions. In the following sections of this chapter, I will specifically analyze coming-of-age ceremonies in Japan and the proper dress associated with them. Later, I will examine the specific coming-of-age ceremony in Kitakyushu, which falls outside the norm for its non-normative fashion. To understand the meaning of difference and how this particular event differs from the formal and aesthetic norms, it is essential to know what Japanese people consider formal and proper. For this matter, this section has focused on analyzing an array of garments that Japanese people commonly use during formal occasions to assess what formality looks like in Japan in terms of fashion. With this analysis, I will examine how Japanese individuals perform their gender identities and how contentious they are. Analyzing the Kitakyushu coming-of-age ceremony will reveal the malleability of gender in Japan and how fashion plays a central role in the diversity of gender expressions. This event will also help us recognize the importance of the existence of spaces where individuals can interact with different gender expressions, which will finally reveal the performative nature of gender and its contentiousness.

❖ Adulthood and Coming-of-Age Ceremonies in Japan

As hinted previously, the analysis of non-normative circumstances, identities, and events needs to be preceded by what we commonly consider normative. In this case, the following section focuses on a specific coming-of-age event in Kitakyushu, Japan. However, before analyzing the said event, this section will focus on giving a brief description of the normative coming-of-age ceremonies throughout the country, as well as exploring the historical development of such events. The analysis of these events is an example of formal settings in Japan. First, I understand the coming-of-age ceremonies as rites of passage,[110] as events that mark a new life period for all participating individuals. Rites of passage in Japan have a long historical presence, focusing primarily on celebrating life and mourning death. As an example, Yohko Tsuji examines mortuary rituals, a way in which dead family members would transcend into the afterlife and become new Buddhas.[111] Similarly, in the Heian (794-1185 CE) courts, as a different example, young boys from eleven to sixteen years old (depending on their rank) went through a ceremony called *genpuku*, marking their official admission in the court.[112]

The coming-of-age ceremonies in Japan usually happen on the second Monday of January of every year, a moment in which all the people who turned 20 years old (or 18 since 2022) celebrate with friends and family. This day is historically linked with rural

[110] Gregory Brown explains that a rite of passage is a structural process, a ceremony shared between members of the same group of people that mark different stages of life, and that serve as a liminal space for the construction of one's identity and the shared identity of the group. Coming-of-age ceremonies in Japan serve as an example where young adults construct their identity through socialization in an event that will mark their start of a new stage of life as adults. For more, see Gregory Brown Hippolyte, Lisa M Brunelle, and Vikas Malhotra, "Tagging: Deviant Behavior or Adolescent Rites of Passage?" *Culture & Psychology* 23, no. 4 (2017): 491-2. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X16660852.
[111] Yohko Tsuji, "Rites of Passage to Death and Afterlife in Japan," *Generations: Journal of the American Society on Aging* 35, no. 3 (2011): 30, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26555791.
[112] Merry White, *The Material Child: Coming of Age in Japan and America* (Free Press, 1993), 41.

Japan, where Japanese people celebrated this day for its connections with the sacred concept of *hare*.[113] Although the ways of engaging, attending, and performing in this event may have changed throughout history, the importance of this day in the lives of young adults has not changed. A coming-of-age ceremony marks when an individual leaves their youth behind while they embrace adulthood. While events such as the aforementioned *genpuku* were reserved for the elites, the coming-of-age ceremonies in contemporary Japan are popular, with many participants each year. In coming-of-age ceremonies, the new young adults present themselves to the audience with a speech, expressing their gratitude and envisioning a plan for their future.[114]

The modern concept of adulthood, introduced in a modern Civil Code, changed the previous conceptions of becoming an adult in Japan. During the Heian period (794-1185 CE), some boys entered a period where they would become apprentices. They would then become adults through the acquisition of different crafting skills.[115] Until 2022, in Japan, young adults reached the legal age of majority when they were twenty. This has slightly changed as the Japanese government revised the Civil Code and enacted a law to reduce the age of majority from twenty to eighteen years.[116] However, this change only affected administrative issues, as for other aspects of daily life, such as drinking alcohol or smoking, the legal age of majority remained the same. This creates a circumstance where the boundaries between youth and adulthood are less obvious.

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[113] *Hare* is a concept related to sacred periods, in opposition to *ke*, which refers to something more mundane or related to everyday life. Both concepts are linked with the agricultural cycle in Japan. To know more, please see Carolin Becke, "Negotiating Gendered Identities Through Dress: Kimono at the Coming-of-age Day in Contemporary Japan," (MA thesis, The University of Sheffield, 2022), 38.
[114] Becke, "Negotiating Gendered Identities Through Dress: Kimono at the Coming-of-age Day in Contemporary Japan," 40-1.
[115] White, *The Material Child: Coming of Age in Japan and America*, 40-1.
[116] "The Act Partially Amending the Civil Code (Related to Age of Majority)," The Ministry of Justice, accessed November 6, 2024, https://www.moj.go.jp/EN/MINJI/minji07_00218.html.

Coming-of-age ceremonies are not only a celebration of a group of individuals turning twenty; they are much more meaningful. Clothing plays a central role in the development of these events every year in Japan. As hinted in earlier instances, fashion can be the embodiment of certain societal norms regarding adulthood and gender. In most coming-of-age ceremonies, men wear Western-style black or navy suits, while women wear a *furisode*. In the previous chapter, I introduced the idea that Western-style suits on men are the embodiment of a particular masculine ideal. Young adult men embody the idea of the salaryman through these suits and show their family and friends that their role in society is to work and have a certain economic stability to support their wives and children. Similarly, when women wear a *furisode* in this event, they embody the duties of becoming good mothers and wives and passing down the Japanese traditions to their children. It is worth noting that *furisode* is a particular piece of clothing usually worn by unmarried women, thus adding a newer layer of meaning to the usage of this garment. However, there are cases in Japan where the usage and selection of fashion deviates from the norm. The following section will examine the specific case of the coming-of-age ceremony in Kitakyushu.

Through the analysis of images from the coming-of-age ceremony in Kitakyushu, I will explore the categories of hypergender and the meaning of non-normativity on formal occasions in Japan. It is, however, necessary to examine the implications of hegemonies regarding gender in the everchanging globalized and capitalist world. For example, the ideal femininity that arose during the early twentieth century was necessary to create a generation of women who took care of their households and took care of the Japanese economy. Women still embody these gender expectations through fashion on formal occasions, but at the same time, they see themselves ingrained in the capitalist job market.

In the present world, women ought to navigate what is expected of them as good mothers while working in the capitalist market. These changes in the contemporary world redefine the concept of tradition that women embody through their clothing due to the inevitable changes of the contemporary capitalist world. This serves as an example of how gender roles and hegemonic ideas regarding gender are in constant redefinition in Japanese society under the influence of the globalized and capitalist contemporary world.

❖ The Importance of Difference: the Kitakyushu Coming-of-Age Ceremony and the (Un)Social Groups in Japan

The coming-of-age ceremony in Kitakyushu fills the national newspapers every year. During this event, all sorts of media flood the internet in order to commemorate an event that stands out among the rest. This particular case exemplifies how young adults use clothing and aesthetics associated with disregarded groups in Japanese society. The analysis of these two elements will help examine how these young adults more or less rebel against societal expectations during formal occasions. The previous chapter reviewed the expectations of the gendered individuals, while this section serves as an example of how non-normativity interacts with

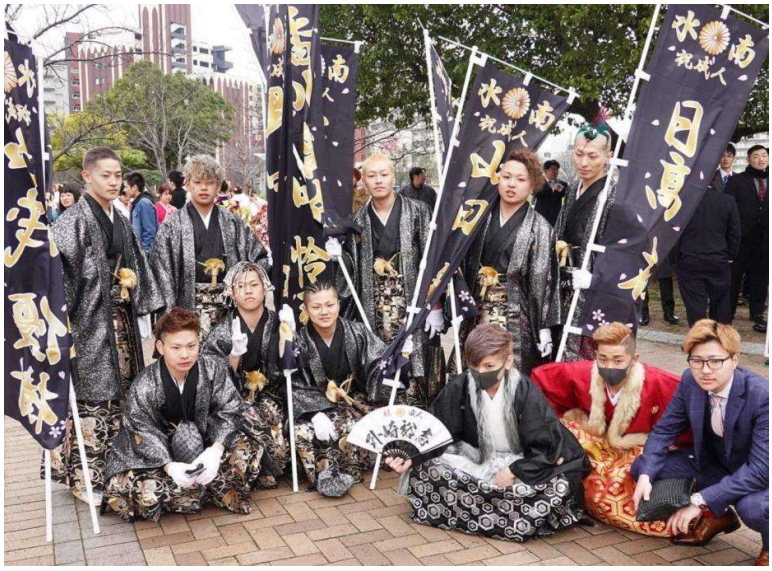

Image 12. Group of male attendees to the Kitakyushu coming-of-age ceremony sharing a similar style and posing like a *bosozoku*.
Source: "Seijinshiki 2020: Kitakyushu's Coming of Age Ceremony dazzles in the Year of the Rat [Photos]," SoraNews24, accessed November 7, 2024, https://soranews24.com/2020/01/14/seijinshiki-2020-kitakyushus-coming-of-age-ceremony-dazzles-in-the-year-of-the-rat%e3%80%90photos%e3%80%91/.

these expectations. The Kitakyushu coming-of-age ceremony thus provides some hints about the meaning of falling outside the norms. Several individuals dress up with *furisode* or suits during the coming-of-age ceremony in Kitakyushu. What sparks the attention of the public are the flashy colours of their garments, their extravagant hairstyles, and their styles that remind people of gangs and disregarded individuals in Japanese society. Groups of young adults gather at this event wearing similar attires, sometimes in accordance with other friends, to differentiate themselves from others (see *Image 12*).

Coming-of-age ceremonies in Kitakyushu not merely exemplify a unique event that falls outside of the normative form but also illuminate how Japanese people create non-normative spaces in which they play with what is expected of them as adults and gendered individuals. Fashion and style play a significant role in this event, and they serve as tools to analyze the meanings of formality and the usage of fashion in formal settings in Japan. It is the analysis of non-normative cases, and not the normative events, that will reveal the negotiation and tensions of gender construction in Japan. Kitakyushu's case falls outside of the norm because it does not follow sartorial standards in Japan, and this is what will help us reveal what the sartorial norm entails in terms of gender construction. It is thus crucial to understand how the fashion and aesthetics of this particular event spread among Kitakyushu's youth. In 2003, two young friends went to a kimono rental store in Kitakyushu and decided to wear a matching *hakama* that could symbolize their friendship. One would wear gold and the other silver. The event already had some

extravagant outfits from the previous years, but these two boys became icons known as *kin-san* and *gin-san*,[117] inspiring outfits for the following years until the present.[118]

As an example of the garments that young men use during this ceremony, *Image 13* shows two men wearing long, flashy gowns resembling kimono that deviate from the norm. The colourful and over-the-top hairstyles and the accessories that complete the outfit make them stand out among the public. Some of the participants in the survey noted that this image produced a scary sensation, as well as a feeling of distrust. However, a smaller number of participants pointed out these men's courage and how they embody their individuality through this unique fashion. The participants' individuality in the Kitakyushu coming-of-age ceremony exists in opposition to the sentiment of unity and collectivity that emanates from conventional coming-of-age ceremonies, in which the participants dress similarly according to what is considered proper. In Kitakyushu, young adults and their acquaintances (along with reporters and curious attendees taking pictures)

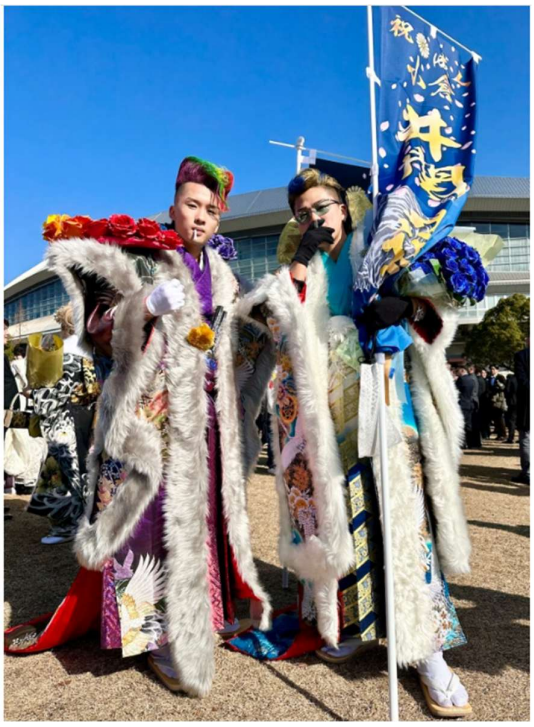

Image 13. Two young men at the coming-of-age ceremony in Kitakyushu.
Source: "Say hello to Japan's new generation of adults, fresh from Kitakyushu's 2023 seijinshiki ceremony," SoraNews24, accessed on November 7, 2024, https://soranews24.com/2023/01/10/say-hello-to-japans-new-generation-of-adults-fresh-from-kitakyushus-2023-seijinshiki-ceremony/.

[117] Lit. Mr. Gold and Mr. Silver.
[118] Becke, "Negotiating Gendered Identities Through Dress: Kimono at the Coming-of-age Day in Contemporary Japan," 154-63.

find common ground in wearing different clothes and creating their own definition of proper.

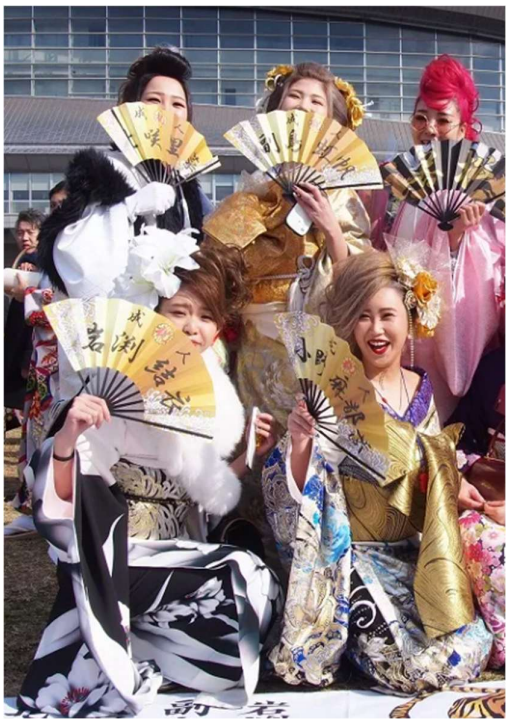

Image 14. Group of women at the coming-of-age ceremony in Kitakyushu.
Source: "Seijinshiki 2019: Best wild kimono outfits from Coming of Age Day celebrations in Kitakyushu," SoraNews24, accessed November 7, 2024, https://soranews24.com/2019/01/14/seijinshiki-2019-best-wild-kimono-outfits-from-coming-of-age-day-celebrations-in-kitakyushu/.

As another example, *Image 14* features a group of women who are wearing a heavily patterned *furisode* and holding fans with what seems to be their names printed on them. Specifically, the woman in the image's bottom-right corner shows her shoulders and is wearing the *obi* in the opposite direction as the rest. The elements featured in the three images inserted in this section (*Images 12*, *13*, and *14*) are usually associated with certain (un)social groups within the present Japanese society. An (un)social[119] group is a group of undesirable individuals who are taboo and associated with dangerous activities in Japan. This term englobes people such as courtesans, the *yakuza*, or *bosozoku*.[120] Firstly, *Image 13* features two men standing in front of the camera with somewhat intimidating poses. Both are holding or smoking a cigarette while presenting

[119] To further explain this concept, I use the term (un)social to refer to individuals who live in the margins of society. It is a double-faced term in the sense that it reflects the social element of being part of society, even if it is in the margins, and the fact that they are considered taboo. Considering this, an (un)social group of people exists within the margins of Japanese society and their interactions with the rest of society are necessary and cannot be disregarded. Young adults in events such as the coming-of-age ceremony in Kitakyushu reflect this interaction, as they reference styles associated with (un)social groups of people such as the Japanese mafia or courtesans.
[120] Motorbike gangs. Usually associated with modified motorbikes and certain elements of fashion such as flags and banners emblazoned with the gang's name on them, similar to the flags that the men in *Image 7* are holding.

themselves confident. The man on the right has a tall banner that matches his outfit with what appears to be a name or a slogan. Some of these elements are reminiscent of gangs or criminal groups in Japan. The tall banners are often associated with *bosozoku*, while the emblazoned names and the over-the-top garments are a possible reference to the *yakuza*. *Yakuza* is a term that refers to the Japanese mafia, a criminal network constituted by men who organize in a hierarchical way.[121] The Japanese media, however, has depicted *yakuza* to the public far from being homogenous. Japanese *yakuza* films often feature a group of good people while their enemies are portrayed as "greedy landowners [...] often marked by their Western-style clothing. The ethical gangs [...] wear humble *hanten*[122] coats emblazoned with the name of the family/gang on them."[123] The two men in *Image 13* wear attires similar to those depicted in *yakuza* films. Similarly, they also hold banners emblazoned with their names, an apparent reference to the "ethical" *yakuza* members portrayed in movies. Other elements such as the cigarette, the aviator sunglasses, and the usage of over-the-top traditional Japanese garments are reminiscent of these (un)social groups in Japan.

Secondly, the women in *Image 14* feature elements, accessories, and manners of wearing their garments that can be examined similarly to those used by men. Although the differences between a common *furisode* and the ones featured in this image may not be noticeable, certain elements reveal the non-normativity in Kitakyushu. In the case of the girl in the bottom-right corner of the picture, the upper part of the *furisode* lays lower on her torso compared to the other participants. In this manner, she leaves her shoulders

[121] Kersten, "Street youths, Bosozoku, and Yakuza: Subculture Formation and Societal Reactions in Japan," 278.
[122] Short coat similar to a *haori* but often worn in winter since it is more padded. This piece of clothing is not necessarily related to the *yakuza*, although it is usually part of their outfits in *yakuza* movies.
[123] Kaffen, "Image Romanticism and Yakuza Cinema," 72.

and part of her chest exposed. All the girls in the picture wear highly patterned and embroidered *furisode* with golden and shiny colours. These are uncommon elements that rarely appear on the *furisode* that other women use in normative ceremonies. Other relevant elements from these outfits are the heavy makeup, flamboyant hair accessories, and removable tattoos that some other women wear. As previously stated, these girls hold fans with their names or a slogan, similar to the banners that boys in *Images 12* and *13* hold, a key element that reminds of the Japanese mafia. The usage of fans, the over-the-top hair accessories, the exposed shoulders, the opposite-sided *obi*, and the heavy makeup are reminiscent of a different (un)social group in Japan: the courtesans. More specifically, the figure of the *oiran*, a highly respected high-rank prostitute,[124] is what the woman in the bottom-right corner embodies through her dress.

The relation between what is considered proper in Japanese society and the elements displayed at the coming-of-age ceremony in Kitakyushu creates a space of interaction between the norm and non-normative ways of gender expression. The tension generated between the hegemonic societal norms and the non-normative events and elements leads to the creation of subculture. This tension also creates a space where hegemonic and subcultural aspects of society constantly interact and resignify elements and styles from each other. The case of Kitakyushu is an example of how individuals create subcultures by giving new meanings to certain elements associated with (un)social members of society. According to Dick Hebdige,[125] while referencing Althusser, subculture is formed, shaped, and reshaped in society; it depends on the location where it takes place (i.e., the coming-of-age ceremonies), and it exists in a relation of tension with

[124] Cecilia Sagawa Seigle, *Yoshiwara : The Glittering World of the Japanese Courtesan* (University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 83, 225-8.
[125] Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, 132-3.

the dominant form of culture. This tension is the catalyst for the creation of culture and subculture. Hebdige adds that individuals usually choose their clothing and style based on a norm (i.e., status or personal preference). However, regardless of how biased people's choices are, they are always expressions of normative aesthetics in tension with other aesthetics that fall outside of the norm.[126]

In addition, Constantine Nakassis argues that people constantly make references in a dual manner. This duality consists in citing and quoting an element (a brand, for example), but at the same time, leaving something meaningful behind. What the individuals leave behind are the purposes for which the cited styles were initially intended. The meaning of this is that when a person quotes an element associated with a different group of people, they do not cite or reference it with all the associated meanings.[127] This is exemplified in *Image 13*, in which the men who appear in the picture, although referencing elements from the *yakuza*, are not associated with it as individuals. What these boys and girls intend to do at the coming-of-age ceremony in Kitakyushu is presenting themselves as something other than members of an (un)social group. They bring a performance in which aesthetics and fashion are key elements to play with the normative categories of adulthood and gender. However, further discussion will help analyze how this very act of referencing alone is meaningful, regardless of the original purposes of the fashion used by the attendees. Giving an answer to this question and examining how the gendered individuals reference certain aesthetics to deviate from gender and formal norms will be the focus of the following section. In what follows, I will analyze how the attendees at the ceremony in Kitakyushu use fashion and style to embody the concept of

[126] Ibid.
[127] Nakassis, "Brand, Citationality, Performativity," 628-9.

hypergender and how it can destabilize the societal and gender norms in present Japanese society.

❖ Gender Norms and the Concept of Hypergender

As examined in the previous section, the pictures from the coming-of-age ceremony in Kitakyushu feature young adults referencing aesthetics and specific elements associated with (un)social groups in Japanese society. The usage of these particular images and aesthetics may be seen as how young adults rebel against societal norms and what is associated with gender and adulthood. In this section, I will develop the analysis of the implications of these references and how gendered individuals exaggerate certain elements associated with their gender to create a non-normative space where gender identities are in dispute. Similarly, I will analyze how the usage of heavily gendered and non-normative imagery and aesthetics that the attendees draw from (un)social groups can defy societal norms.

I will now examine how the citation of (un)social groups of people exists in other realms of Japanese society. The *kabuki*, a traditional form of theatre in Japan formed by an all-male cast, serves as an example to explore the citation of certain social groups of people through aesthetics and clothing. In *kabuki* troupes, all the feminine roles, including *oiran*, are performed by male actors. The *onnagata*,[128] using a hyperfeminized appearance constructs a gendered image of the body that is utterly detached from how the actor presents outside of the stage. The construction of this hyperfeminized image happens through the excessive usage of makeup, accessories, and garments that feature

[128] Trans. "woman-like person."

flashy and heavy patterns, usually associated with people such as the high-rank courtesans, as I discussed in the previous section. A second element that the *onnagata* uses to embody femininity is to expose their body through the kimono.[129] This gesture indicates the sensuality often associated with the female body and is a sign of submission to the male preferences and sexual expectations.

In different instances of present Japanese society, women use heavily gendered outfits and aesthetics, such as in street fashion. *Lolita* and *kogyaru* trends make use of these hyperfeminized and sometimes sexualized imageries and rebel against gender norms. *Lolita* is a subcultural fashion trend from Japan that is known for its Victorian and Rococo style fashion. Although there are numerous branches within this umbrella term, they are characterized by the usage of big skirts, heavy makeup, excessive accessorizing, and an abundance of patterns and bows. *Lolita* fashion emphasizes the concept of *kawaii* (cuteness) through its fashion, posing, and every element associated with it. The district of Shibuya is the central enclave for the development and origins of this particular subcultural fashion style. In the same vein, *kogyaru* is another trend that incorporates elements from high-school garments (such as pleated skirts or blazers) that have been transformed to be revealing and sexualizing, an attempt to reclaim their individuality and independence. This subcultural fashion style exists in communion with some other very notorious styles, such as *gyaru* or *ganguro*, styles that seem to have originated from a commonplace. As discussed earlier, the gendered individuals, and women in particular, give new meanings to fashion and, in this particular case, rebel against the hegemonic feminine ideals. Thus, this is another example of the contentious nature of identity, as the

[129] Mezur, Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies: Devising Kabuki Female-Likeness, 220.

gendered individuals deliberately express their gender and use material culture to modify their appearance and the images that they want to embody for various reasons.

The concepts of hypermasculinity and hyperfemininity, or hypergender, can be understood as identities that represent conformity with "extreme gender-role ideologies."[130] In other words, hypermasculinity and hyperfemininity are concepts that reveal how gendered individuals comply with or make use of gender norms. The example of the *lolita* or *kogyaru* subcultures reveals that women purposely and excessively comply with gender norms to look like an over-feminized version of themselves. In the present world, women face numerous challenges in relation to what is expected of them, and in some occasions, interiorizing and exaggerating these expectations can be a tool to rebel against societal gender differences. The concept of hypergender can also be used to investigate the power relations between men and women. In this sense, hypermasculinity refers to the sets of negative values around hegemonic masculinity (such as machismo, the suppression of certain emotions, and violence), whereas hyperfemininity is centred on the heterosexual relationship between men and women.[131] As examined earlier, examples of hypermasculinity can be found in the attendees to the coming-of-age ceremony in Kitakyushu, where men embody their masculinity through the usage of aesthetics associated with the *yakuza* and other gangs. Similarly, women in the same event or the *onnagata* in *kabuki* plays are examples of hyperfemininity, showing elements and forms of expressing femininity that comply with the wishes of male sexuality and desires,

[130] Merle E. Hamburger, Matthew Hogben, Stephanie McGowan, and Lori J. Dawson, "Assessing Hypergender Ideologies: Development and Initial Validation of a Gender-Neutral Measure of Adherence to Extreme Gender-Role Beliefs," *Journal of Research in Personality* 30, no. 2 (1996): 157, https://doi.org/10.1006/jrpe.1996.0011.
[131] Tyson C. Kreiger and Larry E. Dumka, "The Relationships between Hypergender, Gender, and Psychological Adjustment," *Sex Roles* 54, no. 11–12 (2006): 778, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-006-9044-9.

revealing the power relations inherent in heteronormative relationships. Thus, hypergender is a tool that serves a double purpose. First, it is a concept that measures the gender individuals' adscription to masculinity or femininity and their relation with the gender binary. In this double-faced process, gendered individuals help reinforce the connotations associated with masculinity and femininity by exaggerating their features, dress, and style in general rather than intentionally defying the gender binary. However, they do create a space for the reflection on the construction of gender identities and their characteristics by making them conspicuous. Hypergender also serves as a critique of the binary and the power relations that emanate from the gender binary by mimicking, parodying and magnifying what is accepted as normative masculinity and femininity.

However, hypergender is not a stable concept. Hyperfemininity and hypermasculinity are categories to measure the extent to which the gendered individuals adhere to gender norms and societal expectations. The expectations over femininity, in general, can be summarized into three categories: being part of a relationship with a man, being able to attract men with their attributes sexually, and considering themselves as subjects of male dominancy.[132] In the particular case of this chapter, the women featured in *Image 14* during the coming-of-age ceremony in Kitakyushu use a hyperfeminized style. This hyperfeminized style is defined by the usage of clothing, accessories, and elements associated with high-rank courtesans in premodern Japan. This figure is heavily sexualized and marketized for male desire. The embodiment of their sexuality and of certain figures that are sexually attractive to men, depicting a submissive role of women by dressing up as prostitutes, is a sign of how women can defy the gender roles that

[132] Johanna M. F. van Oosten, Jochen Peter and Inge Boot, "Women's Critical Responses to Sexually Explicit Material: The Role of Hyperfemininity and Processing Style," *The Journal of Sex Research* 52, no. 3 (2014): 307-8, https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2013.858305.

Japanese society imposes on them. Unintentionally, women's dress and their performances of femininity unveil the unstable, malleable nature of gender. Accordingly, the concept of hypermasculinity revolves around certain factors that male individuals ascribe to a degree: the breaking of taboos regarding violence, homophobia, and masculinity comparison; the usage of violence in problem-solving; and the objectification of women. These ideas are rooted in the ancient codes of being a warrior. Similarly, in Japan, the *yakuza* families are known for having a militarized structure and values that resemble those of the ancient warriors. *Image 12* and *Image 13*, and their analysis, reveal the ascription of men to the values of hypermasculinity by showing themselves as fierce, violent, bold, and around women who dress up as courtesans.

As previously mentioned, boys reference the *yakuza* and motorcycle gangs through clothing, poses, and elements associated with these (un)social groups. However, the citation of styles by men in the case of Kitakyushu (as an example) differs from how women reference certain styles and aesthetics. As seen in *Image 13*, men in this particular event wear over-the-top garments closely related to the aesthetics associated with the Japanese mafia. The poses that they adopt, however, are a reference to the *bosozoku* or motorbike gangs.[133] In normative events, formal attire for men is a black or navy Western-style suit with a white shirt followed by a coloured necktie. Although these two styles may seem overly divergent, they are both made and worn to embody a similar idea associated with masculinity in Japan. The masculine ideal that young men embody in

[133] Although a woman, a representation of this aesthetics is the character of Ichigo Shirayuri, from the book *Shimotsuma Monogatari* (*Kamikaze Girls* in North America), written by Novala Takemoto in 2002. Ichigo embodies a masculine identity by acting fierce and being part of a gang, which is usually a realm for men, while Momoko, the protagonist, embodies a much more feminine image while wearing a *lolita* outfit. They both are great representations of what social expectations of genders look like in Japan and how they break free of them in their own manners. To learn more about this character, please see Novala Takemoto, *Shimotsuma Monogatari* (Shogakukan, 2002), np.

normative and non-normative coming-of-age ceremonies is a man who is strong, fierce, and ready to fight for what is important to them (such as their family, country, or friend group). As explained above, during the early Modern Japanese periods (the end of the Edo period and the entirety of the Meiji period), men embodied the masculine ideal of an enlightened and scholarly person through the usage of clothing, specifically, Western-like school uniforms which resembled the newer Western-style uniforms from the military. The Japanese government changed both school and military uniforms[134] as a consequence of the necessity for Japan to be recognized as an equal by the Western forces.[135] As Japan lost the war in 1945, the militaristic ideal of a man caring for his country switched to the figure of the salaryman, a man who could provide support for his family with his work. This led to a scenario where young men embody these traditional masculine ideals through fashion on formal occasions. This masculine ideal entails acting fierce and ready to defend the country, while others embody a common sense of masculinity with suits. Thus, the masculine ideals that young men embody are double-faced: both fierce and scholarly, representing two hegemonic ideals of masculinity.

The analysis of the particular case of the coming-of-age ceremony in Kitakyushu has revealed some aspects regarding the construction of gender and the usage of fashion on formal occasions in Japan. Young men and women embody specific hypergendered aesthetics along with their peers and friends in an event that has congealed as a custom in this region of Japan. My final analysis for this chapter focuses on understanding (and assuming) that most of the participants in this event, once it is over, return to their normative lives, where they do not use (un)social aesthetics. This reveals the contentious

[134] Namba, "School Uniform Reforms in Modern Japan," 93-4.
[135] Slade, *Japanese Fashion: A Cultural History*, 91-92.

nature of identity, as young adults play with their gender and gender expression as part of their daily lives and embedded in the culture of Kitakyushu as a custom. The question that initiated this chapter aimed to know how much the Kitakyushu ceremony could defy gender norms. Thus, although the gendered individuals use hypergendered aesthetics and fashion, I argue that rather than defying gender norms, they reinforce and exaggerate them as part of a performance. In this sense, it is essential to note that non-normative experiences do not necessarily defy normativity. However, non-normative experiences, usages of fashion and aesthetics, and representations of gender identities help the creation of spaces where individuals can reflect on the meanings of masculinity and femininity. The coming-of-age ceremony in Kitakyushu serves as an example of how young men and women can reveal existing tensions between femininity and masculinity through the usage of exaggerated fashion and gendered elements.

V

Gender, Fashion, and Race

The previous chapters have focused on diverse topics regarding Japanese individuals. Japan comprises people from diverse backgrounds. Sometimes, discussions on certain concepts, such as gender, appear in the field completely detached from other categories. Nevertheless, an intersectional discussion in which adjacent concepts of gender are included is needed. In this chapter, the concept of race will deepen the discussion on how gender is constructed intersectionally. As the number of nationalities that form Japanese society is vast, it is necessary to narrow it down to some examples that, by no means, represent the totality of experiences but that could serve as a hint to understand how gender is performed and constructed by people from different backgrounds. This chapter will be expanded into a different section focusing on the case study of *Zainichi* Koreans.[136]

To understand how different ethnic identities are constructed in Japan, nationalism and the concept of homogeneity, which Japan is widely known for, must be revisited. Thus, a new puzzle needs to be solved: how can different ethnic groups help deconstruct the idea of Japanese homogeneity and see Japan as a multicultural space? The varied understandings of the concepts of gender and ethnicity of the *Zainichi* people will be the main focus of analysis and the primary tool for deconstructing Japanese homogeneity. With the Westernization of Japan, ideas such as the nation-state and nationalism were also

[136] Individuals who live in Japan and who relate to Korean culture and ancestry in their daily lives but who do not necessarily hold Korean nationality.

adopted by the Japanese government, creating a notion of "Japaneseness" or cultural homogeneity of the Japanese people. According to Harumi Befu, a question was to be answered in pre-war Japan, as in any other nation: who are we, the Japanese? The state needed a series of "clear and unambiguous symbols in the imperial institution, the national flag, the national anthem, and the national emblem."[137] However, there was more to those symbols, as they had to become effective to create unity across the nation. The Meiji state's expansionist projects came together with the ambition of assimilating the colonies' cultures and peoples, a duty that resonated manageably among scholars and officials. The Meiji government colonized the Indigenous territories in the north by considering them "*terra nullius*," or lands that the government considered unoccupied. The Japanese government also considered the Ainu people to be a vanishing people.[138] These were excuses that served as justification for taking away the ancestral lands from the Indigenous people. At the same time, the Koreans were seen as culturally and language-wise similar (or assimilated) to the ethnic Japanese people.[139] This distinction between the ethnic Japanese and "others" was pertinent to the Japanese state for justifying the colonization and their expansionist projects. Generally, people tend to think that Japan is a homogenous nation formed of a homogenous ethnic group of people.[140] Still, that vision did not come until way after the war ended. Rather, Japan acknowledged the

[137] Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of "Nihonjinron,"* 3 and 9.
[138] Katsuya Hirano, "Thanatopolitics in the Making of Japan's Hokkaido: Settler Colonialism and Primitive Accumulation," *Critical Historical Studies* 2, no. 2 (2015): 192 and 197, https://doi.org/10.1086/683094.
[139] Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of "Nihonjinron,"* 68-9.
[140] A variety of authors have done research about the deconstruction of the idea of Japanese homogeneity. For example, Eiji Oguma examines how the myth of ethnic homogeneity in Japan was established after the Pacific War, since by the twentieth century, there was no evidence of such homogeneity, and it was not until the second half of the twentieth century that the rhetoric of homogeneity sprang in Japan. (for more, please see Eiji Oguma, *A Genealogy of "Japanese" Self Images* (Trans Pacific Press, 2002), 29 and 81). In the same vein, Michael Weiner argues that Japan as a homogenous nation is part of the postwar political discourse and not grounded in any social reality (for more, please see Michael Weiner, *Race and Migration in Imperial Japan* (Routledge, 1994), 1 and 14).

differences between the colonies and the metropole.[141] The simultaneous process of differentiation and cultural assimilation created a multiethnic empire far from homogeneity, of masculinity across the empire for example, that the Japanese state was professing during the Second World War, and especially in the postwar period, when ethnic homogeneity became widespread.

The ultimate goal of solving the puzzle of how multiculturalism and false homogeneity interact (and how the first deconstructs the latter) is to demonstrate that Japan is a diverse space. This diversity is in constant change and evolution and is the basis of the construction of different and varied gendered identities that interact with the social expectations and circumstances of each person, group, and historical moment. This chapter examines how *Zainichi* people's experiences of generational trauma, prejudices, colonialism, and ultimately, race and ethnicity play a significant role in the construction of national, ethnic, and gender identities. In other words, the *Zainichi* people epitomize the diversity of identities within Japan highlighting the intricate web of relations, trauma, and cultures that coexist in the same regional context. Similarly, the usage of clothing and the relation to formality (specifically, formal events and the usage of a particular kind of clothing for these occasions) of *Zainichi* people will illuminate how fashion and clothing can be a tool for the construction of one's (contentious) identity and the deconstruction of the fictive ethnical homogeneity of the Japanese nation.

[141] David Askew, "Oguma Eiji and the Construction of the Modern Japanese National Identity," *Social Science Japan Journal* 4, no. 1 (2001): 112.

The concept of intersectionality is crucial in understanding the way the categories of sexuality and race are entwined. The theory of intersectionality understands that identities are more complex as they appear, and one person who has a specific gender is also affected by other categories such as race, sexuality, and social class. This is a more nuanced approach to understanding the reality of people who live on society's edges or are not represented within the majority or the hegemonic discourse.[142] As Wilchins argues, queer theory has made more evident the case of people whose identities are more concealed or even erased within society, for they are marginalized and oppressed; thus, their voices are silenced, and they are not even able to demand a space in the fight for inclusion.[143] Considering this, it is essential to understand that the Japanese nation is formed by a diverse population from different backgrounds. This diversity intersects with gender identities that are always dependent on each person's background and circumstances. In other words, gender identities in Japan are not constructed separately but in an intersectional manner. The construction of gender identities in Japan is dependant on each person's ethnic background, social struggles, privileges or sexuality among other factors. The concept of intersectionality is thus key to understanding the relationship between gender identities and each person's circumstances, and how different groups of people build their identities and establish hierarchies that reinforce (or question) social inequalities. Economic or social factors, for example, influence how a particular group of people build an idea or category of gender and how they interact with it. For this, it is necessary to understand that the social differences between people in society are at the center of the construction of gender identities.

[142] Riki Anne Wilchins, *Gender Norms & Intersectionality : Connecting Race, Class & Gender* (Rowman & Littlefield International, 2019), 33-4.
[143] Ibid. XIV.

Performativity is a word that envisions identities as separate constructions that form themselves over time and exist with the repetition of certain social patterns. However, this work aims to take a step further and recognize the influence that the construction of different identities within one's persona has over the construction of others. In other words, recognizing that race, social class, and sexuality influence the construction of the idea of gender, hence its contentious nature. ann-elise lewallen[144] helps the reader understand that the concept of gender is variable depending on the cultural and social background of the social group. lewallen casts light on how the Indigenous peoples of Japan bring the idea that gender is not fixed. As mentioned in the book, women in Ainu communities took on tasks that traditionally all members of the community shared, such as passing down traditions to their children, to prevent the downfall of Ainu communities due to the Japanese colonization of their lands.[145] This is an example of how historical context, oppression, and resilience are elements that (re)shape gender norms and expectations. As Hill Collins[146] argues, the concept of intersectionality understands that identities are not separated entities but entwined and in constant interaction. The categories of gender, race, social class, and sexual orientation are also interconnected by oppression and how different groups of people interact with each other in more or less positive manners. One can better understand the complexities of society and power structures by examining how various forms of oppression intersect and interact.[147] The intention of this chapter is thus to provide an example of how different ethnic groups in Japanese society create their notion of identity. In what follows, the analysis of how their identities are constructed will be examined through the lens of colonialism as a central part of the history of the *Zainichi* people and their ancestors.

[144] lewallen, *The Fabric of Indigeneity: Ainu Identity, Gender, and Settler Colonialism in Japan*, 15-23.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Hill Collins, *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory*, 43-6.
[147] Ibid.

Zainichi Koreans have experienced colonization in diverse ways that shaped their relations with the colonized land, the metropole, and their own group.[148]

❖ *Zainichi* Koreans, Nationalism, and the Political Division of the Diaspora

The term *Zainichi* englobes the realities of nationals or residents in Japan who relate to Korean culture and ancestry. This is, thus, a very nuanced term to refer to people who relate to Korean culture and diaspora in various manners. For the Japanese administration, the term is only used as a political or even administrative to separate a part of the society based on their political background. The *Zainichi* communities settled in Japan in the context of colonization and the aftermath of the Second World War. Thus, this ethnic minority saw its emergence amidst the consequences of colonization that brought disparities between ethnic communities, poverty, discrimination, and generational trauma passed down from previous generations of Koreans who saw their land taken away by the Japanese empire. After Japan was proclaimed victorious in the first Sino-Japanese War in 1895, China lost all its influences on the Korean peninsula to Japan, which solidified its domination over Korea.[149] Right after the war ended, Russia became an influential regional power. Russia prevented the annexation of the Korean peninsula as a Japanese territory, which created increasing tension in the region. The Japanese state allied with Britain while Russia extended its influence in the peninsula.

[148] A wide number of authors have worked on the concept of intersectionality and have helped deepen the understanding of it. An example of this is Kimberlé Crenshaw, who defined the concept as a manner to understand how different categories such as race, gender, and class, are entwined, creating a unique experience of the social world, of discrimination, and of privilege. For further reading, please see Kimberle Crenshaw and Anne Phillips. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," in *Feminism And Politics* (Oxford University Press, 1998), 141-50. Another example is Angela Davis, for who the concept of intersectionality emphasizes the relations between different forms of oppression in relation to race, class, or gender. She argued that these forms of oppression reinforce each other and thus cannot be seen and analyzed alone. For further reading, please see Angela Y. Davis, *Women, race, and class*, trans. Ana Varela Mateos (Akal Ediciones, 2005), 77-85.

[149] Charles Roger Tennant, *A History of Korea* (Kegan Paul International, 1996), 225-6.

The constant presence of foreign forces in the Korean peninsula,[150] the rise of certain reform movements such as the Independence Club,[151] the spread of education in the Korean population, and the emergence of movements fighting for women's rights (such as the *Changyanghoe* in 1898) were all critical elements to the construction of a unified Korean national identity.[152] The growing tension in the Korean peninsula resulted in the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904. Japan was victorious the following year by signing the Portsmouth Treaty, which reaffirmed Japan's influence in the region, beginning its occupation until the Meiji government officially annexed it as part of the Japanese empire on August 22, 1910.[153]

After Korea was annexed in 1910, the population of the Japanese empire was far from being homogenous, as it counted Taiwanese, Korean, and Indigenous people (among others) in its population. The reality, however, reflected an unequal society under Japanese rule in the colonies. The inclusion of these ethnic minorities as part of the Japanese population was highly regulated and heavily based on the policies approved by the government, which generated an environment in which ethnic minorities were set in a grey area between being subject to the Japanese state and being colonial minorities.[154] The annexation of Korea by the Japanese Empire in 1910 signified complete control over

[150] While these influences affected the Korean peninsula, the region was slowly transforming from a premodern kingdom into a modern(ized) empire, or what would be one interest for the Japanese occupation of the peninsula. These influences have existed in Korea before the 20th century, as it was a strategic geographical point for Russia, China, and Japan. As Japan gained influence over the Korean peninsula, the region slowly transformed into a moder(ized) region where the Japanese government would impose part of the Japanese means of production and other Westernized cultural elements. To know more about this topic, please see Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun : A Modern History* (W. W. Norton, 2005), 22-7, 96-105, 133-41 and 159-73.
[151] Kor. *doglibhyeobhoe* (독립협회).
[152] Tennant, *A History of Korea*, 232-4.
[153] Alexis Dudden, *Japan's Colonization of Korea : Discourse and Power* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 7-9.
[154] David Chapman, *Zainichi Korean Identity and Ethnicity* (Routledge, 2008), 16.

the territory and its population. This was reflected, for example, in the forced migration of Korean people towards the end of the Second World War as wartime labour.[155]

During the colonial years, inter-empire migration, such as to Manchuria or the metropole, also increased due to people seeking better opportunities within the empire. The Korean peninsula was slowly impoverished and dispossessed of its resources and production (rice, for example).[156] During the colonial rule of Japan in Korea, the attempts at cultural assimilation (rather than the construction of a multicultural state) varied. Mark Caprio[157] summarized a list of ways in which the Japanese government culturally assimilated the Korean population into the empire. For example, the colonial government changed the Western Gregorian calendar for the Japanese one, so Korean civilians could internalize the meanings of Japanese festivities. For the sake of assimilation and strengthening the ties between the Korean and Japanese populations, the Japanese government encouraged marriages between the two ethnic groups. As a third example, the colonial government proposed changes in the lifestyles of the Korean population, such as their clothing. As Caprio argues, the government imposed this last change to limit tasks and the use of resources. All of these examples form part of what Caprio calls a "Counterplan Proposal," a plan that aimed to the total utilization of the empire's resources. While this proposal was a plan to efficiently utilize the empire's resources (even the colonized subjects), it created tensions in the construction of Korean people's national identity as simultaneously others to the Japanese and as almost-the-same as the colonizers.

[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid., 17.
[157] Mark Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945* (University of Washington Press, 2009), 145-9.

The creation of this *Zainichi* identity needs to be analyzed along with the historical analysis of the Korean migration to Japan. During the colonial era, a vast number of Korean families emigrated or were forced to emigrate to Japan and continued passing their culture down while slowly being assimilated into Japanese culture.[158] Before the First World War, the number of Koreans entering Japan was from 1,000 to 2,000. After the war started, these numbers tripled and continued increasing. After the end of the First World War in 1918, the increasing amount of rice produced in the Korean peninsula was redistributed by the Japanese authorities to the metropole, creating a context of poverty where Korean people emigrated to Japan for better economic opportunities.[159] The number of Korean migrants to the Japanese archipelago was tenfold by 1930, mainly because the Japanese authorities needed a cheap workforce to work in the mines and other manual jobs.[160] Until the start of the Second World War in 1939, most Korean immigrants in Japan voluntarily moved from their homeland. However, as WWII started, the Japanese government forcibly moved over half a million Koreans to work and fight for Japan.[161] After the Second World War, with the emergence of communist ideologies in the Korean peninsula, the *Chosen Soren* movement helped with the repatriation of approximately 70,000 *Zainichi* to North Korea in the early 1960s, whereas South Korean affiliated *Zainichi* were not involved in the repatriation campaigns.[162] In the meantime, by March of 1946, more than one million Korean individuals returned to the Korean peninsula. However, this number started decreasing with time due to economic and political

[158] The concepts of Japanese culture and Japanese society, in this chapter, refer to the whole body of ethnically Japanese people and those others who are viewed as Japanese even if their ancestry is different. An example of the latter is the cousin of one of the protagonist's friends in the movie *Chong*, who is defined as a Japanese because he does not speak Korean and seems to have been completely culturally assimilated into the Japanese practices. To know more, please see Lee, *Chong*, 0:53:52.
[159] Chapman, *Zainichi Korean Identity and Ethnicity*, 17
[160] "Koreans in Japan," SPICE, accessed November 20, 2024, https://web.archive.org/web/20230623194324/https://spice.fsi.stanford.edu/docs/koreans_in_japan.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid.

instability in the peninsula, which prompted the migration of many back to Japan.[163] The Korean population that remained in Japan eventually formed the *Zainichi* communities.

During the colonial period, the international influence and the divisions happening in countries in East Asia (such as in China between the Nationalists and the Communists) helped create a political division among the Korean population. This, the end of the Second World War resulting in Japan's defeat, the emergent rivalry between the United States and USSR, and the economic disparities between the northern and southern parts of the Korean peninsula led to the division of Korea into two zones across the 38th parallel with opposing political affiliations in 1945, as Japan lost its claims over its colonies.[164] The Northern half, which had a significant Soviet influence, was affiliated with Communist values, while the southern part leaned more towards Nationalist sentiments and relations with the United States. While the physical separation of the Korean land occurred on the peninsula, the political divisions between the Korean population affiliated with either Communist or Nationalist values were present both in the peninsula and the diaspora. In this sense, the *Zainichi* population in Japan was also politically divided, raising affiliations and sentiments that aligned with either of the two new political streams and regimes in the region. The identity of the *Zainichi* people is thus defined along the lines of ideological difference.

[163] Sara Park, "Casting Migration Seeds under Colonial Rule: Migration from Korea to Japan after the Second World War," *Oral History* 44, no. 1 (2016): 59,
[164] Tennant, *A History of Korea*, 255-6.

The *Zainichi* could be categorized as *Chosen Soren*[165] (aligned with the North Korean regime) and *Mindan*[166] (aligned with the South Korean nationalist and capitalist political values).[167] These two groups appeared in Japan after the Korean peninsula was politically divided and captured the *Zainichi* people's attention for different reasons, such as the promises of collective support from the North Korean affiliated group or the more moderate and embracing of the Japanese culture from the *Mindan*.[168] In the following section, I will explore how the usage of fashion and clothing reflects the struggle for identity within the *Zainichi* population and how *Zainichi* people reshape their connections with material culture in relation to political divisions, generational trauma from the colonial period, and their social struggles within Japanese society.

❖ *Chima jeogori* and the Struggle for Identity among *Zainichi* population

The *chima jeogori*, a traditional Korean dress, will be the central piece through which this section will be constructed. The garment is formed by two primary elements: a *chima* (skirt) and a *jeogori* (top) (see *Image 15*). *Chima jeogori* appeared in Japanese media years before the annexation of the Korean lands in 1910. Japanese media depicted Korean women as impure, showing their breasts and clearly setting a boundary between the enlightened and refined Japanese culture and the "barbaric" Korean culture, a

[165] General Association of Korean Residents in Japan.
[166] Korean Residents' Union in Japan.
[167] John Lie, *Zainichi (Koreans in Japan) : Diasporic Nationalism and Postcolonial Identity* (University of California Press, 2008), 39-41.
[168] Ibid., 39 and 166.

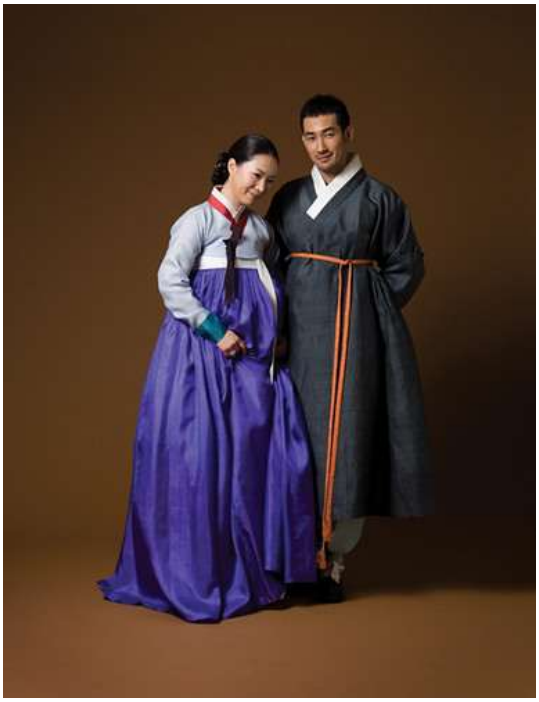

Image 15. Woman and man wearing *chima jeogori*. *Source:* Korea.net, Hanbok for man and female, photograph, 385 × 500 pixels, 2010, Openverse, https://openverse.org/image/04aad909-8c42-4c0f-a30d-483f79a161a7?q=chima+jeogori.

distinction that the Japanese government needed to justify the colonization of Korea. [169] What the Japanese media circulated about Korean women's clothing was far from reality, as the *chima jeogori* changed during the colonial years to be more cost-efficient and to cover a larger part of the female upper body.[170] Japanese authors made many depictions of the Korean people and culture during the colonial era (1910-1945), and a large number focused on creating caricatures of them. As said previously, Korean women were shown as lazy, submissive, and sexualized, while men were depicted as lazy, corrupt, and backward.

The introduction of Confucian values in the Korean peninsula, as well as the necessity from Japan to create a submissive and feminized Korean society, constructed a norm by which Korean women were expected to be housewives and apply all their expertise in caring for their loved ones and the household. The education of Korean women was more focused on household activities and domestic skills, which ultimately discouraged them from continuing their studies, thus creating a less cultivated female

[169] Suhyun Choi, "Dressing Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, and Subjectivity in Representations of Chima Chogori in Japan" (MA thesis, Seoul National University, 2019), 9-10.
[170] Hyung Gu Lynn, "Fashioning Modernity: Changing Meanings of Clothing in Colonial Korea," *Journal of International and Area Studies* 11, no. 3 (2004): 79–80 and 87.

population compared to Japanese women. The Japanese colonial government purposely aimed to limit the opportunities given to the Korean population, especially women, so that they could justify the colonization of the territory.[171] Artists often represented Korean people during the colonial period, who used traditional clothing such as *chima jeogori*, while Japanese individuals were shown wearing Western-style clothing.[172] The disparities in the depiction of the colonial subjects versus the colonizers created a division between the two cultures that could generate sentiments of rejection towards the Korean people as they were depicted as backward or not modern enough,[173] creating thus another tool for the justification of the need to colonize the Korean population by the Meiji government.

It is necessary to note that, since the annexation of Korea as part of the Japanese empire in 1910, the question of national identity needed to be resolved by the Meiji state to keep the idea of homogeneity that they were creating of the Japanese population. At this point, citizenship was granted to all ethnically Japanese people. The different ethnic groups were generally classified with two terms: *naichijin* (those with Japanese ancestry) and *gaichijin* (colonial population).[174] This situation left the Korean population in Japan recognized as "imperial subjects" but never entitled to the same rights as ethnically Japanese citizens. Since the end of the Second World War, and after Japan lost its claims over the Korean peninsula, Korean residents in Japan (among other ethnic minorities) were registered as alien residents by the Japanese government under the Alien

[171] Theodore Jun Yoo, *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea : Education, Labor, and Health, 1910-1945* (University of California Press, 2008), 60-73.
[172] Manuel Schilcher, "Appropriate Japan: How Western Art prepared a Nation for War" (PhD diss., University of Artistic and Industrial Design Linz, 2019), 103 and 204.
[173] For images regarding depicting Korean peoples during the Japanese colonial era, see Yoo, *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea : Education, Labor, and Health, 1910-1945*, 78 and 165.
[174] Chapman, *Zainichi Korean Identity and Ethnicity*, 75.

Registration Law, enacted in 1952.[175] Three years later, fingerprints were required when renewing the alien status, which caused some resentment among the *Zainichi* population, congealing into movements such as the anti-fingerprinting movement during the 1980s.[176] Regardless of the numerous efforts opposing the Alien Registration Law, it was not abolished until 2012. The Basic Resident Registration System replaced the law, which requires fingerprints to be considered as a resident within Japanese territory.[177]

Ethnic identity can be highly influenced through dress, and clothing can be a physical embodiment of the generational trauma. Ethnic identity and its construction are influenced by factors such as trauma, the internal understanding of "who we are" as a group, and the otherization from external groups. Kim-Wachutka describes the sentiment of shame that many Korean girls felt when they attended school for wearing "funny" dresses that differed from Japanese traditional clothes. *Zainichi* women also describe the feeling of anger while seeing Japanese women put on the *chima jeogori* without having the experience of being bullied for their cultural differences.[178] Similarly, the *chima jeogori* carries a heavy cultural weight that also reinforces certain ideas of gender that are intrinsic to Korean society, as well as the negativity that being an ethnically minoritized person in Japan brings along. As mentioned by one interviewee in Kim-Wachutka's book, being a Korean in Japan means feeling the shame of using one's ethnic name and being associated with trivial elements of Korean culture, such as roasted meat and *kimchi*.[179] In a context where racism, xenophobia, and discrimination against the "different other" are

[175] Ibid., 73.
[176] Ibid.
[177] "Immigration Control of Japanese and Foreign Nationals," The Ministry of Justice, accessed November 18, 2024, https://www.moj.go.jp/ENGLISH/m_hisho06_00044.html.
[178] Jackie J. Kim-Wachutka, *Zainichi Korean Women in Japan : Voices* (Routledge, 2018), 164-5.
[179] Ibid., 163.

at the center, an intersectional analysis is essential to understanding how race and other categories influence the construction of gendered identities. The stories featured in Kim-Wachutka's work reveal the fact that *Zainichi* women physically wear the burden of being part of an ethnic minority in Japan through *chima jeogori*. The book shows how fashion and what is associated with it affects people differently within the gender binary depending on their relation with their ancestry and their ethnicity. The book shows the stories of Korean women as examples of minorities who have to perform their gender in a distinctive way because of their invisibility in Japanese society.

Exposing Korean heritage to the colonizer's gaze creates a trauma that necessarily affects the relationship of the colonized subjects and their descendants with their notion of Korea and their national identity. It is thus essential to understand the divisions in gender, race, or class in society to examine how individuals construct different gender identities based on contentious gender norms. The comprehension of how gender is constructed in society is limited without understanding the social injustices and the disparities of diverse social groups. The expectations of the gendered individuals are diverse depending on the social group, context, and moment in history. Thus, knowing the social contexts and circumstances of different groups of people in society is crucial to understanding the diversity in gender identities and norms.

The *chima jeogori*, along with other elements from the Korean culture, was used by the colonial Japanese government as a tool to represent a soft and feminized Korean society through different sources of media such as magazines. This representation was very much needed in a period of colonization to create a more familiar and welcoming

image of the "other" who was just annexed to the empire. Similarly, women were depicted as obedient and carrying out diverse household activities such as cooking, cleaning, or simply sitting around being silent. This image conflicts directly with the reality many Koreans faced during the colonial period, in which they felt the urge to emigrate to find better opportunities.[180] In this sense, the Japanese government would benefit from constructing an idea of Korean people as submissive, feminine, and docile. The media depicts these "others" with a welcoming and docile image while creating a space for the justification of the submission of the Korean people's identity, livelihoods, culture, and lands. The construction of the Korean "otherness" as a feminine and submissive identity in a foreign land where one is bullied for being different passes through various stages of acceptance and rejection, adding to the contentious nature of identity.

Previously, I analyzed the gendering of dress as a consequence of the Western values adopted by the Japanese state during the Modern periods of Japanese history. During this time, and while the Korean peninsula was under the occupation of the Japanese forces, not only Japanese school uniforms changed, but so did the Korean ones. Korean traditional clothes such as the *chima jeogori* were worn by women until 1907, when the first Western-style uniform was implemented at the Sookmyung Women's School. However, they entered a similar state as in Japan, being adopted and dismissed multiple times during the Modern era. For boys, however, the case was much simpler, as a traditional-style uniform was adopted around 1898 to be changed into a Western-style military-like uniform in 1939 under Japanese rule.[181] The implementation of these

[180] Ibid., 10.
[181] Park, "Do School Uniforms Lead to Uniform Minds?: School Uniforms and Appearance Restrictions in Korean Middle Schools and High Schools," 164.

uniforms for men resonates with the idea of creating a shared sentiment across every potential soldier in the war. Regardless of their cultural background, men from the Japanese archipelago and men from the colonies could fight for a common objective based on similar shared experiences that built a sense of community. Similarly, women kept wearing traditional clothes at schools intermittently. Still, they remained a common practice for formal occasions, a fact that resonates directly with the previously discussed gendering of social roles and how society assigned the task of passing down the traditions and embracing the values of the traditional family.

The *Zainichi* people construct their gender identities and their gender roles in an intricate web of experiences, trauma, and feelings of pertinence to both Japanese and Korean cultures and none at the same time. In many occasions, the *Zainichi* people internalized prejudices and adopted the misogynistic ways of understanding *chima jeogori* that circulated across Japan during the colonial period. The movie *Chong*, directed by Sang-il Lee in 2000, analyzes these topics and shows an example of how the construction of ethnic identity is inherently related to dress and how institutions differentiate people by clothing. The movie is set in post-imperial Japan, when the Korean Peninsula was divided into two political entities. In the film, the protagonist and his friends manage to qualify for the Kanagawa baseball tournament, representing their Korean school for the first time, as Korean schools were banned from the competition. Through the characters' lives, the viewer can see how life for the Zainichi families was during that period and how discrimination and mutual rejection played a particular role in creating a national identity among these people. Embracing the Korean culture and overcoming difficulties and discrimination are the two main key elements of the movie.

Clothing plays a central role in representing how gender and national identities are constructed among the Korean diaspora in Japan. During the post-colonial era, many Korean immigrants and descendants lived in Japan, trying to embrace their native culture and traditions and assimilating into certain parts of the Japanese culture. The protagonist is a third-generation Zainichi who attends a North Korea-affiliated school (*chosen gakko*) and is heavily influenced by the *Chosen Soren* movement.[182] In the movie, ethnicity is displayed and embraced through clothing on multiple occasions. As an example, towards the end of the film, Nami, who is a *Zainichi* girl in the protagonist's class, has a conversation with the protagonist while wearing a *chima jeogori* that makes him realize that his ethnicity and identity should not be tied to what others expect of him, but to what he truly is inside. In that moment, the protagonist embraces his culture and can proudly play baseball against other schools, representing his community and culture.[183]

On a different occasion, one of the protagonist's friends gets caught sniffing and putting on girl's clothes in the changing room at the school.[184] In this scene, the *chima jeogori* plays a central role in embodying Korean culture and ethnicity. The protagonist's friend physically embraces the garment, smells it, and manipulates it sexually. In this scene, the *Chima Jeogori*, an element of material culture, represents Korean ethnicity. The character sexualizes the garment because it represents Koreanness, implying that Korean girls are desirable for their ethnicity and because they can reassure his identity.

[182] In the movie, it is clear that the political affiliation of the school is with North Korea as they fly North Korean flags and display pictures of Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jong-Il. The *Chosen Soren* was a political movement formed by ethnic Korean people who were affiliated to the North Korean regime and communist values. This organization was central in the lives of Koreans who lived in Japan, providing stable financial support for them. To know more, please see Lie, *Zainichi (Koreans in Japan) : Diasporic Nationalism and Postcolonial Identity*, 40-2.
[183] *Chong*, directed by Sang-il Lee.
[184] Ibid.

However, at the same time, the man fashioning his body with female attire could also be interpreted as a sign of the feminization of Korea and the Japanese government's need to justify the colonization of Korea. The events in this scene reveal the misogynistic male gaze of feminine livelihoods and elements embodied in the chima jeogori, with the boy manhandling the garment to fulfill his own desires. Similarly, it reveals the internalized colonial discourse of the intentions of the Japanese government of feminizing Koreanness. Finally, all the women at school wear *chima jeogori*, while everyone wears Western-style clothing outside. This, in addition to multiple occasions in which the women in the movie are bullied for not embracing Korean values as they are expected to do, suggests that *Zainichi* women, as discussed previously, live a similar reality to Japanese women. They are expected to carry on and pass down the traditions reflected in their traditional clothing usage. Accordingly, the construction of this identity is contentious as it is not universal within all the members of the community. In this sense, growing up as a Korean in Japan, creates a conflict within individuals who are unable to distinguish to what extent they form part of either or both ethnicities or national backgrounds, especially when Korean schools forced the alumni to wear traditional dress to differentiate from the rest of society.[185]

The high pressure put on *Zainichi* women to embody the traditions and the Korean values portrayed in the movie makes it necessary to bring the feminist discourse in Japan into the conversation and analyze how *Zainichi* women are represented in the fight for equality among the Korean diaspora. The feminist movement in Japan tends to oversimplify gender struggles and fails to include categories such as social class and

[185] Choi, "Dressing Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, and Subjectivity in Representations of Chima Chogori in Japan," 29-30.

ethnicity. Instead, it tends to be an exclusive and nationalist movement. It is a movement of Japanese women for Japanese women who do not include other (ethnic and social) realities substantially. [186] In the same vein, various feminist discussions have problematized gender in relation to *Zainichi* identities.[187] When fighting for equal rights for the ethnic group, the masculine hegemonic discourse tends to eclipse the alterity of *Zainichi* women who live their oppression in a multifaceted way. Patriarchy and sexist epistemologies of gender relegate women to a lower and more invisible sphere. Similarly, racism and cultural differences within Japanese society accentuate this oppression against *Zainichi* women. [188] Here lies the need to construct an inclusive and intersectional discourse and discussion.

The usage of *chima jeogori* in contemporary formal events remains widespread. Although it is not a part of the school uniform, as well as the hakama and kimono, it is still used by the Zainichi population when attending events such as coming-of-age or graduation ceremonies. In more recent terms, one of the stories shared in the book by Kim-Wachutka mentions the necessity of wearing a chima jeogori for a funeral and the shame the person feel when wearing the garment. Her sister crafted the garment for her, but the sole idea of wearing it in front of everybody and having to reveal her ethnicity to the public terrified her. [189] However, the garment still seems popular among Korean women for formal events. However, they seem to increase more in smaller circles of Korean people who gather and dress up together. This is the case for women, but men,

[186] Chapman, *Zainichi Korean Identity and Ethnicity*, 112.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid., 81.
[189] Kim-Wachutka, *Zainichi Korean Women in Japan : Voices*, 165.

similarly to what occurs during the rest of formal events in Japan (especially those where adults or young adults are the participants), tend to dress in Western-style suits.[190]

Image 16. Young *Zainichi* celebrating a coming-of-age ceremony in Osaka in 2010.
Source: Tokyo Keizai "<Koreans in Japan Society> New Korean adults in Japan, the leaders of the future!"

As previously said, this differentiation of formal dress existed among the Koreans living in the archipelago and has extended until the present. *Image 16* shows a picture of a coming-of-age ceremony of ethnically Korean people living in Osaka in 2010. The image shows a clear distinction between the garments worn by men and women, similar to the ceremonies for ethnically Japanese individuals that happen all across the country. The adoption of Japanese and Western values permeated Korean society[191] ever since the colonization of the peninsula. The presence of Korean culture amongst *Zainichi* individuals in the present is noticeable in events such as the one shown in *Image 16*, where a group of *Zainichi* individuals celebrate their coming of age. The entanglement of cultures and sentiments generates a struggle for an identity that is misrepresented and judged from the outside but also associated with many negative feelings that the Korean people have to carry and that are embodied in these garments.

[190] "<Koreans in Japan Society> New Korean adults in Japan, the leaders of the future!" Tokyo Keizai, accessed November 20, 2024, http://www.toyo-keizai.co.jp/news/society/2009/society20090116.php.
[191] In the context of this thesis, Korean society means not only the individuals and the political and cultural connections that exist and live in the Korean peninsula, but also those who live in the diaspora, especially in Japan. Thus, *Zainichi* peoples are also included in this umbrella term.

Nationalist sentiments and different experiences around bullying and discrimination heavily influence the construction of gender identity in this context. This creates a complex environment in which wearing a piece of clothing such as the *chima jeogori* for a coming-of-age ceremony could evoke an array of feelings that help in the construction of a gendered *Zainichi* identity that is in constant contact change and conflict due to the colonial past in the land of their ancestors.

The Japanese government has made efforts to make Japan a multicultural space where heterogeneity can be embraced, such as the Multicultural Coexistence Promotion Plan, which aimed for a multicultural Japan "while maintaining community order during a period of increasing diversity in Japanese society."[192] The notion of community in Japan establishes a clear differentiation between those who are Japanese and those who are not. This distinction is made on the basis of cultural assimilation and not for the pursuit of a multicultural society, which does not necessarily challenge Japanese ethnic nationalism.[193] Rather, such policies are examples of how ethnic nationalism is still prevalent in contemporary Japan, resulting in the constant 'othering' of ethnic minorities. Despite the efforts to create a multicultural society, the Japanese concept of homogeneity is still widespread. According to Demelius, this is also mixed with the generalized lack of knowledge about the rest of East Asia and the former colonies, such as Korea. Although this lack of knowledge has been the trend in the contemporary history of Japan, there has

[192] Yoko Demelius, "Thinking through Community Spirit: Zainichi Koreans in Post-Korean Wave Japanese Communities," *Japanese Studies* 41, no. 1 (2021): 99, https://doi.org/10.1080/10371397.2021.1893673.
[193] Ibid., 101.

been a slight shift in recent years due to the massive consumption of South Korean media in Japan.[194]

In the context of the Korean diaspora in Japan, the concept of, in this case, 'Koreanness' is a series of elements (language proficiency, the usage of Korean words when speaking in Japanese, family stories, Korean culture, traditions, etc.) that congeals in a particular identity and a political agent, especially among a group of people that counts with fourth or fifth generation descendants whose parents' first language is Japanese. After the Korean wave hit Japan, the relationship of Japanese people changed towards *Zainichi* individuals, and they seemed more open to interacting and relating to them in various daily aspects, as explained in Demelius' paper.[195] The openness of Japanese people to Korean media and the culture behind it points to the fragility of the concept of homogeneity. Japaneseness and Japanese society were based on the assimilation of other cultures. However, cultural hegemony shifts from one side to another depending on the public: the space in which ideas from different spheres of society converge and define and redefine society as a whole.

The concept of Japaneseness was based on Japan and its people being an independent cultural whole, but the image of young Japanese people dressing up as their favourite K-Pop idols or replicating what is trendy on the streets in Seoul suggests the malleability of identity and how fashion can be a symbol of how society is in constant change and interaction with different spheres. Similarly, understanding Japan as a

[194] Ibid., 103.
[195] Ibid., 105.

multicultural space, the *Zainichi* people can see in the consumption of Korean popular culture an opportunity to explore their culture and embrace their ancestry without negative connotations. Wearing similar clothes as their favourite K-Pop idols and bringing to Japan styles that are trending on the streets of Seoul is, indeed, a contemporary manner for the *Zainichi* individuals to be closer to their roots without the necessity of wearing certain garments that are linked to a heavy generational trauma. Japan's openness to the Korean wave and trends that arose from K-Pop gaining popularity is a symptom of how racial biases in Japan diminish with the interaction with different cultures, especially if spread through mass media.

However, the question of ethnic nationalism lingers despite the popularity of Korean music bands. Whether Japanese and Korean nationalism is still dominant among young individuals is a question that may remain unanswered, but what is important is that access to diverse cultural elements through mass media opens a possibility of interaction with others and of (re)thinking and (re)constructing one's ethnic identity and their relation with "others." The construction of gendered and hybrid ethnic identities can thus be more open to the exploration of non-normative spaces and the construction of dissident[196] gendered identities. These identities may range from individuals who disagree with the social conventions to the exploration of certain genderless styles that might be more suitable and comfortable for people who do not identify with the gender binary in any manner.

[196] The word "dissident" is used to refer to a disagreeing sentiment against the normative and hegemonical values and expectations of the individuals in society. A dissident person, in this context, is a non-binary individual, because their mere existence is a political statement against the social norms.

❖ Japan as a Multicultural Space

This chapter examined how gender identities are constructed in a multi-faceted way. The concept of gender interacts and intersects with others, such as sexuality, social class, and ethnicity. The case study of the Zainichi population in Japan served as a lens to understand how gender interacts and reacts with diverse cultural and historical backgrounds and how the process of colonization is highly relevant when understanding the construction of post-colonial identities. For this matter, the concept of intersectionality has been crucial to understanding how these different categories interact in the construction of identities. The analysis of the *Zainichi* population in Japan has been helpful in the deconstruction of the idea of Japanese homogeneity and in understanding that Japan is a multicultural and multiethnic space regardless of the convoluted and discriminatory history that still extends to the present. The *chima jeogori* is a traditional Korean piece of clothing that illuminates how generational trauma and ethnicity work together in tandem for the construction of a gendered identity (and certain expectations associated with it).

The struggle for identity among *Zainichi* individuals happens within the existence of hybrid identities that are in constant change and interaction. The Korean people living in the diaspora have suffered from discrimination and assimilation, as well as more recognition in the present times with the acceptance and spread of Korean popular culture in the world. These circumstances led to the construction and exploration of these hybrid identities and, specifically, the Korean people in Japan, the exploration of new manners of expressing one's gender while embracing parts of their culture that once used to be the source of discrimination against them. The *Zainichi* ethnic identity exists in an intricate web of circumstances that range from generational trauma, the meaning of traditional

fashion, the difficulties of being part of two different cultures, and the (re)discovery of their ties with their ancestors' culture through mass media. The *Zainichi* people are an example of the heterogeneity of the Japanese nation and also serve as a key to understanding that the construction of gender identities in Japan varies and depends on every individual's circumstance, something far apart from the ideas of a homogenous Japan.

VI

Conclusion

This thesis has examined a variety of elements to solve an intricate and layered puzzle: It aimed to find an answer to the question of how gender identities are constructed in Japan in close relation to fashion as a tool for expressing one's gender in alignment with or against existing norms. In this thesis, I have explored and understood fashion not only as an object used to express a certain feeling or gender but as a tool for an in-depth analysis of how society is structured and divided. With the inclusion of a broad historical analysis, the thesis attempted a nuanced conversation in which multiple ideas entwined. In so doing, it ultimately aimed at creating a space for inclusion to represent realities and identities that are usually left out when discussing Japan. The analysis of non-normative experiences, people, and occasions has been key for understanding gender norms and the expectations of the gendered individuals in Japanese society. The inclusion of queer, racialized, and non-normative narratives has helped the construction of a broader understanding of gender identities in Japan and how the gendered individuals relate to formality and fashion. This illuminates the division between what is considered normative and what is not, allowing us to understand the intricacy of a broader narrative about gender identities in Japan.

In this thesis, I examined previous literature on the topics of gender, intersectionality, style, and non-normativity. The examination of the existent literature helped me construct this thesis around the concepts of gender, fashion, and non-normativity, which I have specified and narrowed to fit the necessities of this particular

research project. After the theoretical construction of the thesis around the concepts of gender, fashion, and non-normativity, I utilized a series of research methodologies and techniques that allowed me to deepen my understanding of the topics mentioned above. These techniques include the creation of a survey that I circulated among a variety of participants, a one-on-one semi-structured interview with one of the participants in the survey, the analysis of diverse pieces of media (such as *manga*, documentaries, and a film), and the analysis of an array of images. I inspected these elements through the lens of gender, fashion, and non-normativity to assess what gender norms entail in Japan. As introduced in the first chapter, the aim of this research, apart from answering the research questions, was to create a space to discuss non-normative realities, people, and occasions and set them at the center of the conversation. I understand the importance of analyzing experiences that fall outside of the norm in Japan to access characteristics of the gender norms that may remain hidden otherwise. Through the different chapters of this thesis, I have exposed the importance of analyzing these non-normative experiences and how they are essential for understanding the construction of gender identities in Japan.

This thesis explored the complexities of gender norms and identity in Japan, focusing on how gendered individuals and diverse groups of people challenge and negotiate these norms. Chapter 3 delved into gender norms through the examination of queer experiences, analyzing the documentary *Queer Japan* and the *manga Paradise kiss*. This chapter highlighted how queer individuals construct their gender norms in a heavily heteronormative society. However, characters like Isabella in *Paradise Kiss* or people featured in the documentary reveal the diversity of Japanese society, people's sexuality, and gender expression. Chapter 3 also identified that queer realities do not always oppose dominant societal structures, but internalize and reproduce them.

Chapter 4 investigated the role of formality in Japan and how it relates to gender construction, using the coming-of-age ceremonies and the particular case of the ceremony in Kitakyushu as a case study. Kitakyushu's ceremony, known for its extravagant and over-the-top attire, reveals the malleability of gender expression and how young participants subvert gender expectations through their fashion choices. By adopting styles and aesthetics from certain (un)social groups in Japanese society, these young adults create spaces that fall outside of the norm, while also adhering to broader gender norms. Finally, Chapter 5 inspected the concept of intersectionality, examining how race, social class, and gender intertwine to shape people's identities. The chapter primarily focused on the *Zainichi* Korean community in Japan and their experiences marked by trauma and social struggles. The analysis of the *Zainichi* community reveals the malleability of gender norms and the impacts of colonialism on the construction of identity, congealing into the usages of Korean traditional garments and people's sentiments while wearing these clothes.

This thesis's primary and general conclusion could be summarized in a few sentences. First, gender identities in Japan are constructed in diverse manners depending on each individual's circumstances, but they are tied to societal expectations and generalized aspirations. These gender categories are embodied through fashion, especially in formal settings, in a binary: women tend to wear traditional garments, while men are more prone to wear Western-style clothing. This differentiation was a consequence of the war period and the modernization of Japan, which was extended to the colonies. The examination of non-normative narratives and identities helps us understand that this division of genders is evident and that these realities are in a constant struggle for recognition and construction of an identity that relates more or less to societal

expectations. Finally, fashion is indeed a key factor in the construction of gender identities in Japan because it has been used to reinforce social hierarchies, the gendered division of society, and an array of expectations of how a gendered individual should behave in society. In Japan, the gendered individuals use (and have used) fashion to embody certain cultural elements that may not be present in other regional contexts. For example, I have examined how Japanese society expects women to dress in traditional Japanese clothes, embodying the traditional values they need to pass down to their offspring. Similarly, men tend to dress up as salarymen, embodying the figure of a man who can provide financial stability to their wife and children. Also, I have explored cases in which the gendered individuals use fashion to exaggerate certain aspects of their gender identity while referencing the aesthetics associated with gangs and prostitutes. The usage of (un)social aesthetics and the embodiment of non-normative experiences and gender expressions through fashion reveals the meaning of the contentious nature of identity as the gendered individuals play with their gender expression daily and even on formal occasions.

Finally, my intention with this thesis was to create a space where non-normative identities can be situated at the center of the conversation. Through the analysis of queer experiences, events that fall outside of the norm for their usage of fashion, and other ethnic realities in Japan, I have explored the theme of gender construction and formality. The examination of these non-normative experiences is critical for the deep understanding of Japanese society (and any regional context) and the construction of gender norms. However, throughout this thesis, I have examined various topics that would benefit from further research. For example, I have discussed the differentiation between modernity and tradition regarding fashion and the advancements in the Japanese industry. Future research that delves into the binary modern-traditional would deepen the

understanding of the field by putting material culture at the center of the conversation. By examining the evolution of fabrics, the materials used in the confection of clothing, and the developments in the sartorial industry, we would be able to reveal the intricacies of this binary. I have also examined the deconstruction of ideas regarding ethnic homogeneity in Japan, a topic that has been widely researched but that would benefit from a different perspective as well. While focusing on material culture, such as clothing, we would be able to examine the different variations and possibilities that individuals in Japan have of expressing their ethnic identities both in private and public settings and how the embodiment of their cultures and ancestry interact with the mainstream culture and the norm.

This thesis has delved into gender and ethnic construction, the meaning of falling outside the norm, and what it means to be a gendered individual in Japan. I have examined these topics, among others, through the lens of fashion, an element of material culture that individuals use daily and which, on multiple occasions, is not taken into consideration. In this thesis, I have put fashion at the center of the conversation and examined diverse aspects of Japanese society in relation to it to reveal the negotiation of gender. Gendered individuals in Japan use fashion in multiple ways. Still, they all speak in a way that conforms to the general gender norms in Japanese society and interact with them. To understand this interaction, I have analyzed the importance of experiences, people, and realities outside of gender, sexual, or ethnic norms. The examination of these experiences has revealed the intricate way in which gendered individuals utilize fashion to embody certain ideas concerning gender and their relation to it. With this research, I have concluded that the construction of gender identities in Japan is far more diverse and intricate than what the ideas of a homogenous Japan try to convey, which are constantly

spreading in the contemporary world. I have revealed that the nature of the construction of gender identities in Japan is inherently contentious, changing, and diverse. The contentious nature of identity in Japan has examined that gender is indeed a volatile category and that gendered individuals adhere to, change, and embody it in multiple manners depending on the occasion. In formal settings, individuals in Japan express their gender identity in terms of tradition and modernity, while the case in everyday settings is different. Thus, in Japan, fashion, formality, or ethnicity are all elements of a tangled and intricate web of connections for the construction of gender identities, which are in a constant process of reformulation.

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Appendix 1

Questions of the online survey for people with Japanese ancestry or who have lived a reasonable amount of time in Japan to have attended various formal events

(All texts and questions included a version in Japanese except for the informed consent)

Header: This survey is part of a Master's thesis by Iván Garcimartín Carmona, a student in the Pacific and Asian Studies department at the University of Victoria, Canada. In this survey, we will talk about fashion and formal events in Japan. Please answer all the questions freely. In some questions you will be asked to write a response. Please, be as lengthy as you wish, and feel free to raise questions, personal experiences, and other topics. All the responses gathered here will be used to write a Master's thesis, and your answers may appear in the final document. For this, I am asking you to provide your name, gender identity, place of residence, and age. Please feel free to create a "fake" name if you don't want your real name to appear in the final document, but be honest with the rest of the questions.

By participating in this survey, you agree and acknowledge that the data and information that you provide is may be used, stored, and published. Please, see a copy of the informed consent here.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact igarcimartincarmona@uvic.ca

1. What is your name?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your gender? (*Mark only one option*)
    a. Woman
    b. Man
    c. Non-Binary
    d. Agender
    e. Other
4. What is your place of residence?
5. Have you ever lived in Japan? (*Mark only one option*)
    a. Yes
    b. No
6. Have you attended school or university in Japan? (*Mark only one option*)
    a. Yes
    b. No
7. Which of the following events have you attended in Japan? (*You may select multiple answers*)
    a. *Shichigosan*
    b. Graduation ceremony
    c. Graduation ceremony (guest)
    d. Coming-of-age ceremony
    e. Coming-of-age ceremony (guest)
    f. Wedding (bride or groom)
    g. Wedding (guest)

8. Which of the following garments have you ever worn? (*Check all that apply*)
    a. school Uniform (*gakuran*, sailor uniform...)
    b. Kimono (*komon*, *tomesode*, or *homongi*)
    c. *Furisode*
    d. *Hakama*
    e. *Yukata*
    f. Western-style wedding dress
    g. Japanese-style female wedding garment
    h. Japanese-style male wedding garment
9. In what kind of events or situations have you worn these clothes? (*Please talk about each item you have selected*)
10. How did you feel wearing these clothes?
11. Why did you decide to wear these clothes? (*Please talk about each element you have selected*)
12. Please describe other attendees' outfits in general (e.g. family members, other classmates, friends or teachers)
13. Please describe these events' characteristics (e.g. what is remarkable about these events)
14. What is your opinion on school uniforms in Japan?
15. In graduation or coming-of-age ceremonies, what kind of clothes did you wear? (If you mark more than one option, please write in “other” in which event you wore them)
    a. New (I/my family bought them)
    b. Rented
    c. Inherited from a relative

d. Borrowed from a friend/relative

e. Other

16. What do you think of the following image? (Two boys at the Kitakyushu coming-of-age ceremony) (*This is Image 13 in Chapter 4*)
17. Please feel free to share anything else
18. If you want, please feel free to share some pictures of you wearing these clothes. Please name the files following this template: Name_Event_Date
19. If you are interested in participating in further interviews and group discussions, please leave your email below. The interviews and group discussions will be conducted to deepen the conversation on these topics

Appendix 2

Questions of the individual interview with Izumi

(The image used for the interview has been removed from the final version of the thesis for copyright purposes. To see the image, please visit “Photo 6/10＞Kitakyushu City Coming of Age Ceremony 2019 was gorgeously decorated! Check out the "20-year-old beauties in their best kimonos" for the last time in the Heisei era,” accessed January 24, 2025, https://www.walkerplus.com/article/175930/image1039267.html)

1. What was the most memorable event that you have been to in Japan? Why so?
2. Can you talk about what kind of clothing you were wearing there? How were the other people dressed?
3. Let’s say that you go to a (graduation ceremony in university, a graduation ceremony in school, a coming-of-age ceremony, or a wedding… This will change among interviews, as I would like to hear diverse answers) in Japan. How do you think you would dress up? How do you think other people would dress up?
4. Would you say there is a proper manner of dressing in the event that we have just talked about?
5. Please look at this image (see image below). Where do you think these people are? [Answer] Do you think they are dressed up properly for the occasion?
6. Is there any event that you would like to participate in Japan? What would you wear for that? How do people usually dress up for that?

7. Thank you for participating in this interview. Is there anything else you would like to add to this conversation or any question that you would like to discuss?

Appendix 3

Informed consent form

University of Victoria | Research Services

Participant Consent Form

Engendering Fashion: Gender Performativity on Formal Occasions in Contemporary Japan

You are invited to participate in a study entitled "Engendering Fashion: Gender Performativity on Formal Occasions in Contemporary Japan" that is being conducted by Iván Garcimartín Carmona.

Iván is a graduate student in the department of Pacific and Asian Studies at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by email at: igarcimartincarmona@uvic.ca

As a graduate student student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Pacific and Asian Studies (Master). It is being conducted under the supervision of Sujin Lee. You may contact my supervisor at +16072792640

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is understanding how gender is embodied through fashion during formal events in contemporary Japan, and how this plays out in a larger

scale in society. Certain formal events are crucial rites of passage and understanding how people present themselves in them is important to know how gender is constructed upon expectations and aspirations of becoming.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because unlike many other works, this will be open enough to consider different gender identities in the spectrum, as well as sexualities, counteracts, acts of resilience, and people from different ethnic backgrounds. Thus, this type of research will help to push the field of Japanese studies forward.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you showed interest in the project and your stories, memories, and experiences, are valuable for the development of this project.

What is involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include sharing personal stories, opinions, feelings, and other personal experiences, as well as your place of residence, age, gender, and name. You may also share pictures of yourself.

Every personal interview and group discussion will be recorded in video (or audio) and a transcription of them will be made. Every answer to the survey will be stored and may be used in the final written piece.

Please be advised that information about you that is gathered for this research study uses an online program located in the U.S. or a program that can be accessed from the US (Google Forms, Google Drive). As such, there is a possibility that information about you may be accessed without your knowledge or consent by the US government in compliance with the US Freedom Act.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including the attachment of your personal stories or pictures in the final written work.

The survey may take up to 20 to 30 minutes to complete. The interview may take up to 1 hour to complete. The discussion groups may take up to 2 hours to complete.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include widening the state of knowledge about Japanese society, gender performativity, the usage of fashion, and the importance of clothing in the development and construction of identities.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study, you will be asked if you want the data you have provided to still be considered for the research. If you decide to withdraw from the study, please, email the researcher at igarcimartincarmona@uvic.ca

On-going Consent

To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, the researcher will hand you a new copy of this informed consent in each stage of the research process that you will have to sign or agree to by implied consent.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your anonymity, you may choose an alias, nickname, or fake name during the survey and at the beginning of each interview or discussion group, and the researcher will refer to you in every stage by that name. Regardless, a different name will be used to refer to each participant in the final written work to protect your anonymity. Some participants may know either the researcher or their supervisor, thus regardless of the usage of an alias, their identity may be accessible for either of the

people responsible for this study. Regarding the nature of the discussion groups, participants may know each other or create bonds after the study and their anonymity cannot be assured. Finally, as the participants may share pictures that may be included in the final written piece, their anonymity cannot be assured as the faces would not be covered (assuming that there are aesthetic elements, such as makeup, that are important for the development of the study).

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by storing the data in a folder that only the researcher will have access to, and protected under a password that only the researcher knows. As stated in the previous section, some participants may know either the researcher or their supervisor, thus regardless of the usage of an alias, their identity may be accessible for either of the people responsible for this study.

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Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in a written thesis and possible future scholarly meetings and talks.

Future Use of Data

With the purpose of pursuing future academic endeavors, all the data will be stored and will not be deleted (unless a participant expresses their concern and their wanting of the data to be deleted, in which case, it will be permanently deleted. Please, contact either the researcher or their supervisor for this matter).

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will not be disposed of, and will be stored under a private folder under a password on Google Drive that only the researcher knows. Data will be disposed of upon request of each individual participant, in which case, the data will be permanently deleted from the folder.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include: the researcher (Iván Garcimartín Carmona), and his supervisor (Sujin Lee).

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

By completing and submitting the questionnaire, **YOUR FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT IS IMPLIED** and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Please retain a copy of this letter for your reference.

Appendix 4

Signed consent form

Participant Consent Form

Engendering Fashion: Gender Performativity on Formal Occasions in Contemporary Japan

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Iván is a graduate student in the department of Pacific and Asian Studies at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by email at: igarcimartincarmona@uvic.ca

As a graduate student student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Pacific and Asian Studies (Master). It is being conducted under the supervision of Sujin Lee. You may contact my supervisor at +16072792640

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scale in society. Certain formal events are crucial rites of passage and understanding how people present themselves in them is important to know how gender is constructed upon expectations and aspirations of becoming.

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The survey may take up to 20 to 30 minutes to complete. The interview may take up to 1 hour to complete. The discussion groups may take up to 2 hours to complete.

Risks

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Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include widening the state of knowledge about Japanese society, gender performativity, the usage of fashion, and the importance of clothing in the development and construction of identities.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study, you will be asked if you want the data you have provided to still be considered for the research. If you decide to withdraw from the study, please, email the researcher at igarcimartincarmona@uvic.ca

On-going Consent

To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, the researcher will hand you a new copy of this informed consent in each stage of the research process that you will have to sign or agree to by implied consent.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your anonymity, you may choose an alias, nickname, or fake name during the survey and at the beginning of each interview or discussion group, and the researcher will refer to you in every stage by that name. Regardless, a different name will be used to refer to each participant in the final written work to protect your anonimity. Some participants may know either the researcher or their supervisor, thus regardless of the usage of an alias, their identity may be accessible for either of the people responsible for this study. Regarding the nature of the discussion groups, participants may know each other or create bonds after the study and their anonymity cannot be assured. Finally, as the participants may share pictures that may be included in the final written piece, their anonymity cannot be assured as the faces would not be

covered (assuming that there are aesthetic elements, such as makeup, that are important for the development of the study).

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Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in a written thesis and possible future scholarly meetings and talks.

Visually Recorded Images/Data

Participant to provide initials, only if you consent (optional):

- Photos may be taken of me for: Analysis ___Dissemination* _____

* Even if no names are used, you may be recognizable if visual images are shown in the results.

Future Use of Data

With the purpose of pursuing future academic endeavors, all the data will be stored and will not be deleted (unless a participant expresses their concern and their wanting of the data to be deleted, in which case, it will be permanently deleted. Please, contact either the researcher or their supervisor for this matter).

PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT:

I consent to the use of my data in future research: __(Participant to provide initials)

I do not consent to the use of my data in future research: ___(Participant to provide initials)

I consent to be contacted in the event my data is requested for future research:

_____(Participant to provide initials)

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will not be disposed of, and will be stored under a private folder under a password on Google Drive that only the researcher knows. Data will be

disposed of upon request of each individual participant, in which case, the data will be permanently deleted from the folder.

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ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant *Signature* *Date*

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.