Struggle as value: Exploring the thematic importance of *seishun* in Japanese idol music

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Abstract

aidoru (idol) music is Japan's biggest-selling genre of popular music, as well as an important component of Japan's multi-platform "media mix" on which popular cultural production and distribution hinges. It is also mostly sung by teenagers, who are prominent popular cultural figures in Japan. But why do these stories of youth, performed by adolescents themselves, have such meaning and ubiquity?

This thesis seeks to understand the thematic importance of *seishun* (youth, adolescence) in Japanese *aidoru* music to wider contemporary social identities in Japan. Focusing on the lyrics to *aidoru* songs, it uses a purposefully constructed lyrical corpus to examine the breadth of themes of *seishun* in lyrics, and in the accounts of lyricists themselves, treating these themes as discourses woven through the genre's history and the recent sociocultural history of Japan as a whole. Case studies of significant media texts are used to show transmedia linkages between representations of *seishun* across time.

I argue that Japanese *aidoru* lyrics represent *seishun* as a canonical time of idealised, performed struggle to be one's purest self, anchored through settings of shared experience, especially Japanese schools. *seishun* is both the story of contemporary Japan's national struggle to "grow" into what it is today, and a resource for individuals to justify their own struggles in Japanese society. This thesis complicates interpretations of popular music's relationship with "youth" as a concept, as well as providing vital context for understanding the prominence of the figure of the teenager in Japanese popular culture.

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Note on Japanese names and orthography

Romanised Japanese names appear by default in the traditional name order, where family name precedes personal name. Any exceptions to this rule are where the person in question is generally known by the alternative. Names in reference lists follow the order suggested by the University of Sheffield's Harvard referencing guidelines as of 2022.

Romanised names of people or official entities are capitalised, and romanised titles of referenced books, articles, games, software, and screen media have the initial letter capitalised in keeping with the School of East Asian Studies guidelines on citation and referencing in foreign languages. Romanised common nouns (such as *aidoru*) are not capitalised, regardless of their place in a sentence or heading.

The modified Hepburn system has been used to romanise Japanese text.

Introduction

Why *seishun*?

    This thesis is a case study of the representations of adolescence (*seishun*) in a genre of Japanese popular music. It considers significance of these representations in the context Japanese society and social identity, carried out through the analysis of song lyrics, the thoughts of lyricists, and the societal and historical context of their themes. As with any cross-cultural study, it is important to consider positioning, and the rationale for studying and producing knowledge on a cultural context outside of one's own experience. I grew up in West Yorkshire, an area in the north of England, with very few connections to Japan. When I was fourteen, one of my friends showed me some episodes of *anime* (Japanese animation). She loved the art style; I was more interested in the soundtracks, and the sound of the words that the characters spoke. Although Japanese record labels and entertainment agencies (*jimusho*) were hesitant to upload their products to video-sharing services like YouTube back in 2009, there were many (illegal) uploaders of music videos, and a few dedicated "fansubbers", fans who provided subtitles to Japanese music in languages including English. I began translating some lyrics as a hobby, asking for Japanese dictionaries and CDs for Christmases and birthdays. I had weekly evening classes in Japanese language at the local further education college, and have even been lucky enough to study Japan and the Japanese language within the UK university system. But over a decade later, one question, that first occurred to me when I was squinting at a pocket-sized Japanese dictionary aged 14, remains unanswered: why on earth do all these Japanese pop lyrics keep going on about this *seishun* thing? Why are there so many songs in the genre of *aidoru* (idol) pop music about the struggles of school and university life, and what, if anything, can this tell us about contemporary Japan? More specifically, this thesis addresses the following research questions:

1. How is the theme of *seishun* represented in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics?
2. What can these representations tell us about contemporary Japanese social identity?

    seishun is a Japanese word that, in the contemporary sense, means youth, or adolescence, although it has past meanings including spring, age, or the passage of time (Shōgakukan Kokugo Jiten Henshūbu, 2002, 15). *seishun*'s current denotation of youth or adolescence was attested as early as 751 CE in the Japanese imperial poetic anthology of classical Chinese poetry (*kanshi*), *Kaifūsō* (*Yearnings for the Ancient Chinese Style*). The word *seishun* combines the Chinese characters for "green" and "spring", referencing the 5 elements or correspondences in Chinese Wu Xing cosmology, where spring corresponds to the colour green. So, in this way of thinking, if life is comparable to the four seasons, one's youth is said to be like the spring. The word *seishun* in the sense of "youth" is attested again in other *kanshi* anthologies throughout the Heian period of Japanese history (794-1185), such as *Honchō mudaishi* (*Poems From Our Court Without Allusive Titles*) (Kadokawa Kogo Daijiten, 2022). During the Meiji period (1868-1912), the word *seishun*, used as an adjective, retained a more dramatic air compared to the associated term *wakai* (young). For example, a 1911 article in a national newspaper describes the double suicide of a pair of young lovers with the following headline: "Double Love Suicide in The Grounds of Futaara Shrine: a Young (*seishun*) Man and Woman Die in Hospital" (Asahi Shinbun), in a then uncommon use of the word. As Miura (2001, 7) points out, the word *seishun* had only entered the public consciousness as a popular

phenomenon just years earlier in 1905, with the newspaper serialisation of Oguri Fuyō's portrayal of the personal struggles of a group of university students, titled, of course, *Seishun* (1905-1906)*.* But, Miura argues, *seishun* only became a social phenomenon after a set of student protests in the 1960s, first against a post-Occupation security treaty with the United States, and then again in 1968 as part of a general anti-establishment malaise. During the 1960s, "*seishun* permeated in cinemas, theatres, and even galleries" (Miura, 2001, 11). *seishun*'s romanticism clearly encompassed struggle, both personal and national.

A good example of how *seishun* became a part of the language of Japanese popular media is the creation of an entire subgenre of television drama based around *seishun*. The genre's creation came about just when the small screen's popularity was beginning to eclipse that of the cinema. Adolescence is actually a comparatively modern concept of human life course (Klein, 1990, 454), being the time of socio-cognitive development that begins with puberty and ends with adulthood (Sisk and Foster, 2004, 1040). In the Japanese context, it corresponds to ages 12 to 21, from junior high school to the time just after the completion of tertiary education when one becomes a legal adult. After this, one is expected to become a *shakaijin*, an active member of society, with specific expectations associated with socioeconomic background (Roberson, 1995). So the concept of adolescence, and of *seishun* by extension, cannot be separated from that of education within standard life course in Japan. Rates of progression to secondary education in Japan greatly increased throughout the 1960s, so that by the 1970s, 79.4% of students had continued to high school, compared to just 47.4% in 1955 (Kōsai, 1989, 516). And, it was in the 1960s that Japanese production company Toho set to work establishing a genre of TV and films set in Japanese high schools that were to help define public discourses of youth and adolescence; many of them had the word *seishun* in the title. Toho's *Seishun to wa Nanda* (What is *seishun*?) (Okada, Nakane and Ōki, 1965), telling the story of an inspirational, rugby-loving English teacher dealing with the issues of students in a rural high school, established the genre of *gakuen dorama* (school dramas). The show's popularity was such that it led to six sequels, the first of which answered the franchise's own question, proudly asserting *Kore ga seishun da* (*THIS is seishun*) (1966). *Kore ga seishun da* had a similarly titled theme song, which cheerily declared:

> When you're angry, fight it out
> When you're sad, cry it out
> Holding what you're proud of in your heart
> And being your unvarnished self is what being young is about
> That's right, this is adolescence (*seishun*)
> (Fuse Akira (1966))

The *seishun* motif of the mid-twentieth century signified an adolescence of high drama, of struggle, lived in extremes, but still representing a very Japanese ordinariness. Just as there are still *seishun* TV dramas, depicting the lives of high school and university students in Japan (indeed, five of the major TV channels' dramas for winter 2019 had school settings (The TV, 2018), there are such things as a *seishun* songs (Founda-land, 2017). Such works are not targeted at Japanese adolescents in particular, despite depicting them, but are instead a part of contemporary popular culture for all ages.

So what does *seishun* mean today? Japanese dictionary *Kōjien* (2008) defines *seishun* as currently denoting "The time when one is young. The period in one's life comparable to spring". Spring brings to mind the blossoming of flowers and the promise of growth and new beginnings,

and so *seishun* suggests hope and potential (whether or not speakers consciously make use of those connotations). *seishun* is sometimes extended into the term *seishunki*, meaning "adolescence" or more literally "period of youth". What I am not trying to do by providing all of this philological context is to claim that the Japanese concept of youth is somehow mysterious, inscrutable, or fundamentally different from what readers brought up in Western scholarly traditions are familiar with. The Oxford English Dictionary notes that in British English, an archaic definition of springtime is "the period of life when a person is young; youth", a usage attested as far back as 1583 (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018). As a literary trope, the association between spring and youth was widely present in the works of Shakespeare, including a sonnet where the protagonist compares his youthful romance to "proud-pied April" who "hath put a spirit of youth in every thing" (Shakespeare 1-2, originally published 1609). And despite the historic nature of this aesthetic association between the blossoming of spring and the vivacity of one's youth, that association is still present to an extent in Anglosphere popular culture, as evidenced by creations such as the Broadway musical Spring Awakening (which portrays the struggles of adolescent sexuality) (Sheik and Sater, 2007). By preserving the Japanese word for youth or adolescence in its original language, I in fact aim to encourage readers to critically consider the assumptions about what a "Japanese" youth or adolescence means, and how that is portrayed in the lyrics I will be analysing.

Nor is there anything particularly remarkable about the fact that young Japanese pop singers sing about being young. As Tlili's study of the tropes of places and time (chronotopes) in a corpus of UK-charting popular music lyrics shows, popular music "builds on" and "contributes to" youth culture by depicting the lives of young people (Tlili, 2016, 240). However, in the case of UK popular music lyrics, the most common chronotope was found to be a nightclub, late at night. If, as Tlili's argument goes, UK pop music lyrics belong to a broad genre defined by "pre-established tacit generic rules" that "sustain an ideology celebrating the value of dancing, love, promiscuity, and hedonistic gratification" (2016, 241), then I argue that the chronotope that defines *aidoru* music as a genre is a Japanese school or university, along with the valorised struggle and timeless impetus to live unhesitatingly as oneself in the moment that these settings are portrayed as entailing. Although it is true that those who labelled themselves as dedicated *aidoru* fans (*aidoru otaku* or *wotaku*) in a 2016 survey were mostly in their teens or 20s (X Business, 2017), that does not mean that *aidoru* performers and their music only have significance for their peers. Respondents up to their 60s were also happy to label themselves as such, and *aidoru* are a near-ubiquitous media presence in Japan, such that most Japanese people will encounter them in some form in the course of their daily lives. The most popular *aidoru* are the subject of constant TV coverage of their activities (Galbraith and Karlin, 2012b, 13), are expected to undertake "corporate promotion" to create a revenue stream for their agencies (Marx, 2012, 51), model for magazines (Praet, 2001, 2), and perform a universal "relatability" through their less-than-perfect singing (Mōri, 2016, 231).

It is this relatability and ubiquity of *aidoru* performers that poses the question as to how the struggles of university and school life bound up in *seishun* tie into ideas about what the typical or "relatable" contemporary Japanese experience is. Firstly, we must establish what distinguishes *aidoru* from pop singers in Japan who are not produced and marketed as *aidoru*, or those pop stars described as "idols" in other countries, especially South Korea. To do so, it is worth briefly examining the history of *aidoru*, and how they have (or have not) changed over the course of the last 50 years.

The development of *aidoru* (idol) music in Japan

There are three aspects that together set *aidoru* apart from other pop stars in the Japanese market; their performed ordinariness, their performed adolescence, and their performed Japaneseness. Firstly, *aidoru* were developed as celebrities for television in Japan, in marked contrast to the otherworldly fame of film stars. This first aspect informs their performance of relatability and "refined ordinariness" (Ōta, 2011, 260). With the development of the post-war music market in the English-speaking world, and the harnessing of the newly conceptualised teenage market, bands such as The Beatles and singers such as Elvis Presley were being described as "teen idols", a term that carried over to Japan and became well-known (if not "common parlance", as it would be after the release of the French musical film *Cherchez L'idole* (*The Chase, 1964*) (Inamasu, 2016). The soundtrack performed by the teenage stars of the film was then promoted as "idol pop" (Richardson, 2016, 17), creating a practical market category that was applied to the promotion of the Beatles' 1965 musical film *Help!*, marketed in Japan as *Help! We Are Idols*. The untouchable star-quality of foreign film stars was one thing, but the Japanese television industry needed its own idols, beamed into the nations living rooms, to be much more relatable.

One creator of stars for Japan's terrestrial TV age was Johnny Kitagawa, the originator of what is now one of the most dominant and successful idol agencies in Japan, an agency that helped to pioneer what is now the archetype of male *aidoru*. Kitagawa, a young Japanese-American who had worked in theatres in Los Angeles before settling in Japan after the war, established what would retrospectively be considered Japan's first idol boyband, which he named Johnny's (Yano, 2016, 27). The band were not professionally trained performers at all. They had started life as a baseball team that met in Tokyo's Yoyogi Park, with Johnny Kitagawa intent on restoring some of the "cheerfulness" to Japanese boys that he believed the war had robbed them of (Ōta, 2011, 174). He took inspiration from the "flamboyant" performances of the all-women Takarazuka Revue musical theatre troupe based in Takarazuka, in western Japan (Yano 2016, 26) borrowing its in-house training and "all-singing, all-dancing" style. Serendipitously (or, perhaps through pure market savvy), the start of Johnny's baseball-inspired boyband empire coincided with a push by the incipient Japanese television industry to create its own stars to rival the musical film stars that were Japan's own equivalents of The Beatles and Elvis (Sakai, 2014). These included versatile performers such as Yoshinaga Sayuri, an award-winning singer and star of Japanese-language films who would have at the time been described, not as an *aidoru*, but as a *seishun sutā* (young star) (Xie, 2014, 75).

By the time Johnny Kitagawa's talent agency had established an in-house training programme that gave rise to its second personable, TV-friendly boyband, Four Leaves (whose merchandise happily proclaimed a "republic of *seishun*" (Four Leaves, 1977), the first "cross media celebrities" (Condry, 2011, 242) produced through the medium of television itself had hit the big time. These weren't boybands, but young female singers, created through the TV talent show *Sutā tanjō!* (*A Star is Born!*). The first series of the show in 1971 produced a trio of charmingly amateurish female singers, who became simply known as the "three girls" (*sannin musume*) (Nishi, 2017, 14). Minami Saori, Koyanagi Rumiko, and Amachi Mari were all given record deals at the tender ages of 17, 18, and 19. Minami Saori, the most successful of the three, was presented to audiences of a popular end-of-year music show as a *tīn no aidoru* ("teen *aidoru*") (Galbraith and Karlin, 2012b, 5) and her debut song *Jūnanasai* (*17 Years Old*) saw her use a pseudo-autobiographical voice to sing about an innocent seaside romance. This

was a conscious decision by producer Masatoshi Sakai, a man often considered the "founder" of *aidoru* pop as a genre, who also had a hand in the production of Johnny's stars such as male soloist Gō Hiromi (Nishi, 2017, 14) But none of these singers were "blessed with extraordinary good looks, a superb singing voice, or impressive performance skills" (Sakai, 2014, 16), and for that reason, they were not consistently described as *aidoru.* The teen idols who debuted as a result of A Star is Born! did not have the talent and charisma of cinema stars or global musicians, but they did pave the way for the "golden age" of idols in the 1980s (Okajima and Okada, 2011, 62).

It was during the late 1970s, and into the 1980s that ordinariness, the second defining characteristic of *aidoru* pop, was established, and that the term *aidoru* became widely used to describe a style of highly produced young singers with strong "commercial exposure" (Stevens, 2008, 158). *aidoru* debut when they are school or university aged, and, in the case of male *aidoru*, retain this adolescent image and aesthetic well into middle age. Consumers are still able to watch performers literally struggle through their adolescent growth into fully fledged members of society, as well as their growth as performers. Unlike polished pop stars, *aidoru* are works in progress. Boyband *Hikaru Genji* sang about their inevitable "mis-steps" in 1978's *Garasu no Jūdai* (*Fragile Teens*) (Nakagawa, 2016, 14), often literally miss-stepping themselves as they and their back-dancers struggled to perform whilst on roller skates. They had buckets of the "amateurish" quality that viewers of light-hearted chat shows such as *Waratte ii to mo!* (*Why Not Laugh!*) were seeking (Yano, 2016, 131). Young female *aidoru* singers such as Yamaguchi Momoe were open about the difficulties that they had faced, and continued to face, in the competitive entertainment industry, and Matsuda Seiko, the undeniable emblem of 1980s *aidoru*ness, portrayed a teenage girl so sugar-sweet that it amounted to a "mutual agreement" with audiences about the manufactured nature of *aidoru* personas. So, the acknowledgement of the struggles of being an adolescent performer as *a part of the performance* set *aidoru* apart from other pop stars in Japan (Ōta, 2011, 185, Galbraith, 2012, 190). This culminated in the debut of Onyanko Kurabu, a group of "ordinary teenage girls living ordinary teenage lives" (Schilling, 1997, 168), who took time off from their studies to appear on a TV variety show and release singles (Stevens, 2008, 50), and eventually their successor AKB48, an *aidoru* group of nominally 48 girls, but in practice hundreds, who became a cultural phenomenon in their own right in the early 2010s (Kiuchi, 2017, 33) buoyed by dedicated fans who buy CDs to earn votes to support the struggle of their favourite member to gain prominence in the next promotional cycle.

Thirdly, *aidoru* are created by Japanese agencies operating within the Japanese market, primarily for the vast Japanese popular music market (Finan, 2020, 162). In other words, they reflect Japaneseness back to consumers. Not only are *aidoru* overtly imperfect and overtly manufactured, they are overtly "Japanese". Male group SMAP and female group Morning Musume were the first two *aidoru* groups to be described as "national *aidoru*" (Nikkan Sport, 1996; 2002) in the late 90s and early 2000s. There were three reasons that SMAP and Morning Musume were described as national in quality: their overwhelming popularity, their ability to capture or reflect the national mood, and their insular production and marketing. Both acts completely dominated the respective markets for male and female *aidoru*, and their lyrics said something about the state of Japan as a whole, or what were perceived as Japanese values. Morning Musume (1999) sang that "no matter the recession, love is inflation", in their hit *LOVE Mashīn* (*LOVE Machine*), which was taken in the economic downturn of the late 1990s as an "anthem for the salaryman" (Ōta, 2011, 216), the archetypal Japanese office worker and supposed architect of Japan's miraculous economic growth of preceding decades. Yano

Toshihiro (2016, 186) argues that SMAP's visible work ethic and constant appearances on variety shows, along with lyrics to songs like *Ganbarimashō* (*Do Your Best*) meant that SMAP were seen as "doing an honest day's work…like any other ordinary city-dweller". These discourses, as I will discuss in the main body of this thesis are a form of *iyashi*, of popular music as self-care for reinforcing "ontological security" (Giddens, 991, 156); a sense of security in who we are in society.

Moreover, the network of agreements between major agencies representing *aidoru* and the television shows and advertisements in which they appear provide a relative guarantee of prominence for acts debuted by those agencies (Marx, 2012). It is true that the recruitment of young amateurs into the public eye to perform ordinariness to the public is more a description of "an industrial approach to production and marketing" than a genre (Condry, 2011, 242), but the domestic nature of that model gives rise to tropes (and chronotopes) that may without a doubt be described as a genre, and tropes that have much to do with contemporary Japanese identity. Although Japanese *aidoru* music has more recently been explicitly marketed to overseas consumers along the lines of K-pop idols, on such occasions *aidoru* are often presented as representatives of Japanese culture, rather than just pop singers. For example, male *aidoru* group SixTONES' online debut, *JAPONICA STYLE*, declares the boyband to be "*wabisabi* Japonica style" referencing both a Japanese medieval aesthetic of rustic simplicity, and a Latin term to describe an outsider's appreciation of all things Japanese. Sociologist Inamasu Tatsuo, writing for a Japanese entertainment news website, asserts that "*aidoru* are cultural symbols that have been especially developed in our country (Japan)" (Inamasu, 2016). We need not take Inamasu's assertion of the national quality of *aidoru* at face value to understand that popular music discourses can be used to give us a deeper understanding of issues of social (including national) identity, something that I aspire to do with this thesis.

Society and identity

I begin from the hypothesis that stories of adolescence in *aidoru* lyrics are produced and marketed to help consumers in Japan to make sense of their changing lives and identities through discourses of youthful struggle. The conventional ways of talking about society (discourses) in *aidoru* lyrics remind people of the value of the way that they live, and this study of a large volume of lyrics and the social context in which they were produced will aim to catalogue and make sense of what those conventions might be. But what is the connection between a pop song and the way a person imagines themselves? In this thesis, I will be using a concept developed by the sociologist to Anthony Giddens (1991) to explain how the lyrics of popular music can contribute to a sense of security and reassurance about who we think we are. As Sharon Kinsella (1995, 252) points out in her study of *kawaii* (cute) culture by adults in Japan, "in any modern society, culture is the sphere to which people turn to fulfil spiritual, emotional, intellectual and sexual needs and desires which are not met within the fabric of their lives at work, at school, at home". Culture includes popular music, and Kinsella's treatment hints at an approach to media and society often termed the "uses and gratifications" (Rubin, 1983, Ruggiero, 2000) approach, which studies why and how people consume the media that they consume to fit particular needs, for example, to obtain social status or to switch off from reality.

Rather than asking what immediate needs audiences consciously use *aidoru* music for, an "ontological security" approach asks how the things that people consume unconsciously help them to make sense of who they are in the late modern (or sometimes "post modern") world. This is a world in which people appear to have plenty of choice, but have lost some of the structures that might have once given them a strong sense of identity, such as local

communities, trade unions, and a feeling of being part of a "nation state" (Strinati, 2004, 222). So how do we respond to such confusion about who we are? According to Giddens (1991, 172), we do two things; we try to distance ourselves from "fundamental existential issues" such as "death" and "sexuality", but more importantly for this study, we become aware of the stories we are telling through our own lives, consuming particular media to make our own stories feel more "coherent".

One issue with describing Japan in these terms is that they risk portraying Japan as an extreme, futuristic example of postmodernity in a way that verges on Orientalism, rather than simply a developed society. There is an abundance of documentaries about the supposed lack of interest of Japanese people in sex, or articles in US or UK-based publications expressing astonishment at the long working hours in Japan that act to the detriment of family life and self-fulfilment. The implication here is that we (whoever we are) are shocked, and are glad that that is not us. I want to present Japan, a country that I have researched from an outsiders perspective, simply as a case study showing how ideas about society and identity may be fruitfully applied to the study of media, not as a particularly exceptional case. OECD figures show that Japanese workers actually work less than the average for the developed countries who are part of that organisation; the average South Korean worker, for example, clocks up 314 more hours per year than the average Japanese worker (OECD, 2018). But it is also true that much Japanese overtime goes unrecorded, and that employees are fearful of taking much-needed time off work to the detriment of their career prospects (Imai, 2011; International Labour Organisation, 2013). With this in mind, the portrayal of an idealised youthful struggle in *aidoru* lyrics, set in the broader struggle to succeed and "get ahead" (Miura, 2001b, 481) in Japanese society could be a resource for consumers to reassure themselves of the meaning for their less-than-ideal working conditions.

In Giddens' thinking, legal, economic, and political structures give rise to "modes of discourse", conventional ways of speaking about societal phenomena which may be harnessed in different ways by individuals (1984, 33). This elaboration of a critical realist epistemology (discussed further in the following literature review chapter) applies to the inward-facing nature of the *aidoru* music market, created by the political economy of the Japanese music industry itself, which in turn produces socially conventional ways of speaking about youth, struggle, and Japaneseness that in turn become resources for people to create their own stories about their lives. Although, as I will discuss in the following literature review chapter, Giddens' social theory struggles to grapple with temporality of social change and assumptions about social processes being "isomorphic" to language (Archer, 1996, 95), I contend that the idea of ontological security is useful for considering what Japanese *aidoru* lyrics can tell us about contemporary Japanese social identity.

This thesis analyses social structures through *aidoru* lyrics by identifying their manifestations in lyrics, as discourses, or "ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic or practice" (Hall, 1997, 6), as well as potential uses of these discourses by individuals. I will be using an approach that combines Critical Discourse Analysis, content analysis, and thematic analysis to draw conclusions from the lyrical data and data from interviews with lyricists that I collect. This approach, which I outline in my methodology chapter, involves picking out and analysing themes as discourses with a critical mindset, and the implicit question of what those lyrics tell us about contemporary Japanese society. Throughout this thesis, I will be referring to both lyrics and songs as a whole as "texts"; by this I do not mean that they are made up of words, but that they contain social meanings that are not always immediately apparent, and may be analysed in the manner of books or literary "texts" (Hughes, 2007, 249). The lyrics

of a pop song may differ in scale to a novel, but analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively alongside other lyrics and their social context, they can tell us a lot about the society in which they have been produced and consumed.

Socioeconomic "struggle" in Japan

One explanation of the portrayal of youth as a time of idealised struggle that helps people in Japan to reconcile their day-to-day difficulties with the stories they tell about themselves, is that popular music (and especially lyrics) are an attempt to incalculate the views of the government and big business into the public consciousness, so that the public are less resistant to their oppressive conditions, and are lulled into a passive stance. This would be the argument made by Cultural Studies scholars (Williams, 1958, Hebdige, 1979, Nelson and Grossberg, 1988) following the writings of Neo-Marxist theorists Theodore Adorno and Max Horkenheimer (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002, Adorno, 2008). As will be addressed in the literature review chapter, there is plenty of insightful work applying Horkenheimer and Adorno's way of thinking to popular music, and the *aidoru* industry in particular. There should be no doubt that the main goal of the *aidoru* industry, as with any music industry (or industry for that matter), is to make money by selling things to people. However, the fact that *aidoru* and their music are products that are sold to make money should not force us to focus *solely* on the power relations involved in their production and marketing; we should be able to criticise what Karl Marx (1906, 83) calls the "fetishism" of commodities, without ignoring the other social subtleties of the production, text, and consumption. As Duffett (2012, 196) argues, such analysis can blind scholars to the significance of "historical change…diversity, and issues of cultural memory".

Nonetheless, the issue of social structures and social inequality remains central to my analysis, because of the way that youthful struggle is portrayed in *aidoru* lyrics as being completely set apart from issues of social class or social stratification. The idea of social class is problematic, as it involves superimposing groupings onto society that may not fit individual self-concept, and that have no basis in that particular society. However, I believe the use of the term "social class" is useful in this context because it highlights the contrast between two different Japanese terms that describe social inequality: *kaikyū shakai* and *kakusa shakai*. *Kaikyū shakai* translates as class society, and *kakusa shakai* as gap society, or "society of disparities" (Kingston, 2010, 34). The term *kakusa shakai* is the more common term in the Japanese media for describing social inequality or stratification, and was coined by socialist Yamada Masahiro (2004). *kakusa shakai* came into popular use in around 2006 (Pulvers, 2012), suggesting that social inequality is a phenomenon of Japan's post-economic bubble (in other words, post-1990s) society. The implication is that prior to the 1990s, everybody in Japan was succeeding by their efforts; people could place faith in daily struggle translating into prosperity.

Of course, social inequality did not magically appear in Japan in 1990. And like in other societies, such as in the United States, 80 to 90 per cent of people identify as being "middle class" (Sugimoto, 2010b, 2). But, according to Okamoto (2016), the difference between Japan and the US is that Japanese policy-makers still firmly stick to education discourses that emphasise the power of "childrearing" and "educational methods"— ignoring the fact that economic disparity limits access to educational opportunities for many children and young people (Kariya, 2013, 127). In reality, adolescence is a time when the struggle to succeed, to become a *shakaijin* (a member of society, meaning someone with a stable career), is absolutely governed by where one lives and the background of one's family. But as Sakai (Sakai, 2014, 79) argues, *aidoru* music sells a vision of Japan where if people lead "mediocre, happy-enough lives", considering themselves to be part of a greater national middle class who are "trying their

hardest", then they will be able to restore to themselves a sense of national identity.

Popular music of multiple genres sells the dream of meritocracy, the "possibility of social mobility" (Wei, 2016, 22). American rap musician Lil Wayne, quoted in Cvetkovski (2015, 43), declares that his rise in prosperity is because "we don't approach things like we're good, we approach things like we are going to work hard and hard work pays off". If the mythological supremacy of meritocracy for helping those at the bottom rise to the top is characteristic of the "cruel optimism" (Berlant, 2011) of the American dream in popular music, then the Japanese equivalent shows a conspicuous absence of a start point. The start point and the end point in *aidoru* music and performance are not so relevant; the struggle is what matters. As Ōta (2021) puts it, "in general it is the appeal of (*aidoru*'s) incompleteness that matters. As of now they may not be complete, but that is why they do their best (*ganbaru*) to work hard and grow as people".

The limits of "critical" analysis of *aidoru* music

This thesis will use a critical realist ontology, or theory of knowledge, to explore the thematic importance of *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* music. Critical realism is a philosophy of science developed by Bhaskar (1979a, 1989, 1998) and accepts that although human society is "much more like a language than a mechanical machine" (Potter and López, 2005, 9), studying society is similar to studying the natural sciences in that we must accept that our knowledge of it is fallible, and that our own backgrounds can affect what we see as being knowable or truthful. Studying any social phenomenon, including popular music, with a critical realist perspective means that we must "be aware that our research is constructed" but that we "shouldn't deconstruct it out of existence" (Baker, 2006, 11). *Aidoru* lyrics are indeed a product of the society in which they have been brought to life, and simultaneously contribute to people's sense of existing in Japanese society, so there is a value to studying the structures (institutions, social norms) that pre-exist those representations, as well as the representations themselves.

I am also aware of the significance of my choice of topic in the context of my own background as a researcher. What I argue during this thesis is that "we" (as scholars with the linguistic, financial, and institutional resources to access to a large volume of English language scholarship on media and society) should treat Japanese popular music, and especially *aidoru*, as a genre of music with its own particular social context, not as an inexplicable, uniquely Japanese phenomenon. There is a need to avoid pandering to both Japan-based discourses of Japanese exceptionality or uniqueness, but also discourses in English-language media about the inherent "weird" or "wacky" nature of Japanese society (Hayes, 2019). At the same time, I acknowledge that the reason for my own initial interest in Japanese popular culture was that it was different from the popular culture I was familiar with as a teenager, and that it is likely that any reaction to or promotion of this research may be framed in terms of existing discourses of difference. Although it is not within the remit of this thesis to conduct extensive comparison with pop music lyrics from other genres, or other countries, I hope that the results of this thesis could be used to do so in the future, helping to situate *aidoru* music within global popular music history and contemporary trends without pandering to Orientalist narratives.

As a UK-based researcher working in English, I understand that my own choice of what or what not to cite, and what or what not to translate, as well as the manner in which I choose to translate it, may put me in the position of being a gatekeeper rather than a scholar or a translator. Moreover, being a fan of Japanese popular music, including *aidoru* music, also comes with its own complex web of advantages and disadvantages. I participated in multilingual fan communities from 2008 to 2015 that produced covers of mostly female *aidoru* music, and

have appeared on Japanese national broadcaster NHK's English-language Japanese pop music programme *J-MELO* with other members of this fan community, meaning that I have some awareness of how the Japanese music and entertainment industry operates, as well as how it co-opts foreign fans into wider discourses of Japaneseness (Mōri, 2014). On the other hand, a justifiable criticism of my continued fandom might be that I am unable to offer the sustained criticism of the oppressive nature of the Japanese music industry and of Japanese society that both are due, because of the important role that Japanese popular music has in *my own* identity and ontological security. But I would argue that as long as I am able to reflect on this bias, my own fan experience means that I will never underestimate the important social meanings contained within the lyrics of *aidoru* songs, thus encouraging a deeper level of critical analysis of those lyrics.

Why is this an important topic of study?
　This thesis will be of use to researchers studying the relationships between textual discourses in popular media and society, as well those broadly studying contemporary Japan. Firstly, this thesis will provide a case study of the application of Critical Discourse Analysis frameworks to popular music, a practice that is still "relatively unique" (Way and McKerrell, 2017, 5), perhaps because the overtly political nature of the two major strands of Critical Discourse Analysis (Foucault's and Fairclough's) prioritise texts that are explicitly political, such as political speeches and newspaper articles. Moreover, although there have been quantitative studies of lyrical corpora in Japanese, as well as qualitative close readings of specific lyrics, as I outline in my literature review, there has been no large-scale thematic study of any genre of Japanese popular music. This makes it difficult to draw conclusions about what Japanese popular music, especially *aidoru* music, is saying, and makes it difficult to place *aidoru* music within its own genre. This study should provide a pattern for other scholars who wish to conduct corpus-based thematic analysis of any type of cultural text. It will show that, as Moore (2012, 12) argues, songs do not simply carry messages from producers to consumers. Songs and song lyrics contain multiple discourses and assumptions and the potential to become resources for identity formation in both positive and negative ways (Hesmondhalgh, 2008, 342).
　Secondly, this thesis will aim to integrate the study of Japanese popular music into broader discussions within the study of media, so that *aidoru* are not seen as an isolated case of the intersection of popular music and (national) identity. As will be shown in the literature review chapter, *aidoru* music, especially in English-language scholarship, is mostly studied as two separate phenomena; male and female *aidoru* music. Whilst it is absolutely true that there are differing gendered expectations that restrict the output of both male and female *aidoru*, and of the behaviour of young men and women in Japanese society, the aforementioned split method of studying *aidoru* music risks ignoring the other socially significant phenomena evidenced in *aidoru* lyrics (such as the predominance of *seishun* as a sense or time, or discourses of resilience) and erases the output of *aidoru* who in some ways exist outside of this binary, including explicitly transgender acts such as Secret Guyz*,* cross-dressing groups such as Fudanjuku, and mixed-gender groups such as Dream 5. *aidoru* music's common theme of *seishun* as an idealised time of struggle means that it is valuable to study it as a single genre of popular music (even if, as will be discussed in the lyrical case studies chapter, creating solid boundaries for this genre is far from simple), a genre whose reach into the Japanese "media mix" (Steinberg, 2012), and into the recent history of Japanese popular as we know it, may help us to better understand discourses of contemporary Japanese identity. *aidoru* music is one of a number of "interlinked cultural forms" (Edensor, 2016, 187) that exist within every region's

popular music as resources for identity formation, and allow people "culturally to situate themselves" (Bennett, 1997, 31).

Thirdly, insights from this thesis will contribute to the study of youth and adolescence by complicating the relationship between youth and popular music. At one time, popular music was studied solely as a "youth music" (Bennett, 2015, 148), or as a way of understanding the specific interests of young people. The music we consume during late adolescence and early adulthood has been proven to resonate with us more than music consumed at any other time during our lives (Krumhansl and Zupnick, 2013), but that should not mean that popular music can only provide significant insights about young people. Because popular music has ontological meaning for those of all ages, it is more accurate to argue, as Frith (2004c, 41) does that "youth music is socially important not because it reflects youth experience (authentically or not), but because it defines for us what 'youthfulness' is". This assertion is no different for *aidoru* lyrics. What did youth mean to Japanese people in post-war Japan? What did it mean during Japan's economic bubble of the late 1980s? And what does youth and adolescence mean for Japanese people in Japan now, when, like many developed countries, there are fewer and fewer young people to take part in society as working adults? Hopefully, this thesis will go some way towards answering these questions.

This introductory chapter is followed by a discussion of academic literature on the study of popular music and Japan as it relates to my research questions and hypothesis, then a chapter outlining and justifying my Critical Thematic Analysis methodology (including how I had to adjust my methods to account for the COVID-19pandemic). My findings are detailed in three chapters; the first on a series of transmedia case studies of <u>seishun </u>tropes, the second on a lyrical corpus composed of *aidoru* lyrics referencing the term *seishun*, and the third on asynchronous email interviews with seven contemporary professional writers of *aidoru* lyrics. I will conclude by summarising and reflecting on the way I have found *seishun* to be represented in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics, what representations of *seishun* can tell us about contemporary Japan's relationship with the idea(l) of adolescence, and how valorised struggle figures or does not figure in those ideals.

Literature review

In this chapter, I will give an overview of some of the main theoretical approaches to studying popular culture and popular music, paying special attention to the scholarly literature relating to the analysis of lyrics. This section will also detail some studies of Japanese popular music, including *aidoru* music, considering their strengths and weaknesses as well as

applicability to my research questions. Because I can only read and understand English and Japanese, the sources covered in this literature review are limited to those available in English and Japanese, but I will still attempt to include as wide a range of perspectives as possible. With one of the aims of this research being to consider what *aidoru* lyrics can tell us about social identity within the context of contemporary Japan, I will begin by establishing my own understanding of social identity within existing debates, as clarifying this will form the ontological and epistemological basis of my enquiry. I will then consider how these debates have been applied to the study of popular culture, in particular popular music. Finally, I will examine how popular music lyrics and *aidoru* music as a genre have been studied and socially situated.

Theories of social identity

Social identity is who we feel that we are within society. There is much disagreement about how we gain a sense of who we are, and how we can make identity an object of study, as will be outlined below. Before we go looking for traces or reflections of social identity in lyrics, it is important to come up with an answer to these questions. Sociologists have broadly theorised three different ways of approaching the issue of identity that also reflect differing ontologies (ways of seeing reality). Firstly, there is the structuralist perspective; identity as a matter of identification with particular structures and their associated representations or signs (self and other, in-group and out-group) (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, Saussure, 1960). Secondly, there is the post-structuralist or constructionist perspective; identity as constructed by the individual based on a subjectively constituted social reality (Barthes, 1957, Foucault, 1988). Thirdly, there is the critical realist perspective; viewing identity as something that the individual consciously creates by themselves that is nonetheless bounded by a definable social reality (Bhaskar, 1979, Archer, 1982). I will explain each of these approaches in turn, and consider how they might be applied to the study of identity within popular music lyrics.

Woodward sums up structuralist views of identity in her overview of the study of identity and difference, arguing that "identity is relational, and difference is established by symbolic marking in relation to others" (1997, 2). For example, we might (even unconsciously) choose to wear a particular shirt to show our identification with and support for a particular sports team, or might choose to decorate our place of work with quotes or lyrics that set us apart from others who we work with. This view of identity as always being based on and constrained by social structures (such as our nationality and how we have been educated) and how we relate to those structures is based on the work of the linguist and philosopher Ferdinand de Saussure (1960). Saussure argued that all concepts, including the concept of oneself or one's identity, are "defined not by their positive content but by their relations with other terms in the system" (1960, 117). So who we feel we are in the society we live in is entirely dependent on things outside of ourselves. Or, in the words of Petrilli (2013, 4) "the self…" (our understanding of who are) "….cannot be identified with the position of subject" (someone who is in control of who they are). Structuralist understandings of social identity have been applied to popular cultural products including advertising (Berger, 2011), pop stars (Sewall, 2010) and television comedy (Perkins, 2010).

When studying Japan, it is possible to apply structuralist understandings of identity to one much-criticised (Befu, 2001, Dale, 1986) school of popular anthropology asserts that Japanese society has a particular uniqueness that sets it apart from all other societies. This school of thought is called *nihonjinron* (theories of the Japanese people), and it flourished between the 1950s and 1980s when Japan's economy was in its period of ebullient post-war growth, and whose legacy is apparent in problematic "nationalistic re-evaluations of Japan's war

responsibility" by the Japanese right wing (Iwabuchi, 2017, 438). At the time, *nihonjinron*-style explanations for the "Japanese economic miracle" (Hewin, 1967) included the efficiency of vertically structured, hierarchical organisations that gave precedence to group loyalty (where Western ones were horizontally organised) (Nakane, 1967) and, a culture of mutual dependence (Doi, 1971) in opposition to Western individuality— all of which are said to be related to Japan's supposed "racial uniformity" (Sugimoto, 2010a, 20). From a structuralist perspective, one might argue that the qualities espoused by *nihonjinron* theorists arose from a network of symbols that constitute a historically situated East/West dichotomy, simultaneously elevating Japanese economic success and thus Japaneseness above the rest of the "East". There are indeed traces of this binary *nihonjinron* rhetoric within the data that forms part of this study, be that in lyrics or in interviews, but I support the view that it is not useful to see identity being akin to a pre-constituted menu that forces us to choose particular dichotomous options. Such a view ignores how our personality interacts with social identity (Fairclough, 2003, 223), and risks casting consopular music as powerless, having no input in the articulation of their identity, having meanings merely "dictated" to them (Bennett, 2009).

Other social scientists would argue that what the proliferation of *nihonjinron* actually evidences is the way in which the world around us (including our identities) consists entirely of the way we explain it to ourselves (Berger, 1990, Burningham and Cooper, 1999, Burr, 2003). Such explanations are culturally and historically specific, and are, more often than not used to enforce unequal power relations in society. As a result, social constructionists would argue that *nihonjinron* is actually a discourse that is meant to enforce a homogenous view of identity and what it means to be Japanese, to the exclusion of those who fall outside of restrictive definitions of Japaneseness. Foucault described a set of phenomena which he called "technologies of the self" (1988) — the different ways in which we form and nurture our sense of who we are, for example, by verbally narrating our lives to others. But the ways in which we are create our sense of identity are, Foucault argued, an "effect" of power and the powerful (Foucault, 1994, 214). In this way of thinking about identity, the menu we have been provided with to assemble our sense of self from is not limited to identification (or otherwise) with particular ideas, but the words on it are always written by somebody else.

But, the more optimistic constructionists would argue, that does not mean that we cannot write our own version. In the dramaturgical sociology of Goffman (1990) our identity is something that we are always reshaping, and performing to others, constantly explaining who we are through our daily choices. We are quite literally creating our own characters with the discursive resources available to us. Judith Butler applied this idea of performativity to gender, criticising Foucault for assuming that gender identity and sexuality are necessarily "always situated within the matrices of power" (Butler, 1990, 123). Butler's more optimistic belief in the performance of gender identity as able to (but not bound to) subvert normative constructions of gender and sexuality has been applied widely in constructionist studies of identity, including studies of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA) identities (Muñoz, 1999, Koller, 2010, Jones, 2016). Of relevance to this study is the way national identities might be constructed of particular words and narratives. Benedict Anderson, argued that a nation is "an imagined political community", and "communities are to be distinguished…by the style in which they are imagined" through the circulation of the printed word in a common language (2016, 14). The stories about nationhood that spread through the media become the stories of both individuals and groups of people, and as will be shown later in this chapter and demonstrated in this thesis, the lyrics of popular song are undoubtedly one such medium, amongst others such as archives (Traister, 1999), magazines (Luthar, 2010), and

social media posts (Yadlin-Segal, 2017). It is up to the scholar to not take these discourses of national identity at face value, and to analyse them closely, and to ask, when presented with conventional ways of talking about identity "who determines who can speak with whom, and how?" (Wodak, 2012, 216). Criticisms of constructionist approaches to identity include that by positing that the social world is composed of discourse, and therefore "reducible to discourse", it becomes near impossible to explain how identities are "created, altered, or destroyed" (Edwards, O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014, 67), and that by simply accounting for discourses as power dynamics, constructionist approaches to identity cannot provide an answer as to how they "come to be used by particular respondents at particular times in particular places" (Michael, 1997, 313). In essence, it becomes difficult to explain how society creates identities AND identities create society, as opposed to just the former. Nonetheless, the scepticism towards the existence of an objective social reality that is a key tenet of the social constructionist view of identity is something that will form an important part of the approach taken by this thesis, because it would be very poor scholarship to look at a lyric and take it as face value, as an a posteriori representation of Japanese society, or what "Japanese people" think of themselves.

This thesis will make use of the third approach to social identity — a critical realist approach. As outlined in the introduction, critical realism holds that "social structures exist materially and are carried from one space-time location to another only in or in virtue of human praxis" (Bhaskar, 1979, 174). So, structures within and against which we form our sense of identity within society, such as socioeconomic status, gender expectations, and the geographical locale we live in, absolutely exist in a material sense, but they are interpreted through the fallible lens of human belief and action. This theory of social knowledge has been developed further by other scholars (Harré, 1986, Archer, 1998, Gorski, 2013), so that now it stands apart from structuralism and constructionism in positing human beings as neither "structurally or culturally determined automata" nor "deconstructed congeries of subject positions" (Porpora, 2015, 10).One critical realist theory of sociology is Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration. Structuration argues that social identity formation is an important part of explaining how "social conventions" (Giddens, 1991, 35) are shaped and reshaped. According to Giddens, social structures are like rules that persist across different times and places, and give rise to consistent social practices (Giddens, 1984, 17); for example, our socioeconomic background affects who we socialise with and how we socialise. At the same time, those rules only exist because people, more accurately individuals actively reproduce them in their daily actions, as they reflect on those actions in an attempt to arrive at a coherent sense of who they are in society (what Giddens calls "ontological security" (Giddens, 1991, 156)). Social identity is created by society, but also creates society. Thus, by looking at the way something is represented in a lyric, we can posit how the social identity of the contributor(s) might have given rise to it, as well as the implicit social rules (structure) that the lyric both implies and recreates.

Although the concept of ontological security is an important part of the theoretical basis of this thesis, I do not mean to accept the Giddensian formation of critical realism wholesale. For one thing, Giddens' ideas about the relationship between individual agency and structure have been criticised as not representative of real social identities. It is argued that "his relentless reduction of structures to praxis means that institutions are always what people produce, never what they are forced to confront" (O'Boyle, 2013, 1021), and that, by giving too much power to the individual in creating their own story in society, Giddens fails to consider the fact that the privileged will never confront as many roadblocks in self-determination. Margaret Archer (1996, 80), another sociologist who theorises from a critical realist perspective, also points out that

structuration makes it hard to "untie" and thus explain social structures and agents separately; if we simply accept that people doing things (such as going to school or writing lyrics) are formative of those same social conventions that bind them, how do we say which one came before the other (social reality or action), or differentiate between significant and less significant actions? Archer (1996, xxv) proposes an approach called "morphogenesis" by which change to cultural systems ("Cultural Elaboration") takes place: "culture and agency operate over different time periods…the Cultural System logically predates the Socio-Cultural action(s) which transform it; and that Cultural Elaboration logically post-dates such interaction" (Archer, 1996, xxv). What this means for this thesis' enquiry into the portrayals of *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics, and what these can tell us about contemporary Japanese social identity, is that I cannot hope to understand the formation of *seishun* as a trope without situating this process within existing Japanese social structures such as compulsory secondary education and (popular) cultural responses to structures over time. In summary, what I would like to show, through this project in relation to social identity, is that there is scope for examining the connection between popular culture and individual agency whilst accepting that there are unequal power relations inherent in the production and consumption of popular culture. Moreover, there are other scholars who have usefully applied critical realist principles to the study of identity, including research into disability (Williams, 1999) and online communities (Stuart and Dark, 2014). I will attempt to do the same.

Theories of popular culture

The historical development and popularity of the above theories is reflected in the development of the relatively new field of popular music studies. Historically, distinctions have been made between Western art music and popular music. The study of popular music developed out of a field called musicology, one that traditionally focuses on the study of traditional Western art music ("classical music") (Katz, 2014) through the lens of "formalism" (Middleton, 1993, 177), that is, studying the compositional style of music through musical scores, whereas popular music studies is mostly the history of widely available *recorded* music (Negus, 1996, 5), which became technologically possible only from the end of nineteenth century. In this thesis, I will be using Shuker's (Shuker, 2001, 3) understanding of popular music as "commercial, cultural forms of entertainment", acknowledging that this definition "regards markets…" (music charts and sales margins) "…as an inescapable feature of popular culture". At the same time Cole (2018, 411) asks us to be aware of how the term "popular" has over time referred "equally to Beethoven, bhangra, and blackface minstrelsy", such that we should not erase how these contradictions privilege particular understandings of what constitute "the people" consuming commercial music. Stuart Hall (2002, 189) has pointed out that the idea of "popular culture" is shaped by what is considered at any one time to be "an elite cultural activity or form"; meaning, anything that is not elite is seen as belonging to the people, an understanding influenced by socioeconomic class and race. It is clear that the definition of popular music, as well as views on how it can be studied, has been shaped by many of the scholarly paradigms that shaped the study of identity. Here, I will trace the development of academic theories of popular music through three phases; popular music as mass deception, popular music as subversion, and popular music as a resource for identity formation.

Views of popular culture, including popular music, as tools that are intended to manipulate the consuming public into passive acceptance of their oppressive circumstances, are rooted in Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony. That is, the cultural power that the "dominant group exercises through society" (1971, 12), goes hand-in-hand with "the

apparatus of state coercive power". In Gramsci's interpretation of Marxism, the government and the rich and powerful use both physical threats and dominance of the more abstract cultural sphere to maintain their control over the public. This approach to culture and power was refined in the mid-twentieth century by Adorno and Horkheimer (2002, 94), who argued that popular culture was part of something called the "culture industry". The "culture industry" consists of all the different organisations who conspire to enforce Gramsci's cultural hegemony coming together to ensure that all the culture people consume "from the time they leave the factory in the evening to the time they clock out" reminds them of "the work routine that they must sustain throughout the day" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002, 104). Popular culture, and especially popular music, in Adorno's own thinking, is distinguished from other cultural products by its extreme "standardization" (Witkin, 2003, 98), in that parts of it are interchangeable despite their outward appearance of having meaning, and every part of a popular song is merely a "cog in a machine" (Adorno, 1990, 303). Popular music, therefore, is part of a "mass deception", aimed at "fettering consciousness" (Adorno, 2008, 106). Studies of the culture industries in this tradition later developed into a field known as cultural studies, which saw studying popular culture and popular music as a serious academic endeavour. Although cultural studies is nowadays more of a "broad tendency across disciplines" (Miller, 2001) to pay attention to culture in society, at its inception it was revolutionary. In Turner's (Turner, 2003, 2) words "the work of the pioneers in cultural studies breaks with…(the) literary tradition's elitist assumptions in order to examine the everyday and ordinary: those aspects of our lives that exert so powerful and unquestioned an influence on our existence that we take them for granted".

Two of those pioneers were Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams. Hoggart (1957) distinguished between mass culture (imposed from above) and popular culture (produced by and representing a particular social class), and Williams (1958) described how said mass culture could be traced to the industrial revolution, with the movement of people to cities and a loss of people's sense of community, which was then relocated in "culture". Stuart Hall later focused Cultural Studies' critical gaze on issues of race and ethnicity in popular culture (1986, 1997), and suggested a new model of production and consumption of popular culture. Instead of the message of say, a pop song, being simply imposed on a passive audience, the way the receiver of the message (the listener or viewer) sees themselves has an impact on how that message is interpreted. In Hall's own words (Hall, 1973, 3) "though the production structures of television originate the television message, they do not constitute a closed system"..,"circulation and reception are, indeed, 'moments' of the production process in television". Though a producer of popular media may "encode" a particular message, the consumer, with their own social background and identity in mind, may choose to "decode" that message either as the same as the dominant (hegemonic) code, as a negotiated version, or as a completely oppositional version — the total opposite of what the producer intended.

Hall's work encouraged a second way of studying popular culture, and especially popular music; as a site of subversive subcultures. With "the change in the attitudes of young people — the so-called 'teenage' revolution" (Hall and Whannel, 1964, 2) being considered just as significant a factor in the creation of a mass culture as the advent of the industrial revolution, the field of cultural studies now focused on popular music as the major object of youth consumption. Youth and their behaviours were often the object of study as much as the music itself, because, after all, "the youth culture of the 1950s and later could not have happened without teenagers having become a significant market" (Bennett, 2001, 7). Clarke and Jefferson (1973) explore the symbolism behind musical subcultures such as mods, rockers, and skinheads, to argue that "the symbolism of working class cultures as representing both a significant dimension and a

signification of the struggle for cultural hegemony"— for example in mod style's mock-aspirational satirical pastiche of white-collar workers' fashion. Musical style, rather than music itself, was worthy of analysis in subcultural studies, because it was there that the construction of oppositional identities was to be found (Willis, 1978). Paraphrasing the Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser (1969), fellow CCCS theorist Dick Hebdige (1979, 12) argued that "ideology saturates everyday discourse in the form of common sense", so musical subcultures should be studies because of the way in which they "rise above" this common sense that casts them, be they "the young, the black, the working class" in a "subordinate position" (Hebdige, 1979, 139). Although the original study of musical subcultures focused on those in the UK post WWII, studies since have focused on popular music as subversive subculture in a range of different contexts, including the complexities of punk subcultures in post-apartheid South Africa (Basson, 2007), queer fans of emo music (a subgenre of alternative rock) based in the US (Peters, 2010), and underground hip-hop in Cuba (Dimou, 2014). All suggest that popular musical subcultures can provide a sense of belonging and empowerment to people who are marginalised and disenfranchised, by allowing them to turn discourses that seek to oppress them into a cultural product that fights back.

Studies of popular musical style are an indispensable part of the history of the study of popular music because of how they look beyond the form of music and lyrics to the broader social context of production and consumption. But this subcultural approach has also been criticised for romanticising and seeking out the rebellious characteristics of musical subcultures (Frith, 2004a), with even one of subcultural theory's founders asking rhetorically why the contemporary craze of kitsch woollen jumpers had not attracted the same critical attention as leather jackets; the implied answer being that they were not perceived as rebellious enough (Clarke, 1982). Another criticism of the attitude that sees popular music as worthy of study due to some inherent subversiveness is that such an approach may fail to include accounts of how women and girls take part in that subversion, perhaps because they lack the same societal means to visibly rebel in the first place (McRobbie and Garber, 1976). In her study of the US girl group music of the 1960s, Laurie Stras (Stras, 2011, 22) argues that "girl cultures are, in fact, resistant regardless of whether they resist in the same overt way as boy cultures do", but that this resistance need not be what makes them worthy of study. Thornton (2001) has tried to confront the issue of musical subcultures being implicitly linked to resisting hegemonic ideologies by arguing that subcultures are better described as "scenes" that young people can weave in and out of, but Hesmondhalgh (2005, 37) argues that such attempts to not solve a third issue with a subcultural approach to popular music: popular musical cultures being studied as solely the domain of the young, something I would like to challenge through this thesis' study of youth as a topic of *aidoru* music.

From the 1980s onwards, in response to some of these concerns, scholars explored the importance of popular culture and music to a greater variety of people. They sketched out a third theoretical approach to the study of popular music, and the approach of most relevance to this study: popular music as a resource for identity formation in everyday life. This third approach was established by John Fiske (1978, 158), who argued that television as a medium allowed for fewer restrictions on how audiences may choose to (in Stuart Hall's language) decode a broadcast. Fiske argued for the existence of "active audiences", not passive ones, as "the actual television viewer is primarily a social subject. This social subjectivity is more influential in the construction of meanings than the textually produced subjectivity which exists only at the moment of reading" (Fiske, 1989, 49). Applied to popular music, this means that who a person feels that they are affects how they interpret, or the meanings that they get out of a

song — and that their reaction is likely more complex than simple acceptance or opposition to its message. This theoretical position is now known as audience studies. Some have explored how audiences selectively use popular culture to fulfil particular needs, (Ruggiero, 2000, Palmgreen, Wenner and Rayburn, 1980, Blumler, 1974); with one of those most significant needs being the need for a coherent sense of identity. As Berger (1991, 88) argues, "as we become more mobile, modern, and materialistic, we find it increasingly more difficult to gain an identity. This is where media come in…they help us manufacture identities, so to speak".

Berger's language is typical of a postmodern approach to popular culture, where the structural certainties of the modern ("universalistic ambitions" of striving towards something better than what had come before (Featherstone, 1995, 43)) have disappeared, meaning that as we can more easily pick and choose the components of our sense of self, we do the same with the popular culture we consume. Accordingly, Jenkins (1992, 2006) has explored how fans of popular cultural products "poach" from texts, and transform them into something completely new; parodies or reproductions, combinations of multiple cultural products. Others have followed Jensen (1992, 9) in arguing that it not helpful to see the remixing that fans undertake as some sort of "pathological symptom" of the supposed postmodern condition, and have sought to document the role that participation in fan cultures (as opposed to subcultures) plays in identity formation (Hills, 2014, Morimoto, 2013, Bennett, 2012)

In fact, wherever it is widely available, popular music plays a role in everyone's sense of identity, whether or not they identify themselves as fans of a particular artist or genre. Frith (1985, 2004b), argues for the analysis of popular music as a sociological phenomenon, that our enjoyment (or otherwise) of popular music is primarily down to "its use in answering questions of identity: we use pop songs to create for ourselves a particular sort of definition, a particular place in society" (Frith, 2004b, 41). Thus, by studying popular music, we can understand the components of the toolkit that people use to create their reflexive identities, and begin to think about where those components might have come from. Another advocate of this approach is Bennett (2001, 2008, 2016). In a study of the lyrical and visual features a genre of British popular music nicknamed "Britpop" that was ubiquitous in the late 1990s and depicted "ordinary" scenes of British life, he argued that "like reggae, South Asian dance music and rap, Britpop is simply another resource through which young people in Britain can choose to culturally situate themselves" (Bennett, 1997, 31). The operative word here is "choose"; in keeping with a Giddensian view of social identity, popular music is one of a number of such resources for identity formation that are constrained, but not completely limited, by their social setting. Such an approach to popular music might be described as an "ecological approach", which argues that "the environment limits our room for interpretation, but does not prescribe it" (2012, 12), meaning that we must, "in addition to looking at the form of the song, examine how and by whom it was used" (Bourdaghs, 2012, 211).

But does characterising listeners as "active" ascribe them more freedom than they actually have? Strinati (2004, 236) wonders if this presumption of liberty in musical interpretation is just as patronising as musical elitism, which "has patronised the audience by calling it stupid", a view shared by Middleton (2000), who worries that by focusing on what music means to listeners, we can end up ignoring the interesting characteristics of the music itself. I would argue that this does not have to be the case, and by conducting systematic and sensitive analysis of popular music, we can acknowledge the relatively unlimited potential of interpretation of popular music within a social world, that is, for each listener, relatively limited to their own experiences. We should acknowledge that there is both good and bad in popular music and how it helps people form their senses of selves (Hesmondhalgh, 2008), but appreciate popular music as an object of

study because it is like a "kind of magic mirror in which to see self and relation to other" (DeNora, 2008, 155). DeNora (2015, 34) notes that music scholarship wrangling between structuralists and constructivists about how society creates music, or how music creates society, are beside the point because we should actually be asking "both questions at once, melding them together as a theory of musical affordance and a practice of ethnographic investigation". In keeping with the critical realist framework of this thesis, we need to understand both the social in the musical, and the musical in the social, otherwise we risk oversimplifying both.

Studies of popular music and identity

I will now outline how that connection between popular music and identity has been elaborated in a variety of case studies that have a bearing on this thesis: those relating to national identity, adolescence, and those that investigate identity through the lyrics of popular music. Not all those who study popular music and identity would agree with me that popular music is a resource for building one's sense of identity. Nonetheless, the cases detailed below show how popular music cannot be separated from the study of social identity, regardless of the place or time of production, performance, or consumption.

Miyairi (2015, 161) notes that people's perceptions of what constitutes Japanese popular music differ. Is it music made by Japanese people? Is it music sung in Japanese? Is it music made in Japan? But despite all these differences in perception, there is a tacit agreement that Japanese popular music is inherently linked to Japan and a sense of Japaneseness, a phenomenon replicated the world over. This sense of popular music having a national quality or belonging to a particular national community can result both from a soft-power branding exercise by governments (Manticore-Griffin, 2011), and the "imaginative modelling" of society by those who consider themselves to be a part of it (Waterman, 1990, 372). Larkey (1992, 153) sees "Austropop", 20th Century Austrian pop music, as a "hegemonically determined, mediated and negotiated system of cultural boundaries" that came about through the remodelling of English-language pop music by individual musicians in Austria, but was later "re-ethnicised" by the recording industry as something inherently Austrian. In Larkey's view, the idea of a national popular music is akin to Barthes (1957) notion of myth, a view that makes natural the oppressive ideas of a government. Baker's (2008, 186) analysis of the Eurovision song contest agrees that the contest is "exploited by states in their projects of constructing identities", mythical musical portrayals of particular countries. And Morra sees the Britishness of British popular music as being a constructed "national canon" " (2014, 10) that aims to "locate a confident and contemporary English identity", but one that ends up privileging "white, English-born men in guitar groups" (Morra, 2014, 186)

Other analyses of popular music and national identity see both performers and consumers as having more power to choose how they want to identify themselves with a national (or diasporic) form of popular music, even if the concept of a national popular music is itself born out of unequal power relations. Pacini Hernandez (2010) makes just such an argument in her analysis of identity and Latino popular music. In a review of studies of Asian popular music and identity, Matsue (2013, 7) argues that "contemporary popular music…is from its inception a complex synthesis of both local and global cross fertilization" — meaning that we need to stop talking so much about Western vs. "indigenous" (2013, 18) influences on form, and focus more broadly on the way popular music talks about nationality. Lie (2012) analyses the Koreanness of K-pop as essentially empty, an artificial genre for export, because it has so little connection to Korean traditional music. But this misses the point that something need not be traditional to be

national. All that matters is that people feel that popular music helps them tell a story about their national identity. Amongst the increasing studies of popular music and national identity published in the past few years, studying the countries of the European Union (Van Der Hoeven, 2014), Southeast Asia (Barendregt, Keppy and Schulte Nordholt, 2017), and Canada (Pattinson, 2018), that recognise both the structural and agentive aspects of popular music and national identity, Wanjala and Kebaya's (2016) study of Kenyan youth, popular music, and identity shows how youth and adolescence can be intertwined with a sense of national identity, where Kenyan popular music portrays the young as determined to shake off negative characterisations, "(stopping) at nothing in order to earn a living" (Wanjala and Kebaya, 2016, 31). Young people in popular music and its production and consumption are not simply rebellious; they embody the most hopeful discourses of national identity. Moreover, the link between youth, popular music, and identity is complicated by the fact that our adolescent or teenage years are the very years during which popular music is most important for the formation of identities; identities that are sometimes maintained for the rest of our lives.

Next, I will survey the existing literature about adolescent identity in popular music. Firstly there is the question of how popular music figures in the formation of adolescent identity. Johnstone and Katz (1957) indicated that for the group of American teenage girls they surveyed, popular music was important for how they structured their friendship groups. Later studies have continued Johnstone and Katz' uses and gratifications approach to popular music and adolescent identity, in trying to find out how and why popular music is important to adolescents. However, later studies have tended to talk more of "roles" that popular music plays in identity formation as opposed to more practical "uses". Kotarba (2002, 244) found through conversations with teenagers in Poland that in the post-Communist era, a greater access to popular music from different countries meant that their sense of what it meant "culturally to be young" was converging with a global consensus. The consensus was that of the teenager, the time in life when one is neither a child or an adult, but has the opportunity to explore a sense of self through abundant leisure time (Frith, 1985). In a study of Japanese high school students' relationship with popular music, Koizumi (2002) showed that the students (aged 15 to 18) selectively displayed or concealed their personal taste in popular music to convey particular impressions in different social situations, pointing to the performative nature of popular music in adolescent identity. On the other hand, teenagers self-report that music is important to their internal as well as their external selves, contributing to their emotional and spiritual stability during what is a turbulent period in their lives (Bosacki and O'Neill, 2015). Welch *et al.* (2004, 253) see music as a "'mirror' that enables us to recognise aspects of the self…the specific properties of the music also come to represent or transform the image reflected in and through its structures". Music is important to all of us who encounter it, especially adolescents — that much is clear.

But why does the music we consume when we are young continue to affect the way we see ourselves throughout our lives? Why should adolescent self-perception be of relevance to this study, when songs about adolescence are consumed by those of all ages? In cognitive psychology, there is a phenomenon called the reminiscence bump, whereby autobiographical memory is stronger for adolescence and early adulthood. Rathbone *et al.* (2008, 1412) suggest that this is because "memories form this time are concerned with self-defining experiences", and it is also possible that such memories coincide with "cultural life script events"; for example, starting university, a first romantic relationship (Rathbone, O'Connor and Moulin, 2017) . This phenomenon extends to popular music; songs in popular circulation during one's adolescence are "more likely to elicit strong autobiographical association in older adults", with age 14 the

peak age to encounter such music (Jakubowski *et al.*, 2020, 10). Zimprich and Wold (2016, 642) also found that when played high-charting songs from different years, people were more likely to simply <u>recall</u> those from "adolescence and young adulthood" (even if they weren't attached to particular memories), positing that listening to music during this time supports "the formation of a social and personal identity". Krumhansl and Zupnick (2013) showed that people tend to also remember the music that their parents listened to when they were young, a phenomenon described as "cascading reminiscence bumps".

What about popular music, that, like the data in this study, portrays adolescence, then? As far as I can tell, there has not been any research about how people relate to portrayals of adolescence, and how those portrayals might be connected to memory. However, there has been plenty analysing adolescents in popular music, mostly as performers, and most of those female performers. Driscoll's (2002) comprehensive study of portrayals of girls across Anglosphere popular culture is one of the founding texts of a field called "girlhood studies" (Handyside and Taylor-Jones, 2016, 1). Due to their age and their gender, girls are doubly vulnerable to the exploitation of their bodies and their image, and this imbalance of power is behind the large number of fetishised images of girls across popular culture. This has always been true of the globally successful girl pop groups who provide much inspiration for the production of female *aidoru*, from the 1960s (Stras, 2011) to the 1980s (Warwick, 2007). Often, female adolescent performers are less musician, more "commodity, and so available — either as a sexual partner or as a best friend//role model/big (or little) sister" (Stras, 2011, 3). Adolescent male performers in popular music are more often found within less overtly manufactured genres like rock (Whiteley, 2003), and at the very least will be perceived as having more agency than their female counterparts, leaving their images theoretically less open to exploitation. Of relevance to this study of struggle as value is the research of James (2015) into "resilience" in popular music. James (2015, 82) notes that women and girls are more likely to perform "overcoming" in their music as "ideally feminine subjects are expected to overcome the burdens traditionally associated with femininity"; because we assume that women and girls are already at a disadvantage, we are keen to see them fight back against that in their performance. However, I still believe that it is possible, and useful, to analyse images of adolescence as performed by both male and female *aidoru* in Japan, without losing sight of the way that those performances are governed by differing gendered vulnerabilities and expectations. Doing so could shed light on the broader significance of tropes of adolescence and their societal significance.

Studying popular music lyrics

This thesis is primarily a content analysis of lyrics. Although I will go into my methods and methodology for analysing lyrical data in the following chapter, I would also like to consider how previous studies have analysed social identity within the lyrics of popular music. Cole (1971) conducted a targeted content analysis of themes of love, religion, violence and social protest in the top 10 popular songs of the 1960s in the US Billboard singles chart. The results of this small study contradicted contemporary research alluded to by Cole (1971, 399) that had suggested young people (the presumed consumers of popular music) bought more songs that expressed violent or rebellious attitudes. Such diachronic approaches to mood in popular music lyrics across genre are common in lyrical studies to this day, with both Pettijohn and Sacco (2009) and Ikeuchi (2015) suggesting that the way people feel about economic conditions changes the popular music that is most widely consumed, with lyrics becoming more emotionally layered,

and having more references to the past and future when times become threatening.

Most English-language thematic analyses of lyrical corpora focus on the US, and make use of the Billboard Top 40 popular music charts, or charts compiled for a specific genre, as in Christenson *et al.*'s (2018) study of broad themes in American popular music (eg. "sex", "alienation"), and prevalent sociological studies of anti-social behaviour in lyrics such as Alexopoulos and Taylor's (2019) analysis of infidelity across genre, or Peteet *et al.*'s (2020) research into portrayals of prescription drug use in US-charting hip-hop. Although these sociologically minded studies provide invaluable models for mixed-methods analysis of popular music lyrics (such as studying word frequency and thematically coding), they have an unhelpful tendency to assume that lyrics are a direct influence on social behaviour and on anti-social identities. Moreover, the existence of easy-to-access application programming interfaces (APIs) on comprehensive anglophone lyric websites such as Genius (Genius Media Group, 2022) is not particularly helpful in the Japanese context, where lyrical data is less readily available for compilation. Relevant studies of social dimensions of Japanese popular music lyrics include Ohde *et al.*'s (2013) inquiry into sentiment (defined through keywords such as "happy" and "sad") in songs in receipt of a Japan Record Award from 1978 to 2012, and Sadamura's (2019) comparative study of a set of prolific Japanese lyricists and the distinctive features of their lyric-writing, both conducted with the aid of KH Coder (Higuchi, 2015), an open-source software package that facilitates mixed-method analysis of corpora (and which has been utilised for the study at hand). Both of these studies succeed in situating their data within the wider music industry and within Japanese societal trends, something I strive for in this thesis.

Thematic analysis approaches have been applied to more specific cases of lyrics and social identity, for example, the lyrics of specific singer-songwriters. For example, Fish (1995) analysed lyrics written by Kurt Cobain, the late frontman of rock band Nirvana, arguing that audiences identified with the personal vulnerability and self-critique expressed in the lyrics, and Huff (1994) organises the lyrics of country music singer-songwriter Willie Nelson into eleven different themes, arguing that for audiences "lyrics are dominant in country as in no other form of music" (Huff, 1994, 91). Although this claim is not well supported by evidence and is very US-centric, Armstrong's study of work and identity in the songs of country musician Johnny Cash (2013) does suggest that the country genre foregrounds issue of social identity more than others, a quality that has been shown to be shared by hip-hop lyrics (Kubrin, 2005, Roth-Gordon, 2012, Laybourn, 2018). Helland (2018) examines both the lyrics and music videos of a Japanese artist called M.O.N.A, who performs a subgenre of hip-hop called Chicana rap that is itself grounded in Latino-American experiences. Helland shows how visual presentation and lyrics combine to create a "hybrid" identity, grounded in the genre trope of identity talk. Identity in lyrics can also be linked to particular localities, on a smaller scale than the national, in which listeners are invited to identify with the song protagonist's association with "lyrical places" (Gibson and Connell, 2007). Goleşteanu (2007) writes about the lyrics of the alternative rock band Pulp: how the British city, and women in the city serve both as a projection of the singer's insecurities and an allegory for "British life in the twentieth century". In a study of how lyrical places are used in marketing, Long (2014) notes a disjuncture between the eccentricities of the city of Sheffield as portrayed in the lyrics of popular music and the way that these same features are incorporated into a tourist marketing strategy.

Surveying a larger body of lyrics, Tlili (2016, 228) describes how canonical places and times in UK popular music (such as nightclubs) project an attitude of "political apathy" on the part of youth cultures. Tlili's concept of the canonical fusion of place and time (chronotope) in genres of popular music is taken from the literary philosopher Bakhtin (1981, 84), who coined

the term to refer to "a formally constructive category" of "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed". He also argued that the treatment of time and space within literary works help define genre and how character is constructed (Bakhtin, 1981, 85), and although the idea of the chronotope was not originally conceived of for use beyond literary studies, popular music scholars studying concepts ranging from the "country" in country musics (Dent, 2009, Fox, 2004) to "creole" in Cape Verdean diasporic hip-hop (Pardue, 2018) have used the chronotopic analysis to account for how tropes of time and place are constitutive of genre and identity. As will be seen in this chapter and in subsequent chapters, the question of whether *aidoru* music is a genre or not is fiercely contested, but I have found the concept of chronotope especially useful for this study, because of the overwhelming importance of high school or university as settings for the trope of *seishun*, but also the specific way that time is treated within portrayals of *seishun* in *aidoru* lyrics and wider Japanese popular culture. Ontological security is evidently sought through popular music in many different ways, and *aidoru* are a fascinating case study of its processes.

aidoru and Japanese popular music

    aidoru are a much-analysed popular cultural phenomenon in both English and Japanese academic literature. In this section, I will take a look at how idols have been written about in the context of the wider Japanese pop (J-pop) industry, and how scholars have treated *aidoru* production, performance (or text), and consumption. Because there is so little existing academic literature about male *aidoru* in either English or Japanese, and to reinforce the approach of this thesis to the broader theme of *seishun*, I will be discussing male and female *aidoru* in an integrated fashion. One of my main motivations in writing this thesis is to show that the themes contained within idol lyrics portraying adolescence are not (only) a reflection of sensationalised aspects of youth in Japanese society such as teen sex work (Kinsella, 2007) or "hyposexuality" (Gershon, 2022), but are closely related to less headline-grabbing aspects of life in Japan, such as finding work, life course, and contemporary politics. Part of the popular Anglophone media focus on shocking aspects of Japanese *aidoru* may be an attempt to grapple with incidents of mistreatment and exploitation that have affected female *aidoru*; for example, a female *aidoru* shaving her head in apparent penance for having a forbidden sexual relationship uncovered by the press (BBC News, 2013), or the alleged failure of management to prevent an assault on member of another female *aidoru* group (Herman, 2019). I hope the diversity of the existing literature shows the potential for socially critical perspectives on *aidoru* content that take into account issues of sexualisation and harassment without trivialising or brushing them aside.

    Firstly, I will examine the academic writing about the Japanese music industry as a whole. The idea of a Japanese popular music, as opposed to "popular song", which had a more critical and political stance, became popular in the 1960s according to Nagahara's study of the growth of Japan's popular music under the American occupation (2017, 192). By 1970, 90% of respondents to a government survey believed that they were part of society's "middle stratum", and the existence of a self-identifying middle class produced a transformed market for recorded music (Nagahara, 2017, 192). Nonetheless, the notion of "J-pop", scholarly consensus holds, only came about in the 1980s with the founding of an FM radio station called J-WAVE, that was to play exclusively popular music from Japan (Mito, 2007, 117, Mōri, 2009, 478, Miyairi, 2015, 6). After much wrangling between record executives and radio bosses, the word J-pop was settled on (though at the time, those involved in choosing the name were adamant that J-pop should <u>not</u> include *aidoru* music) (Miyairi, 2015, 7). Although all the above studies are by

Japanese researchers, both Stevens (Stevens, 2008) and Bourdaghs (2012) have written English-language overviews of J-pop's evolution. This study is particularly indebted to Carolyn Stevens' focus on "Japaneseness" in popular music from the 1950s to the present day, especially her assertion that Japaneseness is not "limited to musical aspects such as modulation and instrumentation but also entails ideologies of cultural and even intercultural identity" (2008, 11), a focus that in turn owes much to Christine Yano's work on Japaneseness in the Japanese popular folk genre of *enka* (2002). Mitsui Tōru's 2014 anthology about popular music that has been "Made in Japan" (Mitsui and Baiton, 2014) unites scholars based within and outside Japan to examine aspects of Japanese popular music that fall both in and outside radio—friendly pop, and analyses important aspects of contemporary Japanese popular music. For example, Brunt (2014, 38) writes about the importance of *Kōhaku Uta Gassen*, a New Year's TV show that features the year's popular music acts and retains its purpose of "providing cultural affirmation", originally conceived of during the post-war period. And Yamasaki (2014, 204) makes a fascinating comparison between voice actors of anime characters who sing theme songs (*anison*), and *aidoru*, who are also playing a character through the singing of songs.

Research about those who shape those characters through production has been driven by the assertion that *aidoru* music is, as Condry (2011, 242) states "a category defined by an industrial approach to production and marketing, developed synergies among media, especially radio and broadcast TV", an approach that, according to Lukács (2010), was developed in the 1990s through the popularity of "trendy" TV dramas featuring aspirational lifestyle role models — *aidoru* often feature in these shows, and continue to do so today. In simple terms, one of the roles of *aidoru* is to create an image so universally likeable and associated with youth and energy that it can be used to market products ranging from recruitment services to beauty products, and it is no coincidence that Japanese TV adverts are twice as likely to feature celebrities as US TV adverts (Praet, 2001). *aidoru* are promoted and built from the ground up by their entertainment agency, or *jimusho*, and Marx (2012, 36) describes how *jimusho* are "responsible for performer creation, management, and overall production. As a few *jimusho* have such control over Japan's entertainment industry as a whole, and own the whole production process, they have "a very strong influence on the long-term state of Japanese cultural tastes" (Marx, 2012, 52), with boyband impresario Johnny Kitagawa being a good example. *aidoru* debut when they are young and "incomplete" (Futoshi, 2012, 70), meaning that they have a limited shelf life, and must be shuffled on and off the music scene in a conveyor-belt fashion, or, to use Mōri's (2016, 228) allegory, like the numerous vaguely interchangeable items on a fast-food menu.

However, not all scholars see *aidoru* production as a late-capitalist exercise in the profitable and disposable. Nakagawa (2016) and Yano (2016) both see male *aidoru* production in particular as being revolutionary in the creativity of their production, contributing to a national mood and sense of aesthetics. Nishi (2017, 16) argues that *aidoru* "played a key role" in creating the ebullient mood of 1990s economic bubble-era Japan, whilst Galbraith (2016) demonstrates how the "labor" that goes into both female *aidoru* performance and fandom has perceived benefits to both producers and consumers. Tajima (2020, 132) shows how the boundaries between *aidoru* "texts" and their interlocutors are increasingly blurred, with fans remixing and performing *aidoru* songs as *aidoru* watch (either virtually or in person); *aidoru* have been "cultivated from mediatised communication", and thus "mediate communication" (Tajima, 2020, 126). I hope that by combining a systematic study of lyrical content with interviews with lyricists and analysis of Japanese media history, this thesis can illuminate all these complexities

of production; how lyrics may be both carefully crafted according to the social identity of the lyricist and imagined consumer, but also the result of a production process that is trying to find the most efficient way to maximise profit from a group of performers with a limited commercial lifecycle.

Alongside these production-focused analyses of *aidoru*, there is a wealth of multi-modal textual analysis of *aidoru* performance and output. Kinsella (Kinsella, 1995) writes about *aidoru* as a broader reification of the *kawaii* (cute) in Japanese popular culture. With specific reference to emblematic 1980s female aidoru Matsuda Seiko, and male *aidoru* such as Tanokin Trio, Kinsella (1995, 251) posits that the phenomenon of "cute stars" idolises childhood, and thus constitutes a rebellion against the values of adult (*shakaijin*) society, including "the maintenance of the work ethic". This research will show that the latter assertion by Kinsella is not strictly true, because the idolising of the adolescent can also represent the idolising of the work ethic itself, through the elevation of idealised struggle within *seishun*. Nonetheless, the aesthetic of performed *kawaii* remains a significant part of *aidoru* aesthetics, as shown by Keith and Hughes' (2016) study of the "embodied *kawaii*" in the voices of female *aidoru* singers, which found that youth is idealised and objectified in vocalisations and in gestures. The result is a compliant, schoolgirl-like persona, whose sexualisation and willingness to be sexualised represents vicarious rebellion on the part of (male) fans (Kinsella, 2007, Kinsella, 2014).

Although we must problematise the idea of *kawaii* being an innocent depiction of teenage female performers, it is also important to be aware that the word *kawaii* is also applied to male performers. This has been shown by Darling-Wolf's (2004) study of male *aidoru* group SMAP, and Glasspool's (2012) study of male *aidoru* group Arashi, and is contrary to Mattar's (2008, 119) unsupported assertion that *kawaii* is "only used in reference to females". Moreover Schilling (1997, 50) argues that *aidoru* perform ordinariness as much as cuteness, a sentiment echoed by Stevens (2008), who gives the example of Onyanko Club, the aidoru group formed on a weekly TV show in 1986 from teenage female viewers who proved that "idols were perfect but not out of reach". Richardson (2016, 84) even goes as far as to suggest that "idols are not idols if they do not appear natural", but this ignores the overtly manufactured nature of *aidoru*, something that is an established part of the *aidoru* brand. Aoyagi's influential study of *aidoru* aesthetics extends the religious etymology of the word *aidoru* itself to analyse *aidoru* as religious objects, a metaphor that can help to illustrate the way the ordinariness of *aidoru* is paradoxically elevated above what is best described as ordinary ordinariness

But what do consumers gain from listening to *aidoru* music, or being fans of *aidoru*? If we are to believe Galbraith and Karlin (2012b, 19), this is a pointless question that distracts us from the exploitative nature of the *aidoru* industry, and more generally, the "culture industry", making us "complicit" with all the worst of *aidoru* production. However, I would argue that not posing this question, especially to a non-Japanese speaking audience who may already have a skewed view of only the most extreme elements of Japanese popular culture, results in the entirely unnuanced transformation of a complex and socially significant genre of music into the lurid headlines quoted at the beginning of this section. For one thing, being a fan of *aidoru* allows the fan to have an imagined relationship with the *aidoru* that fan studies scholars refer to as "para-social" (Stever, 2011), in that it exists alongside conventional real-life relationships, as explored by Nagaike (2012) in relation to female fans of male *aidoru*, and by Dent-Spargo (2017) in relation to male fans of female *aidoru*, with the latter finding that the ability of male fans to choose their favourite female *aidoru* amongst many within the *aidoru* group AKB48 gives them a sense of empowerment in their relationships, a domain where many feel powerless (Dent-Spargo, 2017, 188). Dent-Spargo's argument recalls the idea of ontological security, or security

in who we feel we are in society. *aidoru* media contributes to ontological security for non-fans as well. Zaborowski (2015, 144) researched how Japanese people use popular music in their everyday lives, and found that for his participants, *aidoru*, in all their imperfections, demonstrate the fact that "in Japan, innate skills only include physical attractiveness. Everything else is labour; hard effort that is appreciated not because of the result, but…because of the journey that the idols undertake with their audiences". Sakai (2014) has suggested that *aidoru* reflect back to Japanese people the value of a particular mentality, that of the "big-shot loser" (*hetare maccho*); someone who takes pride in seemingly pointless striving in search of middle-class success, a performance of effort, which Yano (2016, 188) and Ōta (2021) see the now disbanded *aidoru* boyband SMAP as embodying through their lyrics and persona.

Recalling the problems of *nihonjinron*, we must interrogate the concept of effort or struggle (*ganbaru*), raised in the hypothesis of this thesis, as necessarily an essential, untranslatable or "Japanese" value. Ōkawa (2016) is critical of scholars such as Amanuma (2004) who do so, and looks instead to the post-war struggle to conceptualise Japanese success to account for the prominence of discourses of effort in culture and society. Yoneyama (2001) and Kariya (2013) show how these discourses of effort have been especially at home in education policy and in the language used to speak to students about their work and ambitions, assuming "egalitarianism" through hard work (Kariya, 2013, 103).This assumed meritocracy of effort finds its way into TV dramas (Leung, 2004), and into films featuring *aidoru* (Nelson, 2016). In summary, the notion that anyone in Japan can be made to matter through very ordinary effort is one of the key stories told by *aidoru* performance. Painter (1994, 74) describes televised representations of *seishun* "meritocracy" as relating to youth's "de-politicization" (Painter, 1997, 74), but I argue that a closer examination of the history and transmedia of idolised *seishun* reveals a more complex relationship between youth, politics, and social identity. Thus, in the context of existing research, it is important to investigate how stories in *aidoru* lyrics intersect with the chronotope of adolescence, so closely tied to the Japanese school, and so present throughout Japanese popular culture, as my media case study chapter shows.

Based on the existing academic literature, I have established the way in which I will be studying the theme of *seishun* in the lyrics of Japanese *aidoru* music. Identity is a sense of place in society that is personally and reflexively negotiated in relation to social structure. Popular music, and the lyrics of popular music, are both a resource for shaping one's social identity, and evidence of the structures and conventions that may shape it. By understanding that *aidoru* music is both a style of production and a style of performance reproduced in different ways depending on the gender of the performer, but united by its privileging of performed inexperience through adolescence, we can begin to understand the trope (and chronotope) of *seishun* and its potential implications for contemporary Japanese social identity. The methodological basis for my analysis and contextualisation of *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics will be detailed in the following methodology chapter.

Methodology

Research design

This dissertation has two objectives: to describe the representations of *seishun* in *aidoru*

lyrics, and to consider the significance of these representations for contemporary Japanese identity. It seeks to build an exploratory picture of *seishun* as a trope within Japanese *aidoru music*, and necessarily seeks to do two things — firstly to ask "what is this text actually talking about?", and then, crucially, to consider "why does what this text is talking about matter?". One potential flaw that I recognise in this method of questioning is the inbuilt assumption that stylised representations of youth and adolescence are particularly significant to *aidoru* as performers in the first place. This is why the rich academic literature on the visual aspects of *aidoru* is so important (Black, 2008, Tajima, 2017); it is evident from the presentation of *aidoru* that they are intended to be seen by the consumer as adolescents, or even akin to adolescents Glasspool, 2012, Nagaike, 2012) in the case of older *aidoru* performers. My thesis aims to supplement these studies of *aidoru* aesthetics by investigating the words and conventions used to portray adolescence though lyrics, an accessible yet under-utilised form of textual data.

I will not only be analysing lyrics as human mediations of assumptions about how society should look, but also the humans who act as those mediators. The lyricists interviewed in this thesis who write for *aidoru* music are native Japanese speakers, raised in Japan. The way their lyrical output reflects the political economy of the music industry within which they work, as well as basic societal assumptions about education, family, and life course, will form a vital component of my study of the significance of why *seishun* is represented in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics particular ways. By comparing the thoughts of *aidoru* lyricists on their songwriting process and their own experiences of *aidoru* music (as fans or otherwise) with critical thematic analysis of my purposefully constructed corpus of *aidoru* lyrics, I hope to provide a case study of how popular music acts as a resource for reconciling life stories and ideals with the realities of contemporary society. Because *aidoru* lyrics are produced within the histories of Japan's society and media, I will also be tracing these narrative threads back through texts and moments in Japan that have been significant for popular cultural conceptualisation of adolescence via a chapter of case studies of popular music, television, film, and video games.

At the outset of this PhD, I had planned to do 6 months of fieldwork in Tokyo from March to September. Corresponding to a Japanese university semester, this length of fieldwork would have allowed me to obtain a student visa, allowing me better access to scarce accommodation during the Tokyo Olympics. Whilst there, I would visit archives (such as the National Diet Library and the Broadcast Library) to collect my Japanese-language source materials, and conduct semi-structured, synchronous, in-person interviews with participating *aidoru* lyricists. However, weeks before I was due to fly to Tokyo, the University of Sheffield suspended PhD student travel in light of the COVID-19pandemic, and government restrictions on travel in both the UK and Japan followed. In discussion with my supervisors, and after reviewing the literature on remote interview methods, I decided to conduct asynchronous email interviews of participants, and to postpone a visit to Tokyo on a tourist visa until whenever travel became possible so that I could visit media archives and conduct in-person interviews. But even a postponed visit became increasingly impractical as border restrictions continued into 2021, let alone the fact I had a clinically vulnerable partner and a pregnancy to take into consideration. As I result, I decided to make my planned archival research chapter into a media case study chapter, retaining my prior aim of documenting evolving depictions of *seishun* in *aidoru* and *aidoru*-adjacent media. There have been advantages and drawbacks to conducting my research in this way, which I will elaborate on below. To restate, this PhD project involves collecting three different types of data: a purposefully constructed corpus of *aidoru* lyrics, asynchronous email interviews with lyricists who have written for *aidoru* performers, and multimedia data from relating to the evolution of

seishun as a trope in popular music and popular culture. The research design of my thesis can be summarised in the following diagram:
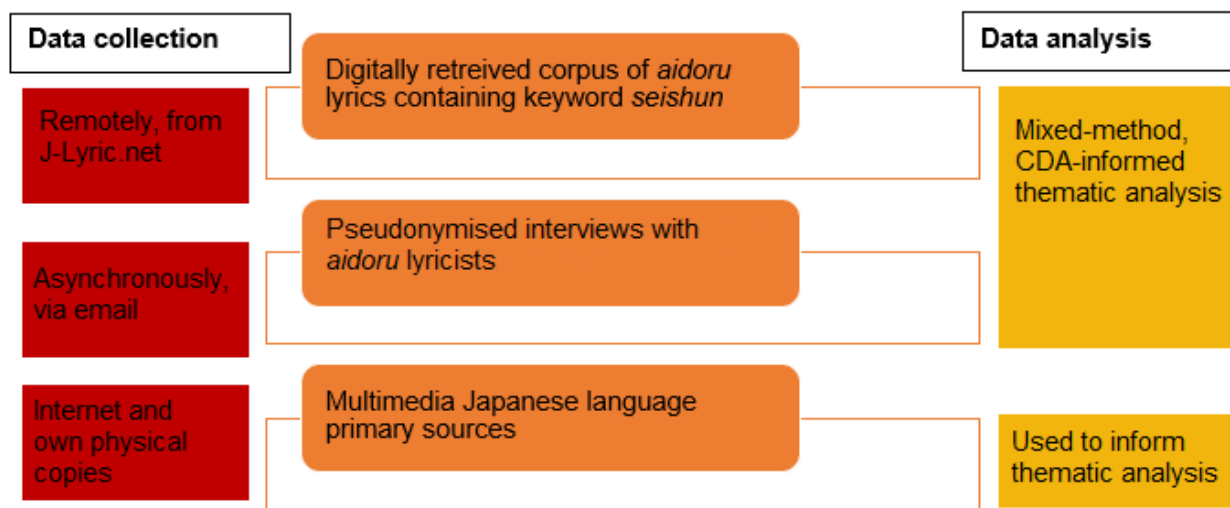

Figure 1-Research design.

I will now discuss the different stages of my research process individually, considering the practical and theoretical issues of each. I hope to show that my critical, mixed-methods approach has made the best use of the data I have, in the time frame I have been allocated, and within the particular challenges of a global pandemic, as well as the specific copyright environment of the Japanese music industry. Firstly, I will explain how the theoretical background of this research project has contributed to my use of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a methodological framework. Second, I will outline my reasoning for using a hybrid of thematic and content analyses to examine my lyrical and interview data. Thirdly, I will explain the process of gathering both lyrical and interview data. Finally, I will discuss how I have made use of archival data to help me think about what the representations in my lyrical and interview data can tell us about contemporary Japanese social identity.

Discourse analysis as a methodological framework

The methodological framework I will be using for this is called Discourse Analysis. It is a group of theories and methods that aim to study the social aspects of *discourses* in *texts*. A text in this case does not necessarily have to be a newspaper article or book made up of words. In the discourse analysis, a text is any media, including songs (Bradby, 2005, Schröter, 2015, Power, Dillane and Devereux, 2016), television programmes (Holmes, 2004, Perkins, 2010, Pafford and Matusitz, 2017) or even toys (Wohlwend, 2009, Van Leeuwen, 2008) where meanings "are produced in a convention-based system which can be apprehended by analysis" (Hughes, 2007, 249). Thus, I will be treating the lyrics of *aidoru* pop songs as texts, both in the sense that they are collections of words, but also that they contain conventional meanings that have social significance, which the audience is able to see connections between (van der Does—Ishikawa, 2013, 46). I argue that because *aidoru* pop music is created within a relatively insular production system that can sustain itself without the need to access the global music market (Futoshi, 2012, 151), the conventions in meaning (or "discourses") that are produced therein can tell us about how the concept and experience of *seishun* ("youth") is valued as a

part of Japaneseness.

The idea of the text, in this case, a lyric, as a collection of conventional meanings that may be interpreted to glean something about its social aspect owes much to the field of semiotics, the study of 'signs' in society. As discussed in the previous literature review chapter, Foucault (1972, 1971, 1975) has written about discourse in semiotics with discourses being thought of as conventions of speaking about the social that reinforce the hold that the powerful in society have over the powerless. Discourses can also simply be the way we speak about particular "themes" or "topics" outside of social research (Baker, 2006, 3) for example, "public discourse" (Reuters, 2013) (ways of speaking about things in the public sphere), or "political discourse" (Schwartz, 2018) (ways of speaking about politics), but discourse analysis suggests that the way we speak about particular things within texts, the "broader ideas communicated by a text" (Machin, 2010, 7), are themselves of significance to social research.

How we talk about things matters, but why it matters is a matter of disagreement among scholars. Those taking a so-called "Foucaultian" discourse analysis approach (van Leeuwen, 1993, 193) do not tend to analyse the text itself, or how it is put together, but rather "its conditions of existence" (Foucault and Nazzaro, 1972, 227) — in other words, the power relations within which it was created. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is the name most often given to this type of discourse analysis that focuses on being *critical* of the picture of society painted by a text, and is among the most frequently utilised forms of discourse analysis in contemporary social science research. Although Foucault may have popularised the term discourse as a convention of power relations within a text, one criticism that may be levelled at the semiotician's way of seeing texts is that by paying too much attention to some greater ideological purpose outside of the text, the way people interact with the text itself and the broader topics that the text itself addresses are often missed (Hajer, 1995, Hughes, 2007).

On the other hand, the application of linguistic analysis to a text in combination with a critical standpoint has led to the development of "Faircloughean" discourse analysis, after the sociolinguist Norman Fairclough who first proposed it (Fairclough, 1985). Fairclough himself (2003, 2) refers to his own approach as "textually oriented discourse analysis", and argues that texts have three main meanings in society: action (what the text is trying to do, for example, persuade someone to buy a song), representation (what aspects of society the text portrays), and identification (how people do or do not see themselves in texts) (Fairclough, 2003, 28). It is this type of CDA framework that better suits this thesis, as these are the types of question I am interested in answering about *aidoru* lyrics. However, Fairclough's own assessment of those who perpetuate discourses (mainly political actors in traditional CDA scholarship) as using conventional, socially significant ways of representing things for "the concealment of problematic 'extra-discursive' interests", can, as Engelbert argues, can lead us to conversely overestimate the intentionality behind texts (Engelbert, 2012, 54).

CDA, although qualitative in nature, is not a method. It mandates no set way of analysing texts. It is a commitment by the researcher to view all texts as complex reflections of societies. CDA is, then, better described as an interdisciplinary approach (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, 75, Wodak, 2001, 2) that sees the conventions we use to talk about things not only as reflective of inequalities in society in a structuralist sense, but also as helping to shape how we act in society (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, van Leeuwen, 1993) in what might be termed a critical realist view of discourse (Fairclough, 2003, 13). We cannot know everything about a text, and our own background greatly prejudices our analysis, but it is still worth looking at how words are used in texts to understand the assumptions that underlie a text that at first sight seems quite superficial; for example, the lyrics to a pop song. Because CDA is more framework than

methodology, scholars working under its umbrella have applied it to fields ranging from "social linguistic analysis, interpretative structuralism, critical linguistic analysis, genealogical analysis, discursive psychology, narrative analysis, literary analysis, content analysis" (Smith and Bell, 2007, 82). Few have attempted to conduct CDA-informed analysis of a corpus of texts, partly because the analysis of large volumes of texts is "labour intensive", and seen as incompatible with qualitative research (Baker, 2006, 9). CDA studies of corpora have been largely studies of online news coverage (Brabham, 2012, Ras, 2017, Samaie and Malmir, 2017) or of open-facing archives (Hunter and MacDonald, 2017), because of the practical reason that online archives, including social media websites, have easily accessible Application Programmer Interfaces (APIs), allowing researchers to export large volumes of data to the application of their choice for analysis. Moreover, themes or classifications of data are often already encoded in metadata when it comes to news coverage or political archives.

However, if we are to take CDA's notion of the text as an object of critical enquiry seriously, we must feel empowered to apply it to a greater variety of texts, including popular music lyrics, which are linked in a vast network of genre conventions and tropes. The linguist Robin Lakoff, writing about linguistic discourse analysis that involves close analysis of the features of conversations, asserts that "discourse of all types is a potent creator and enforcer of identity, and it is the sum of our daily linguistic interactions that, to a very large degree, creates us and recreates us continually" (2009, 144). Although we do not interact with lyrics in the same way that we interact with others in conversation, we encounter the lyrics of popular music on a daily basis, and those words have the same power as resources to help us imagine who we are as spoken words do. We can learn from those who analyse discourse in a linguistic sense that there is no text, just as there is no utterance, that is "an inert object, complete in itself as a bearer of abstract meanings" (Bazerman and Prior, 2009, 1). How can we, then begin to understand the conventional ways of speaking about society, the discourses, contained within a medium that is so seemingly shallow? The first step, as described in the introduction to this chapter, is to account for exactly what *aidoru* lyrics are talking about when they mention *seishun,* and to conduct an analysis of their content.

Content analysis or thematic analysis?

Content analysis is defined by Huckin (2009, 16) as "the identifying, quantifying, and analysing of specific words, phrases, concepts, or other observable semantic data in a text or body of texts with the aim of uncovering some underlying thematic or rhetorical pattern running throughout these texts". The use of the plural "texts" here is key; it is a method for analysing features across one or more instances of media, and thus lends itself to larger corpora rather than the close reading of a few key texts. Content differs from spontaneous conversation in that someone has made that text for someone else to consume for entertainment, and it is important to be aware of this when conducting content analysis. Titscher *et al.* (2000, 10) point out that early content analyses "presuppose" that what the researcher sees as the most important features or meanings in a particular text (such as a lyric) are the ones that the producer had in mind, or that consumers are bound to pick up on these features. For example, Horton (1957), Carey (1969), and Cole (1971) all examine what popular music tells us about romantic dating in Anglophone adolescent culture, fitting with the scholarly consensus at the time about popular music being worthy of analysis due to what it can tell us about teenagers and their attitudes to relationships. I have already established that, unlike the above-mentioned studies, this thesis will not treat media texts as having a message that transmitted in a linear fashion through producer to consumer. However, I believe there is merit in the commitment of these same

scholars to analysing lyrics through both quantitative accounting for common words or themes, and then further qualitative analysis of the social significance of those words or themes.

This project is a content analysis of the "summative" (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, 10) "bottom up" type, meaning that I am looking at texts with some particular questions in mind, looking at relevant features and the conventions within which they are used, and then "using these features of conventions as examples in a descriptive argument" (Barton, 2009, 67). Huckin (2009) clarifies five steps for inductive content analysis:

1. Decide on what you are interested in studying within texts.
2. Find or create a corpus where all texts correspond to your interest.
3. Decide on the features to compare within texts.
4. Gather data.
5. Interpret findings.

In the case of this dissertation, my object of study is *seishun* within *aidoru* lyrics, my corpus is a purposefully constructed set of *aidoru* lyrics that contain the keyword *seishun*, the features I will be comparing are the broader themes that *seishun* is associated with in its representations, the corpus will be compiled digitally, and the findings will be interpreted in conjunction with my interview and archive research. The point is to "discover patterns and relationships within findings that an unaided observer would otherwise easily overlook" (Krippendorff, 2013, 188).

By looking for themes in my content analysis, I am also taking from a social science method called thematic analysis, which pays much closer attention to the process of how themes are "coded", or brought together by analysing one's research data, which can be either human communication or media texts. Braun and Clarke (2006, 82) describe a theme as capturing "something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of *patterned* response within the data set". Although content analysis is distinct from thematic analysis in that, with content analysis the interpretation of findings in a qualitative sense is secondary to the quantification of patterns within data (for example, word frequency and co-occurrences of particular phrases) (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013, 398), I feel that the two approaches can be combined in this study, and applied to both lyrical and interview data.

I argue that Braun and Clarke's (2006, 87) own six-step process for creating themes out of data is a good way of solving the issue of how imprecise the process of isolating "features" in content analysis can be. They concentrate on this third step in Huckin's content analysis process, and encourage the researcher to constantly consider whether the way they mark-up themes is reflective of their dataset. These steps include:

1. Transcribing data, re-reading and recording initial thoughts.
2. Producing intial "codes", akin to preliminary themes and grouping data by interesting features.
3. Searching for themes amongst these codes.
4. Considering whether these themes make sense within the broader context of the codes, and within data as a whole
5. Continuously refining each theme and the "story of analysis", including assigning names to themes.
6. Producing a report including "vivid, compelling extract examples" that relate back to the research question(s).

At the same time, content analysis can help guide thematic analysis. As noted by Feltham and King (2016, 5) in their analysis of how abortion was presented in South African newspapers, using quantitative "directed content analysis" to help track how present particular patterns in data allowed them to better understand how those patterns were associated with particular words or concepts, and how they changed over time. In fact, the patterns that Feltham and King seek to analyse are *discourses*. This is where Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a framework becomes a part of this thesis' methods.

On the other hand, although Braun and Clarke (2013, 5) acknowledge that "qualitative data might be converted to a numerical representation and analysed quantitatively", they are sceptical about how useful it is to use numbers when reporting qualitative research, due to the variability involved in collecting qualitative data, especially from people (Braun and Clarke, 2013, 261). I recognise the aforementioned issue, and that is why I intend to apply numerical descriptions (namely, descriptive statistics on word and theme frequency) only to my secondary lyrical data, where the dataset I am working with is much larger than my interviews (where the detailed thoughts of seven participants merit a more "thick" description). Nonetheless, I still maintain that when working across qualitative data types, it makes sense to combine the quantitative aspects of content analysis with the qualitative aspects of thematic analysis so as to create "interpretive stories" (Braun and Clarke, 2019, 594) out of data, and for that reason, I have turned to a version of thematic analysis that allows for both within a discourse analysis framework.

Critical thematic analysis
Lawless and Chen (2018) argue for just such an approach in their advocacy of a methodology that they call Critical Thematic Analysis. They see limitations in both the hesitance of Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis to connect qualitative analysis to "everyday discourses", and the lack of utility of linguistic CDA's "unpacking of syntax and grammar" for understanding the everyday (Lawless and Chen, 2018, 95). Their process of thematic analysis includes both a (non-numerical) assessment of in what manner, and how often themes are repeated within and across texts, and an additional step in which the researchers consider the relationship between discourses they are describing in their data and "larger societal ideologies", including whose voices might be absent (Lawless and Chen, 2018, 98). Critical thematic analysis seeks to untie the "intertextual chain" from which discourses are formed, both inside and outside of texts, be they interviews or media (Lawless and Chen, 2018, 96).

The phrase "critical thematic analysis" is not unique to Lawless and Chen, having in fact been used in an analysis of survey co-written by thematic analysis scholar Virginia Braun (Terry and Braun, 2016). Moreover, Lawless and Chen express a stronger social justice-based justification for their method than underpins my research, I argue Critical Thematic Analysis' openness to different types of data, and to surveying quantity as well as quality of themes within a discourse analysis framework makes it suited to my research project, where within an intertextual chain of lyrics, interviews, and other media, I hope to understand how the theme of *seishun* is represented in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics, and what those representations can tell us about contemporary Japanese social identity. By qualitatively accounting for broad statistical trends in textual data, and then conducting a systematic thematic analysis of the same data, whilst treating those themes as discourses and coding accordingly, I have attempted to make use of the advantages of each method or approach, as depicted in Figure 2 below.
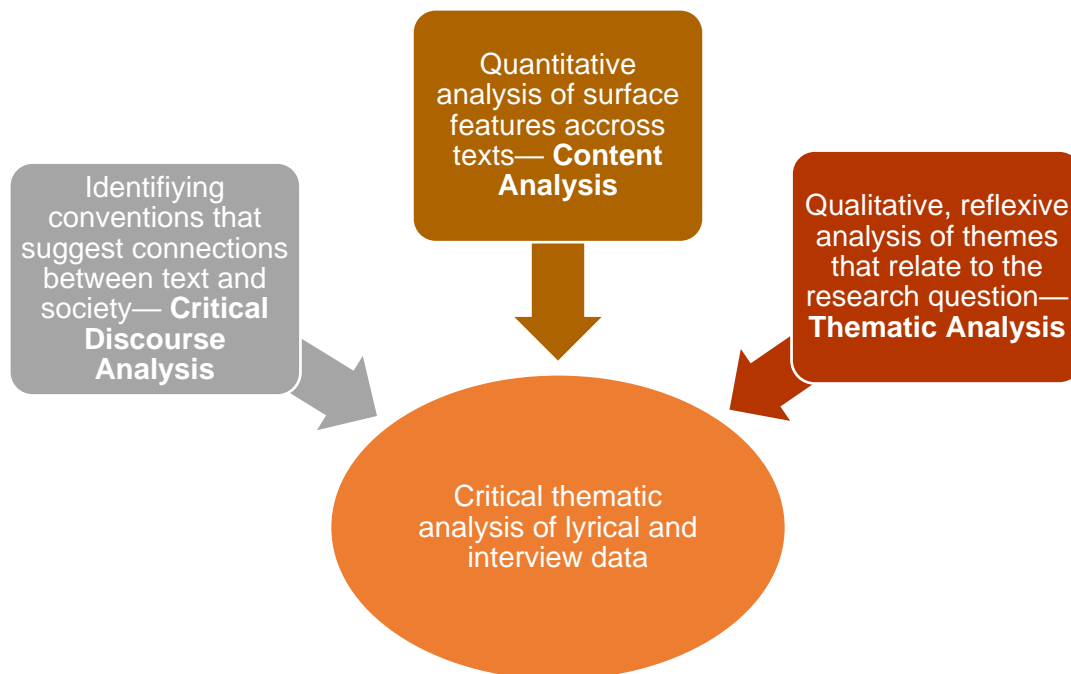
Figure 2- A synthesis of methods and approaches

What does this all mean for my study of *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics? It means that I have chosen to use a CDA-informed combination of Huckin and Braun and Clarke's steps to analyse the lyrics and interview data that I gather. I have conducted the initial quantitative analysis of each type of data separately, as I understand that popular music lyrics and spoken word vary both in complexity and form. I decided that it was not feasible in the time I had to use a second person to help me mark up my data thematically (commonly referred to as a secondary coder), but have attempt to mitigate this by compiling a document where my developing criteria for coding are recorded (a codebook, which can be found at the conclusion of this thesis as an appendix), and annotating this with diaristic notes describing my reasons for making particular coding decisions. My own synthesised set of steps for analysing my textual data, then, looks like this:

1. Collect data relevant to research questions.
2. Conduct initial quantitative analysis to establish interesting features.
3. Use these features to put together initial codes.
4. Group these codes into themes, treating themes as discourses (conventional ways of speaking about things in society).
5. Check that these themes fit with the overall story of the data, and with particular cases (lyrics, specific interviews).
6. Produce a final set of descriptive statistics about prevalence of particular themes.
7. Report on cases of particular significance to the research question or quantitative data.

My attention to the features of my data at different levels is taken from van der Does-Ishikawa's (2013, 58-59) interpretation of Critical Discourse Analysis. These levels are the micro-level features of my lyrical data (specific words and their frequencies and co-occurences), as well as the meso-level of how those lyrics are produced (interviewing lyricists), and the macro-level of

the broader discourses and societal structures that those lyrics reflect (critical thematic analysis and use of archival data). Treating my research data as reflecting different aspects of researchable reality is a way of integrating critical realism into my methodology, by acknowledging that empirical accounts of textual features, the way those features come into being, and the social structures and assumptions behind their production are three separate but interlinked objects of enquiry (Fletcher, 2017, 183). I will now explain the digital tools I have used to gather and analyse my data, with a view to making my research process as efficient as possible.

Collecting and analysing lyrical data

Whereas early lyrical content analyses gathered lyrics from chart compilation magazines, or from the booklets included with physical music media (like records and CDs), more recent lyrical content analyses make use of the large quantity of lyrics now available on the internet. Computer-aided discourse analysis is a sub-field at the intersection of discourse analysis and corpus linguistics, and as explained previously, has been mostly applied to the study of discourses within digitally archived newspaper articles, covering topics such as the portrayal of political figures within the European Union (Hardt-Mautner, 1995), of refugees and asylum seekers (Baker *et al.*, 2008), and of euthanasia debates (Stegmeier, 2012). The computer-aided aspect can refer to both the source of the data (the internet), and the way it is stored and analysed (specialist software). Something that is often left unexplained is how the researchers get the lyrics from the website(s) in question into their software of choice. Do they copy and paste lyric-by-lyric into simple text files? Do they use an application programming interface (API), a special view of the website, to search through lyrics and export them in an easy-to-process format? Or use a computer program to extract exactly the lyrics they want and download them (web-scraping)? Phrases like "compiled from an online corpus" (Bridle, 2018, 25) and "downloaded from two websites" (Petrie, Siversten and Pennebaker, 2008, 198) do little to illuminate the details of how to create a corpus in the first place.

This lack of clarity in the existing literature is compounded by the fact that it does not account for the specific problems of online lyrics that are copyrighted in Japan. Any Japanese lyrics from officially licensed online databases are formatted such that users are unable to copy those lyrics, a result of Japan's strict copyright laws (Mikami, 2016, 19). During my MA thesis, I conducted what would become a pilot study for this PhD project. I used keywords to construct a corpus, with each instance of a Japanese lyric stored in a row of a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet along with its metadata (year of release, genre). I ended up having to copy and paste some of my lyrics from unlicensed websites, which do not have in place the same block on copying of licensed "official websites", but which are less reliable and lacked much of the useful metadata I needed for my analysis. Hosoya and Suzuki (2010, 196) describe obtaining the 116 lyrics in their content analysis study of the styles of Japanese female singer-songwriters from licensed websites *Uta-Net* (Uta-Net, 2019) and *Uta Map* (Interrise Inc., 2019). This would either involve typing out all the lyrics by hand, or using the software *Lyrics Master* (Maehashi, 2018) to retrieve lyrics by artist from licensed website and export those lyrics to text files. The latter method has been used by both Wang *et al.* (2013) and Ikeuchi (2015). Though I had initially planned to write my own computer programme using the programming language Python to conduct scraping of lyrics, I came across a plugin for the Google Chrome browser called *Web Scraper.io* (Web Scraper, 2019) that allowed selective scraping of content into an Excel spreadsheet, automatically organising that content into different columns. With some trial and error, I was able to use the lyrical database *J-Lyric* (2019) to collect a corpus of 926 *aidoru* lyrics containing

the word *seishun*.

I also considered the scope of my corpus of *aidoru* lyrics. Previous corpus linguistic studies have studied particular artists (Huff, 1994, Armstrong and Greider, 2013, Czechowski, Miranda and Sylvestre, 2016), and particular genres (Baker-Kimmons and McFarland, 2011, Werner, 2012, Premkumar *et al.*, 2017) over defined periods of time. All of these studies involve some kind of purposive sampling, whether that be selecting particular songs from an artist's repertoire, or the best-selling songs of a particular genre. Others sample the most popular songs from a particular region based on that region's popular music charts, as in Arisawa's (2018) use of top 10 hits from Japanese language songs in Japan's Oricon and Billboard charts at 5 year intervals to constitute a snapshot of frequent terms in "J-pop", or Christenson *et al.*'s (2018) very large corpus study of keywords in all US Billboard Top 40 hits from 1960 to 2010 in alternating years. My research is not that different from these, but because my study aims to produce qualitative analysis of a specific theme within a specific genre <u>without</u> the computerised semantic analysis tools available to those working in English, such as the software *WMatrix* used by Kreyer (2015) and Motschenbacher (2016), or *Linguistic Inquiry and Wordcount* used by Hart and Day (2019), I have not been able to create and analyse such a large dataset, such as one consisting of all Japanese popular music charting between particular dates, or one consisting of all aidoru songs from a particular period of time. I have thus created a corpus that has already been narrowed-down by keyword (*seishun*) and genre (*aidoru*), further analysed that corpus in the manner detailed in the previous section, in order to better answer my research questions. I discuss the criteria used to determine *aidoru*ness further in the lyrical analysis chapter that follows this.

I formatted and analysed the corpus using three pieces of software: Microsoft Excel, KH Coder (Higuchi, 2015), and NVivo (QSR International, 2018). Microsoft Excel was used to edit the metadata for lyrics, comprising title, year of release, performer, gender of performer, and lyricist, some of which was automatically scraped from *J-Lyric*, the rest added manually by myself (see figure 3).

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	Text	Song name	Year	Performer	Gender	Lyricist	
	がんばって　がんばって　がんばって　前向いて がんばって　がんばって　がんばって　行こう 思い通りに行かない時は ヒツジ数えて眠っちゃえ ヤバい涙にもれなくグッナイ リセットできる朝が来る どんな人も　道の途中 弱い自分を　乗り越え生まれ変わる	がんばって	2011	SUPER☆GiRLS	F	森由里子	

Figure 3- A lyric with metadata in Excel.

Formatting the Excel data in this manner meant that it could be easily imported into KH Coder for exploratory content analysis (counting word frequency, understanding the relationship of different words to each other), and then into NVivo for thematic analysis. KH Coder is a free natural language processing computer programme that is, unlike many similar programmes, designed with the segmentation of the Japanese language in mind. It is possible to conduct thematic analysis within KH Coder, but this requires an extra layer of computer code on the part of the researcher, and for this task I preferred NVivo's visual approach to coding, where the user

simply highlights the part of the text they want to code for a particular theme. NVivo is a type of Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) software for which the University of Sheffield holds a licence, meaning that could use this software alongside the processing power of the university PCs. I could also install the software on my own laptop, allowing for remote analysis, vital for reviewing my findings during the COVID-19pandemic. With NVivo, I have been able to code for themes as discourses across lyrical and interview data, and compare that coding using descriptive statistics within one application. For example, NVivo has been able to tell me if there are more lyrics about a particular theme in a particular time period, or if a particular discourse is more associated with girl *aidoru* rather than boy *aidoru*. However, the process for gathering interview data presents its own challenges, compounded by the fact that Ihad to quickly rearrange my plans for interviewing lyricists due to the COVID-19pandemic. I will discuss these challenges in the following section.

Asynchronous email interviewing

Having planned to recruit around five lyricists with experience of writing *aidoru* lyrics, and facing an inability to travel to Japan for my scheduled fieldwork in late March 2020, I considered synchronous interviewing (via a video-conferencing platform) as an alternative method. However, I eventually decided that interviewing asynchronously by email would give me the best chance of a response. With the exception of celebrity lyricists, many Japanese lyricists write under pseudonyms in the first place, often concealing their appearance and even their age. Zaborowski (2015) notes in his own study of generational participation in Japanese popular music that getting in contact with potential interviewees within the Japanese music industry was not as simple as emailing entertainment agencies; he often needed a personal recommendation to set up the interview in the first place. With lyricists, the trade-off is that though they are less bound by agency rules, their personas are less public. I also considered that during a global pandemic that may well be threatening their own livelihoods, my participants might prefer to at least maintain control over their own privacy and personal time. This led me to asynchronous email interviewing as a method. Although "virtual interviews are often viewed as a (poor) substitute for face-to-face interviews", they are "extensions of the traditional method…which have particular strengths and weaknesses in their own right" (Braun and Clarke, 2013, 79). Although asynchronous email interviewing is in fact, in this case, a substitute for an earlier plan of face-to-face interviews, it was vital that I tried to understand this new method's strengths and weaknesses before I tried to implement it.

Asynchronous email interviewing was first suggested by Bampton and Cowton (2002), who used the term "e-Interview". They had success sending questions in a few discrete sets to participants in a project to investigate lecturers' attitudes to ethics in teaching after a participant suggested that email might be a better way to reach them. They note that this gives the interviewee more time to consider their responses, but also results in "loss of spontaneity" (Bampton and Cowton, 2002, 8), as respondents are able to edit their answers to convey a particular image. I feel that this act of self-presentation has great value for the researcher, and shows how email interviewing can be useful as a methodology in and of itself. Meho (2006) later noted increased use of asynchronous email interviewing for social research, whereas previously it had been used mainly as a case study of the technology itself, citing examples such as Kim et al's (2003) study of identity amongst Asian-American youths, and Hodgson's (2004) inquiry into the sociology of self-harm. Meho (2006, 1289) surmises from a review of these studies the importance of emphasising the degree of confidentiality at each stage, including which parts of the email exchange are party to these. This is something I was careful to do when contacting

participants, including informing them when they had accidentally included some identifying information in a response (such as a particular project they are associated with), so that if they ever see their words in print, they understand why those parts have been redacted. James and Busher (2007, 109) found that email exchanges were easy for their academic participants to integrate into their daily lives, as they were frequent email users anyway. This could definitely be said for my digitally literate participants who use email to communicate with clients, and a wide array of music production software as a matter of course. I do acknowledge that had I been able to conduct face-to-face interviews, I might have had a better chance of reaching older participants, or those who use email less. My approach of sending my questions in sets, as is recommended by Gibson (2010), who has researched participants' memories of participating in British music scenes, was maintained, except for one instance where I only had a small window in which to interview a participant, in which case I sent the questions in one batch.

I contacted my potential participants via email, or via their agency websites, having identified them through their presence in the writing credits of a mixture of male and female *aidoru* lyrics on the Japanese music copyright database JASRAC. I had a higher rate of response from younger participants, and from those who are not represented by an agency, the latter likely being due to the volume of enquiries received by agencies and the lack of opportunity for participants to express a personal interest in the research outside the promotional prerogatives of their agencies. Following university ethical guidance, and after obtaining ethical approval, I emphasised to my participants that I would present all their data pseudonymously, except for a master document of participants, and that all of this information would be kept on a secure, password-protected cloud service. These details were presented in an information sheet, and participants were invited to submit a digitally signed and dated consent form. Once participants signed the consent form, I invited them to answer the first of two sets of three questions in their own time, and in their preferred format within the body of the email. I gave an ideal timeframe of two weeks within which to return a set of replies, and this was in all cases adhered to. Once the exchange was complete, and the participant had no more questions, I copied their responses to a pseudonymised Google Doc, and then imported those into NVivo to facilitate coding in accordance with the method outlined earlier in this chapter. In all, I managed to compile seven sets of responses, from participants with differing levels of experience as lyricists. I did encounter some issues communicating the scope of my research, and in trying to obtain informed consent through agencies, issues which I will detail in my interview data chapter, but those who did respond were often as interested in my reasons for contacting them as I was in obtaining their responses. As can be seen in the appendix of email templates, I preface my inquiry email by stating that I am not only a researcher of Japanese popular music, but a fan too, which led interviewees to muse on their own roles as fan-producers.

The small number of previous interview studies of multiple writers (Bennett, 1976, Funk, 2009) have tended not to state the gender of the participants, resulting in an implication that those participants must be male by default. Although my interview data is pseudonymised, I have made the gender of each participating lyricist explicit, because as established in my literature review, the differing expectations of male and female *aidoru* performers within the industry cannot be removed from the expectations placed on men and women within Japanese society as a whole; expectations that affect my participants just as much, and may well find their way into their writing. This is something that participants discussed unprompted. Moskowitz (2010) does state the gender of his participants, and it provides some fascinating insights into the role of women in the production side of the Taiwanese music industry. I also chose to add the age of the lyricists, where publicly available, because I have established that the *aidoru*

archetype has changed over time, something that might affect participants' perceptions of *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* music. Those perceptions have been gained through immersion in a society where ideas about what it means to be between childhood and adulthood have undergone great changes in the mass media age.

seishun and *aidoru* through Japanese media

In this chapter, I will examine the development of *seishun* as a popular cultural trope through different media (film, TV, animation, and popular music in general) so as to build an understanding of how depictions of adolescence in *aidoru* lyrics fit into broader sociohistorical trends in Japan. I will pay particular attention to how and why secondary education as the quintessential setting of idealised youth developed into a discourse in Japanese society, and how that discourse has been played out through broadcast media from the 1960s to the present day. This chapter takes a chronological approach, beginning in the mid-twentieth century, when compulsory secondary education was introduced to Japan under the US occupation, as broadcast media began to be dominated by television and entered its period of high economic growth; all of these, I argue, being important factors in the formation of *seishun* as a popular cultural trope. I will then discuss the impact of global popular music trends and the Olympics on *seishun* in 1960s popular culture, before moving onto the 1970s, the decade when *aidoru* were becoming an omnipresent (if not thus described) market category closely associated with *seishun*. I will show how the proliferation of *aidoru* during the 1980s, alongside depictions of boisterous, rebellious adolescents in popular media, reflected the confidence of Japan at the height of an economic bubble, and then how depictions of the pathos of youth predominated during the economic crisis years of the 1990s. Finally, I will examine how the enjoyment of the everyday was key to media depictions of *seishun* in the 2000s, and how *aidoru* found themselves at the centre of novel *seishun* depictions in the 2010s that bridged the real and the

virtual.

      I have chosen to analyse the development of the *seishun* trope through a study of media texts that I believe best illuminate its connection with the Japanese media landscape as a whole and with the *aidoru* lyrics that form the focus of this thesis. These cases range from films and TV (animation, dramas, and variety programmes) to multiple genres of popular music and videogames. As detailed in the preceding methodology chapter, I had originally planned to travel to Japan from March to September 2020 to access primary sources to inform this chapter, but have been unable to do so due to border restrictions and safety considerations arising from the COVID-19pandemic. As a result, these chronologically organised case studies of *seishun* as a popular cultural trope are based on material I had to hand (existing studies, music on streaming services, physical media) and those I was able to access, even in part, through the internet. I hope that despite these limitations, this chapter aids understanding of the historical development and continued significance of the *seishun*-related themes as discourses found in the following lyrical analysis and interview data chapters, and how *seishun* is woven into the very fabric of *aidoru* music and the development of post-war Japanese popular media. Although my focus is on broadcast media, I acknowledge that books and manga are frequent sources for the content I analyse in this chapter, many of which predate their more well-known incarnations as animations or TV series, meaning that although I have organised case studies by decade, the depictions of *seishun* within each section are not necessarily bound by decade or medium.

Anxieties of *seishun* in post-war Japan

      In the aftermath of WWII, Japan was administered by the US occupation, headquartered in a bombed-out Tokyo and referred to metonymously as SCAP (Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers). As early as 1946, SCAP brought over a group of education experts from the United States to research a potential democratic overhaul of Japan's education system, resulting in the recommendations that the upper limit for compulsory education be extended from aged 12 to aged 15 (up to the equivalent of 9th grade), and that such education should be co-educational (Rohlen, 1983, 65). The recommended reforms were put into place in 1947 (albeit with some pre-war features such as entrance exams retained in response to the sheer demand for non-compulsory high school places) (Rohlen, 1983, 73). The vision laid out was one of "individualism…the differing developmental needs of individual personalities" (Rohlen, 1983, 66), where young people and their own personal dreams for the future were perceived as indispensable in (re-)building a new Japan, far from wartime militarism. Alongside schooling reforms, the Civil Information and Education Division (CIE) worked with censors to make sure that the popular culture which young people had access to promoted "democratic ideals and practices" (Grealy, Driscoll and Cather, 2020, 8). The word *seishun* often featured in some of the set pieces of occupation film, depicting the lives of young people in a way that directly contrasted with what SCAP perceived as undemocratic values of the pre-occupation period. For example, *Waga seishun ni kui nashi* (*No Regrets for our Youth*, 1946), set in a university in the 1930s, depicts the lives of students caught up in anti-militarism movements, actions to which society only becomes somewhat reconciled after the war has finished. Coates (2016, 212) argues that the young woman protagonist through which the events of the film are viewed, played by star actress Hara Setsuko, was chosen to add "lightness" to "the weighty topic of post-war reform". Released in the same year, *Hatachi no seishun* (*20-year-old Youth*, 1946) famously featured the first kiss depicted in Japanese film, and portrayed young people falling in love despite "parental disapproval" (Grealy, Driscoll and Cather, 2020, 9).

      After the occupation ended in 1952, Eirin, the independent film classification board set up during the occupation era, took on the task of protecting minors by shielding them from supposedly harmful depictions of youth. Its guidelines in 1955 for designating films as not for

viewing by those under the age of 18 were a mixture of occupation-era governmental prerogatives and responses to the worries of "community stakeholders" (Grealy, Driscoll and Cather, 2020, 14). Most forbidden to minors were films that "violated public orders and morals" or expressed "anti-democratic" ideas (Grealy, Driscoll and Cather, 2020). These worries came to a head in response to the release of the *taiyōzoku* ("sun tribe") films in the mid-1950s, which depicted "Japanese students and young workers who aped the lifestyle of the privileged bourgeoisie" in hedonistic fashion (Raine, 2000, 222). For example, *Kurutta kajitsu* (*Crazed Fruit*, 1956) depicts a violently ill-fated love triangle between two young brothers and a married woman at a trendy seaside resort. Ishihara Yūjirō, the brother of Ishihara Shintarō who authored many *taiyōzoku* stories, had major roles in the films, and saw his star rise as a result, becoming something of a rakish "James Dean" (Grealy, Driscoll and Cather, 2020, 17) of youth media. One reason that the *taiyōzoku* films and the Ishihara brothers were so important and contentious was because, in the minds of the public, they represented the young people who were growing up in post-war education and thus a "significant shift in Japanese identity" (Shamoon, 2002). As in 1950s Hollywood where stars such as James Dean and Elvis Presley sold "youth" culture to the masses (Shuker, 2001, 175), Japanese film studios took "girl stars" such as Misora Hibari and elevated them to visual icons and idols of their time, playing on a fascination with the overlap between the "real lives" of their stars and those depicted on screen (Shamoon, 2009, 143). These young stars (*seishun sutā*) were also prolific as singers, releasing records to coincide with their films.

But the multimedia star personas of young people at leisure and in education portrayed in post-war Japanese popular culture were not necessarily reflective of the realities of young people adjusting to life in a new Japan. Up until 1953, it was still legal for those under the age of fifteen to work in factories (Kariya, 2013, 29), and most young people from agricultural backgrounds who finished newly compulsory secondary school education (meaning junior high school) would return to some form of manual labour afterwards (Kariya, 2013, 52). In the 1950s, high school was still a lofty dream for the majority of adolescents, and those who wanted to see Misora Hibari play *Izu no odoriko* (*The Dancing Girl of Izu*, 1954) pursued by a lovelorn university student would have to make the trip to the cinema, still the "king of the broadcast media" (Sakai, 2014, 18), in order to vicariously enjoy the possibilities of upper-secondary or higher education. It would take until the age of the small screen for the experience of *seishun* as seen through the Japanese high school to become a true cultural trope, with the moving image gaining a proximity to the real lives of young people, as high school itself became a not-so far-off dream.

Olympic *seishun* and the future of Japan (1961-1970)

Whilst wartime blockades and destruction had previously limited what Japan could produce, between 1946 and 1973, real Gross National Product (GNP) grew by 9.6% each year, which was an "outstanding" rate compared to other "industrial economies", even after Japanese GNP had returned to pre-war levels (Kosai, 1997, 159). By the 1960s, the Japanese public were seeing the benefits in terms of their own personal incomes, as the economy reached a state of "full employment" in 1967 (Kosai, 1997, 169). The expectation was that people would work twice as hard to sustain economic growth in the name of the then (1960-1964) prime minister Ikeda Hayato's 'Income Doubling Plan'. This plan was likely an attempt to focus the national political mood away from youth-led protests against the new US-Japan Security Treaty (1960), protests which prompted one critic in young men's magazine *Heibon Punch* to declare "the start of the young people's century" (Smith, 2016, 343). The democratic and anti-militaristic values championed by occupation in both education and popular culture as the future of Japanese

seishun had come back to bite the Japanese government, now seeking to retain a US military presence on Japanese soil. Instead of clashing with the police in the streets in opposition to Cold War militarism, young people were supposed to filter their passions through their efforts to contribute to further increases in GNP. These same school-aged young people, freed from their long hours in agricultural or manufacturing industries, were to become the audience for a new wave films and songs starring their peers. Building on the Japanese market success of the French jukebox musical *Cherchez L'idole* (*The Chase*, 1964), from which the trend for young multimedia stars in Japan took its name, and from American jukebox musical films of the rock 'n' roll era, discourses of *seishun* in the popular culture of the 1960s were designed to "cash-in" on (Cateforis, 2009, 163) and amplify the profitability of what young people were already interested in by creating new tropes, genres, and modes of production rooted in the potential of youth.

This new "mass education society" (Kariya, 2013, 104) was supposed to offer equal opportunities to all adolescents, regardless of socioeconomic background or natural ability, with success and prosperity within reach if they just "'put their mind to it' (*ganbareba*)" (Kariya, 2013, 103). And there were indeed plenty of opportunities to go around. But as hierarchies of educational institutions and competitive entrance exams remained, the result was a competitive society where effort was elevated as a quality of Japanese capitalism, manifested through "exam wars" and subsequent efforts to "get into a decent university, get a job at a decent company, get a decent salary" (Sakai, 2014, 79). The idea of a good youth became tied in to discourses of post-war Japanese 'success' through conspicuous effort, and began to work its way into the popular culture of the time through stories about high school life. Funaki Kazuo was a high school senior himself when his pop song *Kōkō sannensei (High School Senior)* went on sale in 1963, and he famously promoted the song on televised music shows in his own school uniform. The song was written from the perspective of a student looking back at the collective ups and downs of their high school days as they mull on their impending graduation. *High School Senior* was the most successful of a wave of 1960s pop songs aimed at young people, by young singers, about school-related topics, that were known as *gakuen songu* (*school pop*). For the baby boom generation of the time, the songs were about celebrating the bittersweet first loves and friendships of their new school days. But for those who penned school pop, the images of high school held a different significance. Endō Minoru (quoted in Goda, 2018, 180) the composer of *High School Senior*, who was 30 at the time, said of his own connection to the song:

> My family was poor. I had my heart set on going to Jinjō High School, in Niigata, where we had been evacuated to (during the war). I found myself working in a textile factory whilst helping out on a farm. This only increased my drive to make it to junior high school, and then high school. Those gold buttons, that stiff collar…a school uniform was all I ever dreamed of.

Whilst Japan's adjusted relationship with the US continued to be a source of political discord among Japan's youth, the US, and by extension the US experience of youth, loomed large in notions of success, as those born after the war found themselves "baptised in American culture from an early age", admiring TV dramas featuring "colour TVs, electric refrigerators, and big cars" (Terawaki, 2020, 85). Though most Japanese in the 1960s instead owned black and white TVs (Sakai, 2014, 9) one of the most anticipated events that families gathered round to watch was the Tokyo Olympics of 1964. The Tokyo Olympics of 1964 was the first ever held in an Asian country, showcasing the best of the world's young people on the cusp of sporting fame, as well as a war-ravaged country on the cusp of something new. A new version of *High School Senior* was released to mark the occasion, with a more upbeat melody, resulting in a song that "undoubtedly summed up the whole of Japan. A Japan that looked to better things. Had dreams.

Had hopes" (Goda, 2018, 186). Here was a young pop singer now wrapped up in the mythology of Japan's youthful potential, just as much as any of its Olympic hopefuls. Now more people were watching TV, the "explosive growth" of the media industries meant that television and film companies were now in competition to sign and promote the next young star, forcing cooperation between publishers, record companies, and promoters (Sakai, 2014, 41-42). Watanabe Productions, a pioneer of this cooperative promotion of young entertainers that had been established by a jazz musician, famously required music television shows to identify "Watanabe" talent on screen (Johnson, 2016, 267), staking their claim to a rapidly growing industry within a rapidly growing economy. The establishment of what amounted to a Watanabe Productions monopoly on multimedia talent (comedians, singers, actors, and some performers who could do all three) extended to music variety shows such as *Shabondama horidē* (*Soap Bubble Holiday, 1961-1972*), which, by agreement with private network Nippon TV, exclusively showcased agency talent, such as twin girl group and *aidoru* antecedents The Peanuts (Stevens, 2008, 73). Although the diversification of publishing rights in the 1970s loosened Watanabe's grip on this young industry, Marx (2012, 38), writing over half a century later, lists Watanabe Productions amongst the most high-profile *jimusho* (entertainment agencies) in Japan, and other agencies followed in its footsteps of creating and promoting multi-talented entertainers in-house, and across screens.

In 1965, Ishihara Shintarō, literary star of the 1950s *taiyōzoku* trend, cast his heartthrob brother Ishihara Yūjirō in another film based on one of his books. In *Seishun to wa nanda (What is Youth?,*1965*)* a now 30-year-old Yūjirō plays an exuberant English teacher fresh from study in the US, sent to teach in a rural school. There, he is shocked at the level of bad and even criminal behaviour amongst his students, and vows to channel their energy into sport by coaching them in rugby. The theme song, also sung by Ishihara Yūjirō, portrayed how *seishun* is a time where young people are fighting for their own dreams and individuality, and full of irrepressible passion (a theme discussed further in the lyrical analysis chapter). Though *What is Youth?* did not make much of an impression on cinemagoers at the time, a TV drama adaptation that began the same year became a veritable cultural phenomenon. *What is Youth?* (1965-1966) aired weekly on the commercial channel Nippon TV (NTV) on the primetime Sunday slot of 8-9pm, and became so popular that the writers eventually found themselves having to deviate from Ishihara Shintarō's source material. Arriving just as agencies like Watanabe Productions were perfecting their rosters of young TV stars, many of whom doubled as pop singers, *Seishun to wa nanda* set off a "trend for TV dramas with a school setting" (Terawaki, 2020, 153) that paired perfectly with school songs. The coalescence of possibilities of television dramas and of young people in compulsory education made high school *seishun* one of the most prominent popular media motifs of the 1960s. This motif of *seishun* at high school as a time of formative and inspirational passion and friendship became woven into the very fabric of post-war Japanese multimedia stardom, and its legacy is very much visible today (as will be apparent in subsequent lyrical and interview data chapters).

That is not to say that televised *seishun* was separate from cinema; Toho, Japan's giant of film production and distribution, was a co-producer of the TV version of *Seishun to wa nanda*, and had a hand in both film and TV sequels to the hit show that became known as the *Tōhō seishun gakuen shirīzu* (Toho Teen High School Series). The basic outline of each iteration of these high school TV dramas was that of a young male teacher who visits a troubled, underfunded (usually rural, working-class) high school, and transforms the outlook of the students through team sport (most commonly boys' football or rugby). Though often not much older than the students, protagonists have experience trying to make it in the big city, or even overseas, and incorporate their own struggles into life lessons for their charges. The protagonist themselves is sometimes guided by a female authority figure at the school who provides a grounded contrast to the protagonist's impulsive nature, and who sometimes doubles as a love interest. Altogether, the Toho Teen High School Series had 8 instalments, concluding with

1974's *Warera seishun*! (*We Are Young!*). The producers' trademark of casting unknown or upcoming young actors and singers in the main roles, or as performers of the shows' theme songs, helped *seishun*, school sport and its vocabulary of fiery passion become a key scenario in the repertoire of any proto-*aidoru* performer, and those made famous by the series included Kurosawa Toshio and Sakai Wakako, both of whom made appearances in multiple Toho Teen High School stories.

Another medium through which stories of sporting *seishun* were eagerly consumed was the *supōtsu konjō-kei* ("willpower in sports genre" (Otomo, 2007, 122)) manga, and associated animated and live-action adaptations. These showcased the persistence of school-aged protagonists in reaching seemingly impossible sporting goals through sheer hard work and suffering, and were openly inspired by the gold-medal winning Japanese women's volleyball team of 1964. One instance of a *supōtsu konjō-kei* work is the manga *Sain wa Bui!* (*V Sign!*, Jinbo and Mochizuki, 1968), where a middle-school student is persuaded by a charismatic male coach to give volleyball another go after the death of her sister (an amateur player who died after overworking herself through training). In the protagonist's own story, the struggles of sport and of youth are imbued with the meaning and hope that she herself had lost. The manga was adapted into a TV drama the next year (1969), starring Okada Kawai, already known to viewers through many of the Toho Teen High School productions, thus connecting these stories as part of a greater *seishun*-scape mediated through young, multimedia stars. These stories were first and foremost about the future of Japan, a democracy where young talents all had an equal chance at shining. In the 1970s, these stories would be written and broadcast across an ever-diversifying range of TV programming.

aidoru as televised democracy (1971-1980)

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the 1970s are generally considered to be the decade when the main components of those stars who would later be described as *aidoru*, came together for the first time. These were young stars for the young, and though pop music about going to school might have momentarily fallen out of fashion, songs about clumsy (invariably heterosexual) teenage romances sung by upcoming pop stars were all the rage, as co-education and increased leisure time for teens were now the norm. Minami Saori's hit debut 1971 debut song, *Jūnana-sai* (*17 Years Old*), was, like Funaki Kazuo's *High School Senior*, an ostensible reflection of the stage the singer was at in their own life, with Saori being 17 at the time of the song's release. The song depicts a young woman who, overcome by the romance of the beachside setting of a date, impulsively grabs her lover's arm to test the strength of their relationship. The choice of song was key to Minami Saori's marketed appeal as a "girl from Okinawa", just as the islands were at the centre of both a political storm around their "return" to Japan, and a tourism "boom" (Kanno, 2008, 112). One lyricist active at the time argued that Minami Saori's popularity came from the fact that her persona was of a happy-go-lucky young woman, who appeared to represent a bright future for Okinawa and Japan as a whole (Kanno, 2008, 112). Here, we see once more how popular culture performed by, and aimed at young people, worked within an (a-)political atmosphere that represented youth, and especially the potential of young women, as a panacea to many of the doubts that plagued Japanese politics and society. Another breakout star of 1971 was 19-year-old Koyanagi Rumiko, debuting with the song *Watashi no Jōkamachi (My Castle Town)*, where the protagonist wanders the streets of a beautiful historical town lamenting her first love. *My Castle Town* captured the spirit of the "Discover Japan" advertising campaign by Japanese National Railways that was active at the time, in which rail travel was promoted using posters of beautiful women advertising domestic travel destinations (Goda, 2018, 21). Where nationalised railways were the infrastructure that supported a new Japan, tropes of *seishun* as a time for romance and dreaming were mobilised by popular music agencies such as Warner Pioneer and CBS Sony as a key part of the country's moral infrastructure. An important aspect of the lucrative appeal of proto-*aidoru* such

as Koyanagi Rumiko was that they gave off the impression of being elevated girls next door; anyone could relate to them, and anyone could become them, an idealised democracy of young talent. This "mediatic mileu" of girls and capitalistic possibilities in 1970s Japan has been described by Yoda (2017, 176) as a "girlscape".

Whereas a lucky few teen stars, like a baby-faced 16-year-old boy Gō Hiromi, could hope for hit singles and legions of fans simply by wandering through suburban Tokyo and being scouted by chance, for others, their best shot at fame was a TV talent show called *Sutā tanjō! (A Star is Born!)*, broadcast weekly on a Sunday morning on commercial network NTV from 1971 to 1983. Hopefuls would queue around the block at the Sogo department store in central Tokyo with their sheet music for their prepared songs, hoping to be in with a chance to be one of the lucky seven who made it to the pre-recorded TV show. The judging panel on the live TV show, as with the first round auditions, was made up entirely of men, and featured at least one representative from a record company, and one from a popular entertainment magazine (Aku, 2015). *A Star is Born!* was the male-dominated music industry (literally) making a show of choosing its next star from the masses. Stars were signed to the agency Hori Productions, a new entertainment company that prioritised advertising and promotion, presenting an overt challenge to the monopoly of the Watanabe Productions agency, who at the time occupied over half the market for popular entertainers (Aku, 2015, 23). This fierce promotional war, fought with *aidoru*'s publishing and image rights and exclusive contracts with advertising agencies and television networks, undoubtedly contributed to the first spike seen in the graph demonstrating diachronic frequency of *aidoru* lyrics containing the word *seishun* in the following lyrical data chapter (Figure 5). Although anyone could audition, the first winner who had to go through a final gruelling live scouting by record label A&R representatives (Brasor and Tsubuku, 1997, 59) was 13-year-old Mori Masako, who set the tone for the type of teen girl star whose "immaturity" (Sakai, 2013, 24) and "everyday" (Aku, 2015, 46) appearance and talents were selling points. After other teenage girls were inspired by Mori Masako to audition for the programme, the so-called *hana no chūsan torio* (lovely middle-school trio) of Yamaguchi Momoe, Sakurada Junko, and Mori Masako came to represent the success of *A Star is Born!*, with their songs becoming major chart hits in the first half of the 1970s.

One might speculate that the power imbalance inherent in a format designed by an industry with such a glaring gender imbalance meant that teenage girls who aspired to stardom were the perfect, easily manipulable candidates for this "massive hit" (Sakai, 2013, 24) of a TV talent show. Aku Yū, resident lyricist, and one of the driving forces behind the production logic of *A Star is Born!* would later justify the show's focus on teenage girls by arguing that in contrast to the "apathy" of the young men who had taken part in the protest movements of the 1960s and had been left disappointed, young women paid this no heed, and were "aware of how lucky they were" and had "hopes and aspirations and the energy to chase them"— for it was now, supposedly the "age of the girl (*shōjo jidai*)" (Aku, 2015, 63). Although Aku's words are counter-historical, part of a false "gendered postscript" that recalls the New Left movements of the 1960s "as primarily male" (Szendi Schieder, 2021, 21), they are of note in that they provide further evidence for how early girl *aidoru* were vessels for the hopes for an optimistic, apolitical vision of post-war Japan written by older men; part of the theme as discourse described in the following lyrical analysis chapter as "*seishun* as a joyful ideal". Indeed, in a study by Nishi (2017, 158) of Japanese pop songs about graduation, he finds that those from the 1970s show young women as the active party, "setting out on a journey and beginning a process of change, whereas men are seen as frozen in the past and unchanging". Yoda (2017, 193) points out how this ideal of the mobile girl within the "girlscape", free to travel to fashionable shopping malls on days out to historic sites, was actually at odds with the "multiple layers of constraints imposed on young women"; for example, young women in the early 1970s were still discouraged from hanging around city streets.

Even so, the world of *seishun* created by *A Star is Born!* was designed to make everyone,

men and women alike, feel included, and a return to school settings was one way in which songwriters tried to achieve such discursive inclusion. Mori Masako's debut song, *Sensei* (*Teacher*, 1972), written with a doomed crush an older man in mind, was received more literally as a story of unrequited love set in a school. The success of the song prompted follow-ups like *Dōkyūsei* (*Classmate*, 1972) and *Chūgaku sannensei* (*Junior High School Senior*, 1973) (Ōta, 2011, 40), the latter of which was a clear nod to *High School Senior*, full of seasonal imagery of spring as the "season of farewells" and new beginnings. Unlike its predecessor, Mori Masako's song was very much about the emotion of the moment of graduation, rather than the significance of the moral journey of *seishun* through school:

> I can't even bring myself to sing the graduation song
> I'm so choked up I just can't sing
> But I can't get all emotional
> Just because they're graduating
> Because I'm a junior high school senior too
>
> *Chūgaku sannensei* (*Junior High School Senior*, Mori Masako, 1973)

The song was written when Mori herself was actually in her final year of junior high school, lending the song extra poignancy, with lyrics penned by Aku Yū himself, the self-appointed shaper of *A Star is Born!*'s proudly feminine, apolitical storytelling. *A Star is Born!* thus became something of a fairytale "school" in itself, which all its young stars attended (Ōta, 2011, 42), and which fans were invited to attend, sharing in important milestones in their lives and budding careers.

Although celebrity teen girls were the primary medium through which a shared popular cultural vision of adolescence was built on TV, there was still a large pool of young men who became staples of Japan's "golden age of television" (Koshiro *et al.*, 2012, 103) and its *seishun* stories. In fact, the stranglehold of particular companies, such as male *aidoru* agency Johnny & Associates (usually referred to as Johnny's), on Japanese television bookings was a motivating factor for TV talent shows and the talent agencies they served to seek fresh, unsigned *tamago* (literally "eggs", but in this sense referring to potential stars). Tanaka (2019) finds that in the 1970s, tropes of sporting *seishun* (such as depictions of school sport) were a popular way of portraying male *aidoru* in the entertainment magazine *Myōjō*, perhaps following the lineage of Johnny's, the very first Japanese boyband to grace its pages, who had originally been a baseball team. Furthermore, Johnny's stars like Inoue Jun'ichi often appeared in inspirational school-themed TV dramas that succeeded the Toho *seishun* series and were "at the height of their popularity" (Ōta, 2018, 18) in the late 1970s, such as NTV's *Seishun Domannaka!* (*In The Thick of Adolescence!*, 1978). So proto-*aidoru* were still the glue that held together the multimedia spectacle of *seishun* in Japan, but in ways that were increasingly divided by the gender of the performer. One space, however, in which all *aidoru* performed together, was the televised music variety show, a format that would come into its own in the next decade.

A golden age of variety (1981-1990)

By the 1980s, *aidoru* were probably more present in everyday life in Japan than ever, both a cause and an effect of the "increasing integration of television and music industries" (Stevens, 2008, 50). They performed their latest songs on television shows, stayed on to chat and play games, and then popped up in the commercials in-between. Flip the channel, and *aidoru* were also likely to be in the latest prime-time TV drama, or even fictionalised in animation. Testament to the sheer presence of teen singing stars in the Japanese popular

media of the 1980s is a survey carried about by Koshiro *et al.* (2012) in 2011 that asked respondents across multiple regions of Japan which music TV shows and *aidoru* or stars they recognised, and if so which they liked or consumed often. Although respondents of all ages related most strongly to celebrities and programmes from their teenage years, there was standout "extremely large reminiscence bump for those in their 40s or 50s", which the researchers attribute to the dominance of TV as a popular medium for both celebrity and current affairs in the 1970s and 1980s, when those respondents would have been teenagers (Koshiro *et al.*, 2012, 103). In other words, those who watched TV as adolescents during this period were primed to develop particularly strong shared memories of popular cultural tropes of *seishun*, performed by stars who were close to them in age. The popular music TV show that most respondents in their 40s or 50s claimed to have "watched often" (Koshiro *et al.*, 2012, 100-101) was *Za Besuto Ten* (*The Top Ten),* broadcast on commercial network TBS between 1978 and 1989, featuring performances of the "top" ten songs of the week (a combination of records sold, airplay, and requests sent into the programme by fans). Each episode, performers would emerge from a glittering mirrored stage door to a fanfare, and spend a few minutes chatting with the hosts and responding to fan mail sent in by viewers. After performing their song to the backing of a live orchestra, they would then join fellow performers on the sofa to hear the rest of the top ten. Each episode would end with the stars of the show posing for a group photo, to be sent to a lucky viewer as a prize (TBS, 2022).

The particular selling point of *The Top Ten* was that it relied on the banter between performers to maintain viewers' interest, and although not all those who featured in the weekly chart were *aidoru*, a significant enough proportion were teenagers that there was a "classroom-like" atmosphere (Ōta, 2018, 21). By 1980, around 90% of Japanese teenagers were now graduating from high school (Tanaka, 2019, 53), so not only did shows like *The Top Ten* have their biggest audience ever (peaking at 41.9% (TBS Channel, 2021)), but more young people who watched teen stars share both the charts and the physical space of the studio had a high school experience through which to relate to what they saw. That ability for young stars to carry out seemingly spontaneous "classroom-like" conversation became an ever-prized quality in 1980s Japanese television, with NHK's competing music variety show *Rettsu gō yangu* (*Let's Go Young*) (1978-1986) creating its own on-screen, mixed-gender *aidoru* group called The Sundays as a training ground for the next generation of teenage stars. Members of this supergroup, which included well-established *aidoru* like Matsuda Seiko, were expected to be capable of "teamwork" and to be "all-singing, all-dancing, and all-talking" (NHK Archives, 2020). In other words, The Sundays were a sort of super school club that any teenager could hope to be a part of. They performed mixed gender covers of popular *aidoru* songs, such as *Aishū deito* (*Tragic Date*) by Tahara Toshihiko, a song about the melodrama of a young romance gone awry. The lyrics depicted young men as having the financial and societal freedom to enjoy casual relationships and all their complexity and impulsivity. Viewers, more used to girl-fronted *aidoru* songs depicting more romantically passive protagonists, would have likely found it a novelty to see the female members of the Sundays singing the following lyrics:

    Cast aside the red roses
    And we'll call it a day
    After all the fun and games
    The excitement only fades

    Aishū deito (*Tragic Date*, Tahara Toshihiko, 1980)

The partnership between commercial television networks and *aidoru* sometimes blurred the lines between performed persona and fictional characters, and over time the building of brands around this ambiguity become ever more deliberate. An example of such a brand was the Tanokin Trio, a nickname given to three Johnny's *aidoru* who performed together as a group of friends and competitors: Tahara Toshihiko (of *Tragic Date* fame), Nomura Yoshio, and Kondō Masahiko. The boys were aged 18, 15, and 15 respectively when they shot to fame in middle-school TV drama *San-nen bī-gumi Kinpachi-sensei* (*Mr. Kinpachi in Class 3B*, 1979-1980), a TBS series that became both a massive hit and a point of controversy, as it was one of the first to portray issues of teenage pregnancy and mental health issues induced by competitive exam culture (Oricon News, 2011). The titular Mr. Kinpachi was in some ways popular cultural heir to the teachers of the Tōhō Teen High School series, in that he took an active interest in his pupils' personal struggles, but unlike these predecessors, Mr. Kinpachi was no "passionate superhero" (Ōta, 2018, 18), and the focus was more on the stories of the students themselves. Viewers also began to take an interest in the personal lives of the Tanokin Trio themselves, and before long they were hosting their own TBS variety show, *Tanokin zenryoku yakyū* (*All-Out Baseball with the Tanokin Trio*, 1980-1983), featuring a mixture of high school sport-themed challenges, comedy skits, and chats with other popular teen stars of the day.

All of the members released their own songs, and readers of entertainment magazines enjoyed speculating about which of the trio were closest, or whom out of the three was the most popular as a romantic interest among female *aidoru* (Tanaka, 2019). They even starred in a series of films together, the first of which, *Seishun gurafiti: sunīkā burūzu* (*Adolescent Graffiti: Sneaker Blues*,1981), featured Tahara, Nomura, and Kondō as struggling teens working during the day, studying at night, and chasing dreams of working in the entertainment industry or becoming sports stars. When Kondō's character finds himself in debt, the others work secretly to try and pay it off, causing conflict within the group, and the fatal involvement of Tahara's character with a yakuza organised crime group. There is no romance subplot, just three young men rebelliously supporting each other in chasing their dreams; dreams which happen to revolve around singing and baseball. Similar stories of the exuberance of school-going *seishun* being (mis-)channelled into the anti-social, to amusing or ill-fated ends, proliferated during the Japanese popular media of the 1980s. I would argue that these stories were, consciously or otherwise, using the figure of the uniformed *aidoru*-as-adolescent to explore the conflicting and unprecedented pressures and freedoms of a Japan at the height of an economic bubble. For example, the film *Sērā-fuku to kikanjū* (*Sailor Suit and Machine Gun*, 1981), starred 17-year-old Yakushimaru Hiroko as the young inheritor of a yakuza organisation, who famously fights in her school uniform, and in the 1985 film BE-BOP-HIGHSCHOOL, the second-biggest box-office hit of the year (Terawaki, 2020, 543), two uniformed delinquents at a private high school form an unlikely pair, with many other ensemble characters modelled on popular *aidoru* of the time (Terawaki, 2020, 545).

Thus, because *aidoru* had become a recognised type of performer to be marketed across different platforms, they were now a popular cultural trope themselves, a way of talking about being young, and the performance of being young, in often tongue-in-cheek ways. The TV anime *Mahō no tenshi kurīmī Mami* (*Magic Angel Creamy Mami*, 1983-1984) portrays a 10-year-old girl called Yū who is given a magical wand by a fairy-alien. The wand transforms her into a charismatic teenage girl with supernatural powers, and whilst in her teenage form, Yu is scouted to be an *aidoru* by a talent agency. To avoid the confusion of being two people at once, and especially since her crush Toshio has become a fan of her idol persona "Creamy Mami", Yū is given a year to remain in her magical teenage form. One of the themes of the anime is how people only seem to understand Yū's potential when she is being Creamy Mami; it is as if, fairy aliens aside, becoming a teenage girl has given her a magical shine. Though some of this was probably supposed to reflect the dreams of its tween audience, it is also possible to see Creamy

Mami as a clever critique of what 1970s lyricist Aku Yū had referred to as the "age of the girl" (see above); how Japanese popular culture had come to place teenage girls on a pedestal, to the detriment of their real selves. This idealisation is something that Creamy Mami itself was guilty of, as the production team purposely chose an unknown young actress called Ōta Tatako to voice Yū/Mami, preparing her for debut as an *aidoru* singer. The result was that the anime "helped spread images of idols and make them part of a ubiquitous media environment: girls grow up relating with and through idols, in media worlds anchored by idols" (Galbraith, 2016, 236).

Meanwhile, an upcoming lyricist and TV producer called Akimoto Yasushi was struck by the unusual acknowledgement of an absence of a teenage cast member on a variety show due to midterm exams. What if, he thought, "there was something there" (*Akimoto Yasushi to Tsunku no taidan*, 2010) — something to be gained by incorporating the "real" school lives of young people into entertainment programming? The show he created was called *Yūyake nyan nyan* (*Meow Meow at Dusk*, 1985-1997) an after-school game show and chat show combination that starred real high school girls and recent high school graduates. These were no "show-biz prodigies", but "ordinary teenage girls" (Schilling, 1997, 163). The cast were referred to as the Onyanko Club (Kitten Club), and each had her own membership number based on the order that they had joined the show. Onyanko Club also functioned as a new type of *aidoru* group, who released their own singles penned by Akimoto. Their newness was not because of their revolving-door membership or integration with a specific TV programme (the Sundays had done both of these in the 1970s and 1980s), but because of the school-related language and symbolism around the members who auditioned for and left the cast, and the unprecedented transparency around their creation as stars. Here, even after group members "graduated", the remaining members would sing their songs (Sakai, 2014, 52) as if they were school songs, and the transience of a particular line up was part of the charm. *Yūyake nyan nyan* effectively took all the trappings of *seishun* performed by girl *aidoru* and dialled them up to a new performative extreme. Those extremes had a lasting influence on the idol industry and on popular cultural images of girls in Japan, in that they catered strongly to an adult male gaze, playing more explicitly on the pantomime of "tension between the pure and the sexual" (Galbraith, 2012, 188) that had existed since the 1970s, yet now worryingly painting this tension onto supposedly "real" girls. Onyanko Club's controversy-courting debut single was a case in point:

Don't take off my school uniform
You can take a look up my skirt, okay?
Don't take off my school uniform
But you can't undo the bow on my blouse

Sēra fuku o nugasanaide (*Don't Take off My School Uniform*, Onyanko Club, 1985)

Despite any apparent innovation in the active stance of the female protagonist in Onyanko Club's lyrics, any lyrical boundary setting appears to be for the sake of a male-coded listener who is supposed to revel in the fantasy of an objectified young woman who may be unwrapped and revealed like a gift, a depiction created by an older male lyricist and producer in Akimoto. This male-authored discourse of *aidoru* girlhood and its stark statement of the gendered power dynamics of the industry wasn't especially new, with 1970s girl *aidoru* Yamaguchi Momoe's first singles written by male lyricist Senke Kazuya all depicting a young woman harbouring some form of secret sexuality, but the blatantness of Onyanko Club's lyrics set them apart; *Don't Take off My School Uniform* even contained the line "I want to have sex like in the magazines". But however rich a seam of imagined, sexualised potential of girl adolescence was being mined,

such a performance could not last forever, and as Japan entered a new imperial era in 1989, the entertainment industry, and indeed Japan as a whole, began to take on a very different shape indeed.

seishun in crisis (1991-2000)

Yūyake nyan nyan continued to air into the late 1990s with declining ratings, by which time Japan's economic bubble had spectacularly burst. In an atmosphere of uncertainty and concern over the future of the teenager, it seemed that _aidoru_ were no longer the popular cultural figures of the moment. In concrete terms, the money to be invested in the numerous media iterations of _aidoru_, namely liquidity for advertising or the use of _aidoru_ images. Indeed, the "Japanese economy" that had "created" _aidoru_ (Sakai, 2014, 45) As a result, popular cultural portrayals of _seishun_ that emerged during the 1990s became a reflection of not just a vague anxiety about young people and their personal lives, but a genuine moral panic over what was to become of Japan, and of Japanese youth. Shows like _The Top Ten_ were axed by commercial networks, decisions that were taken to have "finished off the idol era" (Brasor and Tsubuku, 1997, 61), as imaginary classrooms shut their doors. Some, however, remained open, as with controversial school-based TV drama _Ningen shikkaku: tatoeba boku ga shindara_ (_No Longer Human: If I Were To Die_…,1994). The show aired on commercial network TBS every Friday weeknight from 10pm for a standard commissioned run of 12 episodes, and is in one sense a murder mystery thriller, where the viewer is challenged to work out who is responsible for the death of Makoto, a transfer student to a prestigious private boys' high school. But _No Longer Human_ is also an exploration of the factors driving school bullying, of which Makoto is a victim. One of the perpetrators is Ruka, a charismatic student who begins the series as Makoto's friend but later becomes his tormentor, as Ruka is soon revealed to have a sinister violent streak. Another bully from a more well-off family resents Makoto because Makoto manages to achieve good grades without expensive tutors. The final shocking episode shows the ultimate mastermind of the bullying, and of Makoto's death, to be not a student, but a teacher who has developed a paedophilic fixation on Ruka.

Although much darker than other popular school drama predecessors such as _Mr. Kinpachi, No Longer Human_ intensified a trend of school dramas exposing the feigned polish of supposedly "successful" schools and their students, the fallible nature of authority figures, and the psychological harm that comes from students having nowhere to turn. The two 15-year-olds playing Makoto and Ruka belonged to _aidoru_ agency Johnny's, and would go on to debut as a successful _aidoru_ duo in 1997 called the KinKi Kids, releasing introspective music to match their personas as voices of a more troubled _seishun_. In a callback to the 1987 male idol song _Garasu no Jūdai_ (_Fragile Teens_), KinKi Kids' debut track was titled _Garasu no Shōnen_ (_Boy Made of Glass_), but this time the pulsing synths and rollerblading were replaced by a slower-paced, melancholic strings-backed story of a teenage boy glimpsing his girlfriend with another boy at a bus stop:

The shards from this glass youth of mine
Pierce my heart
I kick aside an empty can on the pavement
And look away from you
In the window of the bus

Garasu no Shōnen (_Boy Made of Glass_, KinKi Kids, 1997)

Between the release of No Longer Human and the Kinki Kids debut, news of a 14-year-old

murderer who had unashamedly killed other children in the wake of the Great Hanshin earthquake of 1995 (Yoneyama, 2001, 21), and the terrorist killings committed by the Aum Shinrikyo cult the same year (many of whom "had attended Japan's top universities" (Arai, 2003, 370)) resulted in further interrogation of the current state of the Japanese education system and of the life courses of young people. The "association between the recession and a diverse set ominous events" became cemented in the public imagination (Yoda, 2000, 163). If school and the race to enter top universities was actually harming adolescents, then what was to be done? If seishun could be saved or recovered, then could the same be said for Japan, and the "phantasm of a homogenous mass middle-stratum nation"? (Yoda, 2000, 657)?

The pressure on Japanese secondary school students to 'perform constantly' the role of a good student 'in all aspects of their behaviour' (Yoneyama, 2001, 12), to the detriment of students own learning and individuality was now under the political spotlight. The Japanese government began to consult on 'a new concept of academic achievement and ability', adopted as the basis for the new national curriculum in 1992, emphasising 'the importance of students' self-directed learning', where the main bogeyman was the cramming induced by the examination system (Kariya and Rappleye, 2020, 161). If students could only be themselves in school, then perhaps Japanese society could recover some of the true spontaneity of *seishun*, and go some way to solving the issues of the youth depicted in television dramas and in shocking headlines. As if to answer the Japanese government's call, in 1997, TBS began to air a weekly school-night variety show starring another Johnny's *aidoru* group, V6, whose members aged from 16 to 26 years of age at the outset of the show; the full span of *seishun*. The stated mission of *Gakkō e ikō!* (*Go to School!,* 1997-2008) was to "make school fun", and its star segment was a feature called *Miseinen no Shuchō* (Minor Opinions), where the V6 members would visit real middle and high schools, and have pupils stand on the roof of the school and shout down at the other pupils things they "couldn't normally say" (with the last "opinion" usually being a confession of love) (Ōta, 2018, 58). Within their lyrics, V6's trendy Eurobeat pop songs presented a vision of youth that channelled the spontaneity of the dancefloor and the potential of the new generation. In one song, they call out to listeners with the English phrase "rave on", because we are all in a "grand coming of age story (*seishun shōsetsu*)/ where we transcend time/ and all your worries disappear" (*DANCE!! Make The Party High*, 1999). V6 were signed to the new label Avex. Avex had begun as an importer of dance records and was known at the time for its star dance music producer Komuro Tetsuya, who pushed karaoke-friendly Eurobeat with lyrics championing individualism and a "desperate…positivity" that Mōri (2016, 190) argues was aimed Japan's insecurely employed youth.

The societal preoccupation with being true to oneself beyond the mundane expectations of society was realised in the figure of *aidoru*, who despite lacking the media presence of preceding years, were out there living their dreams, and could act as role models for young people. Lukács (2010, 143) notes that Kimura Takuya, another Johnny's star, often played fashionable young men with expensive tastes in 1990s romantic dramas, but far from representing a young person lacking power over their self and in thrall to capitalism, viewers were inspired by the fact that "they too can craft and manipulate their selves (style and attitude) to be socially successful". Ontological security was to be derived from a feeling of being able to select and defend one's sense of self, an agenda that began with changing the mindset of adolescents, be that in the classroom or in the shopping mall.

But not all were satisfied with this view of individualist *seishun* as the saviour of Japanese society and economy. Depictions of high school students in their uniforms also became vectors for critiquing the responsibility placed on young people to be accountable for their own futures as individuals, and by extension the future of Japan, where the establishment were seen to have spectacularly failed. During the 1990s, Japan had seven different prime ministers in quick succession, with strong "distrust" in government after a far-reaching insider trading scandal in the late 1980s (Shinoda, 2013, 47). Even prime minister Hosokawa Morihiro, who had promised

to clean up politics at the head of an opposition coalition in 1993 (Shinoda, 2013, 55), was apparently not all he seemed, resigning in 1994 after becoming embroiled in a bribery scandal. Moreover, excesses of Japan's so-called "bubble" period were seen as representing a kind of "decline in morals" and "weakening" of "the ethos of labor" (Flath, 2014, 140). Surely moral atrophy was something that the new generation could overcome by pursuing their true selves?

This burden of expectation placed on adolescents in 1990s was explored in the thriller film *Battoru Rowaiaru* (*Battle Royale*, 2000), which depicts a recession-beleaguered Japanese government passing a piece of legislation to curb the actions of rebellious youth that mandates a "Battle Royale": the selection of a high school class to fight each other to the death, with only a sole survivor. The film, though shocking and violent, showcases the ability of many of the students to help each other amidst the selfish violence mandated by the government, and paints the main authority figure — their class teacher — as a man enacting said violence as a result of his inability to relate to contemporary adolescents. Arai (2003, 367) sees the film as a critical metaphor for the government's new educational policies, that now made it the responsibility of the individual student to develop into a positive member of society, and of the continuation of "examination wars" that young people are "desperately" engaged in. Kariya (2013, 127) concurs that there is a real risk that by elevating individual effort, the government is absolving itself of, an even (re)producing "social class differences". These intense neoliberalist depictions of school-based *seishun* at the turn of the century would go on to be challenged by a new series of popular cultural depictions of *seishun* as the very opposite of "individualization seeking individuality" (Kariya and Rappleye, 2020, 173).

seishun as the joy of the everyday (2001-2010)
As the Japanese economy continued to stagnate, popular depictions of *seishun* in the 2000s took on an easy inertia. Fictional teenagers across media were striving not towards top grades or a dream career, but towards making the most of those everyday friendships and hobbies that did "make school fun". As we have seen from the popular broadcast media of the immediate post-war, school clubs have always been depicted as a vital part of harnessing the natural positivity of teenagers to shape more prosocial, hard-working characters; the essence of *seishun*. However, depictions of school clubs in some leading popular cultural properties of the 2000s showed teenagers entering school clubs not for any grand purpose, but simply to have a good time and to mess around. In the comedy film *Uōtā Bōizu* (WATER BOYS, 2001), a group of friends at an all-boys high school end up training as synchronised swimmers after joining the swimming club in admiration of its young, beautiful PE teacher. After the teacher goes on maternity leave and all the other club members drop out, one of the boys enlists the help of a hapless dolphin-trainer to help them continue to learn synchronised swimming. The boys become something of a media phenomenon, drawing interest even from their peers who had previously dropped out in embarrassment, and they find themselves forming a club with a real legacy out of what had originally been a crush on a teacher. The protagonists of *WATER BOYS* fall into their status as inspirational figures quite accidentally, and the fun they have whilst doing so is the main focus of the film (and of a number of TV drama adaptations). Their efforts are almost incidental, and apart from Kankuro, who was in the swimming club to begin with, most of the members are not particularly talented.

Even if a full-time job might no longer be guaranteed (Sugimoto, 2010a, 104), 49% of young people who graduated high school in the year 2000 were now progressing to higher-education, a statistic that some commentators at the time lamented as undermining "the association between effort and the ideal of hard-work" (Ōkawa, 2016, 71). Such complaints were targeted at the teenagers and young adults who had moved through the education system after the 1992 reforms, and after a further set of 2004 reforms that removed Saturday classes and "introduced experiential learning" (Kariya and Rappleye, 2020, 161), nicknamed *yutori kyōiku* (relaxed education). The supposed apathy of the "relaxed generation" who apparently

just had not had it tough enough, was the subject of much hand-wringing in the news media of the 2000s (Zaborowski, 2015, 171), when in fact, the "intense years" of secondary education (Fukuzawa, 2001, 5) had been instead funnelled into private tuition on evenings and weekends for those who could afford it. There was also a "society-wide scare" over *furītā*, (freeters/free workers, a portmanteau of the English word "free" and the German word for "worker") young people drifting between insecure work and their supposed lack of "commitment" to employment (Toivonen, 2014, 13). *furītā* became such a buzzword that Ninomiya Kazunari, member of *aidoru* boyband Arashi, starred in an inspirational 2010 television drama titled *Furītā ie wo kau (Part-Timer Buys a House)*, where the unmotivated protagonist learns from the older generation to take responsibility for his life, and resolves to buy a house for his mother.

Nonetheless, the reduced intensity of school days themselves left room for popular media to explore *seishun* more carefully through the intricacies of interpersonal relations. In the 2005 TV drama *Nobuta o purodyūsu* (*Producing Nobuta*, 2005), based on a prize-winning novel released the previous year (Shiraiwa, 2004), two very different yet popular young men at a high school in Tokyo decide to coach a shy, bullied girl who has transferred to their school to develop better social skills. These coaching sessions are casual chats that take place in-between lessons and on lunch breaks on the school's rooftop, with the three protagonists forming an unexpected friendship. Shuji, who feels stifled by expectations to be an all-rounder, and Akira, who feels pressure to inherit the family business, seem to gain just as much from having time and space away from the pressures of the classroom as does Nobuko, the young woman they are "producing", and who eventually realises that she simply needed the confidence to be herself. Shuji and Akira were played by two Johnny's *aidoru*, Kamenashi Kazuya and Yamashita Tomohisa, who formed a duo based on their characters from *Nobuta*, and went on to release Japan's best-selling single of 2005, titled *Seishun amīgo* (*Young Amigos*). The lyrics made reference to the the delinquent *seishun* stories of the 1980s, painting a bittersweet picture of two young men from a small town who move away together to the big city to make their fortune and fall in with wrong crowd. They find themselves longing for the familiar scenery of home:

Si (Yes), we were always one and the same
Back home there was no-one who could beat us, remember?
Si (Yes), we've always dreamed of moving here, that's what we believed in
But for some reason, all I remember is
How the sky back home looked on the day we left

Seishun amīgo (*Young Amigos*, Shuji to Akira, 2005)

Consumption of *seishun* media itself was also tending towards familiar. With sales of physical media like CDs being one of the markets that had survived the burst of Japan's economic bubble relatively unscathed (Mōri, 2016, 168), since the 1990s, musicians and producers had sought hits that were easy to sing at karaoke booths with friends or colleagues (Kelly, 1998, 76), and songs about school or school days were something that virtually anyone who found themselves in a booth would be able to relate to, with decades upon decades of tropes and popular cultural (as well as personal) memories of *seishun* to draw upon. When karaoke platform JOYSOUND released its list of most-requested songs of the Heisei era (1989-2019), fifth on the list after a selection of love songs, ballads, and anime theme songs was *Kiseki (Miracle/Path)*, a 2008 release by pop-rock band GReeeeN (Musicman, 2019). The lyrics seem directed towards a beloved friend or love interest whom the protagonist has met at school, and the title can be read to mean either "miracle", or "path", musing on the strange and mundane coincidences that create the precious relationships of one's school days. For those in their teens surveyed by Billboard Japan in 2012 who named Kiseki their favourite "*seishun* song", the tune

would have been closely associated with *ROOKIES* (2008), the TV drama that it scored, a narrative based on a popular manga of the same name (Morita, 1998-2003) and very much in the Toho Teen High School tradition (the drama features a teacher who uses the inspirational power of baseball to harness the misdirected passions of a group of delinquent teenage boys). The co-existence of spaced "relaxed" *seishun* stories of young people who made use of their new free time to explore what it meant to be themselves in relation to others with more high-stakes stories of young people who produce extraordinary outcomes through hard work, both popular during the 2000s, should remind us that many contrasting and conflicting *seishun* tropes could and did flourish, a state of affairs that will be apparent in the lyrical corpus analysed in the following chapter.

The most innovative and significant *seishun* stories of the 2000s were pioneered by publishing giant Kadokawa, under a new "media mix" model that was "organized…around magazines; proliferated across a wide range of media forms, including manga, video games, anime, and novels" (Steinberg, 2012, 174). An early example of this was *Raki Suta* (*Lucky Star*, Yoshimizu), which began as a four-panel manga in Kadokawa's *Comptiq* magazine in 2003 illustrating the lives of a group of four high school girls throughout typical milestones in the Japanese school year, such as summer break, the school's cultural and sporting festivals in the autumn, and the winter exam period. Adapted into an anime that was screened on Chiba TV in 2007, the essentially uneventful story pastiches many well-known stories of *seishun* in Japanese popular culture through the eyes of its geeky protagonist Izumi Konata, such *as Sailor Suit and Machine Gun* and *Haruhi Suzumiya* (a franchise built around a high school girl who unknowingly disrupts her boring school life with supernatural powers). Importantly, these were all Kadokawa's own cultural properties, and so the mundane nature of *Lucky Star* had the effect of highlighting the integration of *seishun* tropes into the Japanese everyday, and of legitimising the publisher's own contribution to Japanese popular cultural life. The four-panel format in which *Lucky Star* had originated meant that a great deal of meaning had to be crammed into a small narrative space, structured around brief events and encounters, lending itself to intertextual referencing and what has been described as "atmosphere-type" *(kūki-kei)* content (Uno, 2015). Hobunsha, a rival publisher, managed to create a successful anime out of its own four-panel comic, *Keion! (Music Club!)* (*2009-2010*), which also followed four high school girls who spend most of their time snacking and planning adventures, despite the fact that they are supposed to have grouped together to practise as a school club band. The girls' teacher nicknames the band "After School Tea Time", as one of the main pivots of the story is the tension between the naturally talented yet lazy guitarist Yui, who favours tea breaks, and the other members who are always trying to actually practise.

As *Keion* progresses, the members come to see the value of their tea breaks and of each others' friendship in the frantic surroundings of their high school, where everyone seems to be studying all day and practicing for their school clubs all night. Their refusal to *ganbaru* (to put in performed effort) and determination to take things slowly, in spite of which they become respected for their skills and personalities by their peers, becomes a statement of rebellion, and After School Tea Time are cheered and celebrated at their school festival. The *seishun* that *Keion*, and other "atmosphere-type" media favour, is one where "the stops along the way after school" are what matter, and where "rather than gaining something through youth, it is youth itself, with its club activities and times with friends that becomes the objective in and of itself" (Uno and Guarnieri, 2015, 121). The characters in atmosphere-type media are a celebration of relaxed education, though perhaps not in the way the Japanese government might have intended. As Allison (2013, 91) suggests, the "presentist" youth of the Japanese popular imagination during the 2000s represent something of a "critique" and a "reclaiming of time" in response to how young people were expected to lead the country in performed effort, despite the fact that their expected earnings had fallen 14 percent between 1997 and 2006 (Allison, 2013, 48).

Earlier in this chapter, I explored how throughout the decades, being an *aidoru* has been presented as the ultimate school club, where members' efforts and friendships were played out on a bigger stage than that of any school festival. As a new decade began, and the *aidoru* market increasingly took on the competitive characteristics of the race to enter a good school or university, the conceptual boundaries between *aidoru* and high school clubs in popular culture became ever fuzzier, as *seishun* tropes began to be bounced between the 2D and the 3D, and even the 2.5D.

Idolised *seishun* between dimensions (2011-2020)

Somewhere in Tokyo, a public girls high school, threatened by dwindling student numbers as a result of Japan's plummeting birth rate, is the subject of a campaign to save it. Led by a student, the plan is to start up a performing school *aidoru* club to attract new students, and to rival a similar club at a nearby private school. This is the plot of the very first iteration of *Love Live! School Idol Project*, a planned multimedia franchise by media mix giant Kadokawa that began in 2010 and as of 2021 is still producing animated television series, films, a wide variety of merchandise, music releases, and video games. Fans of the series have, from the outset, been able to choose the names, roles, and trajectories of the fictional high school *aidoru* girl characters by submitting their suggestions and votes to the magazine *Dengeki G's* (Jang, 2020, 47). The franchise is an heir and competitor to the Bandai Namco's *iDOLM@STER* franchise, which began with an *aidoru* production simulation arcade game in 2008. The girls of Love Live! exist at the intersection of *aidoru* and *seishun* tropes of struggle and of the everyday, of the real and of the virtual, created to appeal to consumers who gain perceived control of and involvement in the literal struggle to save the potential of Japanese youth, and in turn maximise the profit of *Love Live!*'s *seisaku i'inkai* (production committee, an array of organisations who invest in and guide the project to minimise risk (Joo, Denison and Furukawa, 2013)). Animated characters, who are canonically both students and *aidoru*, command fanbases as loyal as 'real' *aidoru*, and nowhere is this more interactive than the mobile game *Love Live! School Idol Festival*. Here, players become the manager and producer of the school *aidoru* club, attempting to maximise their ability to play rhythm games based on the franchise's songs by assembling a school *aidoru* group composed of trading card-like characters. The story of nurturing (*ikusei*) at the heart of the game and of the *Love Live!* project (Finan, 2021), whereby consumers act as *aidoru* producers harnessing the potential of teenage girls, could just as easily be taken from the production of the semi-fictional personas of 3D (human) *aidoru* as much as of 2D animated ones. Some music agencies now focus on developing or recruiting multidimensional talent for these franchises, scouring vocational acting colleges and social media to find performers who can best represent these simulated *aidoru* (Saijō et al., 2016, 240). So, fictions of *seishun* and their production are front and centre of contemporary Japanese media, existing across dimensions and between platforms. There are even "2.5d" concerts (Lu, 2019) where the voice actors of fictional *aidoru* perform live and in character. One of the songs that *Love Live!*'s animated characters and their voice actors most often perform is titled *Kitto seishun ga kikoeru* (*You Can Hear How Young We Are*). The lyrics make explicit reference to the audience of a live concert, and the hoped for emotional connection formed by the audience to the effort being performed on stage by *aidoru,* who are young and full of hope:

> Finally our *seishun*'s beginning
> We want to share how good it feels with you
> Our never-ending pride
> Finally our *seishun*'s beginning
> We love how it feels
> But because you're here with us (all this wonder, always)

It's all for you

Kitto seishun ga kikoeru (*You Can Hear How Young We Are*, μ's, 2013)

Other lyrics by *aidoru* groups simply use the word *seishun* as a kind of motivational refrain bordering on the nonsensical, with the assumption (as demonstrated in the following corpus and interview chapters) that the listener will simply *know* what kind of youth is being suggested, a phenomenon that demonstrates how accepted a trope *seishun* has become in contemporary Japanese media, and especially *aidoru* media. This extent of decontextualised referencing of *seishun* as a timeless, joyful, struggle-filled ideal in *aidoru* lyrics was not possible in earlier decades, as such discourses would have not yet been as established. One example is the chorus to this song by male *aidoru* group Johnny's West:

Seishun whoah whoah whoah whoah whoah
Whoah whoah whoah whoah whoah
Go hard yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah
Love the excitement
Wanna feel my heart beat faster
More (more) forever (forever
Yeah, la la la la la la la
That's *seishun*

Seishun uō!! (*Whoah, We're Young!!*, Johnny's West, 2015)

Other texts explore notions of the national past to help make sense of the present. At no time was a sense of connection to a shared yet personal cultural past more vital than in 2011, when the triple disaster resulting from the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami destroyed or damaged the ephemera of people's lives, objects through which people now make sense of their "attachments" to a pre-disaster world (Vainio, 2021, 25). These objects of course include those relating to popular media and memory, such as physical media. A 2013 television drama by national broadcaster NHK, titled *Amachan*, explored the legacy of the disaster for the Tōhoku region through the story of a young woman called Aki who returns to her north-eastern hometown from Tokyo and discovers her mother's secret past as an *aidoru* through CDs. Whilst working as an ama, a traditional woman diver, Aki gains her own online fame, and is herself recruited to join an *aidoru* group based in Tokyo, consequently shining a light on the neglected legacy of the women of her rural hometown, including her own mother, who was unfairly robbed of her chance at stardom.

When the earthquake hits the town, an *aidoru* song called *Shiosai no Memorī* (*Memory of the Sound of the Sea*) sung by both Aki and her mother (played by real-life *aidoru* singer Koizumi Kyoko) becomes a rallying point for the town's recovery. *Amachan* was one of NHK's *asadora*: "morning TV dramas", broadcast every morning in 15-minute episodes and featuring a plucky young heroine who is usually portrayed by a new, unknown actress who may herself attain *aidoru*-like fame and ubiquity through her everyday presence in people's homes. The year it aired, *Amachan* became NHK's "second biggest twenty-first century hit in terms of audience numbers (Martinez, 2019, 145), and Martinez argues that "the subject of surviving though adversity" featured in the drama was not only common to the *asadora* format, but to "Japan's post-war era narratives" (Martinez, 2019, 153), especially pertinent to the economically uncertain times Aki and her young peers must persevere through. As the adolescent heroine of

Amachan gives hope to those around her through striving as both a diver and and *aidoru*, her mother's CDs also symbolise a nostalgia "for a pre-internet media culture" "that was believed to be positive and enthusiastic" (Johnson, 2018, 55); the *aidoru* of the television age, after all, had no online abuse to contend with, and no recession.

These new hardships of contemporary adolescence and of the *aidoru* industry were explored in a novel by Asai Ryō titled *Budōkan* (2015), after the martial arts hall built for the 1964 Olympics turned concert venue that has become the pinnacle of any *aidoru* performer's career, and a byword for dreams realised through effort. Asai won the Naoki Prize for his debut novel *Nanimono* (Someone) (2012), a story of a group of friends just out of university as their relationships are tested by job-hunting, and he has since become known for stories exploring the anxieties and dreams of contemporary Japanese youth. *Budōkan* follows a girl *aidoru* group called NEXT YOU, chosen through a televised audition, and who appear to be on a straight ascent to stardom, but who encounter repeated misogyny and numerous rules that restrict their personal lives, shattering the illusion that effort will lead to success. One member is the victim of an attack by a stalker-like fan, another of online abuse discussing her weight, whilst a third becomes caught up in a scandal when she is found to be dating in contravention of her contract. When *Budōkan* was adapted for television in 2016, real-life *aidoru* group Juice=Juice played NEXT YOU, a casting choice that Asai himself as a self-declared *aidoru* fan, was heavily involved in. They released a single as the fictional *aidoru* group NEXT YOU, and the drama's airing led to numerous questions being posed to the members of Juice=Juice about the darker side of the industry, and the pressures placed on young women in the entertainment industry. The cycling of this "real life" embodiment of a fiction, itself an interpretation of the real contemporary *aidoru* industry, helped to loosen the pact between audiences and *aidoru* performers to maintain a facade of *seishun* as a cheery struggle, arguably aiding some of Juice=Juice's former labelmates in speaking out about their experiences with personal issues such sexuality (Forbes Japan, 2020) and mental health issues (Oricon News, 2017). But for all *Budōkan*'s touted role in allowing girl *aidoru* new freedom from their idealised personas, as recently as 2021, a member of Juice=Juice was forced to leave her group and agency for being found in a relationship with a musician her own age; the musician himself has continued to perform (Nikkan Sports, 2021). Youth in the public eye is, after all, still a highly gendered performance.

Meanwhile, *seishun* stories featuring both boys and girls are still at home on television, and especially in the variety format, where the televised school club has been revived for the 21st century by one of its old hands. *Seishun kōkō sannen shī-gumi* (*3C! The time of your life*, 2018-2021) was a nightly show (originally live, but later recorded) that aired on TV Tokyo, aiming to construct the "ideal high school class" from real-life auditionees who wanted to "experience *seishun*" (*seishun shitai*) just like in a manga or a TV drama. Produced by Akimoto Yasushi, creator of Onyanko Club and of numerous *aidoru* groups, the students in the titular class 3C were mostly of high school age, and, as with other variety shows, the cast take on challenges together (such as pop quizzes and debates), guided by TV personalities as "guest lecturers" ostensibly intended to help them get the most out of their adolescence in a classroom-like set. The prospect of romance and unrequited love between the cast was always floated, and though only some of the class had entertainment industry experience, all were presented with taglines as if they were characters in a *seishun*-themed TV drama ("Tough-looking rapper who really loves his mum!", "Cheerful girl who's a little on the dumb side!" (TV Tokyo, 2021)) and in a way, they were, with *3C* being what was effectively a constructed reality show that played with *seishun* tropes and character archetypes. The question implied in the setup of the show, of how to provide young people, especially school-aged young people, with an *ibasho*, "a place or a space where one feels comfortable" (Allison, 2013, 47) so that they can have, as per the title of *3C*, "the time of (their) life", was seemingly answered by the show itself; through playing with fictionalised *seishun* to rediscover what being young was truly about.

Was there really much of a difference, the series seemed to ask, between the former-*aidoru* in the cast putting on their personas in the classroom, and the "ordinary" participants? Wasn't *seishun* itself just a performance in kind in pursuit of a dream? When the series was forced to end as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, TV Tokyo aired an emotional graduation and retrospective on the show, and "three years of *seishun* that they got through with the help of their friends"; although, the format lives on in cast members who perform in school-based television dramas and in an *aidoru* group of the same name. As before, *aidoru* media and tropes of *seishun* are purposely blended into one ideal, defying the binaries of real and constructed.

Summary of findings

In this chapter, I have attempted to trace the development of wider popular cultural tropes of *seishun*, and how these tropes are in turn related to the broader development of post-war Japan and its media industries. I contend that the "macro" level of textual analysis (of the broader discourses and societal structures that texts are embedded in) is essential to understand how the theme of *seishun* is represented in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics, and to begin to suggest what those representations might mean for contemporary Japan; indeed, the "critical" element of critical thematic analysis is not possible without understanding how themes in lyrics are suggestive of connections between text and society. Although I had hoped to have access to more Japanese popular media from physical archives, I still feel able to suggest a number of trends to contextualise them in both my lyrical and interview data.

Firstly, from the 1960s onwards, school settings became the place for *seishun* portrayed in popular culture as an effort that comes from the natural passion of youth; a struggle with value. As Pugsley (2022) argues, the "ontological comfort" of the familiar school spaces across generations captured an experienced "shared" by people in Japan; fictionalised schools were thus ripe for stories of Japanes-ness. Adolescence was a way of not only talking about young people, but of talking about the inherent and incipient potential of a post-war Japan, a country that would push through national socioeconomic challenges by virtue of hard work and a shared vision. On screens of all kinds, adolescent boys and girls were both shown to be capable of chasing their dreams through sport, but in the 1970s the men who created popular culture for a new age of television began to place teenage girls on a particular pedestal, where heterosexual romance was now the dream to be chased, a set up that gave way to the dizzy freedoms of teenage girls' fantasised and objectified promiscuity in later decades. As will be seen, this difference in the supposed spontaneous mindset of *seishun* between girls and boys is borne out in the lyrical corpus all the way up to the present day. Throughout the decades studied in this chapter, rebellious struggle by young men is alternately endorsed or lamented depending on the prevailing national mood, either as a sign of Japan's own resolve, or of its lack of direction.

Secondly, I would argue that the idealised figure of the adolescent performed through *aidoru* and their antecedents is integral to what is now described as the media mix. I do not believe it is an exaggeration to say that the profitable, planned, multi-platform popular cultural franchise would not exist in its current form without the existence of *seishun* as a trope, and all its associated discourses of adolescence as a timeless, spontaneous, struggle-oriented way of being, set around the Japanese school. This is evident in the Tōhō *seishun* series, the advertising-driven variety television and *aidoru* films of the 1980s, animations ranging from *Creamy Mami* to *Keion*, and of course *aidoru* music itself. The stories found in *aidoru* lyrics are part of threads that weave their way through the very fabric of the past and the present of Japanese popular cultural industries, and through Japanese society.

Consequently, *seishun* cannot be separated from the political economic prerogatives that motivate the creation and consumption of popular culture. When questioning what representations of *seishun* in *aidoru* lyrics can tell us about Japanese social identity, it is important to acknowledge that *seishun* is not only a discursive resource to support personal reflexive ontological security on a micro level, but on the macro level for those who hold political

power in Japan to narrate a story of Japan's effort and success. In a conversation between the late former prime minister Abe Shinzō and *aidoru* lyricist and producer Tsunku organised by a right wing Japanese newspaper to mark the new year (Sankei Shinbun, 2017), Abe applauded Tsunku for penning the lines "Japan's future will be the envy of the world", and "No matter the recession, love is inglation" in the 1999 song LOVE Machine, making a direct link between the power of *seishun* stories to stimulate the public mood and the supposed power of his own "Abenomics" policies to stimulate the Japanese economy:

> "Japan was in a deflationary period when that song came out. When the monetary value of things falls, we have tendency to see the world in a negative light. It is so impressive that the group (Morning Musume) were able to keep singing about inflation in these circumstances. Just like (our) current pro-inflation measures".

On a more meso-scale, when we look to the 2000s and 2010s and ask why it is that we see so many "everyday" representations of *seishun* based around friendships at specific school clubs, especially friendship between teenage girls, it is tempting to point to banal postmodern fragmentation as a reason; fragmentation of consumption (no one generation gathered around the same television screen), fragmentation of creation (many production companies and talent agencies jostling for prominence), even fragmentation of stories through disembodied characteristics. However, by looking to the lyrics that form the core of this study, and the circumstances of their creation, we see how their everydayness is down to a very small number of prolific lyricists, who exhibit sometimes remarkable thematic unity, suggesting that there is more to contemporary depictions of *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics than broad theorising can account for. These subtleties are examined in the following lyrical data chapter.

Lyrical data

In this chapter, I will describe the application of my synthesised methodology to a corpus created based on *aidoru* lyrics containing the word *seishun*. Firstly, I will discuss how I have developed my process of gathering the lyrics themselves through web scraping. Secondly, I will describe how I used preliminary quantitative analysis (content analysis) of the quantifiable surface features of those lyrics to understand the potential themes contained within the corpus. Thirdly, I will discuss how I understood those themes as discourses, and how their distribution might help me answer my research questions; how *seishun* is represented in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics, and what those representations can tell us about Japanese social identity. At the conclusion of this chapter, I consider to what extent this lyrical data supports my hypothesis that struggle idealised within the adolescent experience is facet of contemporary Japaneseness, as it is depicted in *aidoru* music. In this analysis, the word <u>entry</u> refers to a single lyric within the corpus (and its associated metadata), the word <u>code</u> to a preliminary grouping of entries based on shared thematic features, and <u>coding</u> to the process of assigning those groupings. I have found that particular lyricists having an outsized impact on the corpus and the wider portrayal of *seishun* in *aidoru* lyrics through time, and that there are four main discourses around *seishun* as portrayed in the corpus; *seishun* as a timeless way of being, *seishun* as a joyful ideal, *seishun* as a valorised school-based struggle, and *seishun* as a gendered battleground, where boys and girls are portrayed as experiencing *seishun* differently

As discussed in the previous chapter, my interpretation of the corpus within this dissertation cannot necessarily be separated from my own assumptions and biases as a non-Japanese fan of *aidoru* music. Moreover, translations of words within lyrics are not necessarily word-to-word, and are informed by the story told within the whole song in relation to the research topic. However, the fact that lyrics do not have a single consistently translatable denotative meaning does not mean that it is not valuable to analyse potential meanings, especially in the context of the ever-changing conventions of *aidoru* music, and of Japanese society. There is much more that could be said about these lyrics in relation to style or genre, their relationship to visual media, and musical composition, but I will focus here on applying analysis of the corpus to my research questions.

Corpus compilation

After using the *Webscraper.io* plugin to scrape all 203 pages of lyrics containing the keyword *seishun* on *J-Lyric.net*, and after removing duplicates, my corpus, stored as a list of entries in Microsoft Excel, contained 924 entries, each with metadata (title, artist, lyricist, year of release, and gender of performer). I concluded scraping on the 25th of October 2019, and this figure of 924 entries includes those from 2019. For the purposes of diachronic quantitative analysis (counting instances of words or codes over time), I will use a more limited corpus of 867 entries, excluding those from 2019, so I may count only complete years. Looking at the more complete corpus, out of 4046 cases in the original search results, I categorised just under 23% of those as *aidoru* lyrics. If I were to include duplicates of much-covered *aidoru* songs containing the word *seishun*, such as Arai Yumi's 1975 hits *Ano hi ni Kaeritai (Those Were The Days)* and *Sotsugyō Shashin* (*Graduation Photo*), the corpus would be much larger. The same goes for songs from fictional *aidoru* franchises sung by multiple characters, where each has a separate CD release; only one instance of each song was included.

I will begin by further explaining the choices I made in relation to inclusion (or otherwise) in the corpus, as well as metadata entry. In other words, how do you decide when an act counts as an *aidoru* or otherwise? I kept a record of these considerations in my lyrical data diary, which I kept updated throughout the data collection and analysis process. For very recent performers,

their online promotions often explicitly state that they are a *dansei aidoru gurūpu* (male *aidoru* group) or a *josei aidoru gurūpu* (female *aidoru* group). For less recent performers, classifying them as *aidoru* or otherwise is a much more difficult undertaking. In the introduction to my thesis, I argue that there are three aspects that set *aidoru* apart from other Japanese pop stars: performed ordinariness, their performed adolescence, and their performed Japaneseness. The rather abstract nature of these three aspects has been made all too evident by the exercise of trying to sort *aidoru* from non-*aidoru* in all the lyrics that contain the word *seishun*. The current consensus is that "*aidoru*" as a distinct type of pop performer existed from the 1970s onwards, but were not labelled as such until the 1980s (Okajima and Okada, 2011). If this is the case, how do we account for the stars of the 1960s, who were often described as *aidoru* in the earlier sense of the word; as teenage multimedia stars, singers who originated on the big screen (Stevens, 2008, Xie, 2014, Richardson, 2016)? I made the decision to include singers who fell into this category, such as Funaki Kazuo (an *aidoru* who was active in the 1960s to the 1970s) and Ishihara Yūjirō (an *aidoru* who was active in the 1950s to the 1960s), in keeping Nishi's argument that even this type of *aidoru*, who he describes as "paleo-*aidoru*" (Nishi, 2017, 139) is an indispensable part of the evolution of *aidoru* as a concept.

Moreover, it is not just changing concepts that make *aidoru* difficult to classify. Performers change styles and genres throughout their careers, often casting off the label of *aidoru* as they move beyond their adolescent years. For example, Arai Yumi performed songs as an *aidoru* for the first part of the 1970s, but switched to her birth name of Matsutoya Yumi during the late 1970s when she wrote and performed more adult contemporary music. In this case, as there is a clear point in time to delineate Yumi's transition from *aidoru* to non-*aidoru*, all relevant songs under Arai Yumi have been included, whereas those under the name Matsutoya Yumi were excluded. On the other hand, there are cases of singers and groups who still perform a fantasy of adolescence decades after their debut as *aidoru*, and may still be categorised as such, because the emphasis is on an ideal of *seishun*, which may be brought to life at any age. This is evident in the case of Morohoshi Kazumi, a former member of 1980s male *aidoru* group Hikaru Genji who is accounted for in this pilot corpus. Now in his late 40s, Morohoshi performs songs of a similar style to his days in the group, often in similarly colourful costumes; his song was thus retained for this study.

A third consideration in categorising *aidoru* is the interaction between "real" and "virtual" idols. Previous studies have focused on personified voice synthesisers as *aidoru* brands, the most famous of which is the character Hatsune Miku (Black, 2008, Lam, 2016, Jørgensen, Vitting-Seerup and Wallevik, 2017). There were a few such instances of these "Vocaloids" in the pilot corpus, but these were greatly outnumbered by songs associated with multimedia gaming and animation franchises about *aidoru* production, as discussed in the last section of the previous case studies chapter. For example, *The iDOLM@STER* began as a simulation and rhythm arcade game where the player creates an *aidoru* group, but has spawned multiple manga, anime, mobile games, and, significantly for this study, pop songs sung by its protagonists (Inoue, 2014). Other mixed media, *aidoru* franchises represented in the pilot corpus were *Love Live!*, *Girlfriend (Note)*, *Re:STAGE! PROJECT*, and *A3!*, *Ensemble Stars*, and *Uta no Prince-sama*, the latter three featuring male *aidoru* acts. All output from these franchises performed by *aidoru* protagonists was included; however, where the character performing the song was not an *aidoru*, the song was excluded.

There is also a grey area where groups of voice actors associated with the franchises release *aidoru*-like songs that are not sung as their characters, for example, the voice actor group *Nanamorichu Gorakubu*, who debuted in 2011. Because these performers are not singing

in character, but as their voice actor personas, these songs were excluded. On the other hand, voice actress Ogawa Mana also has a career as an *aidoru*, and so her song *Oshare Mai Dorīmu* (*My Trendy Dream*, 2010), from the soundtrack of an anime with a high school setting was included. This fuzzy boundary between the "real" and the "virtual" when real life performers with their own personas portray fictional characters has been discussed by scholars of Japanese media as the 2.5D (half way between 2D and 3D) (Nozawa, 2013, King, 2019, Lu, 2019) and there is the potential for these entries to constitute a separate study. There are also *aidoru*, such as 1970s performer Agnes Chan (from Hong Kong) and 2010s idol group SEA☆A (from Singapore), who have been produced and marketed in Japan in the style of *aidoru*. They have been included due to the domestic nature of their careers; they may not be overtly "Japanese", but they are produced according to Japanese ideals of what constitutes an *aidoru*. This complex issue of what exactly makes an *aidoru* Japanese, beyond perceived ethnicity and production style, merits further consideration beyond this thesis. Korean "K-pop" idols, who operate under very different expectations and market conditions to Japanese *aidoru*, have been excluded from this study (Futoshi, 2012, Finan, 2020).

As a result of the above considerations, I established the following short checklist for whether or not to categorise an act as *aidoru*, and thus include it in my corpus:

1. Is the act described as an *aidoru* in official publicity
OR, in the case of pre-1980s acts, have they been accepted into the canonical history of the genre?
2. Was the act active primarily in the Japanese market?

I considered adding a criterion relating to the age of debut being prior to the Japanese age of majority; after all, if *aidoru* are performing adolescence, can there even be such a thing as an *aidoru* who debuts post-adolescence? I came to the conclusion that the answer is yes, because if we consider *aidoru*ness to be the performance of a type of stylised, marketable adolescence, it is a costume that can be assumed even by those who debut much later. Momoi Haruko, for example, is a 41-year-old performer of the exuberant *Akiba-kei* style of *aidoru* music, who made her debut at the age of 23. She is also heavily involved in *aidoru* production. Another inclusion in the corpus, Nishikino Akira, a male performer who debuted in 1970 at the age of 22, is also an accepted part of Japanese *aidoru* history. And that acceptance of an act as being part of idol history relates to the second part of the first condition; if an act is widely, and retrospectively labelled as an *aidoru*, then they are indisputably an *aidoru*. My experience of compiling this corpus bears out the fact that genre is "discursively constructed" (Jarman-Ivens, 2007, 12) ; created out of the conventional ways people speak about music, which are themselves rooted in societal structures, and people's need to make sense of their musical past as a "repository of lost values" (Cateforis, 2011, 211). This sense of genre is borne out through a variety of texts, such as archival websites like *Idol.ne.jp*, and nostalgic books and magazines.

Quantitative content analysis of lyrical data

Firstly, I conducted an analysis of the frequency of the words in the corpus, alongside an analysis of the frequency of the different categories of metadata, by importing the corpus into software package KH Coder (2015). This corresponds to step two of my synthesis of Lawless and Chen's "critical thematic analysis" methodology, wherein I carry out initial quantitative analysis to establish interesting features, which in turn informs my thematic analysis of lyrical data. I began by looking at overall word frequency, and how frequently occurring words relate to

each other. Excluding the word *seishun* itself, the morphological element *nai,* and the auxiliary verbs *suru* (do) and *naru* (become), the latter of of which occur in such large quantities as to obscure the relationships between the remaining words in KH Coder, the top 10 most frequent words within my corpus of *aidoru* lyrics containing the word *seishun* are:

1. *yume* (dream)
2. WOW
3. *ima* (now)
4. *koi* (romance)
5. kokoro (heart/mind)
6. *ai* (love)
7. *iku* (go)
8. *mirai* (the distant future)
9. *miru* (see)
10. OH

Out of context, this list cannot give us much information about how the theme of *seishun* is represented in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics. We can surmise that the corpus talks a great deal of romantic love and dreams of the future, and employs English exclamations to punctuate these stories, but little else. So, I used KH Coder's co-occurrence network feature to create a visual representation of association between terms (words), measured by Jaccard similarity coefficient. The Jaccard coefficient is a statistic that helps measure similarity between sample sets (in this case, lyrical words), by the number of members (associated words) they have in common. For this purpose, I excluded the English-language terms used as exclamations, as they all occurred together, and in relative isolation from the rest of the corpus (a phenomenon I will discuss later). I set the minimum term frequency to 80 (so, a word had to occur at least 80 times in the corpus to be included in this visualisation) (Figure 1).

To further understand how all the words, and not just the central terms, relate to each other in these apparent communities, it is useful to look at the modularity of the terms (the extent to which they form groups). The English translations of the below terms do not reflect that Japanese nouns do not inflect for number, so that the distinction between, say, town and towns is context-dependant. To decide how to represent those nouns in English, I used KH Coder's Key Word in Context (KWIC) feature to see what sort of sentences those nouns tended to appear in, and then chose a translation to reflect that usage. Any Japanese verbs that appeared on the original diagram in their "plain" unconjugated form have been rendered in English as infinitives (for example, *to change*), except where their relationship with neighbouring words is better reflected by another form (eg. *shine* with sun).

Some of the communities of words here form distinct semantic groups. One grouping of words centres around the as yet unknown, or unseen. Combined with intersecting interrogatives (*how*, *should*), the theme of temporality suggested by *tomorrow/today* could suggest a consideration of the uncertainties of the passing of time, or what the future might bring. Indeed, the modularity of the words *tomorrow*, *to blow*, and *the wind* suggests the Japanese idiom *ashita wa ashita no kaze ga fuku* (tomorrow's wind will blow tomorrow/what will be will be). The centrality of the term *tears* suggests that the adolescence portrayed by the lyrics does appear to be a time of hardships; albeit not a strictly negative one, but rather a period of ups and downs. These tears are, more than anything, associated with smiles and sweat (suggesting hard work). There is also a set of words and phrases about effort in the face of adversity, including terms

like *courage*, *spirits*, and *to shout*, which could suggest a theme of perseverance.

A possible metaphor for adolescence and life as a journey shows up in a grouping of words around the central term *road*. The association between *tears* and *smile* is replicated in a second pair of words, to *laugh/smile* and to *cry*, which one might summarise in a second metaphor of adolescence as consisting of ups and downs (or mountains and valleys, as the Japanese idiom goes). A grouping around the world *blue*, which in its Japanese form makes up part of the word *seishun* and suggests naivety or immaturity, is shown to be linked to a network related to passionate feelings. These feelings are referred to in Japanese using metaphors related to fire; words included in this set include *hot* and *to burn*, which form another potential metaphor for adolescence. Furthermore, a group of action verbs, including *to go, to dance*, and *to begin*, are associated with the central term *come on*, an exclamation of encouragement that most likely precedes them all in encouraging someone not to hesitate. This exhortation to not hesitate is echoed elsewhere in the diagram, where the word *now* shares a community with the verb *to live*. Through these linkages and associations, I formed a preliminary set of codes to assist my critical thematic analysis of the lyrical data:
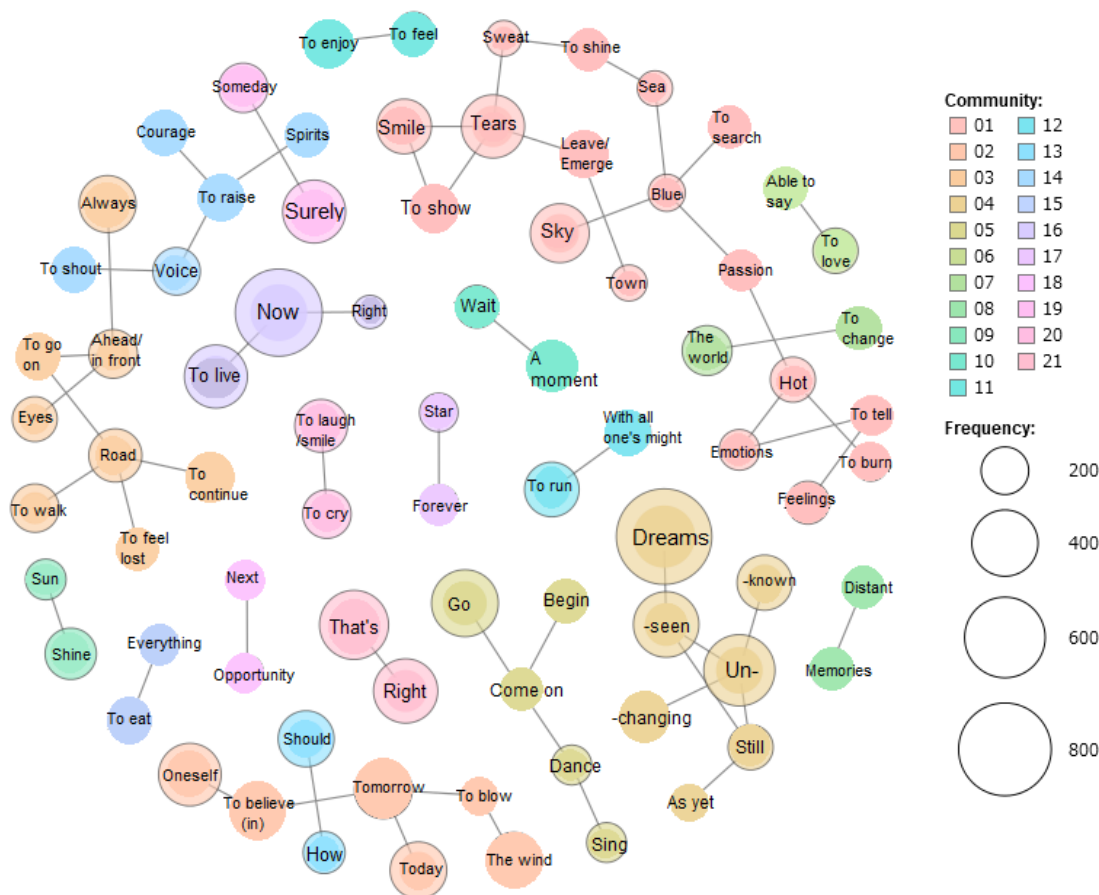

Figure 4-Term modularity within the corpus.

- Romance.
- Uncertainty.
- Dreaming of the future.

- Doing one's best.
- Ups and downs.
- Adolescence is a journey.
- Adolescence is a burning passion.
- Live for the present.

These were then refined through the qualitative thematic analysis process carried out using the software NVivo, with some remaining unchanged, and others being expanded into more specific themes, treated as discourses relating to adolescence. I will now examine each type of metadata (lyricist, artist, year of release, gender of performer), and explain how their respective distributions aid my analysis of the theme of *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics.

Examination of metadata

Two lyricists make up 27.3% of the entire corpus; Akimoto Yasushi, who penned 144 of the entries in the corpus, and Tsunku, who wrote 108. As discussed in the previous case studies chapter, Tsunku is a musician and composer who established the Hello! Project *aidoru* talent agency, and whose most famous act is the *aidoru* girlband Morning Musume, which he founded through a talent show in 1997 and is still going to this day, as new members join and old members 'graduate', or leave the group. Akimoto Yasushi has been producing *aidoru* girlbands since the late 1980s, and often penned lyrics for *aidoru* acts of the 1970s, though is today best known for his production of the "46" and "48" roster of *aidoru* groups, where fans are able to vote for their favourite members to receive further promotion amongst a vast cast of nominally 46 or 48 girls. Both are men who write mostly for girl *aidoru*, and have auteur-like production styles, where they have historically gone to great efforts to portray themselves as in control of every aspect of their acts' careers (Tsunku, 2015, Saitō, 2017). Akimoto Yasushi and Tsunku even collaborated on a TV talent show called *Rasuto Aidoru* (*Ultimate Idol*, 2017), which aimed to produce the "ultimate" girl *aidoru* group (Universal Music Japan, 2017), and resulted in a jointly. A full list of the top 10 most frequent lyricists in the corpus follows (female lyricists are underlined):

1. Akimoto Yasushi (144)
2. Tsunku (108)
3. Matsumoto Takashi (20)
4. Urino Masao (17)
5. Aku Yu (16)
6. Miura Yoshiko (10)
=7. Aki Yoko (9), Maeyamada Ken'ichi (9)
=8. Hata Aki (8), NOBE (8)
=9. Nakanishi Rei (7), Karasawa Miho (7)
=10. (6), Yamakawa Keisuke (6), Matsui Goro (6), Matsui Yohei (6)

The next most frequent lyricist in the corpus, Matsumoto Takashi, originally known as the drummer for influential 1970s folk-rock band Happy End, has written 20 of the lyrics in the corpus, centring on the late 1970s and early 1980s. This is followed by Urino Masao, who came to prominence during the late 1980s after penning a breakout hit for female *aidoru* Nakamori Akina, winner of TV talent show *A Star is Born*!, and then Aku Yu, the lyricist behind the earliest

aidoru of the small screen, and the driving force behind the girl- and boy- next door style of singer that *A Star is Born!* became so known for. The next two most frequent lyricists are decade-spanning Miura Yoshiko, and actress and writer Aki Yoko, the latter famous for forging female idol Yamaguchi Momoe's more mature and assertive lyrical identity in the 1970s; these two are the most prolific women lyricists in the corpus. There is not enough data for lyricists <u>other than</u> Tsunku or Akimoto Yasushi for KH Coder to come to any meaningful conclusions about distinctiveness in usage of particular words. However, looking at the top 10 most distinctive words for each of these two lyricists (Figure 2, measured by Jaccard distance), we can surmise a few things:

Akimoto Yasushi	Tsunku
ima (now) .021	*seishun* (youth/adolescence) .041
yume (dream) .020	WOW .018
jibun (oneself) .014	OH .015
itsu (when) .013	*koi* (romance) .015
miru (to see) .011	*hito* (person) .012
suki (to like) .011	*ai* (love) .011
kaze (the wind) .011	*mirai* (the distant future) .011
hashiru (to run) .011	LOVE .011
michi (road) .011	*iu* (to say) .010
aruku (to walk) .011	YEAH .010

Figure 2— The ten most distinctive words for the two most frequent lyricists.

First of all, the large number of English language exclamations in the corpus displayed in the overall word frequency list can be mostly attributed to Tsunku's lyrical style. Secondly, the use of the word *ima* (now), as well as the prevalence of words associated with the adolescence-as-a-journey theme (to run, road, to walk), are related to Akimoto Yasushi's own lyrical idiosyncrasies of portraying *seishun* as an ongoing voyage on which to look back. This contrasts with Tsunku's use of the more distant, idealised future (one of romantic love) as a setting for his lyrics that touch on *seishun*. As will become clear later in this chapter, these findings regarding the differing temporalities of the two overwhelmingly most frequent lyricists in the dataset are borne out in the thematic content of their entries, and tie in with Sadamura's (2019, 25) findings that Akimoto Yasushi's lyrics <u>overall</u> (not just those referring to *seishun*, as in this case) have a comparative abundance of words referring to the present. Finally, because the corpus is purposefully constructed, each entry of course contains the word *seishun* at least once; but use of the term *seishun* itself is most strongly associated (and meaning, used most frequently) in lyrics written by Tsunku. Because I used to listen to a lot of lyrics written by Tsunku when I first became a fan of Japanese popular music, it is possible that this has skewed my perception of the centrality of the term *seishun* itself to depictions of adolescence in *aidoru* lyrics, a clear limitation to my sampling methods. But it is also the case that, aside from my own consumption, Tsunku-penned songs and their longing for a whimsical future have been a feature of the Japanese charts since the late 1990s, an optimistic picture of youth and hope set against a prevailing "pessimistic outlook on the nation's economic future" (Yoda, 2000, 633). They are an unavoidable part of the development of key tropes in *aidoru* storytelling, as the rest of the lyrical metadata shows. Thus, I do not see this limitation as a reason to ignore the usefulness of a purposefully sampled corpus in discovering the nature and significance of depictions of *seishun*

in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics.

Eight of the ten most frequent artists in the dataset were each female *aidoru* groups, with all but one associated with either Akimoto Yasushi or Tsunku. In the following list, the number of instances of each act follows in brackets (in this case, the male acts are underlined):

1. AKB48 (40) (produced by Akimoto Yasushi)
2. Morning Musume (29) (produced by Tsunku)
3. Berryz Kobo (23) (produced by Tsunku)
4. SKE48 (23) (produced by Akimoto Yasushi)
5. Shiritsu Ebisu Chūgaku (13)
6. C-ute (14) (produced by Tsunku)
7. HKT48 (14) (produced by Akimoto Yasushi)
8. Nogizaka46 (12) (produced by Akimoto Yasushi)
9. Ishihara Yujiro (11)
=10. Saijō Hideki (9), Yamaguchi Momoe (9)

The next most frequent artist is 1960s star of movies and popular music, Ishihara Yūjirō, reflecting the star-making power of films during that decade. Ishihara was at the nexus of the moral panic around the excesses of wealthy "sun tribe" (Shamoon, 2002) youth and their leisure time, and the earliest high school set *seishun* screen media. He is followed by 1970s female *aidoru* Yamaguchi Momoe and her male contemporary Saijo Hideki, the latter famous for hit Japanese language cover version of The Village People's YMCA, converted from a camp disco hit into a poppy motivational anthem called *Young Man* (1979) about making the most of *seishun* to follow your dreams. The most frequently occurring male *aidoru* group is Zoo True Bee (a play on the Japanese pronunciation of The Beatles), a group formed through a TV talk show in the 1970s who were forerunners of *aidoru* as all-round entertainment personas. As with the less frequently occurring lyricists, generating data on distinctive words is not necessarily of any use in telling us about portrayals of *seishun* and their significance for social identity. It is therefore important to pay attention to both how *aidoru* music exists within the wider entertainment industry of its time of production, and how it exists within the memorialisation and canonisation of *aidoru* as a coherent genre in order to understand the significance of portrayals of *seishun* therein.

Of the final corpus of 924 lyrics, 79.4% were by acts made up of those performing as[1] women, and 19.8% by those performing as men, be they groups or solo singers. The remaining 0.8% were groups of mixed genders, and none of these groups occurred more than once. Although we cannot know how representative these statistics are of a hypothetical corpus composed of all *aidoru* lyrics, the predominance of women performers in the corpus matches their presence as objects of analysis in existing *aidoru* scholarship, as explained in the introduction to this thesis. Taking a look at the diachronic frequency of *aidoru* lyrics containing the word *seishun* (Figure 4), we also get a sense as to when these mostly women *aidoru* performers' *seishun*-related releases are concentrated:

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[1] The phrase "performing as" is used to encompass cross-dressing acts such as Fudanjuku (girls who perform as boys).
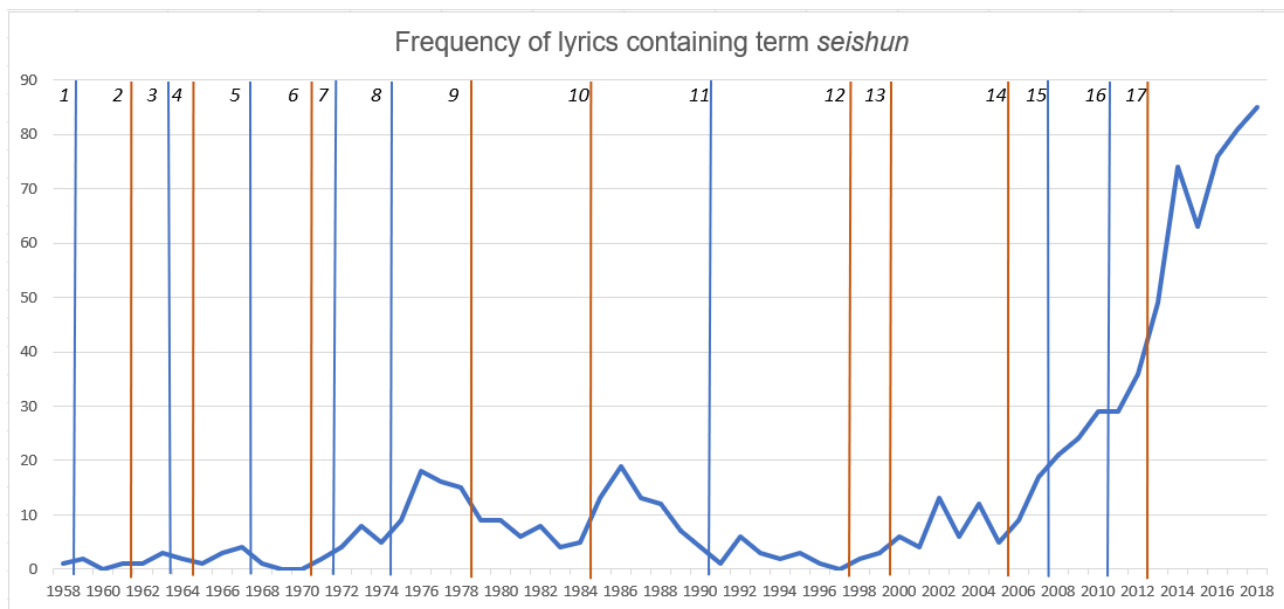
Figure 5- Diachronic frequency of aidoru lyrics containing the term seishun.

The chart has also been labelled with some points of note in recent Japanese history (blue vertical lines) that in the previous chapter I have argued had some impact on the media history of the *seishun* trope (orange vertical lines). Corresponding to the numbers in italics, these refer to:

1. The first protests against the US-Japan Security Treaty, 1959.
2. Debut of Johnnys, 1962.
3. Tokyo hosts the Olympics, 1964.
4. *Seishun to wa nanda* first broadcast, 1965.
5. First Japanese student protests, 1968.
6. *A Star is Born!* first Broadcast/Minami Saori debuts, 1971.
7. "Reversion" of Okinawa, 1972.
8. Japanese inflation peaks, 1974.
9. *The Best Ten* first broadcast 1978.
10. *Yūyake Nyan Nyan* first broadcast, 1985.
11. Burst of economic "bubble", 1991.
12. Major label debut of Morning Musume, 1998.
13. *Battle Royale* released, 2000.
14. Major label debut of AKB48, 2006.
15. Beginning of global economic crisis, 2008.
16. Tōhoku earthquake and disaster, 2011.
17. First *Love Live!* franchise anime and game released, 2013.

Although it is tempting to suggest that this graph illustrates an increasing use of the word *seishun* in *aidoru* lyrics, it actually corresponds to a well-established chronology of the vicissitudes of the *aidoru* industry as a whole in Japan. This includes a rapid increase of lyrics mentioning *seishun* in the wake of the first TV-star *aidoru* of the 1970s, such as Minami Saori, and the peak years of *aidoru* performing for their post-war *dankai no sedai* (baby boomer) generation peers as members of the ideal school club on shows such as The Best Ten. We also

see a peak during the so-called "golden age" of *aidoru* in the 1980s (Okajima and Okada, 2011, 62), when the Japanese economy was booming, and a dip in the the *aidoru fuyu no jidai* (wintertime of *aidoru*) in the 1990s, when *aidoru* lost some of their prominence (Sakai, 2014, 101). resurgence of *aidoru* performers in the early 2000s, leading to the current "warring states period" (Okajima and Okada, 2011) of a highly competitive, perhaps even oversaturated, market for girl *aidoru* performers. From 2006 onwards, which is when Akimoto Yasushi launched the first of his 48 franchise of groups, and when the Tsunku-produced groups Berryz Kōbō and C-ute became established, there is a very clear upward trend in *aidoru* lyrics containing the word *seishun*. The lack of insight into the development of particular themes associated with *seishun* tropes provided by this purely diachronic data shows the importance of archival and interview data, as well as following qualitative critical thematic analysis, in helping to place the corpus within the development of the wider *aidoru* industry.

Critical thematic analysis of lyrical data

I have conducted more detailed thematic analysis on a sample of 2/3rds of the wider corpus (a total of 615 entries). All the entries in this corpus have in common that they contain the word *seishun*, and are performed by acts that may be described as *aidoru*. Some of these songs mention *seishun* only in passing, and some are dedicated entirely to the concept of *seishun*. With songs that are so clearly about *seishun* itself, it was easier to consider themes that might unite them. With entries where portrayal of *seishun* was less clear-cut, it was a matter of conducting initial coding; labelling those entries with nodes that described the themes (places, relationships, emotions) that they associated with *seishun*, with these steps all performed in the computer-aided qualitative analysis software NVivo. I have then grouped those nodes into four main discourses; *seishun* a joyful ideal, *seishun* as a gendered battleground, *seishun* as a valorised and specifically school-based struggle, and *seishun* as a timeless way of being. In this section, I will discuss each of these discourses in turn, as well as how specific nodes are distributed across the corpus, and what these can tell us about contemporary Japanese social identity.

seishun as a joyful ideal

Although I expected a significant presence of lyrics about *seishun* as a type of effort, the most strongly represented discourse sees *seishun* as a joyful time, a condition to aspire to and draw inspiration from. Romance, dreams, and friendship, are the most widely represented nodes topic in the corpus (with respective distributions of 81.6%, 74.5%, and 50%), and just under a third of lyrics (31.7%) portray youth as fun and exciting, a slightly higher percentage than those that discuss doing your best or working hard (28%). Most romantic lyrics are about first loves, crushes, and many discuss the difficulty of telling your beloved that you like them (a trope known as *kokuhaku* or confession), which is especially associated with school settings. Entries that mention sexuality are less common, making up only 5% of the corpus. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, discussion of sex as a secret or forbidden practice is a key feature of the lyrics sung by 1970s girl *aidoru* Yamaguchi Momoe, many of which were penned by woman lyricist Aki Yōko:

> My fingertips recall
> An endlessly deep, deep
> Love, you see
> I will tie these feelings up in a bow
> And secretly, so secretly
> Hide them deep in my heart
> (*Kagerō* (*Heat Haze*), Yamaguchi Momoe, 1976)

In this scenario, the sexuality of the protagonist is something clandestine, and the lyrics are written as if the listener is the person to whom Momoe is revealing her secrets. There is a degree to which discussion of sexuality becomes more explicit in the entries from later years, and to which the protagonists of the song become less passive. However, this lack of passivity and secrecy is especially the case for lyrics performed by boy *aidoru* groups, including this song which celebrates infidelity as the inevitable consequence of the enthusiasm and high sex drive of young men:

> I want a flower in each hand
> That's my insatiable curiosity
> Doesn't everyone want to be popular?
> Just once, don't you want girls going crazy over you?
>
> (*Pheremone*, Sexy Zone, 2018)

The second most represented topic is dreaming of the future, although it is mostly unclear what kind of dreams the protagonists of the songs are wishing for. Dreams are referred to by way of demonstratives (this dream, that dream), such that an implicit understanding is established between the performer and the listener as to what kind of dreams they must be. The clearest characteristic of these dreams is that they are a feature of *seishun*, and that we lose them as we get older. Those dreams might be linked to a romantic interest:

> You over there, daydreaming head in hands
> You've not somehow, some way
> Given up, have you?
> Someone waiting for you far away from here
> Will open the door to your dream world!
>
> (*Let's get love*, Doll Elements, 2016)

Or, we may even have to return to *seishun* in order to recover those purer ambitions that become sullied by adult life. For example, this 1980s boy *aidoru* group extoll the virtues of revisiting your younger days in this 2015 song, in order to promote their comeback:

> Stop! Look back before you lose that dream
> As time passes, your heart becomes muddied
> But it's not too late to do *seishun* over again
>
> (*Ano koro no oretachi* (*How We Were Back Then*) Shibugakitai, 2015)

The third most common node within the corpus is that of friendship, and it is often collocated with discussions of dreams and romance. These three aspects define the experience of *seishun* as it is portrayed in the corpus, in an idealistic manner. However, whilst romance and dreaming are fairly constant throughout the years of the corpus, idealised friendship as a component of *seishun* only begins to materialise from the mid-2000s, corresponding with the increase in *aidoru* who perform in groups. These groups are performing the values of friendship through their *aidoru*ness, as opposed to romance, which they may sing about but not contractually engage in. This song by girl *aidoru* group LinQ uses a baseball metaphor to discuss how *seishun* means living in the moment:

Let's Go! *seishun* Everyday
Push off with all you've got
Pitch for your dreams, romance, and friendships at full power
Let's Go! Want more out of Everyday
Make all those dreams a reality
(*Zenryoku Everyday* (*Full Power Everyday*) LinQ, 2013)

The "atmosphere-type" of popular media discussed in the media case studies chapters where "rather than gaining something through youth, it is youth itself, with its club activities and times with friends that becomes the objective in and of itself" (Uno and Guarneri, 2015, 121), shares many of its values with depictions of *seishun* as a joyful ideal in *aidoru* lyrics, even if lyrics do not share the immediacy of anime such as *Keion,* themselves being more rooted in ideals of the future or the past. But where "atmosphere-type" media peaked in the early 2000s, the elevation of *seishun* as an aspiration for all is clear to see in this lyric written by Akimoto Yasushi for female *aidoru* Koizumi Kyōko in 1986:

Be more young
Be young
Feel that fire in your heart
Be more young
Be young
What's wrong with taking yourself seriously from time to time?
(*Seishun de yukō yo* (*Be young*), Koizumi Kyōko, 1986)

What it means to "be young" in this idealised sense, however, differs greatly depending on the gender of the performer within the corpus. In the next section, I will explore what metaphors in the corpus can tell us about these gendered differences in portrayals of *seishun*.

seishun as a gendered (metaphorical) battleground)
    I have already noted above, girls are depicted as more passive in romance within the corpus. By examining the frequency of particular nodes in lyrics grouped by gender of performer, and then comparing those figures to the overall prevalence by gender of performer, it is possible to see how some nodes are more associated with 'girl' *seishun* or 'boy' *seishun*. The nodes overrepresented in lyrics by girl *aidoru* are more closely associated with self-image; for example, 94.03% of mentions of body image or fashion are coded to lyrics by female acts. Topics like anxiety, youth being awkward, and adults not understanding adolescent feelings are also similarly prevalent in female *aidoru* lyrics. For example, in the following song, the girl protagonist worries about all manner of small things:

Do I get new clothes or not? I just don't know
Do I get a new piercing or not? I just don't know
Do I send that text or not? I just don't know
Should I go on that date? I just don't know
(*Seishun wa hazukashī* (*Adolescence is Awkward*), SKE48, 2010)

The awkwardness of *seishun*, where worries over minor aspects of appearance or choices in one's social life seem overwhelming, are discussed by lyricists in the following chapter as being an important part of depicting adolescence warts-and-all; but those same lyricists also questioned their own abilities to relate to and to recreate the teenage experience, timeless

though it may be, when they themselves were in their twenties or older. Lyricists also acknowledge the commercial imperatives of lyric-writing, and so the fact that many lyrics are written for girl *aidoru* by older men suggest that there is something appealing about the vision of *seishun* that is being presented, regardless of the authorship or its 'authenticity'. The image of a teenage girl as being swamped by everyday concerns is reminiscent of critiques of the contemporary Japanese experience as "indulging repetitively, practically endlessly, in activities that gratify…without necessarily trying to find any special meaning therein" (Cervelli, 2021, 7). At the same time, I do indeed remember my own teenage years are a time of small conflicts, "blown out of all proportion", as one lyricist I interviewed for this research put it. As discussed in the media case studies chapter, scholars have accounted for how the image of girl has become a vessel for the hopes and anxieties of post-war Japan, whether that be within cinema (Coates, 2018), efforts to promote Japan's soft power through her pliable image (Miller, 2011), or manufactured moral panics about the potential rebellion of girls (Kinsella, 2014). As Taylor-Jones and Thomas-Parr argue in reference to Japanese cinema (2019, 357), girls are, like *seishun*, a type of temporality in and of themselves "caught between a nostalgic past and an uncanny future".

As was hinted at in the co-occurrence network (Figure 4), metaphors of adolescence associated with boy *aidoru* describe how the intrinsic passion of young men can help them to weather the storm that is *seishun*. Masculinity in Japanese popular media is a matter of "self-discovery" (Barber, 2014, 136) through hardship, especially sports. For example, in the following track by 'boy' *aidoru* group Arashi, the mutual agreement of a group of friends to keep on going together through the hardships of school life is summarised in the title of the song: *GUTS.*

> All the best to those
> Who fly off in the face of the wind
> We're all essentially weak
> Shedding tears
> But the rain will clear, the curtain will rise
> As we vow
>
> (*GUTS* Arashi, 2014)

These stories of the intrinsic passion of (male) *seishun*, frequently played out through sport in the tradition of the Japanese teen drama dating back to the *Tōhō Teen High School* television dramas of the 1960s, overlap with discourses of *seishun* as a valorised, school-based struggle, as school is a common setting within these dramas for the taming and refinement of the energy of teenage boys. Another typical lyric from the 1970s reads as follows, in reference to the Kurosawa Akira film *Waga seishun ni kui nashi* (No Regrets for Our Youth, 1946), a film that became a generational dividing point in the occupation era Japan (Kitamura, 2017, 139), as it showed a (US-approved) vision of young people standing up to political suppression:

> What should we do
> On this fleeting spring day
> All that matters is that our tears are hot
> Those mental scars mean something too
> Do you have any regrets?
> Did you feel that fiery passion?
> That's what you need to ask yourself
> (*Seishun ni kui wa nai ka* (*Any Regrets for Your Youth?*),
> Morita Kensaku, 2005, originally released 1973)

The orthography for this song is of particular interest, as the word "spring" is represented with the characters for the word *seishun*, marking an implied equivalency between the two as fleeting and beautiful. Aside from youth being a burning passion, or a storm to weather, poeticism and pathos of *seishun*, as represented by flowers and spring is another node overrepresented in male *aidoru* lyrics, something that may be connected to the numerous male solo singers like Morita (who have been retrospectively labelled as *aidoru*) active in the 1960s and 1970s, when *enka* (a genre of Japanese folk popular music filled with "tears of longing" (Yano, 2002)) bled into *kayōkyoku*, the pop music of the time. Where metaphors of conflict associated with girl *aidoru* are similarly violent and intense, those battles <u>between</u> girls are framed as the result of love rivalry; two girls who pursue the same boy romantically and for whom a relationship is a prize to be won to elevate her amongst her peers. This track by the girl *aidoru* group Super Girls describes one summer night that it is a battle for "survival" between two friends who like the same boy:

> You and me, we're not messing around
> You and me, things can change in the blink of an eye
> Tonight it feels like anything at all could happen
> I won't lose
> You and me, declaring ourselves rivals
> You and me, it's time to put
> Our friendship aside for now

> (*Survival*, SUPER GiRLS, 2013)

This discourse is parodied by another song by a girl *aidoru* group that depicts the school as a literal apocalyptic battle ground for survival, in the manner of the 2000 film *Battle Royale*. In this entry, the protagonist cheerfully excuses herself from classroom cleaning duties because the broom is flying through the air and her clothes are stained with blood. She then fantasises about encountering her love rival in the corridors of the school, and describes in comedic understatement how the prospect of a battle to the death makes her heart beat "a little" faster:

> I want to run into that girl
> Challenge her to a fight after school
> One of us must die
> School life
> Is all a little bit exciting
> I won't let her crush me
> After all, I've got so much *seishun* left to enjoy

> (*Otome Sensō* (*Girls' War*), Momoiro Clover Z, 2012)

At the time, Momoiro Clover Z were performing as overt characters; ordinary schoolgirls who become superheroines with magical powers at the weekend. I would argue that the above song, as well as Momoiro Clover Z's stage personas, are a subversion of the trope that girls are only interested in competing innocently for the interest of boys in school settings, and its self-aware tone is noteworthy in the context of how the group were discussed at the time as being at "war" with other *aidoru* girl groups for sales and prominence. In the next section, I will discuss how struggle at school is idealised within the corpus beyond the concept of the battleground, and how that struggle remains connected to the gender of the performers.

***seishun* as valorised school-based struggle**

 Although school life was not as significant a part of the corpus as I had anticipated, I contend that there is still value in examining how school life is represented within *aidoru* lyrics that mention *seishun*, especially considering the enduring cultural power of the schoolgirl within (Kinsella, 2014), and on behalf of (Miller, 2011), Japanese popular culture. The idealisation of school clubs (*bukatsudō*), especially school sports, and the joys gained through participation despite physical hardships and turbulent personal relationships, is the most present discourse about school life in the corpus, and has clear precedents in popular screen media, as discussed in the previous chapter. As my discussion of metaphors of battle and conflict suggests, this discourse centres boys as the heroes of *bukatsudō*, embodying their idealised struggle. I also mentioned in the thesis introduction that the folk story of how boy *aidoru* agency Johnny's was created involves the agency's eponymous founder, Japanese-American Johnny Kitagawa, seeing a group of boys playing baseball in post-war Tokyo and wondering at their potential for musical performance. Sports clubs', and particularly baseball's place in *aidoru* media and its representations of adolescence continue to the present day. Whilst boys are the players of the game, girls are, as in real life, cast in the role of the manager who organises games and keeps players in line. She is often portrayed as falling in love with the players, such as in this song by a girl *aidoru* group:

> I know more than anyone
> How much practice you put in
> *seishun* is so unfair
> I'll be by your side, love you

> (*Candy Love*, FuwaFuwa, 2018)

In the media case studies chapter, I posited *aidoru* as a type of alternative, idealised *bukatsudō*, and the portrayal of life as an *aidoru* within the corpus shows a similar idealisation and valorisation of struggle as has been acknowledged in real-life Japanese school clubs (Cave, 2004, McDonald and Kawai, 2017). Out of the 38 entries where performers discuss being an *aidoru*, 17 of those describe the hard work that they put in as a team. Girl *aidoru* group Ongaku Gatas take this a step further; they were a group put together by Tsunku's pop music agency from a range of different girl *aidoru* groups who also genuinely competed as a futsal team. The song makes a direct comparison between being an *aidoru* and being on a sports team:

> There are techniques to learn
> To keep on winning
> Even in those situations
> When you're so nervous you can't breathe

> As long as you can share a smile
> With your team mates
> You can get through
> Any tough situation

> (*DREAMIN' ~Gatas Brilhantes H.P. no Ōenka~* (*Dreamin': Gatas
> Brilhantes H.P. Anthem*), Ongaku Gatas, 2007)

Aidoru songs about graduation are an opportunity to muse on how *seishun* is fleeting and

beautiful, and to make use of the metaphor of adolescence as a flower. The cherry blossoms that bloom during Japan's springtime graduation season are an especially common motif, and are not particular to *aidoru* lyrics, as the discussion of "*seishun* songs" in the media cast studies chapter demonstrates. The entries coded as "School life" demonstrate a more frequent occurrence of both anxiety and valorised effort compared to the corpus of a whole, and many of those sentiments of struggle and worry centre on high school graduation. Over a quarter of lyrics with school settings are penned by Akimoto Yasushi and associated with female acts that he presides over, acts who, since the 1980s, have worn school uniforms to represent their ordinariness. For example:

> My friends,
> We need to believe in our futures
> That shine brighter
> Than our memories
> Because graduation
> Isn't an exit
> But an entrance
> (GIVE ME FIVE!, AKB48, 2012)

The immediacy of these lyrics, where the protagonist is not looking back on their graduation, but instead experiencing it, and looking to the future, is somewhat unusual amongst Akimoto's other contributions to the corpus, that tend to be rooted in nostalgia or regret, but is nonetheless a strong demonstration of the meaning accorded to the school experience in *aidoru* lyrics, and in wider Japanese society. On the other hand, a track about graduation performed by male *aidoru* group w-inds shows a scepticism towards the idealisation of *seishun*:

> "*seishun*" is an excuse made up by adults
> It's nothing pretty, it's been hard going
> We should all be able to fly into the sky
> Our own blue skies
> Anywhere, anyway
> And again someday under the rainbow
>
> (*Itsuka, niji no shita de* (*Someday, Under the Rainbow*) w-inds, 2005)

What is being subverted here is the idea of youthful struggle as resilience; as surviving and overcoming social pressures for the better, in a way that justifies those very pressures to be someone of consequence under neoliberalism (James, 2015, 19); after all, graduation from high school and higher education that follows spits young people out into a competitive job market that mirrors the fierce competition of the popular music world that *aidoru* inhabit. A similar stance is taken in this song by female idol group Splash Revolution, who disavow "anyone else's idea of/dreams, hope, love, desire/of *seishun*" (*Seishun Lie la night*, 2014). But these songs are a minority, and most portrayals of *seishun* in this corpus portray it as having inherent, idealised qualities that transcend time, a key discourse which will be examined in the following section.

seishun as a timeless way of being
The canonical places and times (or, chronotopes) for the entries in the corpus are harder to pinpoint. About a fifth of songs that paint adolescence as a fun and exciting time discuss school or university life, with seasonal settings (particularly springtime and summertime) being equally prevalent. The rest, I would argue, may be situated in the chronotope of *seishun* itself; an

imagined temporality that does not necessarily reflect what we understand as <u>real</u> adolescence, but a time that passes with an intimate connection to the seasons and a transformational impact on the self. As Allan (1994, 214) argues, with reference to space and time in novels, chronotopes and the discourses they suggest "cannot be torn from reality"; they are conventions through which the creator and consumer of the text understand time. As can be seen from the media case studies chapter, the chronotope and trope of *seishun* is closely connected with changing societal views of Japan over time and of young people from the mid twentieth century onwards. The idea of *seishun* as a time of pure, unsullied potential to be harnessed by effort was solidified in Japan's post-war as young people, many entering compulsory education for the first time, were expected to fuel Japan's economic resurgence in the aftermath of the very real loss of so many young lives.

> "What is *seishun*?"
> Sharing your dreams and share your worries
> "What is *seishun*?"
> Living with all your might
> (*Seishun to wa nanda* (*What is Youth?*), Ishihara Yūjirō, 1965)

> You won't find a definition of *seishun*
> In a textbook
> It's about living honestly
> With nothing but passion
> (*Kakenukerō! Seishun* (*Kids, Don't Hesitate!*) Sunmyu, 2013)

Though these two songs may have been released 48 years apart, they share in a discourse that *seishun* is a transcendent state of mind, a way of living that speaks to some better form of humanity. This was something that lyricists interviewed in the following chapter often pointed to; to the fact that the endurance of *aidoru* songs had something to do with *seishun* tropes and their timelessness. Discussing the teen drama *Oretachi no tabi* (*Our Trip*, 1975-1976), which portrayed the adventures of a group of university dropouts who literally put off their induction into corporate society by setting up an odd-job business, Ōta (Ōta, 2021) argues that it was an important step in the establishment of the idea that *seishun* "never ends"; because even though the characters are outside education, they take their passions and spontaneity with them, just like *aidoru*, who "never stop growing". *aidoru*, therefore, are the ultimate embodiment of *seishun* time as a chronotope, a view shared in this song performed by a character in a fictional male *aidoru* franchise that brings together many of the themes as discourses identified in this chapter from corpus coding (youth as a passion, as a joyful ideal):

> Being young is a once in a lifetime performance!
> What's the point if you don't do it with passion?
> Time to plunge right into the moment!…
> We'll probably argue from time to time
> But we'll make up when we decide it's better to get along
> And that's how we grow!
> (*Seishun! Satisufakushon* (*Adolescent Satisfaction*),
> Shirai Yuusuke/Wakazato Haruna, 2017)

Summary of findings

I have shown through critical thematic analysis how a variety of discourses are associated

with *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* music, with *seishun* as a time for romance, and *seishun* as a time for dreaming, remaining the two most important ways of talking about adolescence from the first diachronic peak in the 1970s onwards. Pop songs being about love and dreams is about as surprising as the revelation that adolescent performers sing about being adolescent. The question of what *aidoru* lyrics can tell us about Japanese social identity is made even more complex by the fact that the corpus tells the story of the ongoing formation and reformation of a genre and performance style within Japan's media mix, where newer formations of ideal *seishun* such as the exuberant "national" school club of the golden age of 1980s youth broadcasting are layered upon older dreams of young people and their effort as the nation's ticket out of post-war uncertainty in the 1960s. The emergence of a discourse which elevates friendship as a virtue of adolescence at the height of the aidoru group boom of the late 2000s and early 2010s, reminds us that we must consider both the social and economic explanations of why lyrics are written in particular ways. Schools encourage working in teams for sporting activities as constitutive of virtue, but the frequency of idealised depictions of friendship from the mid-2000s onwards are also linked to the increasingly crowded market for group *aidoru* in Japan, and the depiction of those groups as extremely produced forms of *bukatsudō* (school club). Metaphorical representations of *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics see it as a bumpy road, with high peaks to climb to and choppy waters to ford. *seishun* is the essence of unvarnished human life concentrated into a period of heightened emotion and heightened memory. The nostalgic view of *seishun* and its fleeting nature, compared to the passing of seasons, and anchored to Japan's academic calendar, coexists at times with a view of *seishun* as an unchanging state of being to aspire to. Adolescence may not even be a particular time and place; it is a trope and touchpoint in and of itself, a chronotope that is undoubtedly of significance to Japanese popular music beyond *aidoru*.

The prevalence of discourses during particular periods of time due to the prolificity of two lyricists, Tsunku and Akimoto Yasushi, brings home the importance of talking to lyricists about their own views of *seishun*, and also of research into the wider media landscape over time, for understanding the media environment in which those views came about, and came to shape the version of *seishun* that we see today in *aidoru* lyrics. In other words, it is difficult to know whether this version of *seishun*, which absolutely includes an idealisation of the troughs as well as the peaks in the metaphorical journey of adolescence/life, is a significant part of the version of what it means to be Japanese today portrayed by *aidoru* lyrics without looking outside the corpus. However, gendered stories about what it means to be Japanese today are evident. Although the boys and girls who sing these lyrics do their best and overcome hardship to make the most of their adolescence, in *aidoru* lyrics, much of that effort in a school setting is the work of boys, whose blood, sweat, and tears may be as much a result of a failed romance as a challenging sporting event.

Though acts performing as boys only make up 19.8% of the entire corpus, it is men who write most of these stories about idealised Japanese adolescence. It is easy to wonder if the men who write *aidoru* lyrics are in some way building their own narratives of self into the lyrics they write about the ups and downs of adolescent life. So, although adolescence is simultaneously a time for intense personal relationships, and a time capsule of nostalgic values, those experiences are structured by societal gender expectations, and the unrepresentative nature of the industry that creates *aidoru* music. Take, for example, this song, sung by a girl *aidoru* group, and penned by Tsunku, which explicitly equates a macho understanding of *seishun* with the very essence of a nationalistic Japaneseness ("THE NIPPON"):

> Don't waste your yesterdays
> After all, you are
> Such strong young Japanese men

> See, it's *seishun* through the seasons
> Where every encounter is an opportunity
> Flying off into the future, that's what it means to be Japanese
>
> (*Seishun THE NIPPON* (*Youth*: *Definitively Japanese*) v-u-den, 2007)

Considerations of *seishun* portrayed in *aidoru* lyrics as Japaneseness have a prominent place in the following chapter in this thesis, wherein I consider the complex ways that adolescence represents and is represented within contemporary Japanese *aidoru* lyrics through conversations with those who have the greatest insight into how lyrics come about: lyricists themselves.

Interview data

In this chapter, I will discuss how contemporary lyricists see their own portrayal of *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics, and the relation of those portrayals to Japanese society as a whole and the canon of *seishun* tropes within aidoru lyrics stretching back over many decades to before some of the below participants were even born. Lyricists are the ones crafting the stories that are the main object of study of this thesis, yet, it goes without saying, they do not create in isolation from economic imperatives, from audiences and their preferences, and from their own experiences and views of youth and adolescence. Their responses paint *seishun* as a semi-fictional state that *aidoru* perform that has particular relevance to Japanese experiences and values; as a fairy-tale in which to lose oneself, as an iconography of youth and femininity (and their contradictions), as a spectacle of effort, and as a timeless way of being. At the same time, it is important not to decontextualise these responses from the way I chose to contact lyricists in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, or my role as a non-Japanese researcher. Firstly, I will describe how I contacted my participants, and provide an overview of who they are and how they responded to my questions. Then, I will explore the qualitatively analysed themes as discourses to explore the relevance of depictions of *seishun* in today's *aidoru* lyrics to our understanding of *seishun* tropes as an aspect of contemporary Japanese social identity.

As outlined in my methodology chapter, I had originally intended to conduct face-to-face interviews with around five participants in Japan. Due to restrictions on travel arising from the COVID-19pandemic, I made the decision to move to asynchronous email interviewing, and managed to gather seven sets of responses from lyricists with experience writing lyrics for *aidoru* music. These responses, collected in a secure cloud storage service, were then temporarily transferred to the software NVivo, along with metadata comprising gender, age-range in decade, and whether or not the participant was a composer or a performer in addition to being a lyricist (all of which was obtained from the lyricists' own promotional materials).

Through multiple email exchanges, the first of which was to introduce my research and seek consent for participation, I kept a diary of my progress, so I could keep track of who I had emailed, who had expressed an interest in participating, who had responded, and from whom I had received signed consent forms. I organised my interviews around two sets of three questions, adjusting the wording where necessary to incorporate the specific experiences of interviewees and what they had already disclosed. These questions were as follows (See appendix for Japanese):

First set
1. How would you define *aidoru* to someone who is not familiar with current Japanese popular music?
2. Please describe an *aidoru* lyric/*aidoru* lyrics that sticks in your memory
3. What sort of *seishun* do you portray in your *aidoru* lyrics?)

Second set
1. Do Japanese *aidoru* lyrics reflect real-life *seishun*?
2. When you are writing lyrics, what sort of listener do you have in mind?
3. What sort of *seishun* will be portrayed by *aidoru* lyrics in 10 years time?

These questions were intended to explore what assumptions the lyricists might have about the performers or audiences they were writing for, their own experiences as listeners, and how they saw *seishun* in *aidoru* lyrics as relating to trends in Japanese society and in *aidoru* music as a genre or set of conventions up to the present day. Participants were contacted between mid-April and mid-June 2020, and out of 25 potential participants I emailed (either via a personal or

agency website, or directly), I received nine positive responses. Out of those, seven signed consent forms and went on to answer all my questions. All dialogue in this chapter was translated by myself, and where a word is of particular research significance or of especially variable meaning, I have chosen to keep those words in *rōmaji* (romanised script) so as to explain my own interpretation, and not present it as the singular possible translation in that instance. All participants responded to the second set of questions within a few days of having responded to the first, though they all engaged with me and my research in quite different ways, which I will detail in the following section.

Participant engagement

I told my participants that as long as they replied to me via email within two weeks, they could make their responses as long or as short as they liked, and structure them any way they wished. From the outset, I was concerned at how participants might respond to this method of data-gathering, which I had pivoted to with just over a month's notice; was it too much like a survey? Did it lack spontaneity? Was it asking too much for lyricists to respond to me in the middle of a pandemic that was having a devastating effect on the industry that they relied on for work (BARKS, 2020)? As discussed in my methodology chapter, the probable lack of spontaneity in the responses and lack of scope for participation of less digitally literate lyricists were offset by the time that participants were allowed to formulate their answers in order to present a particular version of themselves in writing, offering another layer to the presentation of identity in their (lyrical) writing. I made it clear to participants that the reason I was proposing to interview them asynchronously and via email was related to limitations arising from the COVID-19pandemic, something that participants expressed sympathy with. Some commented that it was good to have a chance to talk informally about their work in the midst of everything going on. However, the level of informality I was able to maintain with participants was greatly affected by how I got in touch with them.

Participants who I contacted through forms or email addresses displayed on their personal websites replied sooner, and took a more conversational tone. Although some of these participants belonged to talent agencies, they clearly retained a degree of control over their personal brand, interspersing more anecdotes and questions, and these responses were the least survey-like of the dataset. On the other hand, one participant was employed by multiple agencies, who each controlled different parts of their creative output. I initially contacted one such agency, before being directed to another, who then asked to veto all my questions, and their client's answers. In this case, I decided that to avoid months of back and forth, the best course of action was to pose all the questions in one go, and so this set of responses was the least conversational in tone. A final set of responses was a midpoint between the two, where our exchange was very informal and responsive, but I was expected to copy in someone from the lyricist's agency (who may or may not have communicated with their client in private). In the table below, I have provided an overview of my participants. All ages, where disclosed, are correct as of when I first made contact with the lyricists (April to June 2020), and participants are listed in the order they agreed to participate.

Pseudonym	Gender	Age range	Writes mainly for
Makoto	M	31-40	Female *aidoru* groups
Miho	F	21-30	Female *aidoru* groups
Daisuke	M	31-40	*aidoru* groups
Kazuya	M	31-40	Female *aidoru* groups
Hideki	M	?	*aidoru* groups
Naomi	F	41-50	Male *aidoru* groups
Akane	F	21-30	Female *aidoru* groups

Figure 6- Table of lyricists.

All participants write mostly for *aidoru*, in addition to having experience in a variety of other roles in the Japanese popular music industry. Three of my participants have also worked on theme songs and incidental music for anime and games. The employment of *aidoru* lyricists to create music for anime and games shows how *aidoru* and *aidoru* music are a key component of Japan's "media mix", a transmedia landscape across which *seishun* is represented as a trope, and through which this trope slots into the everyday life of people who live in Japan, a complex set of connections that will be explored in the following chapter.

Moreover, all participants were born and raised in Japan, which certainly affected how they engaged with myself as a non-Japanese researcher of Japanese popular music. One potential participant showed initial interest in taking part in the project, before expressing doubt that I would be able to communicate the variety of *aidoru* content available in Japan (such as the fact that not only girls could be *aidoru*), and then ceasing to reply, perhaps experiencing a weariness of sensationalist or overgeneralised portrayals of *aidoru* that tend to appear in English language media. Amongst the seven who did choose to participate, their responses contained some interesting reflections on the Japaneseness of *aidoru*, and of portrayals of *seishun* in *aidoru* lyrics. The previous lyrical analysis chapter showed how a few prolific lyricists have helped to create canonical portrayals of *seishun*, and despite commonalities in their attitudes to *seishun* as a trope, participants all saw themselves as possessing their own styles that placed them somewhere in relation to this tradition of genre lyric-writing in Japan. The four themes as discourses conceptualised from their responses are detailed in the following section.

Critical thematic analysis of interview data

In developing the qualitative element of analysis of my interview data, as with my lyrical data, I began by putting initial codes together, qualitative features that were shared across participants' responses. Some of the most widely represented codes I began with included "*seishun* transcends time", "effort over talent", and "*aidoru* as soothing (*iyashi*)". I later refined these into themes by re-examining the context of each code throughout the interviews, treating those themes as discourses (conventional ways of speaking about social phenomena). The four discourses I identified were:

1. *seishun* as a fairy-tale
2. *seishun* as iconography
3. *seishun* as a spectacle of effort, and
4. *seishun* as a timeless way of being

These themes as discourses are necessarily connected in a myriad of complex ways. They relate to each other, to the lyrics studies in the previous chapter, to Japanese popular media history, to the structures and rites of passage that shape the concept of "real" *seishun* in contemporary Japan. They are meaning resources for identity-formation for the lyricists themselves as much as they are for a putative audience. I examine these discourses in lyrics one by one, and consider what they can tell us about lyricists' role in representing *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics, as well as what those representations can tell us about contemporary Japanese social identity.

seishun as a fairy-tale

Tallying with how the lyrical corpus was filled with joyful ideals of love, hopes, and dreams, my participants described their depictions of *seishun* as being important for bringing such ideals to the lives of listeners. *seishun* as it is performed by *aidoru* is seen by participants as being a particularly pure and idealistic time (whether or not they subscribe to those ideals themselves). Participants saw it as their job to anticipate what listeners want in order to bring emotional relief (*iyasareru*) to those who encounter depictions of *seishun,* and by extension create a successful (profitable) song. Lukács (2015, 496) describes the "cute" personas created by women who self-managed their online presence and fan networks in the 2000s ("net idols") as being a form of "emotional labour" carried out by precarious digital workers that aims to "induce feelings of ease, comfort, and pleasure"— in other words, *iyashi* (emotional relief). *iyashi* as a marketing category became prominent in Japanese consumer life in the 1990s, attached to products and celebrities promising "healing" from the stresses of "city living" (Roquet, 2016, 154), stresses arising from "economic precarity", especially that of men as assumed breadwinners (Koch, 2020, 203). To return to Lukács terminology, a great deal of "labor" goes into making the struggling audience feel good about themselves, and some of that labour is carried out by lyricists in return for no more than a quarter of song royalties (themselves no more than 6% the price of a physical release), with lyricists existing in considerable precarity themselves if not tied to an agency or publishing company.

But as Miho pointed out, those coveted listener responses are far from static. As this research was conducted at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in Japan, Miho mused on how a song she had recently contributed lyrics to had taken on a different significance. The song itself portrays *seishun* as a fun and exciting time, and was used to advertise a Japanese food and drink company, with the intention being that consuming the company's product might bring the consumer some of the energy of the song and the youthfulness of the girl *aidoru* who sing it. She explained "I had only intended to write a song about being happy and healthy, but the lyrics have taken on a whole new meaning in light of the pandemic, surprising even myself. I felt how the meaning of lyrics — and this goes for all lyrics, not just *aidoru* lyrics— can change depending on what's going on".

Naomi also believed that in writing lyrical stories of *seishun* that made fans happy, she was not only "bringing a product to market", but also "challenging (herself) artistically and musically" so as to best please fans of *aidoru*. She told me that the ideal song is one that fits well with the persona of the performer, but that also makes people happy when they hear it, a

sentiment echoed by Akane who claims to focus on crafting words that suit the particular "vibe" (*fun'iki*) of an *aidoru* group. All participants emphasised that songs could not, and in fact should not be written in isolation from *aidoru* and the idiosyncrasies of their fanbases; what pleases one set of fans may not please another. As critical thematic analysis of the lyrical corpus has demonstrated, not all *aidoru* songs are full of joyful ideals, or self-evidently happy-go-lucky topics, but participants saw the ultimate goal of their lyrics as helping fans feel better about themselves. For example, Makoto described *aidoru* as a "form of emotional or spiritual support", and when asked about what future depictions of *seishun* in *aidoru* lyrics might look like, Hideki suggested "messages that help us forget our everyday lives". But Daisuke, a fan of *aidoru* himself as well as a performer (giving him a particular multifaceted view of the entertainment industry) had a more cynical view of the idealism of *aidoru* lyrics, and what that idealism might mean to fans. Whilst juxtaposing lyrics that were "non-fiction", with those that were "fictional", he made the following observation:

> In fictional lyrics (not something I do a lot of myself), I do think there are parts that aren't real *seishun*. These lyrics put into words something like the hopes that fans have of their ideal *seishun* for their favourite *aidoru*. I think the tendency to see teenage girls as daydreaming and virginal, when they actually have a more realistic view of the world and get out a lot more, is wishful thinking on the part of men (*Daisuke*).

In other words, according to Daisuke, male fans want female *aidoru* to seem innocent and daydreaming because that is what makes them feel good about themselves. However, it is not as simple as to say that *aidoru* are written as innocent because fans <u>buy into</u> that image. As discussed in the introduction, the overtly produced nature of female *aidoru* in particular became a part of their performance during the 1980s, and the playful artifice of constructed innocence was famously parodied in Koizumi Kyōko's 1989 song *Nantetatte aidoru (I'm an aidoru through and through)*, in which she admits to having romantic relationships, but hiding them to preserve her "pure, proper, and pretty"[2] image. Participant Kazuya described this song's lyrics as having resonated with him as both a listener and a writer, because of its "meta-approach to the figure of the *aidoru*…I like how these lyrics show the transition from puppet-like *aidoru* figure to an independent woman who has her own opinions". So, the fairy-tale of *seishun* performed by girl *aidoru* is multilayered. Masafumi Monden has studied how and why women in Japanese pop music (including *aidoru*) perform the persona of Alice from *Alice in Wonderland*, and argues that this tension between a sweet exterior and an "autonomous interior"… "is a highly appropriate vehicle for performing and, quite cleverly, negotiating a compromise between female autonomy and the presumed asexual girlishness of the *shōjo*" (Monden, 2014, 274).

Moreover, the fairy-tale innocence of lyricists' descriptions of *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics ties in with coding in the lyrical corpus, where *seishun* is depicted as a time when our humanity is purer and more beautiful. This purity and beauty derives from *seishun* supposedly remaining unsullied by adult life (meaning, in the context of contemporary Japan, working life as a *shakaijin*). Participants described *seishun* as being an appealing refuge for listeners because its heightened emotions encourage us to not hesitate, and to be true to ourselves. When asked

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[2]The title is a joking reference to the motto of the Takarazuka Revue (see p10).

what type of *seishun* his lyrics depicted, one participant responded:

> It's the type of *seishun* summarised by the phrase "don't think too much, just run!". When you grow up and get a job, you gradually come to an objective view of social norms from those around you, or of your own strengths that people have pointed out to you. When this happens, people do eventually tend to become more conservative in their views, and lose their capacity for the spontaneous. Whereas, in many ways, immaturity makes it easier to be spontaneous. I believe that youth and innocence is what *seishun* is about, and that *seishun* is a topic that fits *aidoru* perfectly (*Kazuya*).

Kazuya's choice of words harks back to a network of terms identified in the initial content analysis of the lyrical corpus that exhorted the listener not to hesitate, to go ahead and take action. Perhaps the depictions of *seishun* in *aidoru* lyrics are especially good at conjuring up ideals and dreams because consumers believe they are bearing witness to the very essence of uninhibited ambition, embodied by the young performers who sing those lyrics and who are chasing their own dreams in a very crowded industry; indeed, Laura Miller (2008) has described how the fairy-tale of Cinderella has become a "productive idiom" in Japanese popular culture for transformation in aid of "attainable dreams". I will return to this point, raised by multiple participants, later in this chapter, but the fairy-tale-like, dreamy depictions of *seishun* that Kazuya describes as being so befitting of *aidoru* are underpinned by a belief in the purity and naturalness of adolescence, against the artifice of adulthood. Kinsella (1995, 238) found in a survey of self-declared fans of *kawaii* (cute) popular culture that "cute sentiments were all about the recovery of a childlike emotional and mental state" and that "the idea underlying cute was that young people who had passed through childhood had been forced to cover up their real selves and hide their emotions under a layer of artifice". Although my participants didn't use the word *kawaii*, I would argue that Kinsella's analysis can be applied to their beliefs about *seishun*.

Makoto acknowledged that the *seishun* that is portrayed in *aidoru* lyrics is more relatable for some people than others, but maintained that idealistic depictions of *seishun* are valuable for all listeners because those who recognise the depiction can enjoy "nostalgia", and those who do not can revel in "ideals of how wonderful that type of *seishun* can be". What Makoto is describing is the vicarious enjoyment of a *seishun* that one may have never experienced, meaning nostalgia for an invented memory. Akane, notably the youngest and least experienced participant, also argues that "a lot of *aidoru* fans are the type of people who weren't able to enjoy *seishun* and romance to the fullest, so I get the sense that they prefer lyrics that are full of ideals rather than lyrics that depict the reality". For those who feel that their adolescence did not conform to an ideal (perhaps they failed to progress to the next stage of their education, perhaps they went through economic or personal hardship), they can either absorb themselves in an idealistic story contained in lyrics, or simply admire it from afar. In the words of another participant:

> Japanese *aidoru* have diversified quite a lot in the last decade, but I think imaginary, manufactured versions of '*seishun*' are still more common. That said, in response, there have been depictions of the real *seishun* that is not so fun, that has a darkness to it, and I don't think this *seishun* is so far removed from reality. The type of depiction that is most

entrenched doesn't so much depict reality itself, as project the wishful regrets of adults and their frustrated hopes (*Miho*).

Popular discourse in Japan has long considered those who grew up in the years following the collapse of Japan's economic bubble in 1989 to be part of a "lost" generation (Hirayama and Ronald, 2008, Iida, 2000, Brinton, 2011), who were denied the opportunities of their parents, and have fewer opportunities for stable, permanent employment. Zaborowski (2015) further identifies two different cohorts of popular music listeners in Japan who reflexively describe themselves as being part of two different successive post-bubble cohorts (one that was just entering the workforce in the so-called "lost" decade of the 1990s, and another that was at the same time entering primary school under a more "relaxed" educational regime), and differ in the way they consume music, showing that we should be careful about lumping diverse populations together and describing them as "lost". However, Miho's comments have particular salience in a media environment so saturated by discussions of the lost potential of Japanese youth, and even more soo considering that the canonical seasonal experiences of idealised *seishun* we see represented in the lyrical database (graduation, sports days) have been snatched from so many Japanese young people as a result of the COVID-19pandemic.

I argued in the introduction to this thesis that the etymology of the word *aidoru*, which has its roots in religious worship, does not suggest that Japanese *aidoru* are themselves the objects of religious worship. However, as critical thematic analysis showed how much participants saw depictions of *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* music as ideals, it also became apparent how the adored ordinariness of that *seishun* was discussed in grand religious terms. In the next section, I will explore how participants saw *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics represented as an iconography; as a grouping of symbols of significance.

seishun as iconography

When Makoto was asked how he would define Japanese *aidoru* for those completely unfamiliar, he explicitly likened them to "Jesus Christ and saints in Christian thought, or to the Gautama Buddha and bodhisattvas in Buddhist thought". The religious figures that Makoto mentions are all human in some way, and provide what Makoto himself describes as "hope" to people, whilst simultaneously being elevated by their holiness. Aoyagi has in fact written about how the "ideal images of adolescent selfhood" (2005, 3) performed by *aidoru* may be understood through the lens of idolatry, that is, the "life-sized" (so, relatable as opposed to larger-than-life) figure of the *aidoru* taking on a "charismatic power" (Aoyagi, 2005, 230). Although Aoyagi's argument has been criticised as essentialising the uniqueness of Japanese popular culture and extrapolating from Japanese religious practice (Bourdaghs, 2005), religion is something that Miho explored at length when asked for her own definition of *aidoru*. She compared *aidoru* (in her own words, not just women *aidoru* but also "men and other genders" ("*dansei ya sono hoka no seibetsu*") to the young women who work as *miko* (Shinto shrine maidens) in Japan. According to Miho, *aidoru*, like shrine maidens when they undergo supernatural possession, derive their power from being a "vessel" for someone else's music or performance. Not only that, but:

> Most people in Japan, though they don't tend to remind each other of this in so many words, share a common understanding that the shrine maidens who sell them charms during the festive period are for the most part working part time, and once that period is over, they will go back to being quite ordinary students who are no different from themselves. They do not

command the same reverence and deep respect that full-time priests do, but people still see them as 'shrine maidens'. They are sacred, but people can also relate to them at the same time. This is something that *aidoru* and (part-time) shrine maidens have in common (*Miho*).

So, the ordinariness of depictions of *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* music underlines how *aidoru* embody a duality of the mundane and the extraordinary, although how particularly "Japanese" this is may be called into question as a result of how this duality echoes Dyer's (2004) theory of Hollywood star charisma. What matters is that in speaking to me, participants thought of *seishun* depicted in *aidoru* lyrics as being of particular resonance to the experience of being Japanese, not just now, but in the future. In the allegory provided by Miho, though she did not explicitly state it it as such herself, the purity of the shrine maiden is very gendered, hinting at both the need for shrine maidens to be young, "unmarried" women and for girl *aidoru* to abstain from sexual relationships (Galbraith and Karlin, 2012a, 7) so that they may fulfil the heterosexual romantic fantasies of men (Dent-Spargo, 2017, 203). Though boys are discouraged from having romantic relationships as *aidoru*, they are penalised much less frequently than girl *aidoru* when those relationships become public, and I noted that in the lyrical corpus boy *aidoru* are more likely to have romantic relationships characterised as the result of impulsive passions, which are themselves a virtue of the spontaneity of *seishun*. However, in the iconography of *seishun*, what is common to all *aidoru* is the portrayal of its duality through the juxtaposition of laughably mundane adolescent concerns with the grand world of dreams, destiny, and stardom. Daisuke gave an example of a song he wrote for a girl *aidoru* group about the struggles of trying to cope with a large volume of schoolwork. He told me that *aidoru* lyrics "can be a mixture of grand topics and mundane ones, and I like this song as an example of the extremely mundane". Kazuya cited a song written by Tsunku (one of the two lyricists most widely represented in the lyrical corpus) called *Ren'ai Reborūshon 21* (*Love Revolution 21*) to argue that "the clever juxtaposition of the personal ('loving', 'working') and the grand and universal ('planet earth')" represents "a worldview where the micro and the macro freely overlap" and "is the result of Tsunku's own innovative method (of writing)". The song Kazuya describes was released in 2002, and describes the hopes and reflections of the protagonist at the outset of the 21st century. This song cemented the performers, female *aidoru* group Morning Musume, as "national idols", youthful icons who captured the prevailing mood of a post-bubble era (Ota, 2011, 216). Although the contemporary *aidoru* market is much more fragmented, another participant saw a firm connection between the zeitgeist and depictions of *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* music:

Happy songs do better when the economic outlook is good…At the moment, Japanese songs are flipping between periods of positive and negative messages. So, depending on the economic outlook and when certain *aidoru* music gets popular, you can predict what the next big hit might be (*Hideki*).

Although sentiment analysis of Japanese popular music charts' correlation with economic growth by Ikeuchi (2015) shows a much less straightforward predictive link between lyrics and economic outlook (happy lyrics were favoured when the economy was growing, but consumers also listened to fewer sad songs when the economy was in recession), Hideki's consciousness of the state of the economy when writing lyrics suggests a prerogative for depictions of *seishun* to symbolise something on a national scale.

Meanwhile, on the "micro" level, participants described how their own personal

experiences of popular music and adolescence years bring home the imperfection of *seishun*, in all its outsized emotions. Yomota Inuhiko (2006) describes cuteness as lying in the appeal of immaturity and incompleteness; certainly an attribute of *aidoru*, whom the majority of my participants described as lacking skill, but possessing plenty of determination. This links to both the discourse of *seishun* as a time of idealistic spontaneity (emotions are strong, but they are pure) and of *seishun* as a spectacle of effort (*aidoru* are performing the incompleteness of adolescence, but doing so with all their might). Kazuya, who has been interested in music and its creation from childhood, describes his teens as being the time when he was most "into music", because he was "very sentimental, and had a lot of free time on (his) hands", a reflection that tallies with current developmental psychology on popular music and memory (we are most likely to remember the music we listen to in our teens, because it is most formative for our sense of self). Miho, herself only in her 20s, recalls her teenage years that involved blowing small problems "out of all proportion", such as "whether or not someone texted you a love heart emoji". She maintained that it was the duty of lyricists to not "airbrush" out these components of adolescence, and Kazuya agreed that it was a lyricists' job to look at adolescence in a "calm and objective way" so as to incorporate its complexities. Naomi expressed admiration for the lyrics to the song *Garasu no jūdai* (*Fragile Teens*) by 1980s boy *aidoru* group Hikaru Genji, because of how it manages to portray the "sentimentality" of adolescence[3]. On the other hand, participants also felt some anxiety that their ability to portray these mundane realities of adolescence were hindered by their own temporal distance from it. Makoto, who is in his 30s and has come to *aidoru* lyric-writing from other genres of music, said that he tries where possible to inhabit the perspective of the teens he is writing for, to "avoid accusations that I am an adult preaching to the youngsters". He recalled an occasion when he was present at the recording of a girl *aidoru* group's song that he had penned the lyrics for:

> When we were recording (the song), I was telling the members how I wanted them to sing a particular part based on how I had written the lyrics. Then one of the members told me that actually, when they put themselves in the shoes of the protagonist, my preferred singing style didn't feel right. As a result of this experience, I realised that lyrical meaning is not something imposed by the person who writes lyrics, but becomes whole as a part of the individual stories in the minds of those individuals who sing or listen to those lyrics, and freely interpret them. I am now careful to keep this in mind when I am writing lyrics (*Makoto*).

So lyricists are very aware of the labour that goes into creating the impression of ordinary, everyday depictions of *seishun* in *aidoru* lyrics in collaboration with performers, and each possesses their own methods of doing so. Participants are also aware of how consumers construct *aidoru* as icons with their own reflexive self-narrativisation in mind, which is how consumers come to find the imperfection of their *aidoru*/idols so soothing. Aoyagi (2005, 45) describes the consumption of *aidoru* as being "fictions about one's socioeconomic wellbeing". In other words, in the same way that participants saw the fairy-tale of *seishun* in *aidoru* lyrics as supporting the ontological security of Japanese listeners, the potential of the *aidoru* to perform a very mundane sort of *seishun* and still attain charisma is also a reassuring story. Where does

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[3] The song, written by Asuka Ryō (an alias of musician ASKA) and released in 1987 includes the lines "It's always been our job to make missteps/ so don't forget the colour of the tears we cried", and portrays the awkward drama of a teenage breakup.

that charisma come from, though? According to my participants, *seishun* as it is performed by *aidoru* is something like a spectacle of effort.

seishun as a spectacle of effort

The imperfection and charisma of *aidoru*, heightened by their adolescence, which is by nature a work in progress, gives *aidoru* a quasi-religious duality that participants saw as particularly appealing to their Japanese listeners. Because *aidoru* do not train for that long before they enter the public eye, and are also by definition young and inexperienced, they are imperfect in terms of skill-level, a state of affairs that my participants justified by recourse to the notion of *ganbaru* (putting in effort, trying one's hardest). This phenomenon in Japanese society and in *aidoru* performance has been widely acknowledged in previous scholarship. Ōta (2011, 260) sees it as being the true marker of ordinary Japaneseness, a reality that *aidoru* audiences recognise and make sense of their own identities. Or, as Sakai (2014, 79) argues, *aidoru* allow people to magnify their own mundane efforts and view themselves as part of a national middle class, where everybody is striving, and nobody is left behind. Naomi, the eldest female participant who has written mostly for boy *aidoru* groups, says that this is an explicit part of the branding of most of the groups she writes lyrics for and produces, saying that "I often write about how even if you lack talent or good looks, as long as you keep on putting in the effort, you'll see results". Daisuke drew a clear line between overseas popstars and Japanese *aidoru* in this respect:

> Unlike overseas idols (such as Justin Bieber and One Direction), they (*aidoru*) don't have to be good at singing and dancing, because, as is characteristic (*dokuji*) of Japanese culture, it is the 'effort' (*isshōkenmei*) that matters (*Daisuke*).

Akane also cited performed effort as a quality with particular appeal to Japanese audiences, stating:

> Fans of Japanese *aidoru* support them as they watch them working hard and going through tough times. So as long as *aidoru* are visibly putting their all into something (*isshōkenmei ganbatteireba),* fans will empathise with that and support them (or even relate to them) — even if they aren't any good at singing or dancing. On the other hand, perfectly complete *aidoru* would have no relatability (because fans would not be able to empathise with them), and I can't see them being popular in Japan (*Akane*).

It cannot be ruled out that my being a non-Japanese researcher might have prompted participants to describe depictions of *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics more in terms of cross-cultural comparisons than they might have otherwise done. Hideki also characterized "Western music and K-pop" in admiring terms of "technological progress…and musical literacy", in implicit contrast to Japanese *aidoru* production. Discourses surrounding artistic production and performance that privilege effort over talent in Japan in terms of *ganbaru* have been noted from the "traditional arts, including martial arts" (Cave, 2004, 408), to karaoke as a leisure practice (Kelly, 1998, 80). Significantly, Christine Yano (Yano, 1997) has shown how those involved in the production of the Japanese folk pop genre of *enka* speak of their practice as reflecting "themes of 'traditional' Japan: perseverance, effort, sprit, repetition, and rank". These discourses not only around *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* music, but in the production of genre that is positioned as particularly Japanese, show how effort is what is being valorised by *aidoru* lyricists

and their creations. To become valorised, that effort must be visible, and it must become a spectacle in and of itself. I argue that when effort becomes a spectacle, it gains its value and in turn becomes a struggle. One way that fans can see effort being carried out by adolescent performers is in their growth, both physical and emotional, and in performance skill.

The spectacle of growth was another feature of representations of *seishun* that my participants referred to frequently. Kazuya discussed growth as if it was yet another ideal that fans were buying into, referring to the "vicarious enjoyment" that people obtain from watching *aidoru* go through their real *seishun* before their eyes, and from seeing something raw and unpolished, like diamonds in the rough. *aidoru* production is thought to enhance the charm of this trajectory, a natural part of adolescence. Or, to use Naomi's words:

> People are like stones lying on the riverbed. The stronger the force that moves them, the more they will bump into things, so that the more they experience things, the rounder and smoother they become. When we are young, we get anxious about a great many things, because we prioritise our feelings above all else, and end up with tunnel vision. This is exactly why that desperation, that facing everything without pretence, makes us shine so beautifully when we are young (*Naomi*).

Hideki also argued that "the joy of watching (*aidoru's*) growth" was a part of what set *aidoru* apart from other performers, even within Japan. Daisuke framed this enjoyment of growth as a spectacle as a "coming-of-age story", a tale of *seishun*, detached from the lives of consumers, that can be opened and closed like a book through the consumption of aspects of the *aidoru* media mix (music videos, social media posts, live performances). The potential of *aidoru* for real-time transformation into a charismatic performer who remains ordinary, and inhabit the "real" transformation of puberty and adolescence, could provide fans with a sense of reflexive control over their own circumstances, and perhaps a more troubling sense of ownership over adolescent bodies. Naomi took a different approach, employing an analogy that portrayed *aidoru* as if they are ersatz children for fans to nurture, and suggested that her production could help enhance this effect for fans. In a survey of men who described themselves as fans of the girl *aidoru* group AKB48, Dent-Spargo (2017, 220) found that respondents who considered the group members to be like daughters saw themselves as gaining "moral support and courage" from the *aidoru* in exchange for their own labour invested in supporting and "protecting" *aidoru*. Naomi's comments refer to *aidoru* generally, but her own experience is predominantly in writing and producing for male *aidoru* of a range of ages, reinforcing an argument made by Nagaike Kazumi (2012, 105) that women who are fans of male *aidoru* have a desire to "fictionalise" them as boys, even if they are grown men. For this reason, though I describe the effort portrayed in the *seishun* of *aidoru* lyrics as a spectacle, I do not mean to suggest that fans do not feel as if they are completely detached, or not involved. Such generalisations are beyond the scope of a critical thematic analysis of lyrics and interviews with lyricists. The *seishun* performed by *aidoru* is undoubtedly for some, a highly-involved, nurturing, "labour of love" (Galbraith, 2016).

In the lyrical corpus, the major setting for effort was school, be that junior high or high school. This was not as obviously the case for the lyricists I interviewed when they were discussing their representations of *seishun* in *aidoru* lyrics, but discussion of Japanese schools was still very much present within interview responses. As described above, Daisuke used a school-related example to illustrate the duality that *aidoru* embody. He added that "the biggest problems for the junior high and high school aged members (of the *aidoru* group he was writing for) weren't global conflicts or political issues"; they were things like homework. If *aidoru* going through *seishun* in the midst of their on-the-job performance training are the height of incompleteness and imperfection, then school settings are the very height of ordinariness (by the year 2000, 96% of Japanese children progressed to upper secondary education or high school, which is not a part of compulsory education (Okawa, 2016, 71)). Hideki even argues that

school settings help separate traditional *aidoru* pop groups from non-*aidoru* pop groups. He cited the girl group IZ*ONE, active between 2018 and 2021, and formed from Korean and Japanese members through a jointly produced talent show, with the involvement of AKB48 producer and lyricist Akimoto Yasushi. According to Hideki, IZ*ONE are *wakai* (young), but not *seishun*. Why?:

> In my opinion, *seishun* entails elements like school days (school uniform), incompleteness, imperfection, and growth. For example, IZ*ONE have a *wakasa* (youth) that comes from how young they are in terms of age and their energy, but the quality of their singing and dancing and the messages in their songs don't really give a sense of *seishun*" (*Hideki*)

So, according to Hideki, because this pop group are so polished, and because they do not sing about the Japanese experience of adolescence in a school setting, they cannot be described as portraying *seishun*. He hints at the use of school uniform as a marker of *seishun* discourses, but IZ*ONE did sometimes perform in school uniforms, leading one to the conclusion that it is their lyrical content that sets them apart from standard depictions of *seishun*. Miho also discussed how you can often date an *aidoru* song's depictions of *seishun* through the type of girls' school uniform described within, with sailor-style uniforms dominating in the 1980s, and blazer-style uniforms becoming more widespread from the 1990s onwards. Whereas the lyrical corpus itself suggests broad settings such as the classroom or the sports pitch as being constitutive of a struggle-filled *seishun*, critical thematic analysis of interviews shows how smaller details of Japanese school life contribute to a depiction that binds lyricist, performer, and listener in its shared nature. That depiction can be shared, even in the current fragmented market for *aidoru* music, because of how *aidoru* music remains primarily created and consumed in the Japanese market. And according to my participants, the depictions of *seishun* in *aidoru* lyrics are not only shared, but timeless. I will consider the nature and significance of that timelessness in the following section.

seishun as a timeless way of being

Earlier in this chapter, I noted how participants describing their *seishun* in fairy-tale-like terms were not necessarily describing nostalgia for any one person's particular *seishun*. We have also seen how participants, perhaps motivated by wanting to position themselves as cultural interpreters to a non-Japanese researcher, describe representations of *seishun* in terms of relatable experiences particular to Japan. In the words of Naomi "What a lyricist wants is for people to listen, remember their own *seishun*, and empathise with the lyrics", which, according to my participants, is an experience not exclusive to a particular time, because neither is *seishun* itself. Hideki described *seishun* as "one of those topics which listeners young and old can discuss in much the same way". In the previous lyrical data chapter, I described a concept of time in *aidoru* lyrics (and likely not limited to *aidoru* lyrics) that I called *seishun* time. To reiterate, *seishun* time is an imagined temporality that may not necessarily relate to real experiences of adolescence, but to adolescence as evanescence, dreaming, and transformation. It is a passing of time that is not limited to adolescence, but has its essence in discourses of *seishun* that can be observed in *aidoru* lyrics and their composition, being words written to be sung by those who perform adolescence. I asked all my participants how they thought depictions of *seishun* in *aidoru* might look in a decade's time. All participants had a clear response to this: though the technological trappings of *seishun* might change, the essence of the rollercoaster of mundane emotions magnified, the spontaneity, the romance of dreams,

would not. Thus, neither would its depictions. Makoto called this essence of *seishun* "humanity's sparkle", demonstrating again the view of *seishun* as a fairy-tale ideal, and recalling Naomi's description of *seishun* "shining". Kazuya imbued his own explanation of *seishun* as timeless with a Buddhist artistic philosophy:

> Though physical changes like technological advancement and the increased popularity of social media are a given, I don't think the emotions that form the basis of human nature will have changed much. I agree with the haiku saying, *fuekiryūkō* (both immutability and transiency), that (to answer this question) we need to combine both the universal and the new. Though it may appear as though the world is constantly changing, the real substance of what it means to be human will remain the same, no matter how many hundreds of years pass (*Kazuya*).

As has been shown in the lyrical data chapter, the ever-changing seasons are a key motif in the timelessness of the *seishun* chronotope. Akane describes "seasonality" and "unrequited love" as the two staples of her lyrics and of *seishun* as expressed in *aidoru* music, although, being of the generation for whom social media has been a staple throughout their teenage years, ponders if technology will change the way that these experiences may be portrayed in the future. As a result of a belief in the timelessness of the real experience of *seishun*, participants expressed hopes that even if those listening to their lyrics in any time and place are unable to relate to or project their own selves onto the ideals of *seishun* in those lyrics, they should at least be able to relate to the sentiment. Using the century as a unit of time to describe the not-too-distant future as Kazuya does, Makoto expressed a certainty that "people 100 years in the future will still be able to relate to those lyrics".

What is it, then, about the depictions of *seishun* in *aidoru* lyrics that are so relatable? Hideki wonders if it could be the absolute freedom to define oneself expressed by *aidoru* lyrics, the "message of being free to live life how you want". In a society where your overall trajectory may appear out of your control, and you are overwhelmed by choices about which path to take, there is real ontological security to be derived from hearing an assertion of the imperfect self, spoken of in the defiant voice of a teenager; a voice that Hideki describes as "countercultural". Miho manages to sum up the true elevated, ordinary struggles of *seishun* as it is depicted in *aidoru* lyrics when she asserts:

> Not getting along with your friends, not being able to say anything to the person you like, your fringe being out of place, your parents being annoying, feeling pressure to think about your future but at the same time wanting to just have fun...the specifics might change with the times, but I don't think these sorts of worries will ever go away (*Miho*).

Summary of findings

Critical thematic analysis of a corpus of *aidoru* lyrics containing the word *seishun* showed discourses of *seishun* as the pinnacle of ideals of love and dreams, as a place to battle for one's sense of self, and as a struggle set in the Japanese school. Analysis of interviews with lyricists shows how those themes become tools for lyricists' storytelling in relation to their own senses of identity and Japaneseness. The reasoning behind making use of *seishun*'s various incarnations as a narrative device (fairy-tale, iconography, spectacle) is understood by participants to relate to the Japanese popular music market, and the type of stories consumers want to hear so they can feel soothed (*iyasareru*). Similar to how the increase in stories about school-based

friendships and struggles in the lyrical corpus reflect the real intensifying competition amongst *aidoru* groups from the 2000s onwards, lyricists see portrayals of *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* music as both enhancing, and being enhanced by the visible contradictions between the elevated struggle *aidoru* go through as celebrities, and the ordinary struggle they go through as teenagers trying to make it in Japanese society.

What can these representations tell us about contemporary Japanese social identity? Aoyagi (2005, 61) notes that "chasing and accomplishing one's dreams" is considered to be an important component of *seishun* in Japanese society, and as we have seen in the last two chapters, the content of and thinking behind depictions of *seishun* in *aidoru* lyrics do seem to support this assertion. Implicit in this depiction of *seishun* is a valorisation of effort, that effort is supposedly more natural and spontaneous in adolescence, and therein lies the idealisation of *seishun* as an experience particularly evocative of *doryokushugi* (ideals of hard work) (Okawa, 2016). Even if the popular cultural valorisation effort is not particularly Japanese, my participants, perhaps pushed by my positioning as a non-Japanese researcher, gave the impression that the *seishun* depicted in *aidoru* lyrics as a site of effort <u>was</u> particularly Japanese. I argue that, based on critical thematic analysis of the lyrical corpus and of interviews with *aidoru* lyricists, we should consider <u>self-reflexive</u> effort (rather than struggle, as I posit in the introduction) as a key component of Japanese social identity. Both the *aidoru* lyrics and their writers show an awareness of the importance of visibly "doing" effort, "doing" dreaming in a way that becomes a spectacle, and that inhabits an idealised time called *seishun* that is simultaneously intimately connected to everyday lives and the central role that *seishun* stories have played in building the transmedia canon of *aidoru* music.

Pedagogical structures in Japanese society encourage a "focus on effort and persistence rather than performance and outcome" from as early as preschool childcare (Yamamoto and Satoh, 2019), into primary school (Cave, 2007), through to high schools (Singleton, 1989) and tertiary education (Okawa, 2016), summed up by the word *ganbaru*. In line with my critical realist framework for this thesis, though I acknowledge these structures give rise to particular depictions of *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* music, and to the conventional, socially-significant ways of talking about it (discourses) mobilised by lyricists, I do not intend to take those structures at face value. Though Japanese society might reflexively privilege pure adolescent effort, as sociologist Takehiko Kariya puts it, "If the degree to which students 'put their minds to it' (nb. *ganbaru*)...is looked on as simply a matter of individual free will, it is difficult to realise the hidden influence of social class in this" (Kariya, 2013, 113).

Conclusion

To conclude this thesis, I wish to return to the two main research questions posed in the introduction: how is *seishun* represented in Japanese aidoru lyrics, and what can these representations tell us about contemporary Japanese social identity?

How is *seishun* represented in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics?

Japanese *aidoru* lyrics represent *seishun* as a time of idealised, performed effort. The struggle of adolescence is actually de-emphasised; its value as a natural setting for striving is emphasised. In these songs voiced by young performers, adolescence becomes a battleground for dreams, for love, and for friendship, to preserve human qualities through sheer willpower that is supposedly unsullied by the adult world, or by adult expectations. True to its older etymology as a denotation for the passage of time, *seishun* in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics is simultaneously a timeless ideal and a canonical time all of its own, painted through supposedly common school and sporting settings that reflect fluctuating anxieties about youth, education, and economic futures in post-war Japan. Though these chronotopical representations of *seishun* are common to most *aidoru* lyrics, lyrics sung by boys and girls vary in what sorts of trials their protagonists are expected to overcome, and how much power young people are imagined to have over their own futures, in what is no doubt a result of the differing dreams that were projected onto each on behalf of the country from the 1960s to the present day. The roles of two prolific lyricists active in the 21st Century (Tsunku and Akimoto Yasushi) have also played outsized roles in creating a discursive world of teen girls combatting the mundane together through stories of friendship and love rivalries, performed through an increasingly competitive, struggle-filled market for girl *aidoru* groups shaped by these same producers. My research has suggested that the comparatively plentiful scholarship on girl *aidoru* is likely an attempt to grapple with how and why girl *aidoru* and their adolescence have gained such a prominent place in the popular cultural imagination, whilst their stories have been shaped primarily by older men.

Speaking to *aidoru* lyricists in my interview data chapter about how they choose to represent *seishun* in *aidoru* lyrics reveals that considerations of voice and authenticity are at the forefront of their minds during the creative process, and that the types of social identity to which they try to remain authentic vary depending on the artist and their fans; in other words, *aidoru* and the stories they perform are not a monolith, even if the building blocks of the *seishun* stories they sing about are necessarily made from the same socioeconomic histories. Lyricists were concerned about how to best portray *seishun* that felt true to particular teenage performers, whilst acknowledging that the type of *seishun* they were selling in lyrics was to some extent a fictional ideal created to make those who heard them feel better about themselves, contributing to the feel-good experience of consuming *aidoru* media (and thus profit). None of this stopped the defence of *seishun* as embodying something of a particularly Japanese sense of effort, or of *aidoru* as representing a particularly Japanese sense of performance and reality; in conversation with a non-Japanese researcher, lyricists (consciously or otherwise) showed how the practice of writing songs about *seishun* for *aidoru* is a way of exploring their own social identities.

We have seen how metaphors are used within lyrics to speak about the value of *ganbaru* (struggle as performed effort) in adolescence; youth as a journey, filled with ups and downs, populated by the sugar-sweetness and hopefulness of girls and the burning passion and

impulsivity of boys. But the most significant contemporary meta-textual metaphor of *seishun* in *aidoru* lyrics, a metaphor that transcends specific texts and is integral to the existence of *aidoru*, is that of *aidoru*ness as a Japanese school club (*bukatsu*). By seeing how *seishun* stories and *aidoru* have developed over the decades in tandem with Japanese secondary education, we have seen how the very nature of "being" *aidoru* is framed as the ultimate school club, and though listeners may only enjoy performers' blood, sweat and tears from afar, in another sense everyone is invited to participate in a school club by taking from lyrics stories of a timeless, idealised, battleground of *seishun* and relating it to their own everyday performances of effort in schools, workplaces, and wider society. If we listen to lyricists, and accept that *seishun* as portrayed in Japanese *aidoru* music is meant to soothe, then we must understand that *aidoru* lyrics are a resource for the maintenance of ontological security of a particular type of Japaneseness; a thoroughly "middle-class" mentality (Sakai, 2014, 203)

What can these representations tell us about contemporary Japanese social identity?

At the outset of this thesis, I discussed and defended the merits of a critical realist understanding of popular music and society, that sees culture and social identity as being negotiated by individuals in relation to social structures (such as systems of education and employment), of which individuals themselves are products and producers at different levels, one such level being that of a nation; "Japan". I acknowledged that critical realist ontologies may appear to assign too much agency to the individual, becoming complicit in the burdening of *ganbaru* as performed struggle onto people who have no choice but to perform it in order to get by in Japanese society; this is not my intention. Rather, by showing how discourses of effort portrayed through tropes of *seishun* in *aidoru* lyrics arise from the imperative to maintain and justify social structures that have specific roots in Japan's recent history, I hope to have provided at least part of the answer to the question of why adolescence takes such specific precedence in such an omnipresent genre of contemporary popular music. Japan's post-war popular media is built around the idealised, timeless, school-based struggle of adolescents as inherent national potential, and the tropes of *seishun* in *aidoru* lyrics are a manifestation of this.

Considering the thoughts of lyricists alongside lyrics and their sociohistorical background shows how people see stories in lyrics that have meaning to them as individuals, and may not necessarily constitute a blind acceptance of the assumptions behind them (effort is good, effort is Japanese, effort is natural to Japanese adolescence). At the same time, we should be ready to critique the neoliberal values that underpin these assumptions and are now key to Japan's contemporary education system, where individual effort is elevated as a means to succeed, pushing real inequalities of opportunity aside. We owe it to all those involved in *aidoru* music, especially adolescent performers themselves, to interrogate the social realities that govern their performance. I conclude that the chronotope of *seishun* as it is represented in Japanese *aidoru* lyrics is a type of pop resilience, where "the spectator feeds the performer's individual overcoming into a second-order therapeutic narrative" (James, 2015, 89): social hardship in *aidoru* performance is given value through the consumer understanding the significance of the effort used to overcome something (heartbreak, exam stress).

Here is where I disagree with Galbraith's (2012, 203) characterisation of *aidoru* amateurism as a "fantasy of unalienated labour" that purposely obscures competition; the difficulty of being a young person, especially a young woman, starting out in such a competitive industry, and overcoming all that this entails, is the very point of *aidoru* lyrics and performance. Young people in popular culture as imagined consumers or protagonists naturally become proxies for concerns about the near future, for as they undergo changes to their physical and

emotional selves, they come to represent "key motifs around which dominant interpretations of social change have been constructed" (Osgerby, 2004, 61). This is the case with representations of *seishun* in *aidoru* music, which tell us about the types of anxieties that threaten the ontological security of contemporary Japanese social identity: about needing to overcome hardships in a competitive society to achieve an elusive sense of belonging. The existence of *seishun* as place or a mindset not bound by time, but inherent and integral to Japaneseness, also shows us how the idealised struggles of adolescence are repurposed to validate performed effort as an important part of reflexively "being" in contemporary Japan. At a more basic level, this thesis has also shown how the joy, anguish, and energy of school-based adolescence, its loves and friendships, are rich source material for pop lyrics, as much an accessible form of escape as they are a resource for social identity formation. I hope that this thesis has complicated theories of adolescence and popular media in Japan, showing that *seishun* stories in *aidoru* lyrics and in the wider media mix are about much more than the fetishising of adolescent bodies and experiences.

The scholarly contribution of this thesis

We know that the figure of the young woman is part of the narrative glue that holds the contemporary Japanese media mix model together (Berndt, Nagaike and Ōgi, 2019), and that school sport has historically been portrayed in Japanese media as key to developing the (national) masculine character of boys (Blackwood, 2008, Collins, 2012, Barber, 2014). Through examining tropes of *seishun* in *aidoru* lyrics, I have shown that, tying these two observations together, there is merit in considering how wider discourses of youth and effort permeate Japanese popular media, whilst retaining a critical view of how these discourses may reflect gender stereotypes. I have also demonstrated how *aidoru* themselves, as embodiments of and messengers of discourses of youth and performative effort, deserve closer attention paid to the actual lyrical content that they perform, in addition to the attention-grabbing visual aspects of their performance, or the philosophical underpinnings of any quasi-religious relationship with fans. Studying tropes of *seishun* in *aidoru* lyrics has also allowed me to trace some neglected, often *aidoru*-centred post-war genealogies of these discourses of youth in Japanese popular media, such as through transmedia series such as the Tōhō Teen High School series in the 1960s and 1970s, and the framing of TV music variety programming as an extended school club in the 1980s, which I hope allows those studying media mix models and/or transmedia in Japan another interesting window onto their development.

I also hope that this thesis can be of pedagogical value. During the course of my PhD, I have met or been contacted by other young researchers and university students from around the world who also came to the study of Japan through an interest in Japanese popular music. Many of us wondered why, when fandom of idols as a transnational East Asian phenomenon is gaining increasing prominence (Finan, 2020), we struggled to find resources on how *aidoru* content gained its contemporary character (aside from difficulties accessing Japanese-language scholarship in this area). I will be pleased if the minimum that this thesis is able to contribute is to the creation of resources for teaching on an aspect of contemporary Japanese popular culture that is sometimes dismissed as nothing more than evidence of Japan-specific sexism or mindless consumerism, or to convincing those approaching the study of Japan for the first time that their curiosity about the sociohistorical background of Japanese popular music or the interlinking historical roots of East Asian popular music genres is more than justified.

Through providing a Japan-based case study of how ideas of individual or national effort manifest in popular music, I have contributed to a burgeoning body of work in the study of pop

resilience, situating *aidoru* music in a global mediascape from which it is all too often detached. As Japan looks back on its hosting of the 2021 Olympics and Paralympics, popular culture (be that sporting entertainment or pop music) will no doubt continue to be touted as ways in which the deeply traumatic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are publicly "overcome". Scholars interested in the politics and economics of popular music should therefore find this a useful intervention. I have also shown how the thoughts of lyricists may be usefully incorporated into the thematic study of bodies or corpora of lyrics, and how lyricists relate their creative practice to their (national) identities and to canonical bodies of lyrical work within a particular genre, with consideration given to the difficulties of remote, cross-cultural interviewing and the need to negotiate the specific structures of the Japanese entertainment industry. This thesis complicates the relationship between popular music and adolescence, making clear that the adolescence performed by *aidoru* through lyrics is of relevance to more people than adolescents themselves, or to those involved in subcultural consumption, and that the young people in *seishun* stories represent more complex ideals than "fun" or "trouble" (Hebdige, 1988, 15) or "personal and social crisis" (Driscoll, 2011).

Limitations of study and questions for future research

The scope of my data-gathering has been limited by the COVID-19 pandemic, preventing me from visiting popular media archives in Japan such as the National Diet Library and the Broadcast Library, and from conducting more spontaneous interviews with lyricists in person. At the time of writing, there is still no confirmation of if and when overseas researchers will be able to travel to Japan within the next year, and as a result, I have had to work with the data I have been able to collect. Although I am confident that this thesis has an original contribution to make to knowledge about Japan, and about popular music and adolescence, I am also aware that without speaking to audiences in Japan, there is only so much that I am able to extrapolate about *seishun* and individual Japanese social identities. I am now convinced of the importance of future mixed-methods audience research projects focused on popular music and autobiographical memory in Japan. There is much to be gleaned about how people of different generations in Japan remember their own adolescence in connection with popular media depicting *seishun*, by combining systematic analysis of media with the detailed reflections of those who remember it (such as the research of Zaborowski (2015) and Coates (2017)) and accounts of how they remember it (Koshiro *et al.*, 2012). One thing I was not expecting to discover was just how significant television has been to the circulation of *seishun* tropes throughout Japan's media mix, especially when performed by *aidoru*. It is vital, therefore, that any future research into *aidoru* takes Japanese television (in its broadest sense, encompassing contemporary streaming services) and its reception into consideration.

I acknowledge that by focusing so much on those who create lyrics for chart music, I run the risk of putting these lyricists on a pedestal. Taken in isolation, quantitative analysis of the authorship of the lyrical corpus erases the complexities of lyric-writing by further embellishing the status of two most well-known writer-producer "auteur" figures in the *aidoru* industry at the expense of many other less prominent lyricists. Moreover, by having a corpus composed only on lyrics whose authorship is registered with JASRAC, the Japanese music copyright-management organisation, and are therefore present on *J-Lyric*, a great deal of amateur or underground creative practice is erased. The conclusions about *aidoru* presented here therefore have greater relevance to mainstream or chart *aidoru*, and less to "underground" *aidoru* (Galbraith, 2018, 158) performing to niche audiences at smaller venues who struggle (albeit sometimes performatively and purposefully) to obtain chart hits. But the question remains as to

why male "celebrity" auteur-producer figures have such acknowledged prominence as popular cultural figures in and of themselves. Is it because they wield enough popular cultural power to produce the type of narrative that suits their own personas? And how exactly has the Japanese popular music industry come to accord so much prominence as celebrity creators to a few older men? Whilst it is also true that young women are beginning to gain more visibility as *aidoru* lyricists in Japan, including those with experience of being *aidoru* themselves, such as Sashihara Rino, it would be interesting to see how lyricists themselves feel about celebrity songwriters in Japan as popular cultural figures. There should also be particular attention paid to the specific experiences of lyricists from more marginalised backgrounds, and how they may or may not conceive of an adolescence that is different from that of the *seishun* chronotope that predominates in this research.

This is not a study of the musicological aspects of *aidoru* songs, and does not claim to provide musicological insights as such. In addition, *aidoru* media are highly visual, and appropriate analysis of that ever-evolving visuality is unfortunately beyond the scope of this study. As I argue above, since the 1970s, Japan's visual media mix in all its forms has hinged upon *aidoru* and tropes of *seishun*, be that through *aidoru* starring in and scoring film and television, gracing billboards, becoming characters in manga and anime, or more recently being transformed into playable 2.5d characters in massive, music-centred multimedia franchises such as *Love Live!* or *Ensemble Stars!*, whose complex interlinking of images deserves separate attention. I have touched on some of the objects and environments in *aidoru* lyrics that are used to paint a picture canonical Japanese adolescence (graduation photos, school uniform, the sports field), but as discussed by the lyricists themselves, these objects and environments are not static. Nonetheless, as long as *aidoru* lyricists themselves continue to believe in the value of an idealised *seishun* as the natural domain of performative effort, and as this concept of *aidoru*ness as adolescent struggle — of resilience — remains founded on decades of socioeconomic policy and multimedia practice in Japan, representations of adolescence in *aidoru* music will continue to exist as ideals through which people may reflexively validate their sense of being "Japanese".

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Appendices

Information sheet (English)

***Seishun* (youth, adolescence) in Japanese *aidoru* music participant information sheet (English ver.)**

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

About the project
This research project aims to increase our understanding of why *seishun* (youth, adolescence) is such an important theme in a type of Japanese pop music called *aidoru* (idol) music. It is part of a PhD thesis being written at the University of Sheffield's School of East Asian Studies. The project involves analysing lyrics and the thoughts and opinions of lyricists.

You have been asked to take part in this project because your work involves writing lyrics for Japanese *aidoru* songs. The aim is to record the thoughts of lyricists, including yourself.

Do I have to take part?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form or give consent through email). You can still withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. You do not have to give a reason. If you want to withdraw from the research, please contact Dorothy Finan (dlfinan1@sheffield.ac.uk).

What will I have to do?
You will take part in an email interview with the researcher. This will involve replying to questions posed by email in your own time, but within two weeks of the researcher sending you the questions (the researcher is currently based in the UK). You will be emailed a few questions at a time. You will be asked to discuss your own experiences of *aidoru* music, how you write lyrics, how *seishun* relates to *aidoru* music, and possible future developments in *aidoru* music. Your responses will be copied by the researcher into a password-protected document.

Your answers will help us to understand how lyricists see the theme *seishun* in *aidoru* music, especially as a part of their own writing process.

What are the possible advantages and disadvantages to taking part?
A disadvantage of taking part in this research is the time taken out of your work and personal life by your participation. Although there are no immediate advantages to taking part in the research, it is hoped that you will have the opportunity to use your experiences to increase understanding of *aidoru* music amongst an English speaking audience.

How will my information be processed?
All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will only be accessible to members of the research team. You will not

be able to be identified in any reports or publications unless you have given your explicit consent for this. If you agree to us sharing the information you provide with other researchers, then your personal details will not be included unless you explicitly request this.

According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis we are applying in order to process your personal data is that 'processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest' (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the University's Privacy Notice https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general.

Your responses will be stored in a password protected cloud storage service, and only the researcher their supervisors will have access to it. The researcher will only view your emails in private. Your data, comprising email address, responses, age range, and gender, will be stored under a pseudonym (false name), and will be destroyed three years after the PhD of which this research forms a part of is submitted (currently expected to be around October 2024). The researcher will not contact you further by email, unless to discuss the research.

The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

Who is organising and funding this research?
This research is funded by a Daiwa Anglo Japanese Foundation scholarship in Japanese studies.
This project has been ethically approved through the University of Sheffield's Ethics Review Procedure as administered by the School of East Asian Studies.

What if something goes wrong and I want to make a complaint?
If you would like to make a complaint, either about your treatment during the interview process, or about something that has happened to you as a result of your participation, you should contact one of the researcher's supervisors using the details given below. If you are not satisfied with how your complaint has been handled by the supervisor, please contact the Head of Department directly (k.e.Taylor-Jones@sheffield.ac.uk).

If you would like to complain about how your personal data has been handled, please email l.v.unwin@sheffield.ac.uk.

Contact details
Researcher Dorothy Finan, School of East Asian Studies, University of Sheffield (dlfinan1@sheffield.ac.uk)
Supervisor Dr. Thomas McAuley, School of East Asian Studies, University of Sheffield (t.e.mcauley@sheffield.ac.uk)

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet

Information sheet (Japanese)

研究説明書　日本のアイドル音楽における「青春」(日本語版)

この説明書は現代日本のアイドル音楽における「青春」というテーマに関する研究の内容について説明したものです。

電子メールのインタビューの対象者として、ご協力くださいますようお願い申し上げます。本研究の目的と詳細をご存知の上、参加されるかどうかを決定することが重要です。下記の情報を時間をかけてお読みになってください。ご不明な点等ございましたら、ご遠慮なくお問い合わせください。何卒よろしくお願いいたします。

研究目的

本研究の目的は、現代日本のアイドル音楽、特に歌詞、における「青春」というテーマの歴史と意義を明らかにすることです。歌詞そのものを体系的に分析するだけではなく、作詞家側のご感想を含めることが本研究の特徴です。３年間の博士課程の博士論文の一部でございます。

研究参加について

あなたは日本のアイドル歌詞を作詞される経験を持つ作詞家であるため、本研究に参加いただけるようお願い申し上げます。ご参加は完全に任意です。したがって、参加されなくても構いません。参加される場合は添付の同意書に署名してください。また、電子メールによる同意も大丈夫です。ご参加中では同意を撤回される場合、dlfinan1@sheffield.ac.uk にて研究者のファイナン・ドロシーにご連絡ください。説明されずに撤回されても構いません。

電子メールのインタビューとなり、いくつかのご質問含める研究者からの電子メールにお答になる形です。凡そ２週間以内にご返信いただければ幸いです。電子メールのインタビューであるため、いつでもご返信可能です（研究者は現在イギリス在住です）。以下のテーマに触れますが、答え方はご参加者次第です：

１．ご自分のアイドル音楽の聴取者経験
２．アイドル歌詞を書くプロセス
３．アイドル音楽と「青春」のつながり
４．アイドル音楽はこれからどう変わるか

研究参加の利点、欠点

ご参加を通じて特定な利益は得られませんが、本研究は英語圏におけるアイドル音楽のご理解を進めることが希望されております。ご多忙の中、参加されることは時間がかかるということが欠点です。

個人情報の扱い

ご参加中に収集されるデータは極秘扱いにされ、研究者と指導教員のみにアクセス可能です。ご参加者のお名前を公開する明示的な同意がないかぎり、本研究に続く論文、出版物の中でも、ご参加者のデータは匿名的に扱われます。ご参加者のインタビューデータを他の研究者と共有する同意がある場合、個人情報は一切含まれておりません。

欧州連合の一般データ保護規則に従って、個人情報の扱いの根拠は「公共の利益のために行われる仕事に必要」だとお知らせします。

本研究の原稿はパスワード保護のクラウドストレージサービスにて保存されます。アクセスは研究者、または研究者の指導教員に限られております。インタビューの原稿は仮名的に保存され、個人情報（原稿、年齢層、性別、メールアドレスなど）が博士論文提出３年後（現在２０２４年１０月予定）までに削除されます。研究実態に関係ある件でなければ、研究後、研究者はご参加者との連絡をお止めします。

この博士課程は大和日英基金の奨学金で資金調達されております。

法的なデーター処理担当者はシェフィールド大学です。倫理承認は同大学東アジア学部から取得されました。

文句がある場合

本研究のご参加のご経験、またご自分の研究者からのご扱いについて文句がある場合、指導教授にご連絡してください。また、指導者の反応についてご不満がございましたら、直接学部長 (k.e.Taylor-Jones@sheffield.ac.uk) にご連絡してください。

個人情報の扱われ方に関する文句はシェフィールド大学までお送りください
l.v.unwin@sheffield.ac.uk

お問い合わせ

研究者 Dorothy Finan (ファイナン・ドロシー）、シェフィールド大学東アジア学部、
dlfinan1@sheffield.ac.uk
指導教授 Dr. Thomas McAuley (マコーリ・トーマス教授)、シェフィールド大学東アジア学部、
t.e.mcauley@sheffield.ac.uk

Consent Form (English)

Please tick the appropriate boxes	Yes	No
Taking Part in the Project		
I have read and understood the project information sheet. (If you answer No to this question please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean),		
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.		
I agree to take part in the project. I understand that taking part in the project will include taking part in an email interview.		
I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time. I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw.		
How my information will be used during and after the project		
I understand my personal details such as name, email address etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project.		
I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. I understand that I will not be named in these outputs unless I specifically request this.		
I understand and agree that other authorised researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.		
I understand and agree that other authorised researchers may use my data in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.		
So that the information you provide can be used legally by the researchers		
I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield.		

Name of participant   Signature   Date

Name of researcher   Signature   Date

Consent form (Japanese)

研究参加同意書　日本のアイドル音楽における「青春」(日本語版)

適切なボックスに確認マーク✔を入れてください	同意する	同意しない
ご参加について		
研究説明書を読む機会がありました。（「同意しない」とお答になります場合、研究説明を改めてご確認ください)		
本研究の関して質問をする機会がありました。		
研究に参加します。研究は電子メールのインタービューからなります。		
自分の参加は自主的であり、いつでも撤回できます。不利益を受けることなく、説明なく撤回することがで来ます。		
ご参加中、参加後の個人情報の扱い		
自分の名前、メールアドレスなどの個人情報は研究者以外のひとにアクセス不可能です。		
自分の言葉が論文、ウエブサイトなどの出版物に掲載される可能性があります。自分の明示的な許可がなければ、自分の実名は一切含まれていません。		
この参加同意書通りの秘密性が守られる限り、自分の言葉が関係研究者にアクセス可能になることもあります。		
この参加同意書通りの秘密性が守られる限り、自分の言葉が他の研究者の出版物に参考されることもあります。		
参加者様のデーターが適法に使用できるために		
この研究から生成されるデータの著作権がシェフィールド大学に譲渡されます。		

参加者の名前　　　　　　　　　　署名　　　　　　　　　　　　日付

研究者の名前　　　　　　　　　　署名　　　　　　　　　　　　日付

Sample invitation email to potential participant's agency (English)

To whom it may concern at (company)/To Mr/Ms _____ _____,

Apologies for contacting you out of the blue like this.

My name is Dorothy Finan, and I am a PhD student at the School of East Asian Studies, University of Sheffield, UK. I am contacting you in relation to (participant), who is associated with your agency.

I am both a fan of, and researcher of J-pop. My research aims to uncover the theme of "seishun" in contemporary Japanese idol music, particularly in the context of lyrics. I hope that through this research I might further the understanding of Japanese popular music in the English-speaking world.

This summer I was planning on conducting interviews with lyricists in Japan, but due to the current situation, I have been forced to remain in the UK. As a result, I have decided to conduct these interviews via email. I am very interested in (participant)'s lyrics, and it would be a great help were I to have an opportunity to speak to them about their thoughts on my research focus. Any research data would be treated pseudonymously, and (participant)'s email address would not be revealed.

If (participant) is able to participate, I would be grateful if you could forward them the attached information sheet and consent form. I have also attached a personal profile. If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to get in touch.

I apologise for bothering you at such a busy time. Thank you in advance for your consideration and participation.

Yours sincerely,

Dorothy Finan

Sample invitation email to potential participant's agency (Japanese)

株式会社 _____御中/_____ _____ 様

突然のご連絡失礼いたします。

初めまして。イギリスのシェフィールド大学東アジア学部所属博士課程学生のファイナン・ドロシーと申します。貴社に所属されている_____さまに関してお問い合わせさせていただきます。

私は J-pop のファン、または J-Pop の研究者です。博士課程研究の目的は現代日本のアイドル音楽、特に歌詞、における「青春」というテーマの歴史と意義を明らかにすることです。英語圏における日本のポピュラー音楽のご理解を進めることが希望されております。

今年の夏日本で作詞家とのインタビューを行う予定でしたが、現在の状況でイギリスにいられずは得ませんでした。したがって、電子メールのインタビューを行うことにいたしました。

_____様のご作詞が大変興味深く、研究テーマに関するご感想を伺う機会がございましたら、研究者として大変助かります。研究データーは匿名的に扱われ、_____様のメールアドレスは一切発表されません。

もし_____様のご参加が可能でしたら、添付の研究説明書、研究参加同意書を転送していただけると幸いです。プロフィールも添付させていただきました。研究に関するご質問がございましたら、ご遠慮なくお問い合わせください。

ご多忙の中大変お手数ではございますが、ご検討、ご参加何卒宜しくお願いいたします。

ファイナン・ドロシー

Research ethical approval letter

Dorothy Finan
Registration number: 180129649
School of East Asian Studies
Programme: PhD in East Asian Studies

Dear Dorothy

PROJECT TITLE: Struggle as value: Exploring the thematic importance of seishun in Japanese aidoru music
APPLICATION: Reference Number 033898

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 08/04/2020 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 033898 (form submission date: 26/03/2020); (expected project end date: 01/04/2021).
- Participant information sheet 1077516 version 1 (26/03/2020).
- Participant information sheet 1077515 version 1 (26/03/2020).
- Participant consent form 1077518 version 1 (26/03/2020).
- Participant consent form 1077517 version 1 (26/03/2020).

If during the course of the project you need to deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation please inform me since written approval will be required.

Your responsibilities in delivering this research project are set out at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Clea Carroll
Ethics Administrator
School of East Asian Studies

Please note the following responsibilities of the researcher in delivering the research project:

- The project must abide by the University's Research Ethics Policy:
  https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/rs/ethicsandintegrity/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure
- The project must abide by the University's Good Research & Innovation Practices Policy:
  https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.671066!/file/GRIPPolicy.pdf
- The researcher must inform their supervisor (in the case of a student) or Ethics Administrator (in the case of a member of staff) of any significant changes to the project or the approved documentation.
- The researcher must comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data.
- The researcher is responsible for effectively managing the data collected both during and after the end of the project in line with best practice, and any relevant legislative, regulatory or contractual requirements.