

Taking the Ice Princess off the Podium:

Recognizing and Challenging Emphasized Femininity in Figure Skating

My first exposure to figure skating as a child was during the Olympic Games in Albertville in 1992 when I was only six years old. I recall thinking that the skaters in the women's event looked beautiful in their fancy dresses, they were so graceful, and they could even spin and jump in the air. I decided that I wanted to be a figure skater and began a prolonged, but ultimately unsuccessful, campaign begging my mother to enroll me in figure skating lessons. By the time the Lillehammer Olympics aired in 1994, I had come to the realization that I would never become a figure skater, the major obstacle being our household was headed by a single mother, and the budget was always tight. Notwithstanding, I watched the sport regularly into my teenage years, by which point, skaters were integrated into my developing schema about what it meant to be feminine in our society. Alongside the gender norms I had acquired by watching figure skating, I was exposed to feminist texts and role models which gave me the language and concepts to challenge the normative performance of gender and sexuality. By analyzing figure skating, I began to see the gender segregation, the athletic-artistic binary, and heteronormative and class biases that are pervasive and reinforced in the sport and must be challenged.

Background and Theoretical Framework

Women figure skaters are expected to conform to emphasized femininity, a concept used in tandem with hegemonic masculinity to explain the socially constructed ideals of the feminine and masculine in our society (Beasley, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Currier, 2003; Schippers, 2007). Emphasized femininity in figure skating manifests itself

through (1) strict gender segregation of the sport, (2) an artistic/athletic hierarchy that places women and men in opposition and assigns dominant value to the masculine value of athleticism, and (3) there is also the presumption that feminized skaters are heterosexual (Beasley, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Currier, 2003; Schippers, 2007).

Additionally, there are racialized and class-based expectations in the sport that “shape the vulnerabilities” of skaters with a co-constituted identity, and marginalize them within the sport (Crenshaw, 2016, 15:27). To take the ice princess off the podium, one must recognize her as a social construction that also ought to be challenged through an intersectional lens.

The Strict Gender Segregation of Figure Skating

During the nascent period of competitive figure skating in the nineteenth century, the sport was neither segregated by gender nor was there any rule barring women’s participation (Adams, 2010; Meyers, 2022). Nonetheless, according to the gender ideology of the era, judges and audiences assumed that the sport would only be taken up by men (Adams, 2010; Meyers, 2022). After women, one of whom was Madge Syers, began competing and sometimes winning against men (she even outskated her husband to win a medal), the sport became segregated by gender (Adams, 2010; Meyers, 2022). Ostensibly, gender segregation was meant to prevent “libidinous feelings in a male judge” caused by the presence of women, and this points to the gender anxiety incurred at the thought of mixed competitions during which judges and the public would compare the skills of men and women side-by-side (Meyers, 2022, para. 4; see also Adams, 2010). The continuing gender segregation in figure skating upholds the female/male gender binary and functions to uphold masculine privilege and ensure the “compliance and subordination” of women in the sport (Connell, 1987, as cited in Shippers, 2007, p. 87; Story & Markula, 2017).

Currently, gender segregation in sport is justified in the name of “fairness and promotion of broad and equal participation” (Shin, 2018, p. 47), or giving women a shot at winning. Otherwise, “the benefits tied to winning . . . would almost certainly flow primarily to men, who are assumed to always “possess superior speed, power, or strength” (Shin, 2018, p. 50). The International Skating Union (ISU) and Olympic Games require athletes to submit to sex verification tests (Feder, 1994; Shin, 2018), which is usually a blood analysis to determine testosterone level (International Skating Union [ISU], 2021a; Shin, 2018). Sex verification flies in the face of the objections that gender and sexuality scholars, activists, and a significant portion of medical professionals have with the claim that hormone levels are an indicator of one’s “real” biological sex (Costello, 2021, paras. 8-9; Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p. 19). Figure skating (and sport in general) continues to strongly hold the line of gender segregation.

The (Feminine) Artistic/(Masculine) Athletic Hierarchy in Figure Skating

Gender segregation has caused a hierarchy in figure skating where the relationship between the women’s event (representing artistry) and men’s event (representing athleticism) is “considered complementary and hierarchical” (Schippers, 2007, p. 90; see also Adams, 2010; Beasley, 2005; Feder, 1994, McGarry, 2005; Voelker & Reel, 2020). The choreography of programs for women is designed to focus on aesthetic merit and make the skater look weightless and graceful (Adams, 2010; McGarry, 2005; Voelker & Reel, 2020). While skating programs for men have changed from the earliest days of the sport when “arms never went above shoulder height; they were stiff like the blades of a propeller; [the] upper body was mostly rigid; [and] all the movement was coming from [the] feet” (Meyers, 2022, para, 16), presently, most men still valorize athleticism through the speed, power, and forcefulness of their skating (Adams, 2010; McGarry, 2005; Voelker & Reel, 2020). This attitude is

demonstrated by Evgeni Plushenko's comments after winning the silver medal behind Evan Lysacek at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics: "You can't be considered a true *men's* champion without a quad" jump (Fyodorov, 2010, para. 3, emphasis added). Plushenko seems to be insinuating that the judges gave more weight to the artistic merit of Lysacek's program than to his own athletic prowess. The comment also reflects a belief that there is a hierarchical athletic value placed on the women's and men's events.

Figure Skating Presumes and Reinforces Heteronormativity

When watching figure skating with a critical eye, one can see it has a heteronormative bias that props up hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity (Beasley, 2005; Schippers, 2007). In most sports, women generally take up the standards set by men, but in figure skating that influence is reversed (Meyers, 2022). While figure skating increasingly values athleticism, paradoxically, it is an aesthetic sport that has been hyperfeminized, and men who participate in it are coded as gender non-conforming or gay (Adams, 2010). However, if women comply to their expected gender performance, they are generally shielded from criticisms of being "butch" or from accusations of lesbianism (Adams, 2010; Krane, 2001). Therefore, the sport operates on the presumption that gender performance equals sexuality. Heteronormativity is especially obvious in the pairs and ice dance events. The rules of the ISU are clear: same-sex pairs or ice dance teams are not allowed (ISU, 2021b). The structural homophobia and transphobia in the sport mould the perceptions of figure skating fans and how the sport is portrayed in popular culture. For instance, the movie *Blades of Glory* is a comedy based on the premise that two men team up to compete together in pairs figure skating. One scene in the film includes a crotch-in-the-face-shot while the two male skaters and the audience look awkward and uncomfortable (Gordon & Speck, 2007, 43:30). The film codes the situation

as absurd. The brunt of the humour throughout the entire film is the very idea of a same-sex pairs duo. The sport may look flamboyant and accepting of gender and sexual non-conformity, but it continues to place more value on athletes who conform to figure skating's heteronormative requirements, resulting in the marginalization of its gender and sexual minority athletes (Beasley, 2005; Chang, 2014; Jones, 2014; Krane, 2001).

Figure Skating Perpetuates Race and Class Bias

A critical analysis of figure skating needs to consider how co-constituted identity factors, especially race and class, intersect with gender to form the conceptions of the ideal figure skater (Crenshaw, 2016; Schippers, 2007), because figure skating is deeply “concerned with the relationship between femininity and discourses link[ing] notions of bodily discipline, race, class, and nationalism” (McGarry, 2005, para. 13). Figure skating is a *very* white sport that requires women participants to conform to its feminized, Caucasian ideals (McGarry, 2005; Pilon, 2018). Caucasian/light-skinned skaters continue to make up the majority of skaters at the elite level (McGarry, 2005; Pilon, 2018). Therefore, race is a major predictor of success in figure skating. Socioeconomic class is another co-constituted identity factor that affects girls and women in the figure skating world. Participation in figure skating is expensive, and most skaters come from financially secure families that can shoulder the required cost to reach the highest levels of the sport (Jennings, 2021). The result is that the femininity and skating style espoused in figure skating is firmly associated with middle- and upper-class norms of behaviour and dress (McGarry, 2005; Pilon, 2018).

Negotiating the Artistic Lady/Serious Athlete Binary

Figure skaters must “pass as ladies” (McGarry, 2005 para. 2), and they must walk a fine line between being athletic and “doing femininity” as not to violate cultural notions of gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 137; see also Adams, 2010; Feder, 1994; Krane, 2001). Women pass by softening their athleticism so as not to encroach into masculine gender performance (Feder, 1994; Krane, 2010; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Women’s programs are frequently performed to mellow classical or operatic music and have the effect of a ballerina on ice (McGarry, 2005). There are also plenty of gentle and emotional gestures incorporated into choreography — such as hands softly brushing the face or chest, flowing arm movements, an emotive face to “relate to [the] music,” and plenty of smiling (Feder, 1994, p. 62; Krane, 2001). There are also specific elements (such as the layback and Biellmann spins) that are regularly performed by women, but rarely performed by men, in competition (Feder, 1994). All these details function to draw attention to femininity over athleticism.

Figure 1

Viktoriiia Safonova of Belarus Demonstrates the Layback Spin Position at the 2022 Beijing Olympics



Note. Photograph by Richard Ellis, 2022

(https://www.upi.com/News_Photos/view/upi/38663a008110bf36edeeaeef67dae96b/Womens-Figure-Skating-at-the-Beijing-2022-Winter-Olympics).

Figure 2

You Young of South Korea Demonstrates the Biellmann Spin Position at the 2022 Beijing Olympics



Note. Photograph by Associated Press/Yonhap, 2022

(<https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/2022/02/17/sports/olympics/Team-Korea-Kim-Yelim-You-Young/20220217234312225.html>).

Also problematic, the women's individual competition is given unequal weight in scoring (Harrington, 2020). The ISU judging guidelines set the Program Component Score (PCS) multiplier for the men's individual event as 1.0 for the short program and 2.0 for the free

skate, while for the women's competition the PCS is 0.8 for the short program and 1.6 for the free skate (Harrington, 2020; ISU, 2021b). Under these rules, if a women's and men's individual competitor performed the *exact same program*, and cleanly, the woman's score would *automatically be lower*. The PCS leads to an obvious gendered score gap and begs the question: why has the ISU not changed this guideline? Perhaps the PCS gap functions to supposedly prove that men are always superior in their skating skills and that women should comply with this due to an apparent natural, biological fact (Adams, 2010; Schippers, 2007; Voelker & Reel, 2020). The PCS gap also demonstrates a preconceived and structural bias about the athletic merit of women's skating.

The athletic demands of figure skating have become more intense, and Evgeni Plushenko's comments about quad jumps seem to be becoming increasingly irrelevant. Some skaters now believe that the Beijing Olympics has set the precedent that men's *and* women's individual event competitors now "need a quad to medal at the Olympics" (Macur et al., 2022, para. 5). Therefore, being overly feminine, dainty, and focused on artistry can come at the cost of the requisite strength and stamina it takes to skate fast enough and perform jumps at the level that is now required. Over the past several years, there have been women skaters (most of the cases publicized in English-language news were athletes from Russia) who have tested positive for PEDs (Associated Press, 2016; Reuters Staff, 2021; "Russian figure skater banned," 2019a; "Russian figure skater Koshevaya," 2019b). The most recent example is Kamila Valieva during the Beijing Olympics (Vanderhoof, 2022). Valieva is only 15 years old, and some commentators have been quick to point out that she might not have been given much choice in the matter — considering her age and that elite athletes from Russia have been caught up in a widespread scandal surrounding PED use (Panja, 2021). Did Valieva's lithe body — while

prized in figure skating — need an athletic boost to perform the quad jumps in her program? The entire situation demonstrates the (feminine) artistry/(masculine) athletic hierarchy in the sport.

Figure 3

Kamila Valieva Performing in the Free Skate Program at the Beijing Olympics



Note. Photograph by Richard Ellis, 2022

(https://www.upi.com/Sports_News/2022/02/14/Winter-Olympics-Kimila-valieva-skate-drug-test/4151644859251).

Negotiating Race and Class in Figure Skating

Gender performance in figure skating also converges with racialized and class-based expectations. These expectations can prevent skaters from fitting in and finding success in the sport. French skater Surya Bonaly is a relevant example when it comes to race (Didone, 2020). Sports commentators considered Bonaly, who is Black and from a middle-class family, a

powerful and athletic skater (Feder, 1994; Pilon, 2018). Notwithstanding her talent, Bonaly recalls being told to adopt a more ladylike aesthetic and skating style if she wanted to win medals (Didone, 2020). At the 1994 World Championships, a commentator pointed out that Bonaly “was criticized...for her skating ability, or lack thereof, [and] for really not using her edges to her full potential,” but quickly added, “if she does have one strength, that's her jumps” (3Axel1996, 2010, 0:58). Bonaly was “a major contender for a medal” (3Axel1996, 0:05), and her main rival was Yuka Sato of Japan, who judges and fans did consider a ladylike and graceful skater (Stump, 2022). There are some figure skating coaches who claim that Asian girls are the easiest to mould into the ideal image of the delicate lady figure skater (McGarry, 2005; Oh, 2019), and therefore, they are more in line with figure skating’s aesthetic and racialized expectations (Didone, 2020, McGarry, 2005).

When Bonaly expressed disappointment with taking the silver medal behind Sato by removing it and walking off the podium, it “was met with a chorus of boos” from the audience (Pilon, 2018, para. 2). When recalling the outcome, Bonaly said, “I wanted to show I was upset. Because they kept doing it to me, all the time” (Pilon, 2018, para. 3). Bonaly did not perform to piano concertos, her costumes and music frequently reflected her connection to blackness, she attacked her jumps, and sportscasters frequently commented on her muscles (Didone, 2020; McGarry, 2005; Stump, 2022). Bonaly set off the “craze for the quad” in the women’s event, thus increasing the sport’s focus on athleticism (Stump, 2022). However, because she did not conform to the racialized image befitting a figure skater she was frequently marginalized within the sport (Pilon, 2018; Stump, 2022).

Figure 4

Surya Bonaly Performing at the 1998 Nagano Olympics



Note. Photograph by D. Madison, 1998 (<https://www.nbcdfw.com/news/sports/black-figure-skater-surya-bonaly-started-the-quad-craze-30-years-ago/2895757>).

Gendered expectations also clash with socioeconomic class. Skaters require regular ice time, private lessons with a coach, custom skate boots and blades, costumes, and transportation to competitions (Jennings, 2021; Steinberg, 2022). Additionally, to stay in top form a skater might need ballet, Pilates, and yoga classes, massages and physiotherapy, and sessions with a sport psychologist (Foote, 2003; “Kaetlyn Osmond,” 2020). The cost keeps working-class children out of the sport — as I can attest to personally. However, the class-based bias goes deeper than the financial cost. While I was enthralled by watching figure skating at the Lillehammer Olympics as a girl, I was not yet aware of a scandal that had been unfolding surrounding an attack on Nancy Kerrigan. An investigation later discovered that the attack was

perpetrated at the behest of another skater—Tonya Harding. The media frenzy that followed highlighted the problem of Harding’s “hidden unruly ambitions” that led to non-compliance with gender and class expectations (Foote, 2003, pp. 7-8). Good, middle-class ladies certainly do not participate in an assault on another figure skater to hedge their bets in the pursuit of an Olympic medal, and by extension, climb the socioeconomic ladder (Foote, 2003). The Harding/Kerrigan scandal is a case study in the framing of middle-class versus working-class womanhood in figure skating.

The media portrayed Tonya Harding as a “scrappy girl from the trailer park” who grew up fishing, hunting, and learning how to use firearms (Rothman, 2017, paras. 4, 7). Nancy Kerrigan is her foil, the prototypical “elegant” ice princess (Feder, 2003, p. 67). In stark contrast to Kerrigan’s “devoted family” and middle-class upbringing (Rothman, 2017, paras. 4-5), Harding was the product of a dysfunctional working-class family and had survived an abusive marriage (Rothman, 2017; Foote, 2003). Even on the ice, Harding did not meet the standards of emphasized femininity and class required of her. She was stocky, more muscular than most figure skaters, and while she could jump (to this day Harding is part of a very small group of female figure skaters who have executed a triple axel in high-level competition) she never managed to lose the label that she was a “graceless” and “mannish” skater who lacked polish (Foote, 2003, pp. 6, 11, 13; Maine, 2017). Moreover, she sometimes donned homemade skating costumes with a “masculine cut” (Feder, 1994, p. 65), and the way she applied her make-up drew comment from the media as indicative of her lower-class status (Feder, 1994; Foote, 2003). Kerrigan, on the other hand, was “blessed with long, slender limbs and a natural elegance, she also reap[ed] the rewards of a photogenic beauty that [in 1993] won her standing as one of *PEOPLE* magazine’s 50 Most Beautiful People in the World” (Rothman, 2017, para. 5; Feder,

1994). The Bonaly/Sato and Harding/Kerrigan situations were presented in the media as examples of who belongs, and conversely who does not belong, in the sport. To embrace one's racial/ethnic background or signal one's class status violates the vision of femininity that figure skating hopes to endorse and can prevent a skater from winning medal (Schippers, 2007).

Figure 5

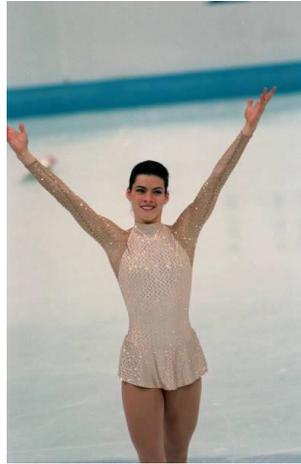
Tonya Harding at the 1994 U.S. Figure Skating National Championships



Note. Photograph by C. Wilkins, 1994 (<https://www.gettyimages.ca/detail/news-photo/tonya-harding-pumps-her-fists-as-she-finishes-her-gold-news-photo/1145514935>).

Figure 6

Nancy Kerrigan at the 1994 Lillehammer Olympics



Note. Photography by Bob Thomas Sports Photography, 1994

(<https://www.gettyimages.ca/detail/news-photo/sport-1994-winter-olympic-games-lillehammer-norway-ice-news-photo/78956264>).

Negotiating the Girl-Woman Bind

In competition, figure skaters must toe the line between girl and woman through their bodies clothing choices, and choreography. Most skaters in the women's individual event "peak in their mid-teens, before their bodies fully mature" (Macur, 2022, para. 9), and competitors near the end of their competitive career in their early twenties (Story & Markula, 2017). Partially, the girl-woman bind is a reflection of the ages of the competitors (Story & Markula, 2017). However, it is still a problematic feature of emphasized femininity that skaters must negotiate.

In the individual event, even women in their late-teens and twenties often portray a girlish innocence and put on an air of sexual purity, while at the same time being sexualized

(Feder, 1994; McGarry, 2005). Figure skaters wear highly embellished and sometimes gossamer costumes that suggest the type of clothing a little girl might wear while playing dress-up. Also, the ISU rules state that costumes should not display “excessive nudity” (ISU, 2021b, p. 75), but nonetheless, skating outfits have short skirts, display plenty of skin, and frequently reveal the athlete’s posterior to the audience’s gaze as they skate (Feder, 1994; Story & Markula, 2017). Furthermore, while make-up is not a requirement to compete or directly mentioned in the ISU *Rules and Regulations*, women figure skaters never compete without a full face of make-up (Feder, 1994; Fetters, 2018). Simultaneously, the outfits and make-up make a skater look girly and render her a “sex object” (Feder, 1994, p. 67). Turning to the choreography, women’s programs are frequently inspired by “fairytale narratives,” or overly feminized characters (Feder, 1994, p. 65; Voelker & Reel, 2020). Women’s programs also generally contain the layback spin element (that has a care-free and child-like quality), and the Biellmann spin (during which the buttocks and breasts of the skater are in the centre of the television viewer’s eye line). The costumes, the make-up, and the choreography all work to simultaneously girlyfy, sexualize, and trivialize women figure skaters (Feder, 1994; Story & Markula, 2017).

Negotiating “Fat Doesn’t Fly” and the Pressure to Attain the Ideal Figure Skater Body

The bodies of skaters are constantly under surveillance and scrutiny by coaches, parents, and the audience who watch the sport (Voelker & Reel, 2020). The “balletic body” — aiming for the willow thin, flat-chested, and petite body type of a ballet dancer — is the ideal in women’s figure skating (Oh, 2017; Oh, 2019). Athletes are told they will not be able to skate as fast, jump as high, and they may lose the aesthetically pleasing lines that judges reward if they are not thin enough (Voelker & Reel, 2020). 2018 World champion, Kaetlyn

Osmond, points out that skaters are “always thinking that skating would be a lot easier if I was smaller. Easier on my body to jump if I was smaller” (“Kaetlyn Osmond,” 2020, para. 35). It seems that Osmond is struggling to reconcile the demands of her coach and the sport with her own personal feelings about the sacrifices she makes to keep her body at a certain size when she goes on to say that

the pressure to look a certain way really does add stress...your weight and the look of your body is in the back of your mind all the time...My coach was never trying to make me feel like I was too big or not in shape enough, but he just wanted what was best for me and to find ways to make my competing easier, which included losing weight. (“Kaetlyn Osmond,” 2020, para. 37)

Furthermore, pairs skater Meagan Duhamel joined Kaetlyn Osmond in expressing support for Gracie Gold when she announced that she would be sitting out an entire season to be treated for an eating disorder (Ewing, 2017). For pairs skaters, such as Duhamel, weight can be an even more critical factor. Some skaters report that to accomplish what the pairs discipline requires of them, there could be up to an “80-pound [36-kilogram] difference” between the female and male partner so that he can lift her in the air above his head and make it look effortless to the judges and audience (Voelker & Reel, 2020, p. 14). Some male pairs skaters report parting ways with their female partner when it would get “to the point that no matter how hard [he] tried, no matter how strong [he] got...[there] was just too small a weight difference for the tricks [they] wanted to do” (Voelker & Reel, 2020, p. 14). The male partner will usually be re-paired with someone who he *can* lift, while the female partner either loses weight to continue in pairs, tries to make it in the individual event, or leaves the sport (Voelker & Reel, 2020).

Women figure skaters frequently modify their eating habits to an extreme degree to keep their weight low (Voelker & Reel, 2020), and these actions may be insufficient to account for macronutrient needs (Dwyer et al., 2012; Jonnalagadda et al., 2004). According to a study by Dwyer et al. (2012), skaters' "dietary intakes were high in carbohydrates (61.6%) but low in total [protein] (14.6%), fat (23.7%), and bone-building nutrients" (para. 1). These eating habits, in combination with a grueling training schedule if one dreams of making it to the elite level, may delay puberty and menarche, cause amenorrhea, and result in damage to developing joints and bones (Klentrou, 2006; Vadoz et al., 2002). There is little wiggle room here—either a skater can perform the elements to an objective degree of technical precision and aesthetic attractiveness, or the sport washes them out due to their weight and body type (Monsma & Malina, 2005; Voelker & Reel, 2020).

Negotiating Heteronormativity in Figure Skating

Figure skating has been hyperfeminized over the past century: the costumes have become more glamorous, and the spectacle of competition as an entertainment has increased which has had an influence on the way not only women, but men as well, men dress and perform on the ice (Adams, 2010; Feder, 1994; Meyers, 2022). Consequently, figure skating has gained a reputation for attracting gender non-conforming and sexual minority men (Adams, 2010; Voelker & Reed, 2020). However, subjective judging, audience bias (Chang, 2014; Jones, 2014), and the homophobia of other skaters—such as was directed toward Johnny Weir by Evan Lysacek (Buzinski, 2010)—encourages male, heterosexual-identifying skaters to believe that they maintain figure skating as a "legitimate sport" and are the bulwark against feminine and queer influence (Buzinski, 2021, para. 6).

Additionally, pairs teams and ice dancers frequently portray heteronormative romantic themes in their programs. The goal of these programs is to convince the judges and audience that the skaters are falling in love on the ice (Kestnbaum, 1995; McCarvel, 2021; Radnofsky, 2022). Much of the resistance to same-sex pairings, however, comes down to the unwillingness to change some of the required skating elements, aesthetic reasons, and audience expectations. Upholding heterosexuality is also an attempt to silence critics who might dismiss men in the sport as “effeminate” or “gay” and athletic women skaters as “butch” or “lesbians” (Adams, 2010, p. 219; Krane, 2001, p. 118; Voelker & Reed, 2020, pp. 17, 18). Figure skating may give a wink and a nod to gender fluidity through costuming and skating style, but at the same time, there is pressure on skaters not to stray far from the gender presentation norms of the sport or be open about their non-heterosexual orientation (Chang, 2014; Jones, 2014).

Resisting Gendered and Sexual Norms

Figure skating is making changes—albeit incremental and long overdue—regarding the gendered performance expectations of athletes in the sport. While more skaters are feeling comfortable with challenging gender and sexual norms, that does not mean speaking out is easy. Skaters who make it to the elite level must start skating at a young age, and they are socialized into the sport’s dominant schemata surrounding gender, race, and class. Skaters are taught that these expectations are natural, and they will be rewarded for performing gender and sexual norms in the proper, prescribed ways (Krane, 2001; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Embedded thinking and habits have frozen the progress of gender and sexual diversity in figure skating.

Challenging the Artistic (Feminine)/Athletic (Masculine) Hierarchy

and Girl-Woman Bind

The image of women figure skaters as ladies at the expense of their athleticism has been, and continues to be, contested. During the Olympic Games in Beijing, the individual competition was renamed from “ladies” to “women’s,” whereas it has always been called “men’s” figure skating since the sport was segregated by gender. Dropping this gendered term is an incremental improvement and demonstrates increased respect for the skills of female figure skaters. However, it does not challenge some of the daily practices and attitudes at the heart of the sport (Migdon, 2022).

In recent years, a proposed solution to the artistic/athletic hierarchy has been a call to forego the short skirts and glitzy costumes. The rules of the ISU allow skaters to wear a unitard or leggings at the highest level of competition (ISU, 2021b). Despite the garments being permitted, it remains rare to see women wearing them (Fetters, 2018). Another idea that has been proposed is that skaters should adopt uniforms, made by a brand such as Nike or Under Armour, as other sports have done (Farhi, 2012; Lukas, 2017; O’Neill, 2014). The aim is to increase the focus on athletic performance and encourage a measure of gender neutrality (Farhi, 2012; O’Neill, 2014). Uniforms could also have the effect of decreasing class-based and racialized pressures since a uniform would probably have a far lower price point than the typical \$1,500-5,000 USD custom-made costume (Ryan, 2018). The idea of uniforms divides skaters and fans. Some agree wholeheartedly with the rationale for uniforms, while others fear the homogenization of figure skating, do not want the sport to lose its artistic flair, and question how effective this action would truly be in advancing gender and sexual minority equity (Farhi, 2012; Lukas, 2017; O’Neill, 2014).

Another proposed fix to figure skating's systemic problems is to raise the age of eligibility from 15 to 17 years for senior-level competitions (Macur, 2022; Associated Press, 2022). The argument in favour is that it could normalize more developed and diverse women's bodies, as well as protect skaters from coerced PED use, questionable training practices, and the pressure of having to perform quad jumps (Associated Press, 2022; Macur et al., 2022; Story & Markula, 2017). However, there seems to be an attitude that there is no going back, and quad jumps will become a non-negotiable element in the women's event, that raising the age limit might prevent the sport from advancing, and the audience has a right to see young athletes perform dangerous quad jumps (Macur et al., 2022). If the skeptical attitude about raising the age limit is not challenged, the idea may be considered settled by coaches, judges, and fans, and as a result, it becomes harder to challenge pervasive gender norms.

Challenging the Bodily and Racial Ideals of Figure Skating

Currently, Skate Canada is encouraging coaches and parents of figure skaters not to focus on a skater's weight, but on the goal of nutrition and fueling the body for performance (Skate Canada, 2020). Additionally, training is transitioning to a person-centered style that attempts to incorporate the particular strengths of a skater, rather than trying to shape them to universalized ideals (Skate Canada, 2020). Despite these efforts, the adage that "fat doesn't fly" remains strong (Kong, 2022, para. 1). Figure skating still favours ectomorph and mesomorph body types and filters out skaters with an endomorph body type at the elite level (Monsma & Malina, 2005). Non-Caucasian and non-Asian skaters are also challenging conceptions of how a figure skater should look and which bodies belong in the sport (Morrison, 2022; Steinberg, 2022; Yu, 2022). For example, Black skating rink owners and coaches (one of whom is Surya Bonaly) actively recruit and develop the skills of skaters of colour to increase their participation

and chances of success (Stump, 2022; Yu, 2022). These efforts will promote inclusion in the sport and will, over time, break down prejudices and ideals as judges and fans see more bodily and racial diversity on the ice.

Challenging the Two-Sex Binary and Heteronormativity in Figure Skating

Institutions such as the ISU and Skate Canada are beginning to recognize the need for change when it comes to gender and sexuality diversity and inclusivity. Skate Canada provides a web page regarding LGBTQI2S+ Inclusion in Sport to introduce resources “to make the sport more welcoming for LGBTQI2S+ persons” (Bridel et al., 2020, para. 7). Additionally, both organizations acknowledge that there are transgender athletes in the sport (Herrick et al., 2020), and have a transgender inclusion policy (Bridel et al., para. 9; ISU, 2021a). Furthermore, for the youngest skaters, Skate Canada has “chang[ed] the definition of pair and dance teams to ‘two skaters’ for STAR events and competitions, and remov[ed] the separation of girls and boys in STAR 1-3 events” (Bridel et al., 2020, para. 11). The tone of such policies, at face value, claims to accept and accommodate gender non-conforming and sexual minority skaters. However, policies continue to reify the two-sex binary and the cisgender/transgender binary (Bridel et al., para. 11; ISU, 2021a, pp. 1-2; see also Darwin, 2020) by admitting that “skating events remain largely segregated using two gendered categories (girls/women, boys/men)” (Bridel et al., 2020, para. 11) and lay out specific criteria to be categorized as female or male (ISU, 2021a). The sport remains limited in its acceptance of gender non-conformity and sexual minorities at the elite level, especially during Grand Prix or Olympic competitions.

Despite all the issues highlighted above, there have been a number of elite skaters who have acknowledged that they are gender non-conforming or sexual minorities (Bell, 2022; Canadian Press, 2021; Linnell, 2021; McCarvel, 2021; Nett, 2018; Zeigler, 2022). The female

skaters challenge the presumed heterosexuality of athletes who present as feminine. While it seems that skaters are feeling more comfortable with going public about their sexual minority status, most skaters still did not feel secure in acknowledging this until about to, or fully, retire from competing (Jones, 2014). Figure skaters are still constantly measured against “gendered or sexual identities [meant] for public consumption” (McGarry, 2005, para. 1), and any narrative that the sport is a gender and sexually diverse safe space cannot go undisputed. Progress in challenging the two-sex binary and heteronormativity in figure skating has been glacial.

Conclusion

While conducting research for and writing this paper, I wondered how I might have fared had I entered the world of figure skating. From my previous knowledge about the sport and the additional information I have learned recently, my experience probably would not have been pleasant. Being in figure skating, had I demonstrated true talent, would have been a massive financial burden on my family. I also imagine coaches would have tried to quench any signals of my working-class background. My body probably would have been a regular point of commentary, especially after going through puberty. I believe that the standards of emphasized femininity and class would have been a source of constant stress and resulted in lifelong internalized feelings of inferiority. Therefore, I surmise I would have been part of the statistic that one in three Canadian girls give up sports during their teenage years (Canadian Women in Sport, 2020, p. 8). Throughout my research, I also found myself wondering: How many young athletes have the language and confidence to challenge another skater, a coach, a judge, or a parent about the reinforcement of gender and sexual norms? Non-conformity might prevent them from performing, being successful in competitions, and acquiring funding and endorsements to make their athletic career possible. Skaters who comply with the sport's

gender and sexual norms are rewarded with medals, prestige, and money. Moreover, coaches and parents understand what is at stake when promising athletes are successful. Skaters stand to make a substantial amount from endorsement deals, and they can extend their performance career and earning potential by being cast in ice skating shows such as *Stars on Ice* (Feder, 1994; Fink et al., 2014; Foote, 2003). Therefore, “figure skating relies on a tenuous, but nonetheless firmly entrenched discourse of the proper bodily performance of class, [race], and gender, a discourse that also hides its relationship to the market” (Foote, 2003, p. 10; see also Beasley, 2005). It becomes clear, when analyzing emphasized femininity and its intersections with race and class, that the sport is slow to respond to change, and the onus can hardly be put entirely on the skaters to move the sport forward to a more inclusive culture. The coaches, judges, parents, the ISU, the media, and even fans are complicit in the conservative and systemic gendered, racialized, and class-based expectations upheld in figure skating.

References

- 3Axel1996. (2010, October 25). *Surya Bonaly (FRA) - 1994 world figure skating championships, ladies' technical program* [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sItV0dAUG4s>
- Adams, M. L. (2010). From mixed-sex sport to sport for girls: The feminization of figure skating. *Sport in History*, 30(2), 218–241.
<https://www.doi.org/10.1080/17460263.2010.481208>
- Associated Press. (2016, March 7). Ekaterina Bobrova fails doping test ahead of figure skating worlds. *CBC*. <https://www.cbc.ca/sports/olympics/winter/figure-skating/ekaterina-bobrova-doping-1.3478989>
- Associated Press. (2022, February 18). Raising age limit for skating would end the age of the quad. *USA Today*. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/olympics/2022/02/18/raising-age-limit-for-skating-would-end-the-age-of-the-quad/49830469>
- Beasley, C. (2005). *Gender & sexuality: Critical theories, critical thinkers*. Sage Publications.
- Bridel, W., McMahon, H., & Levac, A. (2020). *LGBTQI2S+ inclusion in sport: Some frequently asked questions*. Skate Canada. <https://skatecanada.ca/lgbtqi2s-inclusion-in-sport-faq/#toggle-id-9-closed>
- Buzinski, J. (2010, August 10). Evan Lysacek questions Johnny Weir's gender. *Outsports*.
<https://www.outsports.com/2010/8/10/4050190/evan-lysacek-questions-johnny-weirs-gender>

Buzinski, J. (2021, July 28). Figure skater Nathan Chen apologizes for homophobic remarks.

Outsports. <https://www.outsports.com/2021/7/28/22597517/nathan-chen-homophobic-figure-skater-remarks-apology>

Byrnes, L. (2022, February 24). *Black winter Olympic Games athletes: Past and present*.

Olympics. <https://olympics.com/en/news/black-winter-olympic-games-athletes-past-and-present>

Canadian Press. (2021, June 11). Former Canadian ice dancing champion Kaitlyn Weaver comes

out as Queer. *ESPN*. <https://www.sportsnet.ca/olympics/article/former-canadian-ice-dancing-champion-kaitlyn-weaver-comes-queer>

Canadian Women in Sport. (2020). *The rally report: Encouraging action to improve sport for*

women and girls. https://womenandsport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Canadian-Women-Sport_The-Rally-Report.pdf

Chang, A. (2014, February 23). *The importance of adding figure skating to the gay rights*

agenda. *LGBTQ Policy Journal*. <https://lgbtq.hkspublications.org/2014/02/23/op-ed-the-importance-of-adding-figure-skating-to-the-gay-rights-agenda>

Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the

concept. *Gender & Society*, *19*(6), 829–859. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639>

Costello, C. G. (2021, September 12). *The silly idea of your “real” binary sex*. The Intersex

Roadshow. <https://intersexroadshow.blogspot.com/2021/09/the-silly-idea-of-your-real-binary-sex.html>

Crenshaw, K. (2016, October). *The urgency of intersectionality* [Video]. YouTube.

https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality?lan

Currier, D. M. (2013). Strategic ambiguity: Protecting emphasized femininity and hegemonic masculinity in the hookup culture. *Gender & Society*, 27(5), 704–727.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243213493960>

Darwin, H. (2020). Challenging the cisgender/transgender binary: Nonbinary people and the transgender label. *Gender & Society*, 34(3), 357–380.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243220912256>

Didone, N. (2020). Chapter 15: Breaking the ice of white privilege. In M.L. Adams (Ed.), *The ball is in y(our) court: Social change through and beyond sport*. Queen's University Creative Commons.

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/theballisinyourcourt/chapter/breaking-the-ice-of-white-privilege>

Dwyer, J., Eisenberg, A., Prelack, K. Song, W.O., Sonnevile, K., & Ziegler, P. (2012). Eating attitudes and food intakes of elite adolescent female figure skaters: a cross sectional study. *Journal of the International Society of Sports Nutrition*, 9(53).

<https://doi.org/10.1186/1550-2783-9-53>

Ewing, L. (2017, October 30). Managing weight ‘a struggle’ for Skate Canada champion Kaetlyn Osmond. *CBC*. <https://www.cbc.ca/sports/olympics/winter/figure-skating/kaetlyn-osmond-duhamel-gracie-gold-1.4378510>

- Farhi, P. (2014, February 13). To fix Olympic figure skating, make everyone put on a uniform. *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/olympics/to-fix-olympic-figure-skating-make-everyone-put-on-a-uniform/2014/02/13/7f1fb530-94ed-11e3-83b9-1f024193bb84_story.html
- Fausto-Sterling, A. (2000). The five sexes revisited: The varieties of sex will test medical values and social norms. *The Sciences*, 18–23. <http://doi.org/10.51151/identities.v3i1.119>
- Feder, A. M. (1994). ‘A radiant smile from the lovely lady’: Overdetermined femininity in ‘ladies’ figure skating. *TDR (1988-)*, 38(1), 62–78. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1146356>
- Fetters, A. (2018, February 17). Why don’t more female figure skaters wear pants? *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive>
- Fink, J. S., Kane, M. J., & LaVoi, N. M. (2014). The freedom to choose: Elite female athletes’ preferred representations within endorsement opportunities. *Journal of Sport Management*, 28(2), 207–219. <https://journals.humankinetics.com/view/journals/jsm/28/2/article-p207.xml>
- Foote, S. (2003). Making a sport of Tonya: Class performance and social punishment. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 27(1), 3–7. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193732502239581>
- Fyodorov, G. (2010, February 19). Figure skating - Lysacek not true champion - Plushenko. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-46312420100219>
- Greensmith, C., & Giwa, S. (2013). Challenging settler colonialism in contemporary queer politics: Settler homonationalism, Pride Toronto, and Two-Spirit subjectivities. *American*

Indian Culture and Research Journal, 37(2), 129–148.

<https://doi.org/10.17953/aicr.37.2.p4q2r84112735117>

Gordon, J., & Speck, W. (2007). *Blades of Glory* [Film]. Paramount Pictures.

Harrington, S. (2020, January 25). We need to update how ladies skating is scored this off season. *Medium*. <https://medium.com/edge-crunch/we-need-to-update-how-ladies-skating-is-scored-this-offseason-98071a87e5ec>

Herrick, S. S. C., Rocchi, M.A., & Couture, L. (2020). A case study exploring the experiences of a transgender athlete in synchronized skating, a subdiscipline of figure skating. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 44(5), 421–449.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723520919816>

International Skating Union. (2021a). *Communication no. 2422: ISU transgender policy*.

<https://www.isu.org/inside-isu/isu-communications/communications/26066-isu-communication-2422/file>

International Skating Union. (2021b). *International Skating Union special regulations and technical rules: Single and pair skating and ice dance 2021*. <https://www.isu.org/figure-skating/rules/fsk-regulations-rules/file>

Jennings, R. (2021, February 18). Figure skating is on thin ice. Here's how to fix it. *Vox*.

<https://www.vox.com/the-goods/22276736/figure-skating-olympics-winter-2022-lessons>

Jones, A. (2014, January 30). The frozen closet. *Newsweek*.

<https://www.newsweek.com/2014/01/31/frozen-closet245138.html>

- Jonnalagadda, S.S., Zielgler, P.J., & Nelson, J.A. (2004). Food preferences, dieting behaviors, and body image perceptions of elite figure skaters. *International Journal of Sport Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism*, 14(5), 594–606.
<https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsnem.14.5.594>
- Kaetlyn Osmond: Athlete interviews. (2020, March 13). *The Gist*.
<https://ca.thegistsports.com/article/409a05f3-71c2-4cab-9e31-33cefc335319>
- Kestnbaum, E. (1995). Compulsory mating dances: The construction of gender difference in ice dance figure skating. *Theatre Topics*, 5(1), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1353/tt.2010.0091>
- Klentrou, P. N. (2006). Puberty and athletic sports in female adolescents. *Annales Nestlé (English ed.)*, 64(2), 85-94.
- Kong, Stacy Lee. (2022, February 2). “Fat doesn’t fly”: Inside the culture of body shaming in figure skating. *Reader’s Digest: Best Health*.
<https://www.besthealthmag.ca/article/figure-skating-olympics-body-image-sports>
- Krane, V. (2001). We can be athletic and feminine, but do we want to? Challenging hegemonic femininity in women’s sport. *Quest Illinois National Association for Physical Association for Physical Education in Higher Education*, 53(1), 115–133.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2001.10491733>
- Linnell, C. (2021, September 2). Skater Amber Glenn on how coming out changed her life. *The Advocate*. <https://www.advocate.com/exclusives/2021/8/26/skater-amber-glenn-how-coming-out-changed-her-life>

- Lukas, P. (2017, December 14). How can an international sport need a costume? *ESPN*.
https://www.espn.com/olympics/story/_/id/21767077/figure-skating-needs-transition-costumes-uniforms
- Macur, J. (2022, February 18). After a disturbing night, concern rises for teenage skaters. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/18/sports/olympics/olympics-skating-valieva-age.html>
- Macur, J., Cai, W., Parshina-Kottas, Y., & Ward, J. (2022, February 16). How the quad jump is changing women's figure skating. *The New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/02/16/sports/olympics/quad-jumps-figure-skating.html>
- Maine, D. (2017, November 29). Tonya Harding and the seven other women skaters who have successfully landed the triple axel. *ESPN*.
https://www.espn.com/espnw/culture/story/_/id/21609322/tonya-harding-seven-other-women-skaters-successfully-landed-triple-axel
- McCarvel, Nick. (2019, January 22). Can figure skating's first LGBTQ team change ice dance's reliance on romance? *ESPN*. https://www.espn.com/olympics/story/_/id/25826280/lgbtq-ice-dancers-karina-manta-joe-johnson-challenge-figure-skating-norms
- McGarry, K. Passing as a 'Lady': Nationalist narratives of femininity, race, and class in elite Canadian figure skating. *Genders*, 41.

- Meyers, D. (2022, February 11). Figure skating has always blurred the lines of gender segregation. *FiveThirtyEight*. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/in-a-sports-world-segregated-by-gender-figure-skating-has-often-blurred-those-lines>
- Migdon, B. (2022, February 8). Figure skaters now compete in ‘women’s’ events, not ‘ladies.’ *The Hill*. <https://thehill.com/changing-america/respect/equality/593357-figure-skaters-now-compete-in-womens-events-not-ladies>
- Monsma, E. V., & Malina, R. M. (2005). Anthropometry and somatotype of competitive female figure skaters 11-22 years Variation by competitive level and discipline. *Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness; Turin*, 45(4), 491–500.
- Morrison, A. (2022, February 11). At the Olympics, where are the Black figure skaters? *PBS Newshour*. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/at-the-olympics-where-are-the-black-figure-skaters>
- Nett, D. (2018, January 7). Adam Rippon is U.S.’s first openly gay man to qualify for winter Olympics. *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetorch/2018/01/07/576359822/adam-rippon-is-u-s-s-first-openly-gay-man-to-qualify-for-winter-olympics>
- Oh, C. (2017). Chapter 8: Nationalizing the balletic body in Olympic figure skating. In Kwak, D.H., et al. (Eds.), *Sport in Korea* (pp. 119–132), Routledge.
- Oh, C. (2019). The heroic white man and the fragile Asian girl: Racialized and gendered orientalism in Olympic figure skating, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 36(7-8), 714–730, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2019.1657840>

- O'Neill, T. (2014, February 19). The case against fancy figure skating outfits. *The Atlantic*.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/02/the-case-against-fancy-figure-skating-outfits/283838>
- Panja, T. (2021, August 1). Russia banned from Olympics and global sports for 4 years over doping. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/09/sports/russia-doping-ban.html>
- Pilon, Mary. (2018, February 7). Winter sports are for rich white people. *The Outline*.
<https://theoutline.com/post/3254/winter-sports-are-for-the-wealthy-olympics-2018>
- Radnofsky, L. (2022, February 13). Can ice dancers win gold if they don't look like they're in love? *The Wall Street Journal*. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/ice-dance-winter-olympics-love-gay-11644750993>
- Reuters Staff. (2021, March 3). Russia announces 10-year doping suspension for Olympic figure skater Sotskova. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sport-doping-russia-figureskating-idUSKBN2AV1QN>
- Rothman, L. (2017, December 8). Tonya Harding's world was nothing like Nancy Kerrigan's. That mattered in 1994. *Time*. <https://time.com/5045902/tonya-harding-nancy-kerrigan-1994>
- Russian figure skater banned for one year for doping. (2019a, April 8). *TASS*.
<https://tass.com/sport/1052655>
- Russian figure skater Koshevaya slapped with 2-year ban over doping abuse. (2019b, October 18). *TASS*. <https://tass.com/sport/1083487>

- Ryan, L. (2018, February 14). Everything you've ever wanted to know about Olympic figure skating costumes. *The Cut*. <https://www.thecut.com/2018/02/olympics-figure-skating-costumes.html>
- Schippers, M. (2007). Recovering the feminine other: Masculinity, femininity, and gender hegemony. *Theory and Society*, 36(1), 85–102. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-007-9022-4>
- Skate Canada. (2020). *SAFE: Skate Canada body positive guidelines*. https://skatecanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/BodyPositiveGuidelines_EN_Dec2.pdf
- Shin, P. S. (2018). Sex and gender segregation in competitive sport: Internal and external normative perspectives. *Law and Contemporary Problems*, 80(4), 47–61.
- Skate Canada. (2020). *SAFE: Skate Canada body positive guidelines*. https://skatecanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/BodyPositiveGuidelines_EN_Dec2.pdf
- Stars on Ice. (n.d.). *The Skaters*. <http://starsonice.ca/the-skaters>
- Steinberg, K. (2022, February 13). 'We don't look like them': Black figure skaters face barriers to entry from a young age. *NBC News*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/-dont-look-black-figure-skaters-face-barriers-entry-young-age-rcna15816>
- Story, C., & Markula, P. (2017). 'I had one year in junior and then I was too old': structural age rules and the girlification in Canadian elite women's figure skating. *Sport in Society*, 20(9), 1223-1240. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2016.1269086>

- Stump, S. (2022, February 20). Black figure skater Surya Bonaly started the quad craze 30 years ago. *NBC*. <https://www.nbcdfw.com/news/sports/black-figure-skater-surya-bonaly-started-the-quad-craze-30-years-ago/2895757>
- Tétrault-Farber, G., Nikolskaya, P., & Cohen, L. (2022, February 14). Formidable Russian coach and doctor with doping past in focus over Valieva case. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/formidable-russian-coach-doctor-with-doping-past-focus-over-valieva-case-2022-02-14>
- Vadocz, E.A., Siegel, S.R., & Malina, R.M. (2002). Age at menarche in competitive figure skaters: variation by competency and discipline. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 20(2), 93–100. <https://www.doi.org/10.1080/026404102317200800>
- Vanderhoof, E. (2022, February 17). Kamila Valieva’s 2022 Beijing Olympics end with a stumble amid doping scandal. *Vanity Fair*. <https://www.vanityfair.com/style/2022/02/kamila-valieva-beijing-olympics-fourth-doping-scandal#:~:text=Nine%20days%20after%20the%20Russian,competition%20and%20failed%20to%20medal>
- Voelker, D. K., & Reel, J. J. (2020). “It’s just a lot different being male than female in the sport”: An exploration of the gendered culture around body pressures in competitive figure skating. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, 28(1), 11–19. <https://doi.org/10.1123/wspaj.2018-0030>
- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & Society*, 1(2), 125–151. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243287001002002>

Yu, Y. (2022, March 2). Meet the figure skaters behind Michigan's 1st Black women-owned skating club. *Good Morning America*.

<https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/living/story/meet-figure-skaters-michigans-1st-black-women-owned-83163655>

Zeigler, C. (2022, February 3). Was Johnny Weir an 'out' gay athlete when he competed at the Olympics over a decade ago? *Outsports*.

<https://www.outsports.com/2018/2/21/17034554/johnny-weir-gay-olympics-nbc-figure-skating>