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NAVIGATING SEXUAL CONSENT IN JAPAN

A Master's Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate College of

Missouri State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science, Criminology and Criminal Justice

By

Samara Mizutani Cesar

May 2024

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NAVIGATING SEXUAL CONSENT IN JAPAN

Criminology and Criminal Justice

Missouri State University, May 2024

Master of Science

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ABSTRACT

Employing an exploratory sequential research design, including focus groups and an online survey, this thesis explores the factors influencing how Japanese people navigate the gray zones of sexual consent. This study not only addresses gaps in the literature on sexual consent but also provides a preliminary understanding of Japanese individuals' perceptions, beliefs, behaviors, and experiences in ambiguous sexual interactions, which is particularly meaningful given Japan's recent legal revisions and changing sociocultural landscape. Findings indicated the impact of traditional sexual scripts on consent perceptions, with gender and relationship norms contributing to the dismissal of sexual assaults within specific relationships. It was also found that the presence of nonconsent communication was crucial in determining sexual coerciveness. Moreover, the results suggested that token resistance beliefs might serve as a risk factor against sexual offending but a protective factor for sexual victimization. While it is too soon to draw any conclusions to inform sexual violence prevention and intervention policies given the study's limitations, this thesis provides insights for future research, emphasizing the importance of understanding consent in diverse cultural contexts for fostering healthy sexual relationships in a manner that is respectful and effective within that culture.

KEYWORDS: sexual violence, sexual consent, gray zones, sexual scripts, token resistance, Japan

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In the interest of academic freedom and the principle of free speech, approval of this thesis indicates the format is acceptable and meets the academic criteria for the discipline as determined by the faculty that constitute the thesis committee. The content and views expressed in this thesis are those of the student-scholar and are not endorsed by Missouri State University, its Graduate College, or its employees.

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INTRODUCTION

On March 7, 2023, BBC released a shocking documentary titled *Predator: The Secret Scandal of J-Pop*, exposing the allegations of sexual abuse committed by one of the most influential and revered figures in the Japanese entertainment industry, Johnny Kitagawa. Johnny was the founder and president of Johnny & Associates, a talent and production agency for boy bands (i.e., J-Pop idols). He established the current form of the all-male idol industry and produced many of the top idol groups in Japan. Performers from his agency are top-rated and active in various genres, from talk shows to commercials to TV series and movies. Hardly one can spend a day without seeing at least one member of his groups in the media. Partly behind this success is the unique system Johnny created. Young boys who are recruited enter the agency's academy and receive singing, dancing, and acting training. The boys called Johnny's Juniors could only make their official debut at Johnny's discretion.

Rumors of Johnny's sexual exploitation of these boys date back to 1965 (Yamaguchi, 2023). Since then, many former idols and trainees of Johnny's agency have exposed his abuse through memoirs and magazine interviews. According to BBC (2023), a weekly current affairs magazine, *Bunshun* published a series of reports in 1999 based on interviews with more than dozens of former Juniors who alleged Johnny sexually abused them. They claimed that Johnny would invite Juniors to sleep over at his house, which was called the "dormitory," where he would grope and engage in sexual intercourse with the boys. After *Bunshun* published the reports detailing these allegations, Johnny and his company sued *Bunshun* for defamation, and the case was processed at a civil court. The Tokyo High Court eventually ruled in 2003 that the

allegations regarding Johnny's sexual abuse against minors reported by *Bunshun* were, in fact, true. Still, no criminal charges were filed against Johnny, and he remained a revered president and godfather of the industry until—and even after—his death in 2019.

Following the BBC's documentary, more recent victims came forward, with one former Junior revealing that he was also sexually abused by Johnny from the age of 15 between 2012 and 2016 (Yong, 2023). These events brought to light the dark side of a glamorous world, which was much hidden, ignored, and dismissed until then, igniting controversy within and outside Japan. Many people criticized the lack of coverage by the Japanese media and questioned why Johnny did not face any consequences for his acts despite early allegations across decades and the civil court decision back in 2003.

However, the truth is that Johnny did not face any criminal charges because his acts did not constitute a crime back then. In Japan, up until 2017, sexual assault statutes only addressed coerced sexual intercourse against women who were above 13 (see Appendix A for reference of Japanese statute's change over time). Most of Johnny's known victims were boys and teenagers above this age, so the law did not apply to them at the time of their abuse. Moreover, the law required that the act involved physical violence or intimidation in order to be considered sexual assault or rape before the revisions in 2023. Many of the boys could not refuse Johnny's sexual advances; on the contrary, many still protect and talk about him with affection (BBC, 2023). These seemingly contradictory behaviors, which are explainable based on an understanding of grooming and sexual abuse involving minors, may make some people doubt the victims' credibility and whether the sexual acts conducted by Johnny were truly a crime.

The complexity of this case lies in the assumptions embedded in the law, which points to the cultural aspect of sex crimes. These assumptions refer to who the victim and offender are and what sexual violence looks like. Until 2017, Japanese law essentially delineated that the victim was a woman, the offender was a man, and sexual assault refers to cases where he uses violence or explicit intimidation to coerce her into vaginal sex. Such limited understanding of sexual violence leads to the creation and perpetuation of exaggerated beliefs and fears of abrupt sexual assaults committed by strangers. Cases that fall outside of scenarios resembling this mythical construction, such as those committed by acquaintances and involving societal norms and pressures, are often unrecognized, minimized, and dismissed, and the victims are blamed and criticized.

This thesis focuses on such cases which are not immediately recognizable as sexual violence because they are excluded from the law or share some similarities with consensual sexual activities. These cases often involve ambiguous sexual consent, termed "gray zones," based on Roiphe's (1993) work. For example, in Johnny's case, it is legally challenging to prove that the victims were coerced because many of them did not resist Johnny's sexual advances. Johnny also did not explicitly threaten or tell the Juniors that their career would be ruined if they did not comply. Does the lack of explicit intimidation and the Juniors' resistance make the act consensual? This type of ambiguity is the artifact of sexual violence's social nature, often intertwined with gender roles, sexual scripts, rape myths, power dynamics, and other social factors. The purpose of this thesis is to begin disentangling these factors and contribute to a better understanding of how Japanese individuals navigate the gray zones of sexual consent.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Dark Figure of Sexual Violence

While sexual violence and anti-sexual violence movements have long been part of history, it was not until recently, with the rise of the #MeToo Movement, that sexual violence began to gain international attention and recognition of its seriousness. Comprehension of its prevalence worldwide is still limited and likely underreported due to the various stigmas attached to the issue. Nonetheless, statistics have shown that sexual violence is disturbingly common, as 54.3% of women and 30.7% of men in the U.S. have experienced contact sexual violence in their lifetime, which includes rape, being made to penetrate someone else, sexual coercion, and unwanted sexual contact (Basile et al., 2022). Some individuals are disproportionately more vulnerable to sexual violence victimization. For example, bisexual persons are 18 times more likely, and lesbian/gay persons are two times more likely to be raped or sexually assaulted compared to straight persons (Truman & Morgan, 2022). Other than gender and sexual orientation, individuals' race or ethnicity, nationality, relationship status, and other identities or mental and physical traits also impact victimization risks.

Despite such alarming prevalence, even these numbers may show an incomplete picture of sexual violence. What the #MeToo Movement has revealed through a wave of individuals coming forward and sharing their stories for the first time is the hidden banality of sexual violence. Termed "the dark figure of crime" by criminologists, the hidden banality of sexual violence refers to its high prevalence and underreported nature, reflecting two characteristics of this type of crime. One is the cultural structures that pressure victims into silence, and the

other is the narrow and ambiguous definitions of sexual violence and related concepts. These elements' processes complicate efforts to reduce sexual offending and victimization.

Sexual Violence as a Social Construction

To better understand how cultural systems and definitions of sexual violence contribute to its hidden banality, it is helpful to first recognize the cultural nature of sexual violence as a crime. Beyond the evolutionary association of sexual activities and procreation, people engage in sexual behaviors and acts for multiple purposes and with various motivations. It could be said that the breadth of sexual expression has particularly expanded by modern technological advances in birth control, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, increased knowledge of the human body, and emphasis on family planning. Sexual behaviors are, therefore, loaded with cultural meanings and interpretations, which makes sexual violence and crimes social constructions.

Rooted in symbolic interactionism, social constructionism is a theoretical framework that focuses on the idea that social reality is constructed through social relations and interactions. Berger and Luckmann (1966) synthesized the ideas of previous thinkers and popularized the term social construction, explaining that reality is formed as common ideas and acts become habitualized and institutionalized. In the field of criminology, this theory offers a lens to see crime and criminal behaviors as actions and behaviors deemed deviant and unacceptable by people and society (Przemieniecki, 2017). In other words, according to social constructionists, particular behaviors only become criminal or deviant when society recognizes them as such through social interactions and institutional enforcement.

The historical shift of what is considered sexual violence and punishable by law supports the argument that sexual violence and crimes are social constructions. For example, marital rape only became illegal in the U.S. federal lands in 1986; up until then—and even after in practicality—sexual violence within marital relationships was neither considered criminal nor taken seriously (Bennice & Resick, 2003). Although a cultural tendency to dismiss marital rape and other forms of sexual violence within intimate relationships still looms in U.S. society, these behaviors are more widely recognized as criminal and unacceptable today. In this way, sexual violence and crimes as social constructions are subject to change as society challenges old interpretations and assigns new meanings to sexual behaviors.

However, the reconstruction of meanings does not come easily. Just like any other social construction, once a sexual behavior gains meaning that provides a shared reality to individuals and society, this meaning becomes a template. Some of these templates—or shared meanings, interpretations, patterns, and roles attributed to sexual behaviors and individuals engaging in those—become what are called sexual scripts and rape myths, which will be further discussed in later Chapters. Marital rape, for example, demonstrates that even legal changes are not enough in completely rewriting old templates, albeit often instrumental to the process. As Foucault (1978) argues, power is not only exerted from the top but normalized and all-pervasive in society. Therefore, changes in the definitions and interpretations of sexual violence and crimes must occur at both institutional and individual levels.

Cultural Suppression of Sexual Violence Victimization

A critical challenge in addressing sexual violence's invisibility is that existing dominant cultural templates act internally and externally, pressuring victims into silence. Despite some

institutional changes, such as the legal expansion of the definitions of sex crimes, sexual violence remains one of the most underreported crimes. According to findings of the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) in 2021, only 21.5% of rape and sexual assault victimizations were reported to the police, which is significantly low considering that 45.6% of overall violent victimizations were reported (Thompson & Tapp, 2022). It is conspicuous that sexual violence pertains to a unique cultural taboo that hinders reporting.

One of the reasons for this underreporting trend is the victims' internalized beliefs regarding sexual violence. Many victims experience feelings of shame, embarrassment, guilt, self-blame, and other harmful emotions which prevent them from seeking help and taking official legal steps (Brockdorf et al., 2023; Ceelen et al., 2019; Orchowski et al., 2022; Reich et al., 2022; Spencer et al., 2017). These feelings often develop through socialization processes unique to each culture, which attribute different cultural meanings to sexual violence. For example, in conducting focus groups with Mexican American women, Ramos Lira and colleagues (1999) found that women often perceived the need to keep silent because sexual assault meant betraying their parents' confidence and an offense against their male family members. In another context, Luo (2000) found that Taiwanese women desperately tried to save face for themselves and their families, resulting in their silence and repeated sexual victimization. These studies illustrate that social scripts, norms, beliefs, and reactions play a significant role in forming victims' internalized beliefs and silence regarding sexual violence.

In fact, victims' common fear of negative social reactions (Brockdorf et al., 2023; Orchowski et al., 2022) is not unsubstantiated. The public is more likely to determine victim desirability and rape severity based on the victim's gender, relationship to the perpetrator,

sexual history, incident location, and other situational factors (Schwarz et al., 2022). Typically, cases that involve stereotypical elements of sexual violence (e.g., female victim, stranger offender, apparent injury) are more likely to garner empathetic views.

The criminal justice system is no exception. Studies show that cases that deviate from these "typical" sexual violence scenarios are less likely to be taken seriously by criminal justice agents and processes (Franklin et al., 2020; Sleath & Bull, 2012; Venema, 2016). When individuals to whom victims disclose or report their victimization engage in retraumatizing behaviors, including blaming the victims for the crime, dismissing their experience, and being insensitive, victims experience secondary victimization. Unfortunately, victims of sexual violence often experience secondary victimization during their interactions with the criminal justice system (Campbell, 2006; Logan et al., 2005; Lorenz et al., 2019). It occurs throughout every level of criminal proceedings by law enforcement officers (Patterson, 2011; Shaw et al., 2017), prosecutors (O'Neal et al., 2015; Spohn & Holleran, 2001), and court personnel (Doan-Minh, 2019; Leverick, 2020; Regehr et al., 2008).

Individuals who engage in retraumatizing behaviors may not intend to hurt the victims. However, their perceptions of why the crime happened and who is to blame are more or less predisposed to their society's rape myths and sexual scripts. As a result of the behavioral and perceptive restrictions of narrow cultural templates, the public and criminal justice agents sometimes inadvertently sabotage victims' path to recovery and diminish opportunities to better understand sexual violence and crimes. Those who speak out about their victimization are effectively silenced, facing blame and insensitive responses from professionals, friends, and

family (Ahrens, 2006). In this way, internal and external cultural forces often discourage victims from disclosing and reporting their victimization, contributing to its invisibility.

Recognizing and Defining Sexual Violence

Unacknowledged Rape. It has been discussed that victims of sexual violence are internally and externally silenced, but a more fundamental component referring to the hidden nature of sexual violence is that some victims may not perceive their experiences as sexual victimization. When individuals engage in unwanted sex that meets the legal and experts' definition of rape but do not label their experiences as such, the literature has termed it unacknowledged rape (Artime et al., 2014; Littleton et al., 2007; Littleton et al., 2008; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2011; Wilson & Newins, 2019). Although it is difficult to estimate the exact number of unacknowledged rape victims, studies have found that they are disturbingly high. A meta-analysis of 28 studies and 5,917 female rape victims found that 60.4% of female rape victims did not acknowledge that they had been raped (Wilson & Miller, 2016). In another study conducted by Reed and colleagues (2020), they found that 80% of male rape victims did not conceptualize their experience as rape, which was much higher than that of female rape victims.

Victims who have been sexually victimized in a way that does not fit the "classical" or "typical" sexual assault scenario (e.g., stranger rape, physical violence, victim resistance) have more difficulty conceptualizing their experience as a sexual assault. The mismatch between the victim's experience, societal definitions of rape, and the victim's personal rape scripts makes it difficult for victims to acknowledge their victimization (Bondurant, 2001; Littleton & Axsom, 2003). Studies indeed have found that endorsement of rape myths is a significant predictor of

rape (un)acknowledgment. For example, men were more likely to accept rape myths, which in turn made them less inclined to label their experience as victimization (Reed et al., 2020). On the other hand, sexual minorities endorsed greater rejections of rape myths, which was associated with more likelihood of acknowledging their rape victimization (Wilson & Newins, 2019). Consequently, individuals whose sexual victimization does not fit the societal and their personal idea of "real rape" are less likely to recognize their victimization and seek support.

Sexual Consent Ambiguity. Recognizing sexual violence and victimization is challenging not only for victims but also for the criminal justice system. A major factor contributing to this pattern is the ambiguity of sex crime definitions. In the U.S., definitions of what constitutes rape or sexual assault vary by state. However, in addition to force or coercion, all states include some element of victims' (non)consent as a fulcrum to define whether a sexual act is criminal or not (RAINN, 2020). In Japan, the term (non)consent was incorporated into the legal language of sex crimes for the first time in 2023, significantly expanding the range of sexual encounters punishable by law. The deciding factor that makes a sexual activity a crime is the absence of consent, which can happen when individuals do not or cannot—due to intoxication, disability, or age—give consent.

The problem with this reliance on consent is that consent has not been clearly conceptualized or operationalized (Beres, 2007; Shumlich & Foster, 2018). Legally speaking, only seven states in the U.S. had a clear legal definition of consent as of 2018 (Hust et al., 2017). Within scholarly literature, most studies on sexual violence mention consent based on an assumed shared understanding, failing to discuss its meanings, explicit definitions, and social forces that produce those (Beres, 2007). As a result of poor critical reflection, there are multiple

interpretations of what is considered consent, some of which are inherently contradictory and gendered. There is a general consensus, though, that sexual consent involves individuals' agreement or willingness to engage in certain sexual activities (Beres, 2014; Shumlich & Foster, 2018). Still, this definition fails to define what agreement or willingness means, how they are communicated, and the conditions in which this communicative interaction takes place.

Because the line that separates sex from rape is essentially consent, the role of consent is critical. Yet, its definitions are vague, varied, and difficult to unanimously measure or interpret in a sexual encounter. The lack of explicit definition causes various problems because whether consent was present or not is ultimately up to the interpretation of the parties, and if reported as a sexual assault case, criminal justice personnel. Criminal justice personnel's decision-making is affected by organizational factors, such as emphasis on indisputable physical evidence and convictability (Martin & Powell, 1994) and societal and personal sexual and rape scripts. These mental and structural restrictions result in high case attrition, where only a handful of cases that conform to the "classic" rape scenarios are processed and punished (e.g., Spohn & Tellis, 2019; Spohn et al., 2001; Vandiver et al., 2016).

To the same degree that scholars and lawmakers disagree on what exactly constitutes consent, so does the public, leaving much room for interpretation. While it is clear in some cases whether or not the individual is willing to and agrees to engage in sexual activity, it is not so obvious in many other cases. For example, some individuals may choose to drink in order to be able to act on their desires to engage in sexual activity (Hirsch & Khan, 2021). Classifying all sexual activities engaged in when parties were drunk as nonconsensual does not capture the nuances of the culture of sex. These ambiguous situations, where it is not always possible to

determine with full confidence whether a sexual encounter is an assault or not, are the gray zones of sexual consent and are the inspiration of this study.

Whereas definitions of sexual consent are criticized for being too vague, a too narrow definition of consent and simply delineating what behaviors should unanimously indicate sexual consent is also problematic. It is not only unrealistic and impractical but also culturally imposing and invasive. Recent attempts to narrow down the definition of consent have resulted in an emphasis on affirmative consent. This model pushes for "ongoing, continuous, and clearly communicated consent" and requires individuals to take steps to ensure that their sexual partner(s) is willing to proceed (Shumlich & Foster, 2018). While legal requirements of affirmative consent are emerging in some states and colleges, specifying behaviors that indicate consent does not reflect how individuals navigate consent in reality (Humphreys & Herold, 2007). Individuals often employ a combination of complex, implicit, and explicit strategies when navigating sexual consent (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Hirsch & Khan, 2021; Jozkowski, Peterson, et al., 2014; Muehlenhard et al., 2016). Many of these verbal and nonverbal behaviors have multiple meanings if taken out of—or even when within—the context in which they are performed, so it is essentially impossible to establish clear, neutral, and absolute forms of consent and nonconsent without creating another set of problems. It is crucial to understand consent as a concept and practice before creating theories and applying them to analyses and discussions aimed at preventing sexual violence. This study aims to better understand how sexual consent is practiced and perceived to eventually inform theoretical work.

Cultural Implications

Gap in Literature

As a social construction, what sexual violence and consent constitute and how they are manifested or practiced are heavily influenced by culture. Each country, region, and even neighborhood has different customs and legal developments to control sexual violence. The challenge is that these cultural groups are not static or isolated. The world is increasingly becoming globalized at an unprecedented pace, with large numbers of people migrating long-distances and interacting with each other online.

The U.S. Census of 2020 revealed that the racial and ethnic diversity of the country has significantly increased since 2010 (Jensen et al., 2021). In addition to the increase of multiracial and non-White Americans, the number of international students in the U.S. is also increasing every year. Although the numbers have sunk a little during the pandemic, there were 948,519 international students in U.S. colleges during the 2021/22 academic year, making up 4.7 percent of the total U.S. student body (Institute of International Education, 2022). As the world quickly and intensively continues to become globalized, a more nuanced cultural understanding of different groups within and outside the country is becoming increasingly critical.

Yet not many studies have examined how sexual consent is perceived and practiced in non-Western or non-White contexts. While some researchers have begun to examine sexual consent behaviors and communication, most of the studies were conducted in Western countries, such as the U.S., Canada, Australia, and England, with the samples' majority being White (e.g., Beres, 2010; Beres, 2014; Beres et al., 2004; Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Hall, 1998; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Jozkowski, Peterson, et al., 2014; Jozkowski, Sanders, et al., 2014; Kitzinger & Frith, 1999). Perhaps one reason that most sexual consent studies are

concentrated in Western countries is that the sexual consent field is relatively new. It was not until recently that researchers began examining behaviors and perceptions regarding consent. As most studies are inherently exploratory, most of the samples are college students from the countries where the leading researchers on this topic reside.

Generalizing findings from studies that were conducted primarily in Western countries with White individuals and developing terminology, policies, and programs based on these findings are not only less effective but also culturally imposing and problematic to other groups. Therefore, more research on sexual consent must be conducted with different populations, including non-Western cultures, non-heterosexual and non-cisgender individuals, and age-diverse groups, among others who are often underrepresented in the sexual violence field. Doing so can lead to a better understanding of unique cultural factors that compose sexual intimacy and violence in particular groups, resulting in more culturally reflective and effective responses to address sexual violence worldwide.

Why Japan

To address this cultural gap in the literature, this thesis will examine sexual intimacy and consent in Japan. Japan is one of the few non-Western countries considered a developed country, measured using the Human Development Index (HDI), which assesses average life expectancy, level of education, and income (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2022). Japan is categorized as a very high HDI country, ranked 19th among 191 nations, with a 0.925 score on a scale where 1.0 is the highest (UNDP, 2022). There is no doubt that Japan is among the most technologically advanced countries, enjoying a successful economy and high-quality infrastructure.

Despite its developmental success, Japan unfortunately lags in the area of gender equality. According to the World Economic Forum (2022), Japan was ranked 116th among 146 nations in the Global Gender Gap Index, which assesses the level of gender parity in economic opportunities, education, health, and political leadership. Japan's ranking is extremely low and lags far behind other developed nations. In another measurement that assesses laws and regulations on women's economic participation, including areas such as workplace, marriage, and parenthood, Japan was ranked the lowest and implemented the fewest reforms among the OECD high-income economies (World Bank, 2023). Most relevant to this thesis is the fact that Japan lacked legislation to punish sexual harassment in the workplace, being the only OECD country that does not have such legislation in place (World Bank, 2023). Although sexual violence is not an issue only facing women, it is largely considered a gender-based crime, so gender issues should not be omitted from this discussion.

In addition to gender inequality, Japan, like many other countries, faces the challenges of preventing and addressing sexual violence. Along with homicide, robbery, arson, and human trafficking, rape and sexual assault are considered "serious crimes" in Japan (what in the U.S. may be referred to as violent crimes). According to the Japanese National Police Agency (2023), 9,535 serious crime cases had been reported or recognized by law enforcement in 2022. Out of those, 1,655 were rape and 4,708 were sexual assault cases, which means that rape and sexual assault alone accounted for almost 67% of all reported serious crimes. The high proportion of sex crimes, which are infamous for their hidden prevalence, indicates that sex crimes are either not a dark figure in Japan or a very serious issue.

Reports from the Japanese Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office suggest the latter, demonstrating that legally known cases are only the tip of the iceberg. In a survey with 1,803 female and 1,635 male adults, it was found that about one in 14 females had been raped (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2021). Among those who had been raped, 58.4% of females and 70.6% of males did not disclose their experience or seek help to anyone. In another survey with young adults (16 to 24 years old), it was found that 12.4% of respondents had been sexually assaulted and 4.1% had been raped (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2022). Consistent with the first study mentioned, almost half of the victims did not report or disclose their victimization to anyone. In both studies, those who did disclose their victimization experience were much more likely to do so with their friends or family, not the police or victim-support centers. Hence, the dark figure of sexual violence is undoubtedly a dire reality in Japan.

Nevertheless, research on the contexts where sexual violence occurs and factors that may contribute to it are considerably lacking. Some studies in Japan examine domestic and intimate partner violence (Fujimura et al., 2007; Fujita & Yonezawa, 2009; Matsunaga & Moriwaki, 2019; Ohnishi et al., 2020; Yamawaki et al., 2009). While these studies are helpful in understanding the intricacy and interlocked aspects of abuse—including physical, psychological, emotional, financial, and sexual abuse—they lack an in-depth examination of the characteristics and factors related to sexual violence, which may or may not be part of larger patterns of abuse. A few studies have investigated rape myths in Japan (Ohbuchi et al., 1985; Omata, 2013; Yamawaki, 2009; Yukawa & Tomari, 1999), but they only address female rape myths and are limited in number and scope. Moreover, these studies tend to focus on individuals' perceptions and responses to blunt sexual violence cases. While they provide invaluable information, no

study to date has examined Japanese individuals' perceptions of gray zone cases despite the fact that many sexual interactions are ambiguous (Bedera, 2021; Hirsch & Khan, 2021; Swauger et al., 2013).

The research gap on the gray zones is related to the fact that sexual consent studies are almost nonexistent in Japan. The concept of sexual consent itself is relatively new to the Japanese public (Saito & Otake, 2019), and the terminology has only been incorporated into the country's law last year. In this context, the first and only research regarding sexual consent in Japan was conducted by Mukai and colleagues (2021). They explored the types of behaviors Japanese individuals perceived the vignette characters could engage in to deliver consent and nonconsent. It was identified that consent took on implicit forms and nonconsent took on explicit and implicit forms. Their preliminary data also suggests that sexual scripts exist in Japan, but their study did not go as far as identifying the scripts and their impacts.

Japan is, therefore, facing a serious sexual violence issue. Still, research on the underpinnings of sexual violence in this country is drastically lacking, and the literature produced in Western countries is limited in its applicability to Japan. Understanding how Japanese people navigate the gray zones of sexual interactions and consent may help identify the cultural factors and beliefs that influence individuals' perceptions and behaviors. Moreover, such data can help inform targeted interventions and education that are not far-fetched and impractical for Japanese people. It is in this light that this thesis examines Japanese beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors related to sexual violence and consent.

Overview of Thesis

Sexual violence is infamous for its hidden banality. Victims are internally and externally pressured into silence, and the ambiguity surrounding many sexual interactions and consent negotiation makes it challenging to identify and classify which sexual experience is criminal, unwanted, or consensual and wanted. Since sexual violence is a social construction with its components, such as perceptions and practices of consent, being affected by cultural factors, this issue must be investigated in different cultural contexts. As most of the literature and discussion lies on Western and White backgrounds, this thesis aimed to expand the field by looking at a non-Western country, Japan, which, despite sharing economic and living standard successes with its Western counterparts, is still lagging far behind when it comes to legal protections relevant to sexual violence.

Taking an exploratory approach, this thesis examined what factors affected Japanese people's consent perceptions in gray zone sexual assaults, their beliefs regarding sexual intimacy and interactions, how they express sexual consent, and their sexual experiences pertaining to ambiguous situations. An exploratory sequential research design was implemented using focus groups and an online survey to analyze this issue more holistically and offer avenues for future research. It aimed to contribute to the emerging field of sexual consent, particularly pertaining to the gray zones, and the development of this field in non-Western cultural contexts. Furthermore, the findings of this thesis also contribute to a better understanding of sexual consent in Japan, which is especially meaningful considering the recent revisions to the Japanese sex crime statutes that included the concept and language of sexual nonconsent for the first time in its history.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this Chapter, the literature on sexual scripts, rape myths, and consent behaviors and interpretations are reviewed.[1] As noted previously, sexual violence is a social construction. Its definition and recognition are heavily influenced by sexual scripts, which are the ideas of how a sexual encounter does or should unfold, and rape myths, which are stereotypical and overstated beliefs of what rape or sexual assault looks like. These social, interpersonal, and individual beliefs and attitudes serve as a cultural template, affecting how individuals behave and interpret their or others' experiences before, during, and after a sexual encounter. Previous literature is reviewed to introduce some of the dominant sexual scripts and rape myths and to illustrate how they lead to the gray zones of sexual violence. In addition to studies on beliefs and attitudes, research on consent is also reviewed to demonstrate that consent behaviors and interpretations are often affected by sexual scripts and rape myths. Implications of these influences and how they contribute to the gray zones and challenges in preventing and addressing sexual violence are also discussed.

Sexual Scripts

[1] It must be noted that due to the limited number of studies conducted in Japan pertaining to this field, the literature presented here is primarily based on Western countries. The purpose is not to assume that the same norms, beliefs, and behaviors are present in Japan but to provide an overview and conceptual point of reference to explore the issue and demonstrate how social scripts and mythical constructions interact to influence individual behaviors and interpretations.

Sexual behaviors and interactions are packed with symbols and meanings that are informed by cultural norms and taboos. These norms and taboos are called scripts, which are behavioral guidelines specifying the appropriate and expected structure, sequence, and behaviors involved at various stages in an encounter (Gagnon & Simon, 2005). In other words, scripts dictate what should happen in a particular encounter and its outcomes, what role individuals should assume, and how those roles should be enacted. Sexual scripts are, therefore, blueprints for sexual behaviors and encounters, providing meaning and direction on how to act, perceive, and respond in those situations (Gagnon & Simon, 2005). Although these scripts are adapted and applied in different manners by individuals, some scripts are promulgated and serve as the dominant point of reference.

Traditional (Heteropatriarchal) Sexual Scripts

One of the most prominent themes is the traditional sexual scripts. Researchers have argued and demonstrated that sexual scripts are gendered and heteronormative (e.g., Ford, 2021; Harvey et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2007; Pham, 2016; Rittenhour & Sauder, 2023; Seabrook et al., 2016; Shumlich & Fisher, 2018; Ward et al., 2022; Wiederman, 2005;). Traditionally, men are expected to actively pursue sex and take the lead, while women are expected to be passive and serve as the gatekeepers. These traditional sexual scripts are particularly relevant in the context of sexual consent because they naturally position men to engage in "consent-seeking" or "consent-pressuring" and women in "consent-enacting" behaviors (Byers, 1996; Shumlich & Fisher, 2018). Therefore, as gatekeepers and consent-enactors, women are expected to either passively meet or resist men's sexual drives. Following this role, women are often believed to engage in token resistance, which is the act of initially refusing sex when they are actually

willing to or intend to engage in it in order not to be seen as sexually promiscuous (Muehlenhard & Rodgers, 1998). Setting consent as unidirectional and specifying heteropatriarchal roles provide a narrow definition of sexual consent, contributing to the gray zones of sexual encounters. It ignores and dismisses the victimization of some and blames and shames others' depending on their attributed roles in the scripts.

Although not many studies have explicitly focused on determining the sexual scripts in Japan, some findings indicate that traditional sexual scripts are also present in Japan. For instance, Mukai and colleagues (2021) provided participants with a scenario depicting a sexual encounter where the genders of the characters were intentionally not specified. Yet, they found that more than 90% of participants assumed the sexual advancement was made by a man and received by a woman, implying the existence of a shared traditional gendered sexual script. In another study, it was found that Japanese young adults assumed that the act of sex involved vaginal penetration in heterosexual intercourse (Farrer et al., 2012), illustrating heteronormativity as the dominant script in Japan.

Moreover, most young adults believed that committed relationships entailed sexual intercourse (Farrer et al., 2008; Farrer et al., 2012). Committed relationships in this context do not necessarily refer to marriage-minded dating. In Japan, dating tends to follow a formalized process, starting with one individual "declaring" their romantic feelings (*kokuhaku*) and the other accepting or declining them (Farrer et al., 2008). Although women can *kokuhaku*, it is typically seen as a men role (Kuribayashi, 2002), implying yet again the script that men are expected to take the lead. Following a successful *kokuhaku*, the parties become "official," establishing a committed dating relationship. Once they form this relationship, both men and

women feel obligated to have sex and to please their partner (Farrer et al., 2008; Farrer et al., 2012). This finding is consistent with another study that demonstrated that the major reasons Japanese individuals engaged in sexual intercourse were societal pressures and their partners' demands (Kosaka & Sawamura, 2017).

Where committed dating entails sexual intercourse expectations as the dominant sexual script, practicing and interpreting consent become increasingly challenging, especially among intimate partners. It increases the chances of individuals agreeing or complying with unwanted sex, which complicates the understanding of consent and contributes to the gray zones. Japanese relationship sexual scripts also lead to the minimization of sexual violence among intimate partners more so than in the U.S. (Yamawaki, 2007; Yamawaki & Tschanz, 2005), potentially because it is believed that consent is implied if you are officially dating. In a way, the act of *kokuhaku* is an explicit form of asking for consent to date. Thus, some individuals may feel like they cannot refuse sexual activities later on because they already gave consent to enter a committed relationship, which is socially expected to involve sexual intercourse.

Seduction Scripts

A subset of traditional sexual scripts involving consensual interactions is seduction scripts. These scripts involve the communication process in which individuals indicate or display their sexual interests in each other. Part of the traditional sexual scripts, seduction scripts are also gendered and involve the expectations of men being more active and women more passive during this interaction. Rather than being verbally straightforward, women will often use their bodies and physicality in a way to attract men, which is referred to as objectification (Landgraf & von Treskow, 2017).

Some of the key elements in seduction scripts found by Ryan (1988) were that they tended to occur indoors, often involving alcohol, prior conversation, attractive individuals, and virtually no resistance or aggression. Addressing some of the methodological limitations and expanding on this study, Littleton and Axsom (2003) found that both seduction and rape scripts involved individuals who had no or minimal prior relationship, use of coercive/persuasive behaviors on the part of the man to obtain sex, woman engaging in unwanted or uncomfortable sexual activity, and alcohol use.

As these studies indicate, there seems to be some overlap between seduction scripts and some forms of sexual violence. Such overlaps create opportunities for ambiguity and misperceptions, which contribute to the prevalence of unacknowledged rape. In fact, various studies have reported that unacknowledged rape victims described their rape as involving less physical force and more use of alcohol (Kahn et al., 1994; Layman et al., 1996; Schwartz & Legett, 1999). They were also less likely to have resisted during the attack (Layman et al., 1996). Moreover, individuals who possessed more "real rape" scripts were less likely to acknowledge ambiguous sexual assaults because those did not match their scripts (Kahn et al., 1994; Littleton et al., 2006). The similarities of seduction scripts with some forms of sexual violence, particularly those reminiscent of acquaintance rape, make it difficult for individuals and criminal justice professionals to determine whether the sexual encounter was criminal or just "bad sex."

Real Rape Scripts

Another subgroup of traditional sexual scripts, which involves clearly nonconsensual sexual assaults, are real rape scripts. These scripts are significantly different from seduction scripts. It often consists of a blitz assault occurring outside at night committed by a man

stranger against a woman (Ryan, 1988). The perpetrator is angry, aggressive, physically unattractive, and with mental or emotional issues (Ryan, 1988). Real rape scripts typically involve the use of force and violence, victim resistance, and negative impact on the victim after the assault (Krahe et al., 2007; Littleton & Axsom, 2003; Littleton et al., 2007). Regardless of the absence or presence of resistance, the victim must be perceived as not responsible for becoming a victim; in other words, their behaviors or actions cannot be perceived to have increased their victimization risks (Ryan, 2011). These scripts usually entail some elements of non-sexual violent assaults, making it easier to acknowledge them as nonconsensual and criminal.

The elements and structure of real rape scripts come from the fear of stranger rape (Carroll & Clark, 2006; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1997; Riger & Gordon, 1981; Warr, 1985), which is often permeated through the media, education, and parents. Many children, mainly girls, have been warned not to walk alone at night and to be wary of strangers, as well as the importance of learning and using self-defense moves and tools. Real and fictional stories of the creepy man from the bush or the crazy stalker behind the lamppost fuel real rape scripts. However, many sexual encounters do not mirror these scripts, falling to the acquaintance rape scripts instead.

Acquaintance Rape Scripts

Acquaintance rape scripts are usually comprised of sexual assaults and encounters that do not match real rape scripts involving blitz attacks by strangers. Unlike real rape scripts, they are often considered to be normal sexual interactions and thus consensual (Bridges, 1991; Szymanski et al., 1993; Willis & Wrightsman, 1995). As mentioned previously, individuals in

committed relationships in Japan are often expected to engage in sexual activities, with many feeling obligated to have sex (Farrer et al., 2008; Farrer et al., 2012; Kosaka & Sawamura, 2017). Since sexual intercourse is such a key component of committed dating and individuals often engage in sexual activities with their partners out of societal, interpersonal, and internalized pressures, the line between complied unwanted sex and nonconsensual sex becomes blurred.

Within the category of acquaintance rape scripts, Clark and colleagues (1992) identified five major scripts: the *early date rape*, the *only for sex date rape*, the *acquaintance rape*, the *relationship rape*, and the *party rape* scripts. According to them, the first script, *early date rape*, refers to a sexual assault that occurs on a first date, usually outside in a car, by a man who feels led on by the woman. The *only for sex date rape* involves a man whose only motivation for the date is to have sex with the woman and who becomes physically coercive to achieve this goal. The third script is the *acquaintance rape* script, which is also referred to as the *friends gone too far rape* script by Ryan (2011). This script describes sexual assaults between friends, usually in either of their places, where the man initiates sexual activity despite the victim's verbal and physical resistance. The next script is the *relationship rape*, which involves a sexual assault between couples, where the man initiates sexual intercourse before the woman is ready. The woman's resistance may not be so obvious, and the man is often unaware that the sex is unwanted. Lastly, the *party rape* script occurs at a party where both the man and the woman are drunk. In this script, the man initiates intercourse, but the woman's intoxication impairs her ability to resist.

While both women and men generally share these scripts, it has been found that some themes are unique to each gender (Carroll & Clark, 2006; Clark & Carroll, 2008). For instance,

women acquaintance rape scripts often involved themes related to the woman victim's negative emotional responses to the situation; in contrast, men acquaintance rape scripts were more likely to place responsibility for the incident on the woman victim's (in)actions (Clark & Carroll, 2008). Furthermore, a script that emerged uniquely for men is the *wrong accusation* script, which describes a situation where the woman gives in after saying no (Carroll & Clark, 2006; Clark & Carroll, 2008).

As can be inferred from these leading scripts, acquaintance rape scripts fall under the umbrella of traditional sexual scripts, containing gendered and heteronormative elements. Expecting men to be hypersexual and aggressive and women to be passive and resistant (Jenkins & Dambrot, 1987), typical acquaintance rape scripts involve a man who cannot control his sexual desires, making sexual advances toward a woman whom he knows or is dating. The woman is expected to either passively comply, especially if they are in a committed relationship, or resist. If she complies, the encounter is deemed consensual regardless of whether it was unwanted. If she fails to resist and stop his advances successfully, it is considered that she was only pretending not to want to have sex because she did not want to be seen as promiscuous or too eager. Either way, there is little room for acquaintance rape to be acknowledged as such in these scripts. Gray zones sexual assaults often entail characteristics of acquaintance rape scripts, contributing to misperceptions and limited understanding of sexual consent.

Rape Myths

A concept that is separate but cannot be detached from sexual scripts is rape myths. Rape myths refer to the stereotyped and false beliefs about offenders, victims, and characteristics of sexual assaults (Burt, 1980; Johnson et al., 1997; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995; Russell & Hand, 2017). They are social constructions, yet their impacts on how people perceive and respond to sexual assaults are immense. Extensive research has demonstrated that higher endorsement of rape myths results in an overestimation of false rape allegations (Fansher et al., 2023; Huntington et al., 2022; Kahlor & Eastin, 2011), victim blaming and offender excusal (Grubb & Turner, 2012; Russell & Hand, 2017; Yamawaki, 2009), higher rape proclivity (Bohner et al., 2006; Chapleau & Oswald, 2010; Ohbchi et al., 1985; Yukawa & Tomari, 1999), and lower perceptions of the severity and negative impact of sexual assaults (Frese et al., 2004; Yamawaki & Tschanz, 2005) among other issues. In this way, rape myths provide mental models of sexual assaults that are much more limited than legal definitions, excluding sexual encounters that fall in the gray zones of consent.

Offenders

The mythical construction of the sex offender is one component that challenges identification and proper attention to victimization. In spite of prior research demonstrating the heterogeneity of motives and characteristics of individuals who commit sexual crimes (Hanson et al., 2014; Polaschek, 2003; van Wijk et al., 2006; Woodworth et al., 2013), the public tends to perceive all sex offenders as untamable beasts who cannot be rehabilitated by therapy or other interventions (Harris & Socia, 2014; Quinn et al., 2004). Sex offenders are often perceived as one of the most despised because they prey on vulnerable members of society, such as women and children.

Gender plays a significant role in offender rape myths; since men are traditionally seen to be sexually aggressive and physically strong, they are often construed as the typical rapists. Studies have found that almost all rapes described in hypothetical scenarios involved a man offender (Anderson, 2007; Ryan, 1988). Although males commit the majority of recognized sexual offenses, they are not the only ones who commit such crimes. Various studies have reported that females also commit such offenses (Anderson et al., 2005; Bierie & Davis-Siegel, 2015; Budd et al., 2017; Cortoni et al., 2017; Fisher & Pina, 2013; Spring, 2020). However, gendered rape myths and sexual scripts inhibit the perception that sexual violence can be committed by any gender, resulting in a narrow understanding of who commits sexual assaults.

Not only are men more likely to be associated with the perpetrator role, but they are also perceived to be more dangerous. Public opinion studies have found that male-perpetrated sex crimes are deemed more serious than those of females (Gakhal & Brown, 2011; Rogers & Davies, 2007) and deserving of harsher punishment (Fisher & Pedneault, 2016; Gould & Gertz, 1994; King & Roberts, 2017). In comparison, female-perpetrated sexual abuse is perceived as harmless and more excusable (Cain et al., 2017; Fisher & Pedneault, 2016). As women are associated with a passive and sexually restrained role, it is difficult to picture them coercing sex to an unwilling man. According to Cain and Anderson (2016), this stereotypical view of women has resulted in denial and minimization of female criminality, contributing to limited research and discussion on female sex offenders. Consequently, it is difficult to discern whether female sex offenders are as uncommon as believed or simply underreported due to gender role stereotypes (Gakhal & Brown, 2011).

In addition to gender, the perceived typical relationship between offenders and victims is also a mythical construction. As previously noted regarding real rape scripts, sexual assaults are often believed to be committed by strangers (Ryan, 1988), mostly due to the fear of stranger rape (Carroll & Clark, 2006; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1997; Riger & Gordon, 1981; Warr, 1985). Many workshops and informal educational processes teach individuals (especially girls and women) about the importance of carrying self-defense tools, such as tasers and pepper sprays, as well as learning some self-defense moves.

Despite this commonly held belief, the majority of sexual assaults occur by someone the victim knows. In the U.S., 93% of child sexual abuse were committed by someone well known to the victim, with 34% being family members and 59% being acquaintances (Katz-Schiavone et al., 2008). Among sexual assaults committed against adults, only 14.9% are estimated to be committed by a stranger (Holmes & Holmes, 2008). Similarly, in Japan, at least more than 75% of rape cases involved someone the victim knew, including their current or former partners, family members, workplace acquaintances (e.g., coworkers, bosses, clients), and school acquaintances (e.g., teachers, peers, seniors), among others (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2021; Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2022; Spring, 2020). Therefore, sexual assaults are mostly committed by someone the victim knows, yet strangers are perceived to be the typical sex offender.

It is noteworthy that some sexual assault cases may be more frequently committed by strangers. In Japan, groping or unwanted touching (*chikan*) is reported to be most commonly committed by strangers (Spring, 2020), often associated with overcrowded trains. This data, however, needs to be interpreted with caution since sexual scripts and rape myths that

associate offenders with strangers may prevent individuals from acknowledging groping by someone they know as sexual assault. Moreover, groping by intimate partners may occur simultaneously during unwanted sexual intercourse and thus be grouped under the category of rape rather than a separate violation, making it difficult to ascertain whether groping is truly more frequently committed by strangers.

Overall, sex offenders are believed to be strangers, men who cannot control their sexual urges and end up assaulting vulnerable members of society. In other words, they are the creepy man from the bush and the crazy stalker behind the lamppost. This construction of the offender is detached from the image of the individuals people interact with on a regular basis and whom they often trust. Whereas identifying sexual assaults and the nonconsensuality of sexual encounters is much easier when the offender resembles this mythical image, it is much more difficult to do so with those who do not fit in it. Consequently, interactions involving offenders that do not fit in this category are more likely to be considered consensual, appropriate, and normal—at the very least, it is much less likely to be deemed a sexual assault.

Victims

Victims' characteristics and behaviors are also influential factors in determining whether a sexual encounter was consensual or appropriate. Victims are constructed as either "ideal victims" or "bad victims" based on the notions of what individual characteristics they should display and how they should respond prior to, during, and after the sexual assault (Klippenstine & Schuller, 2012; Weis & Borges, 1973; Williams, 1984). Victims who do not fit into the ideal victim category are deemed less credible and attributed responsibility for their victimization

(Dunn, 2010; Randall, 2010). Hence, rape myths regarding victims create an informal and narrow standard demarcating who deserves empathy and protection and who does not.

Similar to offender rape myths, one factor that affects the determination of ideal and bad victims is gender. The ideal victim of a sex offense is typically a woman or a child (Pickett et al., 2013), which is aligned with stereotypical views about offenders. In a heteropatriarchal society, men, who are sexually driven and aggressive, are considered the typical offenders, while women, who are the gatekeepers of sex, are considered the typical victims. In fact, prior to recent revisions, rape in Japan was defined as vaginal penetration against women using physical force or intimidation (see Appendix A). Sexual victimization of men and other genders was not legally acknowledged in Japan up until 2017.

While the actual number of male victims is unknown, studies have found that they are not as low as the public assumes. According to findings from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 30.7% of men in the U.S. have experienced contact sexual violence in their lifetime (Basile et al., 2022). Among those, 14.5% of men were raped or coerced to penetrate someone. In a survey conducted with teenagers and young adults in Japan, 5.1% of men have experienced unwanted sexual contact, and 2.1% have experienced unwanted sexual intercourse (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2022). These data indicate that men are indeed sexually victimized, contrary to rape myths about the ideal victims.

The idea that male adults can be sexually victimized is largely dismissed because it is believed that, given their physical strength, they should be able to fight back if the sexual encounter is truly nonconsensual (Davies & Rogers, 2006; Hlavka, 2017). If they are not able to successfully resist, it is implied that the encounter was consensual and that they even enjoyed

it. Moreover, males' arousal and ejaculation during their assaults are misconceived and taken as if they have "participated" and thus consented to the sexual activity (Rentoul & Appleboom, 1997). In this way, preconceived notions regarding men's dispositions lead to a restricted standard of nonconsent and, consequently, the rejection of their victimization by others and the victims themselves.

Several studies have found that male victims are less likely to identify and report their sexual victimization than their female counterparts (Davies & Rogers, 2006; Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2021; Hlavka, 2017; Vandiver et al., 2016). Shame, stigma, and inability to identify their assault were the primary factors that prevented them from reporting their victimization (Hlavka, 2017). When they do disclose their experience, they face negative societal responses. If the offender is a female, they encounter doubt, suspicion, indifference, and questioning of their victimization; if the offender is a male, they are shamed and associated with homosexuality (Hlavka, 2017; Javaid, 2016). Therefore, the construction of women and children as the ideal victim is harmful as it creates internal and external barriers for other genders—especially men who are attributed a role in juxtaposition to women—to make sense of and report their victimization.

Victims' behaviors prior to, during, and after the sexual assault are also subject to critical scrutiny. Previous literature has found that rape myth acceptance is related to just world beliefs (Hayes et al., 2013; Russell & Hand, 2017), which is a theoretical construct explaining that people view the world as a just and safe place (Lerner, 1980). According to this theory, people who believe in a just world assume that bad things will only happen to individuals who deserve it. In the context of sexual violence, individuals with stronger beliefs in a just world are

more likely to blame the victim (Hayes et al., 2013; Stromwall et al., 2012) because the victim must have done something bad in order to be victimized in a just world. The victim is essentially judged based on whether they have adhered to or defied their culturally assigned roles.

Behaviors that are associated with increased undesirability and blaming of women victims are drinking alcohol, being promiscuous, dressing scantily, and having multiple sexual partners. These behaviors are believed to increase victimization risks by making women an easy target (Abbey, 2002; Abbey et al., 2001). Therefore, some people hold limited assumptions that women who engage in such risky behaviors are naturally consenting to sexual activities, or even if they are not, they cannot complain about being perceived to be. In support of that, various studies note how the victims' sexual history, clothing, and other related behaviors had been brought up in court to determine whether the offenders' perceptions of consent were reasonable or not (Anderson, 2002; Lennon et al., 1999; Morosco, 2022; Remick, 1993). Stereotypical beliefs that engagement in certain behaviors implies consent feed the gray zones of sexual violence by creating room for intentional or unconscious misperceptions and excusing the offenders while blaming the victims' behaviors.

Therefore, the mythical construction of the ideal and bad victims is extremely relevant to the sexual consent discussion. Sexual assault victims are believed to be women and children, who are passive, weak, and vulnerable. However, not all individuals who fit in this category are deemed worthy of empathy and understanding. Their behaviors prior to, during, and after the sexual encounter are scrutinized, particularly those considered risky and less desirable from a gender-role standpoint. If individuals do not pass the ideal victim test, their sexual assault is

either deemed consensual or inevitable at their fault. Other situational factors also add to the constrained identification of consent and nonconsent.

Situations

Compounding with the offender and victim rape myths, situational factors also impact the involved parties' and others' perceptions of whether the sexual encounter was consensual or not. Some of the most commonly cited factors are location, physical force, and communication of nonconsent. The stereotypical rape location is public places, such as parks, bus stops, and dark alleys, at night (Ewing, 2011; Ryan, 1988). Sexual assault has to involve violence or physical force by the offender in order to be considered real (Ryan, 1988). Victims' visible injuries and the presence of a weapon are regarded as reliable indicators that the encounter was nonconsensual. Moreover, it is also commonly believed that real sexual assault involves the unambiguous communication of nonconsent by the victim. This communication is inferred from physical injuries, which clearly demonstrates that the victim physically resisted the assault.

Contrary to these beliefs, a great majority of sexual assaults occur at a private location, such as the victim's or offender's residence or a hotel (Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], 2021). Although many assaults do occur at night, many also happen during the day (FBI, 2021). Moreover, many victims may not physically resist because they fear for their safety, experience a freeze response, and do not want to risk their relationship with the perpetrator, among many other reasons (Gidycz et al., 2008; Spring, 2020). Since they do not physically resist and most rapes do not involve a weapon (Planty et al., 2013), most victims do not suffer physical injury either (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006). Nevertheless, rape myths provide a narrow understanding of

sexual violence and consent. They deny and minimize cases that fall out of these constructions, blame the victims, justify and excuse the behaviors of perpetrators, and contribute to the perpetuation of sexual violence, particularly those pertaining to the gray zones.

Rape Myths Studies in Japan

Rape myths have also been investigated in Japan albeit very limitedly. Consistent with the Western literature (e.g., Hockett et al., 2016; Russell & Hand, 2017; Stephens et al., 2016; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010), researchers have found that Japanese males were more likely to endorse rape myths than females, particularly for items measuring acceptance of interpersonal violence (e.g., "sometimes the only way a man can get a cold woman turned on is to use force") (Ohbuchi et al., 1985; Omata, 2013). Beliefs in traditional sex roles partially explain this gender differential; in other words, the less individuals believe in equal sex roles, the more they are to accept rape myths (Omata, 2013).

Aside from the influence of sex-role beliefs on rape myths acceptance, another study has examined the factors affecting rape myths' formation. Yukawa and Tomari (1999) found that sexual intercourse experiences and sexual desires stimulated exposure to sexual media, which led to the exchange of sexual information with peers. The interaction with peers contributed to rape myths' formation, which in turn resulted in higher permissibility of sexual violence against women. This study demonstrates the social processes involved in developing individuals' rape myths acceptance, which is coherent with the idea that social norms and expectations influence individuals' sexual perceptions and behaviors.

While Yukawa and Tomari (1999) did not investigate whether higher rape myths acceptance affected sexual violence behaviors in reality, Ohbuchi and colleagues' (1985)

findings indicate that rape myths may indeed affect individuals' perceptions and increase sexual assault risks. More specifically, in comparing college students, sex offenders, and non-sex offenders, they found that sex offenders were more likely to strongly endorse the belief that women have an unconscious wish to be raped. Although establishing a causal effect was not within the scope of this study, it demonstrates preliminarily the influence of sexual beliefs and attitudes on sexual behaviors.

Unfortunately, these three studies are the only rape myths research conducted in Japan, of which two are outdated. Moreover, all of them examine female rape myths only; no study in Japan has ever investigated the existence, prevalence, and impact of male rape myths. The substantial lack of research on male rape in Japan is not surprising, considering that only females were deemed sexual assault victims up until 2017 (see Appendix A). In light of the recent and significant changes in the Japanese sexual violence laws and the emergence and permeation of many gender-based movements, it is critical to examine whether and what kind of rape myths are relevant in Japan today.

Communicating Consent

In the previous sections, dominant sexual scripts and rape myths have been discussed, as well as how they may impact individuals' perceptions and behaviors before, during, and after sexual encounters. The following sections will further review what previous studies have found about how individuals practice and interpret consent and illustrate the impact of traditional gender roles and sexual scripts on those behaviors and interpretations.

Behaviors

Studies investigating how individuals communicate consent suggest that consent is expressed in a variety of ways (e.g., Hall, 1998; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Humphreys, 2007; Jozkowski, Peterson, et al., 2014). Individuals may use direct, indirect, verbal, nonverbal, and other behavioral indicators to convey consent. Direct or explicit communication refers to the clear delivery of consent, whereas indirect or implicit communication refers to more ambiguous communication that relies on contextual nuances. Direct and indirect communication can take on verbal and nonverbal forms. For instance, saying "I want to have sex" or placing the hands of the other person on one's intimate parts are both explicit forms of consent. On the other hand, asking whether the other person has a condom or agreeing to go home with someone are more implicit forms of consent, which may be perceived as such or not, depending on the context and the individuals.

Young people often use a combination of communication modes rather than just one to communicate and negotiate consent (Beres, 2014; Hall, 1998; Humphreys, 2007; Jozkowski et al., 2015). However, overall, consent is more frequently communicated nonverbally than verbally (Beres, 2010; Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Hall, 1998; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Humphreys, 2007; Jozkowski & Peterson, 2014). In some instances, individuals' likelihood to engage in verbal communication increases, such as on dates or sexual encounters occurring early in a relationship (Humphreys, 2007), for sexual intercourse (Hall, 1998; Jozkowski, Peterson, et al., 2014), and by sexual and gender minority individuals (de Heer et al., 2021; Griner et al., 2021; McKenna et al., 2021). Nevertheless, nonverbal communication generally prevails.

Other behavioral forms of communication, such as transitioning from a social to a private setting (e.g., going home together after a party), are also perceived as an indicator of sexual consent (Beres, 2010; Humphreys, 2004; Jozkowski et al., 2018). For instance, in a study using staggered vignettes of a fictional sexual encounter, Jozkowski and Willis (2020) found that the act of transitioning from a social to a private setting increased participants' perceptions of the characters' willingness to engage in sexual touching and sex. This type of communication may involve verbal or nonverbal communication and implicit or explicit nuances depending on the situation, including the parties' interaction prior to this event, their relationship status, alcohol use, and many other contextual factors.

Regardless of whether it is explicit or implicit, verbal, nonverbal, and behavioral indications are active forms of communication because they involve some action by the person responding to a sexual encounter. In contrast to these active communications, passive consent communication is also common and frequently employed in sexual encounters. Not moving away, stopping, or resisting a partner's advance are major themes emerging across qualitative and quantitative studies (Beres, 2014; Beres et al., 2004; Hall, 1998; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Jozkowski, 2013; Jozkowski, Sanders, et al., 2014; Willis et al., 2019). While no response is a form of nonverbal communication, it can be helpful to address it as a separate category because it communicates consent through inaction.

Gender and Sexual Orientation Differences

Although the public as a whole generally shares these communication preferences and practices, some studies have noted that there are a few differences based on individuals' gender and sexual orientation. Whereas men tend to rely more on nonverbal cues, women are

more likely than men to use verbal signals to communicate and interpret sexual consent (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Jozkowski, Peterson, et al., 2014). Moreover, in a study with more than 600 university students, Jozkowski, Sanders, and others (2014) found that women were more likely to engage in passive behaviors (e.g., "did not say no or push partner away") and no response signals (e.g., I did not do anything, it was obvious), and men were more likely to engage in borderline pressure (e.g., kept moving forward in sexual behavior unless partner stopped).

These findings are coherent with traditional sexual scripts, which place men in a sexually aggressive role and women in a passive, gatekeeping role. Because men are expected to be sexually driven and active, they may think that consent is implied in their behaviors and does not need to be vocalized (Jozkowski, Peterson, et al., 2014). They may also engage in more forceful actions because women are the ones expected to stop them if they are unwilling (Burkett & Hamilton, 2012). On the other hand, women are expected to be passive and not appear sexually promiscuous, so they may use more implicit and passive behaviors to communicate consent.

These gendered sexual scripts also impact individuals in non-heterosexual relationships. Consistent with findings that heterosexual men engage in more nonverbal behaviors, Beres and colleagues (2004) found that men who have sex with men used significantly more nonverbal signals in giving sexual consent compared to women who have sex with women. In addition, participants in de Heer and others' (2021) study talked about how traditional sexual scripts complicated the way they navigated sexual consent while having an intersecting identity of being male and gay. According to them, due to the misconception that men are always sexually

driven, sexual encounters among gay individuals are assumed, which makes it difficult to express nonconsent.

Despite some parallels to how consent is practiced in heterosexual relationships, gender and sexual minority individuals simultaneously face more challenges and flexibility in the way they navigate sexual consent. Since most sex education and socialization processes are heteronormative, LGBTQ+ individuals lack sexual scripts or norms to frame their behaviors and experiences around (de Heer et al., 2021; Edenfield, 2019; Sternin et al., 2022). While the lack of scripts causes more uncertainty and the need for experimentation, which can be unsafe, it also creates room for more open communication (de Heer et al., 2021; Sternin et al., 2022). In fact, a few studies have found a preference for verbal communication among gender and sexual minority individuals (de Heer et al., 2021; Griner et al., 2021; McKenna et al., 2021). While it is too soon to draw conclusions and many more studies on each specific group of this population are warranted, these findings indicate that gender and sexual orientation impact the way individuals communicate consent due to sexual scripts or the lack thereof, among other factors.

Interpreting Consent

Though it is conceivable to assume that the way an individual communicates sexual consent also informs how they would interpret their partner's consent, those are two separate things. Interestingly, studies have found that there is a dissonance between how people communicate and interpret consent. On the one hand, individuals most commonly communicate consent through indirect and nonverbal means (Beres, 2010; Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Hall, 1998; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Humphreys, 2007; Jozkowski & Peterson,

2014). Verbal consent communication is often regarded as unnecessary because consent is thought to be easily discernible and “you just know” it (Beres, 2010; Jozkowski & Hunt, 2013). Moreover, consent is often communicated through the lack of resistance or refusal (Beres, 2014; Beres et al., 2004; Hall, 1998; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Jozkowski, 2013; Jozkowski, Sanders, et al., 2014). These consent communications illustrate a consent negotiation that is nonverbal and indirect, involving a passive consent-giving partner.

On the other hand, the consent cues individuals perceive to be the most indicative of their partner’s consent are direct and verbal cues (Edwards et al., 2022; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999). No response behaviors are less indicative of consent (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999), and active participation by one’s partner is required to infer their willingness (Beres, 2010). In terms of nonconsent, both men and women perceived that women express nonconsent through direct verbal communication (e.g., saying no), direct nonverbal communication (e.g., resisting fondling), and no response behaviors (Burrow et al., 1998; Byers, 1980). Adding to the literature on how men perceive women’s signals, O’Byrne and colleagues’ (2008) focus groups with college men revealed that participants were able to perceive subtle cues of nonconsent from women. Yet, when asked about rape, some participants indicated that only a direct verbal “no” would constitute nonconsent (O’Byrne et al., 2008). These studies suggest that in interpreting consent and nonconsent, individuals tend to account for more verbal, direct, and active communication by their partners, which is in contrast to the way that most people engage in consent communication.

The contrasting differences between how individuals communicate and interpret consent cause the possibility of consent misperceptions. Individuals may be looking for certain

consent (or nonconsent) cues, while their partners may be communicating it through means that are not perceived as such. The idea that one of the leading causes of sexual assault is miscommunication between partners is referred to as the sexual miscommunication theory (Frith & Kitzinger, 1997). This theory is rooted in findings that men often overestimate women's sexual interest and engagement in token resistance (Abbey, 1987; Farris et al., 2008; Krahé et al., 2000; Lindgren et al., 2008; Loh et al., 2005; Metts & Spitzberg, 1996; Osman, 2003;).

One of the problems with this theory is that it implies that if women in the consent-giving role communicate consent explicitly, much sexual assault can be prevented. Therefore, as this theory is based on traditional sexual scripts in which men are the aggressive initiator and women are the gatekeepers, it does not account for sexual assaults against men and sexual and gender minority individuals. It also places the burden on women for not explicitly and unambiguously communicating consent and excuses the men's sexual coercion as a simple misunderstanding (Fenner, 2017; Frith & Kitzinger, 1997). Some researchers have contested this theory, demonstrating that women do communicate consent clearly and men are capable of interpreting their consent accurately (Beres, 2010; Frith & Kitzinger, 1997; O'Byrne et al., 2008). In fact, many studies observed that gender differences in consent communication and perception were small, and both men and women tended to interpret consent cues similarly (Beres, 2010; Burrow et al., 1998; Byers, 1980; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999). Moreover, as noted previously, it was found that men were indeed capable enough of understanding women's subtle verbal and nonverbal cues (O'Byrne et al., 2008).

However, it is critical to note that labeling an unwanted sexual encounter as "miscommunication" has a social function. In O'Byrne and colleagues' (2008) study, men

attributed the cause of rape to miscommunication, despite their abilities to interpret subtle signals from their partners. The idea that sexual assaults occur due to miscommunication and women's ambiguous consent can render men less accountable for their forceful sexual conduct. On the other hand, women may label their victimization as miscommunication due to various reasons. In a study with 123 women who have experienced rape, Dardis and others (2021) found that 46% of participants described their experience as "serious miscommunication." Avoiding the rape victim label may allow the victim to minimize their experience and the perpetrator's responsibility, enabling them to maintain their relationship with their partner, among other reasons (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2011). Thus, miscommunication offers something for both genders—one that upholds traditional sexual scripts. By attributing the cause of sexual assault to miscommunication, men are allowed to remain sexually aggressive since women are the ones who need to communicate clearly. On the other hand, women can avoid labeling their partners as perpetrators and themselves as victims, which can have various implications for their relationship and societal status.

The possibility of miscommunication cannot be entirely dismissed since there are some discrepancies between individuals' consent communication and interpretation. Given the unclear definition of sexual consent and overall preference to engage in implicit and nonverbal consent communication, some misunderstandings do occur. Nevertheless, miscommunication—regardless of whether it truly happened or is being used to fulfill a different function—often contains an underlying theme, which is the power dynamics present in sexual encounters.

Negotiating Consent

Various forms of power can be present in a sexual encounter. For example, Harvey Weinstein, Jeffrey Epstein, and Jimmy Savile are notorious sex offenders, among many others, for using their power and authority to threaten or intimidate individuals to engage in sexual behaviors. In these dynamics, individuals take advantage of their authority status (e.g., boss, teacher, coach, correctional officer, religious leader, caregiver) and pressure the victim into sexual compliance and silence. According to the Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office (2021), among those who were raped by someone other than family members or intimate partners in Japan, more than half of respondents reported the perpetrator was in an authority position. These cases particularly contribute to the dark figure of sexual violence because victims are less likely to report due to fear, self-blame, and negative societal responses (Schneider, 1991). Moreover, even if they do report, their cases often do not meet the legal standard of proof because their compliance is viewed as consent.

While these forms of sexual assault require special attention due to their dreadful nature of harboring victimization suppression, normalization, and victim blaming, this thesis primarily focuses on more subtle forms of power embedded in intimate relationships. Notably, sexual scripts dictating gender roles and relationship expectations affect how individuals enact their sexual agency. These cultural expectations pressure individuals into consenting to unwanted sex (i.e., compliant sex) and nonconsenting to wanted sex (i.e., token resistance).

Compliant Sex

Numerous research has reported that individuals commonly engage in compliant sex (Krahé et al., 2000; Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988; O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1994; O'Sullivan &

Allgeier, 1998; Shotland & Hunter, 1995; Walker, 1997). In a cross-cultural study with American, Russian, and Japanese samples, Sprecher and others (1994) found that among those who were sexually experienced, 27% of Japanese individuals had engaged in compliant sex. There may be various reasons for individuals to consent to unwanted sex, including to maintain their relationship, avoid tension, fulfill their partner's sexual desires, and follow a sense of obligation (e.g., Impett & Peplau, 2002; Livingston et al., 2004; Miller & Marshall, 1987; Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988; Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2005; West, 2008). Impett and Peplau (2003) also pointed out that there are a few gender differences in reasons for compliance; whereas women comply to maintain their relationship, keep peace, or respond to their partner's or societal expectations, men comply due to peer pressure, to gain sexual experience, and avoid the stigma associated with male virginity. These motivations and gender differences are coherent with traditional sexual and relationship scripts.

Traditional sexual scripts delineate clear roles where men are sexually motivated and tasked to initiate sexual activities and women are sexually restrained and expected to act as gatekeepers. To meet societal and internalized expectations, men may comply with unwanted sex to enhance and sustain their ideas of masculinity. Aligned with the traditional men's role as the initiator, Vannier and O'Sullivan (2010) found that men were more likely than women to initiate their own unwanted sexual activity. Women, on the other hand, may comply with sex because, in a heteropatriarchal tradition, they are expected to respond to men's needs. In previous studies, women often talked about a sense of obligation to satisfy their men partners' sexual wishes (Bay-Cheng & Eliseo-Arras, 2008; Burkett & Hamilton, 2012).

Feelings of obligation to satisfy one's partner's needs are not only gendered but also influenced by relationship scripts. Multiple studies have found that relationship status affects individuals' perceptions and communications of consent (Beres, 2010; Humphreys, 2007; Jozkowski, Sanders, et al., 2014; Marcantonio et al., 2018; Williamson et al., 2023). Overall, they demonstrate that individuals often perceive that consent is implied and does not need to be explicitly communicated as the relationship progresses. Such notions are consistent with relationship sexual scripts, in which sexual intercourse is considered a normal and necessary part of committed relationships (Farrer et al., 2008; Farrer et al., 2012). Through social, interpersonal, and internalized pressures of having to follow this script, individuals often comply with unwanted sex in order to satisfy their partner's desires and needs (Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Kosaka & Sawamura, 2017).

Token Resistant Sex

A behavior that is in opposition to compliant sex is token resistant sex. Previous literature has confirmed that some individuals do engage in token resistance (Muehlenhard & Hollabaugh, 1988; Muehlenhard & Rodgers, 1998; O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1994). In Sprecher and others' (1994) study mentioned above, 54% of Japanese individuals who were sexually experienced had engaged in token resistance at least once. Contrary to the stereotypical beliefs that only women engage in token resistance to sex, men also engage in token resistance at similar or even higher rates than women (Krahé et al., 2000; Muehlenhard & Rodgers, 1998; O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1994). Similar to compliant sex, individuals have various motivations for engaging in token resistance. Some of them are fear of appearing promiscuous, moral or religious concerns about sex, adding different sexual activities into a repetitive sexual routine,

gaining control over the situation, and testing their partner's motives (Muehlenhard & Hollabaugh, 1988; Muehlenhard & Rodgers, 1998).

Traditional sexual and relationship scripts are also relevant to token resistant sex. For example, the fear of appearing promiscuous and moral or religious concerns about sex are consistent with traditional scripts and socialization processes that teach women to be sexually restrained and protect their virginity. Testing partner's motives are also consistent with stereotypical beliefs that men are only after sex (Muehlenhard & Rodgers, 1998). Moreover, using token resistance to gain some control of the sexual encounter can be conceived as a strategic tool by women attempting to have partial control over a situation that is typically led by men (Muehlenhard & Rodgers, 1998). Several men also used this strategy to control women (Muehlenhard & Rodgers, 1998), which is coherent with the idea that sexual violence is about control and dominance.

Problems with Compliant and Token Resistant Sex

Both compliant and token resistant sex illustrate a disconnection between internal willingness and external agreement to engage in sexual activity, complicating understandings of sexual consent and contributing to the gray zones. Indeed, recent studies have cautioned against conflating "wanting" with "consenting" (Fenner, 2017; Muehlenhard et al., 2016). Peterson and Muehlenhard (2007) found that sexual wantedness and consent, while connected, may not always be linked. Other studies have supported this argument (Jozkowski, Sanders, et al., 2014; Walsh et al., 2019; Willis et al., 2019). Yet, consent is often defined as or perceived to be either individuals' internal willingness or external indications of agreement.

A conflated model of internal and external consent does not allow proper examination and understanding of compliant and token resistant sex, which is problematic because of their entanglement with traditional sexual and relationship scripts. Defining consent as only external expressions of agreement ignores that many compliant sexual encounters are coercive due to social, interpersonal, and internalized pressures related to gender and relationship roles. Simply dismissing these types of power dynamics and assigning all the burden on individuals who complied can create more opportunities for unacknowledged rape and victim-blaming. Moreover, compliant sex may sometimes resemble wanted-consensual sex where consent was given through no response behaviors and unwanted-nonconsensual sex where the victim froze and could not physically resist the assault. The similarity creates ambiguity and complicates efforts to distinguish sexual assault, unwanted sex, and wanted sex.

In comparison, token resistance may seem harmless since the individual internally wants to engage in sexual activity. However, the practice and beliefs of token resistance may create confusion as to which external refusal cues are indicators of unwantedness or token resistance. Even if individuals are able to accurately distinguish between token resistance and unwantedness, some people may still ignore those cues to pursue their sexual goals. Combined with scripts that expect men to sexually conquer, some men disregard women's refusal due to beliefs that they are engaging in token resistance or that their refusal is something to be overcome (Jozkowski & Hunt, 2014). Higher endorsement of token resistance beliefs has been linked to more coercive behaviors (Jozkowski, Sanders, et al., 2014), less likelihood to recognize sexual assault and consent (Shafer et al., 2018), and rape proclivity (Masser et al., 2006).

Therefore, token resistance provides an excuse for individuals to engage in forceful sexual encounters while avoiding responsibility, also contributing to the gray zones of sexual assaults.

Summary and Literature Gap

Previous literature demonstrates that dominant sexual scripts and rape myths exist and impact individuals' perceptions and behaviors about sexual encounters. These scripts and myths are influenced by traditional and heteropatriarchal gender roles and relationship norms, which leads to the minimization and dismissal of cases that do not fit these cultural expectations. Moreover, they also affect how individuals engage in and interpret others' sexual consent behaviors, contributing to ambiguous situations where the lines between sexual assault, unwanted but complied sex, and wanted but non-complied sex are blurred.

Despite the wealth of research conducted in the area of sexual scripts and rape myths, only a few have examined these factors in Japan. While some of them suggest that similar scripts and myths may be present in Japan, the scope and number of these studies are limited and require more inquiry in a modern context. Furthermore, research on male rape myths and sexual consent behaviors and perceptions is almost nonexistent in Japan, which perhaps may be the result of outdated laws that neither acknowledged male victims nor had sexual consent as relevant to the legal definition of sexual assault or rape. Therefore, there is a lack of empirical understanding about what beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions Japanese people have regarding concepts associated with sexual violence and how they navigate the complexity of practicing and interpreting sexual consent. The purpose of this thesis is to fill these gaps in the

hope of contributing to the sexual consent field, especially in non-Western contexts, and to open more avenues for future research.

METHODS

Research Questions

As previous literature indicates, sexual scripts and rape myths form a narrow and limited understanding and contribute to the gray zones of sexual violence. These social beliefs and attitudes are gendered and involve power imbalances, which provide stereotypical and false notions of who the victims and offenders are and what sexual assault cases look like. They influence individuals' behaviors and perceptions when navigating sexual intimacy and negotiating consent, blurring the lines of sex crimes, unwanted sex, and wanted sex. Therefore, examining and furthering our understanding of these factors is critical to preventing and addressing sexual violence. Yet, not many studies have examined these factors concerning the gray zones nor investigated how sexual consent is practiced in non-Western contexts.

To address these gaps in the literature, this thesis adopts an exploratory approach focusing on Japanese people's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors regarding sexual intimacy and consent. It aims to approach the disturbingly prevalent, undetected, and under-reported nature of sexual violence from a sexual consent perspective by looking at what sexual scripts and rape myths exist and how they impact individuals' behaviors and perceptions in ambiguous sexual interactions in a non-Western country. The main research questions are:

- What factors affect Japanese people's perceptions of consensuality, responsibility, and acceptability in ambiguous sexual interactions?
- What factors affect Japanese people's beliefs regarding sexual intimacy and interactions?
- What factors affect how Japanese people express sexual consent?
- What factors affect Japanese people's sexual experiences?

These questions will be approached through mixed methods to increase the study's validity and elicit further questions and avenues for future examinations.

Data Collection and Sample

An exploratory sequential research design was implemented using focus groups and an online survey to collect comprehensive and in-depth data. The focus groups' findings were preliminary analyzed and applied to inform the context and language of the online survey. Since the procedures of this thesis involved intrusive, sensitive, and personal questions—some of which may trigger participants—a list of free support resources was provided for all potential participants. For the focus group participants, a list of resources offered by their university and community in the U.S. (e.g., Counseling Center, 24-hour crisis hotline) was provided. For the online survey participants, a list of resources offered by the Japanese government and other victim support agencies (e.g., One-Stop Support Center for Survivors of Sexual Violence, Japan Legal Support Center) was provided.

Focus Groups

The first phase involved focus groups and was primarily structured to gain feedback on improving the language and context of the online survey scales and vignette scenarios. Since the survey instruments this study is founded on were developed in Western contexts, the focus groups were critical in adjusting their language and context to increase their validity when applied in Japan. After review and approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB-FY2023-367; see Appendix B), a recruitment email for the focus groups was sent on March 24th, 2023, to 18 Japanese students attending a university in a Midwest city. These students varied in age,

gender, study program, degree level, length of stay in the U.S., and other factors, but they all have lived in Japan for most of their lives. Convenience sampling was utilized at this phase's recruitment since these students were well-versed in the Japanese culture, sufficiently diverse to achieve the focus groups' primary purpose, and the researcher, who is an active member of the local Japanese community, had already established contact with them for reasons unrelated to the research. Although convenience sampling has limitations in its generalizability (Bachman & Schutt, 2021), considering the time restrictions and research plan that includes other data sources, this sampling method was appropriate for this initial stage of the research.

Fifteen students in total participated in the focus groups that took place in early April 2023. The participants were separated into three groups of women and one group of men. Due to the topic sensitivity, participants' self-reported gender was taken into consideration when creating the groups to make as much comfortable space as possible and encourage open discussion. No participant at this phase identified as other than women or men. Each focus group consisted of three or four participants. While focus groups generally involve six to eight participants (Bloor et al., 2001), studies indicate that focus groups of a smaller size are optimal for sensitive topics (Liamputtong, 2011) and Japanese participants (Chitose & Abe, 2000).

Each focus group was conducted in a private room on campus and took three hours on average. Participants were given in advance a packet containing two vignette scenarios created by the researcher and four scales developed and tested in the previous literature. The researcher translated the packet and facilitated the discussion in Japanese. In addition to feedback on the vignette scenarios and scales, open-ended questions related to sexual intimacy

and violence were also inquired to identify sexual scripts and rape myths unique to Japan. The focus group guide utilized can be found in Appendix C.

Online Survey

In the second phase, an online survey was administered, which included demographic questions, other relevant personal questions, and the survey instruments and vignette scenarios adjusted by the focus groups. The purpose of the survey was to examine broad cultural patterns of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors related to sexual intimacy and consent in Japan. The study population was adults (18 years or older) with a living base in Japan and access to the Internet. This definition excluded individuals living temporarily in Japan, such as foreign exchange students or travelers, and included individuals who resided in Japan but were temporarily out of the country when completing the survey.

The survey was built in Japanese through Qualtrics and distributed mainly through social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Line. The researcher was a member of several Japanese groups on these platforms, varying in size from smaller groups with less than 20 people to larger groups with more than 5,000 members. Some groups were open to the public, but others were private with restricted access. Private group admissions were often based on participation in a particular program targeting Japanese individuals or attendance in a Japanese educational institution, so most members of these groups were likely to meet this study's participation criteria. Recruitment information and access to the survey (i.e., link and QR code) were posted in these groups and on the researcher's account page. Additionally, the researcher contacted friends and acquaintances through email and text messages to improve the survey dissemination.

The survey was open for about three months, from July 31st to November 5th, 2023, resulting in a total of 230 responses. The survey was not available at all sites for this entire period; instead, it was posted on new platforms as they were discovered throughout this timeframe. Therefore, while the survey was first posted at the end of July on some sites, it was not until September or October that it was posted on other sites. Distributing the survey in different online avenues helped increase the response rate and reach a larger audience. After removing respondents with many missing or invalid responses, the final total sample resulted in 174 respondents.

The final sample consisted of 74.1% of respondents identifying as a woman, 23.6% identifying as a man, and 2.3% individuals who reported they did not know or had not decided their gender. For sexual orientation, 82.2% identified as heterosexual, 1.7% identified as gay or lesbian, and 14.4% self-described (e.g., bisexual, pansexual, asexual), did not know or had not decided, or preferred not to respond. Almost half (47.1%) of the respondents were single when asked about their relationship status. In comparison, 43.1% were casually or seriously dating, and 7.5% were in an officially committed relationship. At the time they completed the survey, more than half of the respondents reported that they had had sex in the past (56.3%). Regarding prior sexual victimization, 8.0% of the respondents reported having been sexually victimized, while 20.1% reported knowing someone who had been sexually victimized. The complete descriptive statistics of this study's sample can be found in Appendix D.

Measures

Survey Structure and Development

The survey was comprised of three main sections. The first section contained demographic questions, such as gender, sexual orientation, educational and occupational background, and so on. The second section contained two short scenarios depicting a realistic sexual encounter that falls into the gray zones of consent. The factorial vignettes each portrayed sexual encounters in a date and a post-party scenario. Following these vignettes, respondents were prompted to answer a series of questions to measure their perceptions of the consensuality of the situation, appropriateness of the encounters, and responsibility attribution. Finally, the last section included personal questions regarding respondents' sexual experiences and survey instruments designed to measure respondents' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors related to rape myths, token resistance, and consent behaviors.

The sections' order, in which the factorial vignettes come before any survey instruments, was adopted to avoid context effects. Because research participants tend to rely primarily on information that is easily accessible to their minds, the order in which related questions are asked can influence the results (Schwarz & Strack, 1991). The survey instruments of this thesis contained strong descriptions of a variety of sexual and consent behaviors, which could have affected how participants perceived the vignette scenarios. Therefore, the factorial vignettes section was presented first, followed by questions related to respondents' experiences, attitudes, and behaviors. In addition, any words or phrases hinting that the vignette scenarios were nonconsensual or coercive (e.g., offender, victim, force) were never used within the vignette scenario texts and following questions to avoid biasing the participants' responses (Davies & Rogers, 2006).

Factorial Vignettes

One of the primary sections of this study was factorial vignettes, which were used to measure the perceptions of respondents on sexual encounters that fall into the gray zones of consent. This method was adopted because it reduces the risks of social desirability bias (Wallander, 2009) and contains experimental design elements (Auspurg & Hinz, 2015), increasing the results' validity. Each vignette dimension has two to three levels, and their assignments and combinations are random. In this thesis, each respondent received two different vignette scenarios depicting common types of nonconsensual sexual encounters. The first vignette described a date scenario, whereas the second one described a post-party scenario.

The first vignette depicted a date scenario, where two individuals go on a date and have a sexual interaction at the end. The following is one version of the first vignette scenario that respondents received. Vignette dimensions, levels, and texts are presented in Table 1.

> *Yusuke (man) and Aiko (woman) were classmates in college. They became close through class and had officially begun dating. On a weekend, they spent the day going to the movie and karaoke, and enjoyed dinner at a restaurant in the evening. On their way home, Yusuke asked, "Why don't you come to my place?" Aiko responded, "Just a little, then." They moved to Yusuke's apartment and drank one or two cans of alcoholic beverages until they were tipsy. While they were chilling, Yusuke leaned his head to kiss Aiko in the mouth. Aiko did not move nor said anything, and Yusuke kissed her. Yusuke then began to remove Aiko's clothes, and during that time, Aiko stayed still quietly. Yusuke proceeded to have sex with Aiko.*

Table 1
Date Vignette Dimensions

Dimensions	Level	Vignette text
Offender gender	1 Man	Yusuke
	2 Woman	Miyuki
Victim gender	1 Man	Takuma
	2 Woman	Aiko
Relationship	1 Friend	often hung out together
	2 Couple	had officially begun dating
Nonconsent communication to kiss	1 None	did not move nor said anything
	2 Implicit	laughed and tried to talk about something random
	3 Explicit	said “wait” and slightly bent back
Nonconsent communication to sex	1 None	stayed still quietly
	2 Implicit	turned his face away and squeezed his eyes shut
	3 Explicit	said, “Sorry,” and blocked the other’s hands

The second vignette illustrated a post-party scenario, where two individuals go to a drinking gathering and have a sexual interaction after moving to a private location. The following is one version of the second vignette scenario that respondents received. Vignette dimensions, levels, and texts are presented in Table 2.

Since joining the company, Momoko (woman) and Yuka (woman) were cohorts and good friends. One day after work, they were invited by their supervisor to join a drinking party, which included about six other coworkers. By the time they were moving to the afterparty, both of them were drunk to the point that they couldn’t talk straight nor walk straight anymore. Other participants were equally drunk, and because Momoko and Yuka were cohorts sitting next to each other, people started teasing them, saying, “You guys seem close,” “Are you in that kind of relationship?” At that time, Yuka would touch Momoko’s arms and get closer, so people would joke and tease them even more. After the party ended, Momoko and Yuka left together since they lived in the same apartment building provided by their company, but Yuka said, “Let’s drink some more,” and came

into Momoko's room. When Momoko returned to the living room with some alcoholic beverages, Yuka was sitting on the couch with her eyes closed. Momoko sat down next to Yuka, and after observing her for a while, she began caressing Yuka's hair and cheek. Yuka remained with her eyes closed and did not react. Momoko then began fondling Yuka's body and removing her clothes, and Yuka turned her body away. Momoko proceeded to have sex.

Table 2
Post-Party Vignette Dimensions

Dimensions	Level	Vignette text
Offender gender	1 Man	Takeshi
	2 Woman	Momoko
Victim gender	1 Man	Keita
	2 Woman	Yuka
Relationship	1 Stranger	cohorts but rarely had any interaction since joining the company
	2 Friend	cohorts and good friends since joining the company
Nonconsent communication to touch	1 None	remained with one's eyes closed and did not react
	2 Implicit	remained with one's eyes closed and muttered, "I'm tired today"
	3 Explicit	groaned and turned one's face away
Nonconsent communication to sex	1 None	did not show any particular reaction
	2 Implicit	turned one's body away
	3 Explicit	said, "I don't want to," and curled up

Variables

A summary table of all independent variables (IVs) and dependent variables (DVs) is presented in Table 3. Although respondents' *Experiences* and *Beliefs* were included as IVs in the factorial vignette analyses, they also served as DVs in other analyses, which is further discussed in the Results Chapter.

Table 3
Summary Table of Variables

IVs	DVs
Level 1 (Vignette Level)	Perceptions
Parties' characteristics	Victim consent
Offender gender	Offender willingness
Victim gender	Offender consent-seeking
Situational characteristics	Victim-blaming
Relationship	Behavior acceptability
Nonconsent communication to kiss/touch	Offender responsibility
Nonconsent communication to sex	Peer responsibility
Level 2 (Respondent Level)	Consent communication
Demographics	Nonverbal
Age	Verbal
Gender	Passive
Sexual orientation	Initiator
Relationship status	Removal
Experiences	
Sex	
Sexual Victimization – Self	
Sexual Victimization – Acquaintance	
Compliant sex	
Token resistant sex	
Consent familiarity	
Beliefs	
Token resistance to sex	
Female rape myth acceptance	
Male rape myth acceptance	

Independent Variables.

Level 1: Vignette Variables. At the vignette level, the genders of the offender and victim were set as IVs pertaining to the parties' characteristics. *Gender* was recorded as man or woman through the parties' names and following parentheses' indication within the text in the vignettes. In addition to the parties' characteristics, parties' relationship status, nonconsent communication to kiss or touch, and nonconsent communication to sex were also established as IVs. These factors are situational characteristics that contribute to the ambiguity of consent.

Relationship status was comprised of two categories that are differentiated based on the parties' level of closeness. This distinction was based on whether the parties were officially dating or simply close friends in the date scenario and whether the parties were friends or acquaintances in the post-party scenario.

Nonconsent communication to kiss or touch referred to three different ways of not giving consent to sexual activities that were relatively less intrusive than sexual intercourse. The first category was the absence of nonconsent communication, which was portrayed as the victim not taking any particular action in response to the offender's approach. In other words, they were neither indicating affirmative consent nor verbal or physical communication of nonconsent. The second category was indirect communication of nonconsent, where the victim implicitly communicated their lack of consent. Direct communication of nonconsent was the last category, where the victim explicitly indicated their refusal verbally and physically to engage in sexual activity.

Nonconsent communication to sex had the same three categories, but it referred to manners of not giving consent to sexual intercourse. In the vignette scenarios, the act of removing the victim's clothing was used to imply the offenders' intent to have sex with the victim, which was confirmed in the subsequent phrase. Although the categories in this vignette dimension were the same as those of *nonconsent communication to kiss or touch*, the scenario texts were altered, accounting for the differential degrees of intrusiveness between kissing or touching and sexual intercourse.

***Level 2: Respondent Variables*.** For the respondent level IVs, demographic factors such as age, gender, sexual orientation, and relationship status were included. *Age* was collected at

the ratio level. *Gender* was recorded as man, woman, other, and questioning or undecided. *Sexual orientation* was recorded as heterosexual, gay or lesbian, other, and questioning or undecided. Finally, *relationship status* was recorded as single, casual, serious, partnered, and married. The "single" category included individuals separated, divorced, and widowed. The "partnered" category referred to those registered as partners through the same-sex partnership system in Japan. Those who chose "other" for *gender* and *sexual orientation* were given an opportunity to specify their identity. Moreover, respondents had the option "prefer not to respond" for *gender*, *sexual orientation*, and *relationship status*. Due to the small sample size, the categories with few respondents were combined to form a new category for the analyses. *Gender* was recoded into man, woman, and other (other and questioning or undecided), and *sexual orientation* was recoded into heterosexual and sexual minority (gay or lesbian, other, and questioning or undecided). *Relationship status* was recoded into single, dating (casual and serious), and committed (partnered and married).

Respondents' experiences of sex, sexual victimization of self, sexual victimization of acquaintance(s), compliant sex, token resistant sex, and consent familiarity were also analyzed. *Sex* concerned whether the respondents had ever had sexual intercourse. *Sexual victimization of self* referred to whether the respondents had ever been sexually victimized, and *sexual victimization of acquaintance(s)* referred to whether someone respondents personally knew had ever been sexually victimized. These variables were measured binarily (yes or no).

On the other hand, *compliant sex* and *token resistant sex* experiences were each measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always). Respondents were asked the frequency that they had expressed consent when they

did not want to have sex, and the frequency that they had expressed nonconsent when they wanted to have sex. These variables were later recoded binarily to analyze whether there was any difference between individuals who had never engaged in compliant and token resistant sex and those who reported they had been involved in these behaviors at least once (rarely, sometimes, often, and always) in the past. Respondents' *consent familiarity* was measured by asking respondents how well they knew about the definitions of sexual consent using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never heard of it, 2 = Heard of it but unfamiliar, 3 = Somewhat familiar, 4 = Familiar, 5 = Very familiar). *Consent familiarity* was also later recoded into dichotomous categories of unfamiliar (never heard of it and heard of it but unfamiliar) and familiar (somewhat familiar, familiar, and very familiar).

Besides these IVs, other demographic variables were collected in the survey. Additional information collected were respondents' residential status, residential prefecture, educational status, occupation, and number of children. The complete list of demographic questions can be found in Appendix E, and personal questions can be found in Appendix F.

In addition to respondents' demographics and experiences, three other IVs were included to measure respondents' preconceived ideas about sexual violence: token resistance to sex, female rape myth acceptance, and male rape myth acceptance. These variables were based on scales established in previous literature but adjusted using focus groups to fit the Japanese context. Furthermore, research has consistently shown that Japanese individuals tend to select the midpoint and avoid extreme responses more frequently (Lee et al., 2002; Wang et al., 2008). To adjust for this factor, a 6-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3

= Slightly Disagree, 4 = Slightly agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly agree) was utilized for these variables.

Token resistance to sex was measured using a modified version of the Token Resistance to Sex Scale developed by Osman (1995). The original TRSS is an 8-item scale designed to measure the predispositional beliefs that women say "no" to sex when they really mean "yes." It includes statements such as, "Many times a woman will pretend she doesn't want to have intercourse because she doesn't want to seem too loose, but she's really hoping the man will force her," and "When a man only has to use a minimal amount of force on a woman to get her to have sex, it probably means she wanted him to force her." The focus groups contributed to adjusting the language and some of the statements of the TRSS to fit the Japanese culture better. The adjusted TRSS, or TRSS-J, resulted in eight items and can be found in Appendix G.

Female rape myth acceptance was measured using a modified version of the updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (uIRMA) by McMahon and Farmer (2011). The uIRMA measures agreement with stereotypes and false beliefs about female rape. The original scale was developed by Payne, Lonsway, and Fitzgerald (1999). It contained 45 items, but it was condensed into 22 items and modified to reflect the modern context in the uIRMA. The updated 22-item scale consists of four rape myth subscales: "She asked for it," "He didn't mean to," "It wasn't really rape," and "She lied." Some of the statements include, "If a girl is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of hand," and "A rape probably didn't happen if the girl has no bruises or marks." The focus groups provided invaluable input in adjusting the survey to reflect Japanese culture appropriately, resulting in a final scale with 23 items. The uIRMA-J can be found in Appendix H.

Male rape myth acceptance was measured using a modified version of the Male Rape Myth Scale (MRMS) developed by Kerr Melanson (1998). This 22-item scale measures agreement with stereotypes and false beliefs about male rape. Some of the statements include, "I would have a hard time believing a man who told me that he was raped by a woman," "If a man obtained an erection while being raped, it probably means that he started to enjoy it," and "A man who allows himself to be raped by another man is probably homosexual." After adjusting the language and some of the statements of the original MRMS based on the focus groups' feedback, the MRMS-J consisted of 22 items. The MRMS-J can be found in Appendix I.

Dependent Variables. The principal DVs for the factorial vignettes were the respondents' perceptions of victim consent, offender willingness, offender consent-seeking, victim-blaming, behavior acceptability, offender responsibility, and peer responsibility of the parties depicted in the vignette scenarios. A 6-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree was used for all perception variables. Each question measuring these variables was slightly adapted to each vignette scenario to avoid using leading terms, such as offender/victim, and to make it instantly clear which character the particular item was referring to. A complete list of the questions on the vignette can be found in Appendix J.

Victim consent was measured with four questions, asking the degree to which the respondents believed the victim had internal consent and expressed external consent to the sexual activities that unfolded in the scenarios. *Offender willingness* was related to the degree to which the offender had internal consent, whereas *offender consent-seeking* referred to the degree to which the offender sought the victim's consent. *Victim-blaming* perceptions included two questions asking about the influential power and responsibility of the victim in how the

situation unfolded. *Behavior acceptability* referred to the degree to which respondents believed the offender's behaviors were acceptable. Lastly, *offender responsibility* and *peer responsibility* measured the degree to which these parties were responsible for how the situation unfolded. The *peer responsibility* variable was only included in the post-party scenario and was intended to preliminarily measure whether respondents perceived peers to be somewhat instrumental in triggering or preventing sexual interactions between two individuals.

Another DV included in this thesis, in addition to the ones specific to the factorial vignettes, is the types of behaviors people engage in when communicating sexual consent. *Consent communication* was measured using a modified version of the Consent to Sex Scale (CSS) developed by Jozkowski and Peterson (2014). The original CSS is a 44-item instrument designed to capture individuals' cues for indicating consent to sex. It contains five subscales: *nonverbal* signals of interest, *verbal* cues, *passive* behaviors, *initiator* behaviors, and *removal* behaviors. It includes behaviors such as, "I would touch my partner's body, such as their legs or arms," "I would not resist my partner's attempts for sexual activity," and "I would ask my partner if he/she wants to go back to my place." The focus groups discussed the items in the original CSS scale and other consent communication behaviors unique to Japan, which resulted in some language and content modifications that formed the CSS-J. The final scale consisted of 45 items, scored on a 4-point Likert scale, with a higher number indicating more likeliness to engage in the particular behavior. Appendix K illustrates the CSS-J.

Consent communication was not included in the analyses involving the factorial vignettes' variables. However, it was incorporated as a DV in analyses examining its relationship with the respondents' variables. This measurement was important in exploring one of the

research questions on how Japanese people communicate consent and examining whether individuals' characteristics and beliefs affect their preference for different types of consent behaviors. For similar reasons, respondents' experiences and beliefs variables also served as DVs in some analyses despite being introduced as IVs in this section. The Results Chapter reports in which analyses these variables were included as DVs.

Validity and Reliability of Measurement Tools

Previous Literature Foundation

This thesis used pre-existing scales in the sexual violence field as a foundation, which have been demonstrated by previous literature to have high validity and reliability. First, the TRSS showed high internal consistency (α = .86) when originally tested (Osman, 1995), which has been consistently confirmed in subsequent studies (Canan et al., 2018; Osman, 2007; Shi & Zheng, 2022). It has also been shown to be a strong predictor of perceptions of date rape (Osman & Davis, 1999), supporting its construct validity. Next, the uIRMA was also demonstrated to have high internal consistency overall (α = .87) and for each of the four subscales (McMahon & Farmer, 2011). Other studies have consistently confirmed uIRMA's applicability and reliability across different populations (PettyJohn et al., 2023; Skov et al., 2021). Finally, the MRMS was demonstrated to have high internal consistency (α = .90), test-retest reliability (γ = .89), and convergent validity (Kerr Melanson, 1998). Various other studies have replicated these results (Davies et al., 2012; Kassing et al., 2005; Sleath & Bull, 2010). To ensure that these measurements—which were culturally adjusted post-focus groups in this study—still formed reliable scales, Cronbach's alpha was computed. The results indicated that

the TRSS-J (α = .79), uIRMA-J (α = .90), and MRMS-J (α = .93) all formed a scale with reasonable internal consistency reliability.

The DVs for this study were also designed based on previous studies' questionnaires and scales. The *consent communication* variable was measured with the CSS, which has been demonstrated to have high internal consistency for both the full scale (α = .96) and each subscale (Jozkowski & Peterson, 2014). Since the wording of some items was modified and a few items were added, Cronbach's alpha was computed to assess whether the items that were summed to create each score formed a reliable scale. The results indicated reasonable internal consistency overall (α = .93) and for each subscale: Nonverbal (α = .83), Verbal (α = .91), Passive (α = .93), Initiator (α = .94), and Removal (α = .77).

Additionally, when designing the questionnaire to measure the *perceptions* variables for this study, other studies administering factorial vignettes and measuring similar concepts (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Humphreys, 2007; Lim & Roloff, 1999; Lofgreen et al., 2021) were consulted. Therefore, the vignette questionnaire for this study aligned with how these constructs have been measured previously in the field. Furthermore, *victim consent*, *offender willingness*, *offender consent-seeking*, and *victim-blaming* were variables composed of a few items, so Cronbach's alpha for both vignette scenarios was computed to assess whether they each formed a reliable scale. For the date scenario, the results indicated that *victim consent* (α = .77), *offender consent-seeking* (α = .86), and *victim-blaming* (α = .71) all formed a scale with reasonable internal consistency reliability. Since the *offender willingness* (α = .50) failed to demonstrate acceptable internal consistency in this vignette scenario, a scale was not created, and each question was analyzed separately for this case. For the post-party scenario, the results

indicated that *victim consent* (α = .90), *offender willingness* (α = .79), *offender consent-seeking* (α = .89), and *victim-blaming* (α = .83) all formed a scale with reasonable internal consistency reliability.

Focus Groups' Contribution

To increase measurement validity of the factorial vignettes, the vignette scenarios were constructed based on factors that have been shown relevant in the literature, which are the relationship between the victim and offender (Ben-David & Schneider, 2005; Bridges, 1991; Margolin et al., 1989) and different types of consent communication (Beres et al., 2004; Jozkowski & Peterson, 2014; Mukai et al., 2021). However, given the lack of previous research using factorial vignettes depicting sexual encounters in Japan, the focus groups provided vital data on how the situation should unfold, what controlled elements should be included, and what wording should be used to differentiate the vignette levels. Although the purpose of the focus groups for this thesis was only to inform the survey development and thus detailed analytical results will not be presented in this paper, some of the main decisions in the vignettes' construction guided by the focus groups are discussed here.

Initially, the researcher planned to convey the vignette parties' genders only through their names using common Japanese names. However, the focus groups suggested strong influential effects of traditional sexual scripts within individuals, which could have resulted in confusion and invalid results. Many participants in the focus groups noted that, although they accurately determined the vignette parties' genders based on their names at the beginning of the scenario, they became unsure and confused about the parties' genders as the sexual events unfolded in nontraditional scenarios (e.g., male-to-male sexual assault). Many of them had to

read the scenario multiple times. Some even went against their first accurate assumption of the parties' genders and changed it to fit in the traditional sexual scripts so the scenario would make more sense. Therefore, a parentheses notation of the parties' genders following their names was added to remove any room for interpretation.

The researcher also initially hoped to include a nonbinary category in the scenarios to increase the visibility of gender-diverse individuals since no sexual consent study using factorial vignettes has included this population to this day. However, similar to the issue faced with the binary genders in nontraditional scenarios, conveying the vignette parties' genders only through their names proved challenging. Inserting a parentheses notation stating that the individuals were nonbinary was also considered and discussed. Nonetheless, the focus group participants demonstrated confusion and unclear understanding of the concept of nontraditional genders. Some of them mentioned that they ascribed the vignette parties' genders following traditional sexual scripts despite the text explicitly noting the individuals' nonbinary gender. Others stated that they were paralyzed when reading a scenario with a nonbinary party because they could not picture the situation in their minds. Given the elevated risks of invalid results due to participants' confusion and preconceptions, the decision was made not to include the nonbinary category for this study.

A significant situational characteristic guided by the focus groups was the content and wording of the victim's nonconsent communication. What is considered implicit or explicit in Japan most likely differs from that of the U.S. For example, it has been well reported that Japanese culture gravitates toward high-context communication (Hall, 1976; Hasegawa & Gudykunst, 1998; Richardson & Smith, 2007; Tsujimura, 1987). In high-context cultures, people

are more likely to emphasize the nonverbal aspects and meanings embedded in the context and use indirect, vague, and reserved ways to communicate (Hall, 1976). The focus group participants went through various nonconsent behavioral examples raised by the researcher and other participants, discussing each behavior's meanings and levels of directness. Interestingly, some behaviors had different nuances to different genders (e.g., what was categorized as explicit nonconsent for women was seen as implicit for men participants), so only the communicative behaviors that both genders agreed on the levels of directness were adopted and built into the vignettes.

Overall, the focus groups also provided an opportunity to test the newly designed vignettes. As changes were made to the initially drafted vignette scenarios following the earlier focus groups' feedback, the latter focus groups' participants could compare and discuss different versions of the vignettes. This process made the vignettes and the other variables more understandable, realistic, and valid, accounting for cultural differences.

RESULTS

In addition to descriptive statistics and measures of internal consistency, preliminary thematic analysis of the focus groups' data, correlation tests, multiple regressions, and logistic regressions of the survey variables were performed for this thesis' purposes. Since the purpose of the focus groups was to guide the development of the vignette scenarios and culturally adjust existing scales to better reflect the Japanese context, the focus groups' preliminary analysis is not reported here. However, how they affected the development of the survey and the interpretation of the findings are discussed in the Methods and Discussion Chapters. It should also be noted that the researcher plans to report the focus groups' findings in the future upon a more in-depth analysis.

Before discussing the results, it is important to acknowledge that this thesis' findings must be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size and generalizability issues that are further discussed in the Limitations section. This study's findings should be treated as a preliminary model to guiding the direction of and design of future studies rather than informing criminal justice policies. While it is too soon to draw any conclusions, the analyses revealed some noteworthy themes that could be valuable moving forward in better understanding the sexual landscape in Japan.

The results of performing correlation tests with the interval or ratio variables of the survey can be found in Appendix L. The results from the multiple regressions with the consent perceptions as dependent variables (DVs) demonstrated that a few vignette-level and respondent-level factors influenced respondents' perceptions of victim consent, offender

consent-seeking, and offender behavior acceptability in both the date and post-party scenario. A significant model also emerged for victim blaming perceptions in the date scenario only. Victim nonconsent communication, victim-offender pair and relationship, respondents' token resistance beliefs, relationship status, and familiarity with consent were the predictors that emerged as significant for some of the models. The multiple regressions that examined the factors associated with respondents' beliefs and behaviors found that respondents' TRSS-J scores and CSS-J Removal behaviors were the only DVs with significant predictors. Respondents' sexual orientation and sexual victimization predicted their TRSS-J scores, and their gender and TRSS-J scores predicted their CSS-J Removal scores. Finally, the results of logistic regression analyses revealed that respondents' age, sexual orientation, relationship status, token resistance beliefs, and rape myths acceptance were predictors of their sexual experiences.

Multiple Regressions: Perceptions

Multiple regression analyses were conducted using SPSS 28 to determine the relationship between respondents' consent perceptions and independent variables (IVs) that previous literature indicated were theoretically influential. Two models for each DV were tested; the first included only the vignette characteristics, and the second included both the vignette and respondents' characteristics. Before running the analyses, the categorical variables that contained more than two groups were recoded into dummy variables for comparison to the reference category.

The assumptions for the DVs were checked to ensure multiple regression was the appropriate test. First, Durbin-Watson statistics close to 2 indicated that there were no correlations between residuals (Draper & Smith, 1998). The variables also had linear relationships as assessed by scatterplots of the studentized residuals against the unstandardized predicted values and partial regression plots. A further visual inspection of the scatterplots showed that the assumption of homoscedasticity was also met. Moreover, the findings from our correlation matrix and the VIF test indicated that collinearity was not an issue in the regression models. Lastly, some models demonstrated high leverage points and violated the normality assumption. However, given this study's small sample size and the purpose of exploring respondents' perceptions, the researcher decided to keep the outliers as they are also valuable data.

Date Scenario Models

Victim Consent. The factors associated with respondents' perceptions of the degree that the victim indicated internal and external consent in a date scenario were examined with four predictor variables for the vignette-only model and 17 predictor variables for the full model. Victim consent was measured on a 6-point Likert scale, in which higher scores indicated stronger perceptions that the victim consented to the sexual activities depicted in the scenario. The results from the F-test show that all of the IVs accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in perceptions of victim consent in both the vignette-only ($F = 2.91$; $p < .01$) and the full ($F = 2.24$; $p < .01$) models. Regression coefficients and standard errors for both models can be found in Table 4.

Table 4
Multiple Regression Results of Victim Consent in Date

Variables	Vignette Only Model (N = 149)		Full Model (N = 76)	
	B**	SE	B**	SE
Vignette Scenario Characteristics				
Victim-Offender Pair (Ref: Male-Female)				
Female-Male	1.292	1.005	1.347	1.371
Male-Male	-.601	1.013	-.1.399	1.382
Female-Female	-1.211	1.004	-1.745	1.522
Victim-Offender Relationship (Ref: Friend)	-.108	.700	-.518	.959
Nonconsent to Kissing (Ref: None)				
Implicit	-2.968***	.865	-3.848***	1.047
Explicit	-1.577	.895	-1.740	1.336
Nonconsent to Sex (Ref: None)				
Implicit	-1.851*	.881	-1.276	1.243
Explicit	-1.639	.846	-.714	1.122
Respondent's Characteristics				
Age			.178	.234
Gender (Ref: Woman)			1.218	1.301
Sexual Orientation (Ref: Heterosexual)			.989	1.252
Relationship Status (Ref: Single)				
Dating			-.809	1.284
Committed			-2.841	2.388
Had Sex			.519	1.556
Been Sexually Victimized			-1.057	1.447
Know a Victim			1.116	1.081
Had Compliant Sex			.659	1.183
Had Token Resistant Sex			-.279	1.252
Consent Familiarity			-.871	1.246
TRSS-J Total			.199*	.095
uIRMA-J Total			-.059	.051
MRMS-J Total			.059	.040

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

An adjusted R^2 value of .093 indicates that the predictors explained 9.3% of the variance in victim consent perceptions for the vignette-only model. The findings for the individual regression coefficients show that implicit nonconsent to kiss ($p < .001$) and implicit nonconsent to sex ($p < .05$) are significant predictors of victim consent perceptions. Respondents who

received the scenario where the victim engages in implicit nonconsent behaviors to kissing or implicit nonconsent to having sex reported a lower degree of victim consent in comparison to individuals who received the scenario where no nonconsent behaviors were depicted. Furthermore, the findings for the Beta weights indicate that implicit nonconsent to kiss was the most influential predictor in the model, followed by implicit nonconsent to sex. No significant relationship was found between the vignette scenario's victim-offender pairing, victim-offender relationship, explicit nonconsent to kiss, explicit nonconsent to sex, and respondents' perceptions of victim consent.

In the full model, including the vignette and respondents' characteristics, an adjusted R^2 value of .266 indicates that the predictors explained 26.6% of the variance in victim consent perceptions. The findings for the individual regression coefficients show that implicit nonconsent to kiss ($p < .001$) and respondents' TRSS-J score ($p < .05$) are significant predictors of victim consent perceptions. Respondents who received the scenario where the victim engages in implicit nonconsent behaviors to kissing reported a lower degree of victim consent in comparison to individuals who received the scenario where no nonconsent behaviors were depicted. It was also found that respondents with higher TRSS-J scores perceived a greater degree of victim consent. The findings for the Beta weights indicate that implicit nonconsent to kiss was the most influential predictor in the model, followed by respondents' TRSS-J scores. No significant relationship was found between the vignette scenario's victim-offender pairing, victim-offender relationship, explicit nonconsent to kiss, implicit nonconsent to sex, explicit nonconsent to sex, respondents' demographic characteristics, sexual experiences, victimization experiences, uIRMA-J scores, MRMS-J scores, and their perceptions of victim consent.

Offender Consent-Seeking. The factors associated with respondents' perceptions of the degree to which the offender sought consent in a date scenario were examined with four predictor variables for the vignette-only model and 17 predictor variables for the full model. Offender consent-seeking was measured on a 6-point Likert scale, in which higher scores indicated stronger perceptions that the offender sought consent through their words and behaviors. The F-test results show that all IVs accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in perceptions of offender consent-seeking in the full model only ($F = 1.84$; $p < .05$). The vignette-only model was not found significant. Regression coefficients and standard errors can be found in Table 5.

In the full model that was found significant, an adjusted R^2 value of .210 indicates that the predictors explained 21.0% of the variance in offender consent-seeking perceptions. The findings for the individual regression coefficients show that respondents' relationship status ($p < .05$) and TRSS-J score ($p < .001$) are significant predictors of offender consent-seeking perceptions. More specifically, respondents who reported they were dating were less likely to perceive that the offender sought consent for the sexual activities in the scenario compared to those who reported they were single. On the other hand, respondents with higher TRSS-J scores perceived a greater degree of offender consent-seeking. The findings for the Beta weights indicate that respondents' TRSS-J score was the most influential predictor in the model, followed by their dating status. No significant relationship was found between the vignette scenario's victim-offender pairing, victim-offender relationship, nonconsent behaviors, respondents' age, gender, sexual orientation, sexual experiences, victimization experiences, uIRMA-J scores, MRMS-J scores, and their perceptions of offender consent-seeking.

Table 5
Multiple Regression Results of Offender Consent Seeking in Date

Variables	Vignette Only Model (N = 142)		Full Model (N = 71)	
	B	SE	B*	SE
Vignette Scenario Characteristics				
Victim-Offender Pair (Ref: Male-Female)				
Female-Male	1.580	.823	1.964	1.122
Male-Male	-.351	.829	-.033	1.091
Female-Female	.844	.821	-.518	1.218
Victim-Offender Relationship (Ref: Friend)	.312	.573	.269	.780
Nonconsent to Kissing (Ref: None)				
Implicit	-.936	.695	-.483	.832
Explicit	-1.141	.684	-.055	1.146
Nonconsent to Sex (Ref: None)				
Implicit	-.656	.714	.981	.993
Explicit	-.443	.705	1.436	.942
Respondent's Characteristics				
Age			.244	.188
Gender (Ref: Woman)			.040	1.055
Sexual Orientation (Ref: Heterosexual)			-.173	1.027
Relationship Status (Ref: Single)				
Dating			-2.161*	1.020
Committed			-2.724	1.993
Had Sex			-.091	1.321
Been Sexually Victimized			1.328	1.217
Know a Victim			.496	.891
Had Compliant Sex			-.014	.982
Had Token Resistant Sex			-.532	1.057
Consent Familiarity			-1.438	1.012
TRSS-J Total			.269***	.075
uIRMA-J Total			-.078	.041
MRMS-J Total			.022	.032

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Victim Blaming. The factors associated with respondents' victim-blaming attitudes were examined with four predictor variables for the vignette-only model and 17 predictor variables for the full model, which can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6

Multiple Regression Results of Victim Blaming in Date

Variables	Vignette Only Model (N = 161)		Full Model (N = 80)	
	B	SE	B*	SE
Vignette Scenario Characteristics				
Victim-Offender Pair (Ref: Male-Female)				
Female-Male	1.154	.583	.977	.873
Male-Male	-.122	.592	-.462	.860
Female-Female	-.436	.582	-.770	.956
Victim-Offender Relationship (Ref: Friend)	-.097	.414	-1.048	.634
Nonconsent to Kissing (Ref: None)				
Implicit	-.944	.502	-.582	.693
Explicit	-.711	.513	-.971	.867
Nonconsent to Sex (Ref: None)				
Implicit	-.532	.511	-.442	.834
Explicit	-.281	.498	.052	.736
Respondent's Characteristics				
Age			.290	.160
Gender (Ref: Woman)			-.545	.871
Sexual Orientation (Ref: Heterosexual)			-.629	.818
Relationship Status (Ref: Single)				
Dating			-1.425	.812
Committed			-4.366**	1.618
Had Sex			.089	1.017
Been Sexually Victimized			-.301	.984
Know a Victim			.491	.725
Had Compliant Sex			-.550	.802
Had Token Resistant Sex			-.147	.825
Consent Familiarity			.181	.848
TRSS-J Total			.065	.065
uIRMA-J Total			.060	.035
MRMS-J Total			-.004	.027

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Victim blaming was measured on a 6-point Likert scale, in which higher scores indicated stronger attitudes that the victim was responsible for the situation depicted in the scenario. The F-test results show that all IVs accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in

victim-blaming attitudes in the full model only ($F = 1.79$; $p < .05$). The vignette-only model was not found significant.

An adjusted R^2 value of .179 indicates that the predictors explained 17.9% of the variance in victim-blaming attitudes. The findings for the individual regression coefficients show that respondents' relationship status ($p < .01$) is a significant predictor of victim-blaming attitudes. It was found that respondents who reported being in a committed relationship were less likely to think that the victim could have changed how the situation unfolded. No significant relationship was found between the other predictor variables and respondents' victim-blaming attitudes.

Offender Behavior Acceptability. The factors associated with respondents' perceptions of the acceptability of the offender's behaviors were examined with four predictor variables for the vignette-only model and 17 for the full model. Offender behavior acceptability was measured on a 6-point Likert scale, in which higher scores indicated stronger perceptions that the offender's behaviors were acceptable. The results from the F-test show that all of the IVs accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in perceptions of offender behavior acceptability in both the vignette-only ($F = 2.29$; $p < .05$) and the full ($F = 1.87$; $p < .05$) models. Table 7 demonstrates the regression coefficients and standard errors for both the vignette-only and the full models.

In the vignette-only model, an adjusted R^2 value of .061 indicates that the predictors explained 6.1% of the variance in offender behavior acceptability. The findings for the individual regression coefficients show that victim-offender relationship ($p < .05$) and explicit nonconsent to kiss ($p < .05$) are significant predictors of offender behavior acceptability. Compared to when

the victim and offender are depicted as friends, respondents who received the scenario where they are a couple reported greater acceptability toward the offender's behaviors.

Table 7

Multiple Regression Results of Behavior Acceptability in Date

Variables	Vignette Only Model (N = 159)		Full Model (N = 77)	
	B*	SE	B*	SE
Vignette Scenario Characteristics				
Victim-Offender Pair (Ref: Male-Female)				
Female-Male	.410	.274	.759	.399
Male-Male	.122	.273	-.037	.391
Female-Female	.420	.273	.325	.432
Victim-Offender Relationship (Ref: Friend)	.482*	.196	.666*	.286
Nonconsent to Kissing (Ref: None)				
Implicit	-.446	.235	-.549	.314
Explicit	-.616*	.239	-.460	.412
Nonconsent to Sex (Ref: None)				
Implicit	-.062	.243	-.218	.367
Explicit	-.305	.230	-.152	.326
Respondent's Characteristics				
Age			.026	.071
Gender (Ref: Woman)			.216	.384
Sexual Orientation (Ref: Heterosexual)			.231	.388
Relationship Status (Ref: Single)				
Dating			-.424	.367
Committed			-.317	.715
Had Sex			1.158*	.455
Been Sexually Victimized			-.402	.441
Know a Victim			.041	.329
Had Compliant Sex			-.646	.363
Had Token Resistant Sex			.070	.387
Consent Familiarity			-.386	.379
TRSS-J Total			.066*	.029
uIRMA-J Total			.002	.015
MRMS-J Total			-.009	.012

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Moreover, respondents who read the scenario where the victim engages in explicit nonconsent to kissing reported lower acceptability of the offender's behaviors in comparison to those who had the scenario where no nonconsent behaviors were depicted. The findings for the Beta weights indicate that explicit nonconsent to kiss was the most influential predictor in the model, followed by the victim-offender relationship. No significant relationship was found between the vignette scenario's victim-offender pairing, implicit nonconsent to kiss, nonconsent behaviors to sex, and respondents' perceptions of offender behavior acceptability.

An adjusted R^2 value of .200 indicates that the predictors explained 20.0% of the variance in offender behavior acceptability for the full model. The findings for the individual regression coefficients show that the vignette's victim-offender relationship ($p < .05$), respondent's sexual experience ($p < .05$), and their TRSS-J score ($p < .05$) are all significant predictors of offender behavior acceptability. Like the vignette-only model, respondents who received the couple scenario reported greater acceptability of the offender's behaviors than those who received the friend scenario. Regarding the variables associated with respondent's characteristics, individuals who responded that they had had sex before reported greater acceptability of the offender's behaviors in comparison to those who had never had sex. Furthermore, those with higher TRSS-J scores also perceived to a higher degree that the offender's behaviors were acceptable. The findings for the Beta weights indicate that respondents' sexual experience was the most influential predictor in the model, followed by their TRSS-J scores, and lastly, the vignette's victim-offender relationship. No significant relationship was found between the other predictor variables and respondents' acceptability of the offender's behaviors.

Post-Party Scenario Models

Victim Consent. The factors associated with respondents' perceptions of the degree to which victims indicated internal and external consent in a post-party scenario were examined with four predictor variables for the vignette-only model and 17 predictor variables for the full model. Victim consent was measured on a 6-point Likert scale, in which higher scores indicated stronger perceptions that the victim consented to the sexual activities depicted in the scenario. The F-test results show that all IVs accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in perceptions of victim consent in the vignette-only model ($F = 2.94$; $p < .01$).

An adjusted R^2 value of .101 indicates that the predictors explained 10.1% of the variance in victim consent perceptions in the significant vignette-only model. The findings in Table 8 show that the female-male scenario ($p < .05$), the male-male scenario ($p < .05$), and explicit nonconsent to sex ($p < .01$) are all significant predictors of victim consent perceptions. Respondents who received a scenario of a female-to-male or male-to-male sexual assault were less likely to perceive that the victim consented to the sexual activities when compared to those who read a male-to-female case. Respondents with a scenario where the victim engages in explicit nonconsent to having sex also reported lower degrees of victim consent in comparison to those where the victim does not engage in any nonconsent behaviors. The Beta weights' findings indicate that the model's most influential predictor is explicit nonconsent to sex, followed by the male-male scenario and then the female-male scenario. No significant relationship was found between the female-female scenario, victim-offender relationship, nonconsent behaviors to kiss, implicit nonconsent to sex, and respondents' perceptions of victim consent.

Table 8
Multiple Regression Results of Victim Consent Post-Party

Variables	Vignette Only Model (N = 139)		Full Model (N = 71)	
	B**	SE	B	SE
Vignette Scenario Characteristics				
Victim-Offender Pair (Ref: Male-Female)				
Female-Male	-2.722*	1.247	-2.555	1.729
Male-Male	-3.045*	1.175	-1.533	1.559
Female-Female	-2.165	1.244	-2.118	1.923
Victim-Offender Relationship (Ref: Stranger)	.759	.862	.319	1.212
Nonconsent to Touching (Ref: None)				
Implicit	-.034	1.073	1.189	1.563
Explicit	-.104	1.074	-.118	1.482
Nonconsent to Sex (Ref: None)				
Implicit	.138	1.106	2.606	1.565
Explicit	-2.991**	1.096	-1.735	1.565
Respondent's Characteristics				
Age			.346	.315
Gender (Ref: Woman)			.411	1.553
Sexual Orientation (Ref: Heterosexual)			-1.305	1.510
Relationship Status (Ref: Single)				
Dating			.677	1.521
Committed			-2.721	3.094
Had Sex			-.063	1.891
Been Sexually Victimized			-.007	2.062
Know a Victim			-2.138	1.449
Had Compliant Sex			.608	1.453
Had Token Resistant Sex			-.680	1.444
Consent Familiarity			-1.482	1.649
TRSS-J Total			.268	.121
uIRMA-J Total			.013	.061
MRMS-J Total			.041	.052

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Offender Consent-Seeking. The factors associated with offender consent-seeking perceptions in a post-party scenario were examined with four predictors for the vignette-only model and 17 predictor variables for the full model, which can be found in Table 9.

Table 9
Multiple Regression Results of Offender Consent Seeking Post-Party

Variables	Vignette Only Model (N = 148)		Full Model (N = 74)	
	B	SE	B*	SE
Vignette Scenario Characteristics				
Victim-Offender Pair (Ref: Male-Female)				
Female-Male	-.782	.756	-1.907	1.104
Male-Male	.144	.710	.226	.966
Female-Female	.587	.722	-.826	1.182
Victim-Offender Relationship (Ref: Stranger)	.368	.518	.102	.745
Nonconsent to Touching (Ref: None)				
Implicit	.668	.647	.812	.952
Explicit	-.171	.642	.559	.927
Nonconsent to Sex (Ref: None)				
Implicit	-.176	.649	.371	.957
Explicit	-.534	.666	.690	.977
Respondent's Characteristics				
Age			.066	.202
Gender (Ref: Woman)			-.381	.987
Sexual Orientation (Ref: Heterosexual)			-.616	.988
Relationship Status (Ref: Single)				
Dating			.234	.978
Committed			-2.574	1.976
Had Sex			.457	1.174
Been Sexually Victimized			.390	1.235
Know a Victim			-1.683	.893
Had Compliant Sex			-.095	.922
Had Token Resistant Sex			-1.371	.926
Consent Familiarity			-1.053	.991
TRSS-J Total			.195*	.077
uIRMA-J Total			-.032	.040
MRMS-J Total			.027	.033

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Offender consent-seeking was measured on a 6-point Likert scale, in which higher scores indicated stronger perceptions that the offender sought consent through their words and behaviors. The F-test results show that all IVs accounted for a significant proportion of the

variance in perceptions of offender consent-seeking in the full model only (F = 1.88; $p < .05$). The vignette-only model was not found significant.

An adjusted R^2 value of .210 indicates that the predictors explained 21.0% of the variance in offender consent-seeking perceptions in the full model. The findings for the individual regression coefficients indicate that respondents' TRSS-J score ($p < .05$) is the only significant predictor of offender consent-seeking perceptions. It was found that respondents with higher TRSS-J scores perceived to a higher degree that the offender sought consent for the sexual activities in the scenario. No significant relationship was found between the other predictor variables and respondents' perceptions of offender consent-seeking.

Offender Behavior Acceptability. The factors associated with respondents' perceptions of the acceptability of the offender's behaviors were examined with four predictor variables for the vignette-only model and 17 for the full model. Offender behavior acceptability was measured on a 6-point Likert scale, in which higher scores indicated stronger perceptions that the offender's behaviors were acceptable in a particular post-party scenario. The F-test results show that all IVs accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in respondents' perceptions of offender behavior acceptability in the full model (F = 2.13; $p < .05$) but not the vignette-only model. Regression coefficients and standard errors for both models can be found in Table 10.

An adjusted R^2 value of .239 for the full model indicates that the predictors explained 23.9% of the variance in offender behavior acceptability. The individual regression coefficients in Table 10 demonstrate that the only significant predictor of offender behavior acceptability perceptions is respondents' familiarity with the definition of consent ($p < .05$). Respondents

who reported that they were familiar with the definition of consent were less likely to perceive that the offender's behavior was acceptable in comparison to those who reported they were unfamiliar with the definition of consent. No significant relationship was found between the other predictor variables and respondents' perceptions of offender behavior acceptability.

Table 10

Multiple Regression Results of Behavior Acceptability Post-Party

Variables	Vignette Only Model (N = 153)		Full Model (N = 80)	
	B	SE	B*	SE
Vignette Scenario Characteristics				
Victim-Offender Pair (Ref: Male-Female)				
Female-Male	.282	.321	.187	.441
Male-Male	.097	.311	.346	.402
Female-Female	.419	.316	.337	.469
Victim-Offender Relationship (Ref: Stranger)	-.116	.223	-.510	.289
Nonconsent to Touching (Ref: None)				
Implicit	-.040	.275	.097	.376
Explicit	-.145	.275	.109	.361
Nonconsent to Sex (Ref: None)				
Implicit	-.363	.279	-.431	.379
Explicit	-.746	.282	-.130	.377
Respondent's Characteristics				
Age			1.08	.074
Gender (Ref: Woman)			.592	.392
Sexual Orientation (Ref: Heterosexual)			-.384	.387
Relationship Status (Ref: Single)				
Dating			-.607	.370
Committed			-1.399	.764
Had Sex			.759	.467
Been Sexually Victimized			-.430	.485
Know a Victim			.122	.360
Had Compliant Sex			-.341	.374
Had Token Resistant Sex			-.591	.356
Consent Familiarity			-.872*	.408
TRSS-J Total			.037	.030
uIRMA-J Total			.005	.015
MRMS-J Total			.001	.013

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Multiple Regressions: Beliefs and Behaviors

In addition to examining vignette-specific variables, multiple regression analyses were performed to study the factors associated with respondents' TRSS-J, uIRMA-J, MRMS-J, and CSS-J scores with ten predictor variables. The same steps were taken to ensure that multiple regression was the appropriate test for this analysis. Upon running the tests, it was found that the IVs significantly predicted two models: TRSS-J and CSS-J Removal. However, no significant relationship was found for the uIRMA-J, MRMS-J, CSS-J Nonverbal, CSS-J Verbal, CSS-J Passive, and CSS-J Initiator models.

TRSS-J

TRSS-J consists of eight items that each measure on a 6-point Likert scale the degree to which individuals believe women use token resistance to sexual advances, with higher scores indicating stronger token resistance beliefs. The results from the F-test ($F = 2.30$) show that all of the IVs accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in respondent's token resistance beliefs at the .05 level. An adjusted R^2 value of .109 indicates that the predictors explained 10.9% of the variance in TRSS-J scores. The model is shown in Table 11.

The findings for the individual regression coefficients show that respondents' sexual orientation ($p < .05$) and sexual victimization experience ($p < .05$) are significant predictors of their TRSS-J scores. More specifically, non-heterosexual respondents and respondents who reported they had been sexually victimized demonstrated lower token resistance beliefs in comparison to their heterosexual counterparts and those who had not been sexually victimized before. Respondents' sexual victimization experience is the most influential predictor in the model, followed by sexual orientation, as indicated by the Beta weights. No significant

relationship was found between respondents' age, gender, relationship status, familiarity with consent definition, sexual experience, and knowing someone who had been sexually victimized.

Table 11
Multiple Regression Results of TRSS-J

Variables	B*	SE
Age	.004	.104
Gender (Ref: Woman)	.350	1.563
Sexual Orientation (Ref: Heterosexual)	-3.431*	1.702
Relationship Status (Ref: Single)		
Dating	1.047	1.504
Committed	.659	3.271
Had Sex	-1.117	1.781
Been Sexually Victimized	-5.247*	2.149
Know a Victim	-1.999	1.489
Had Compliant Sex	.871	1.471
Had Token Resistant Sex	1.537	1.407
Consent Familiarity	-1.687	1.539

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

CSS-J Removal Behaviors

CSS-J Removal is a variable consisting of four items that are measured on a 4-point Likert scale, which shows the degree to which respondents are likely to engage in removal behaviors when communicating consent. Higher scores indicated a higher likelihood of engaging in removal behaviors. The results from the F-test (F = 1.87) show that all of the IVs accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in respondents' use of removal behaviors at the .05 level. An adjusted R^2 value of .135 indicates that the predictors explained 13.5% of the variance in CSS-J Removal scores. Table 12 illustrates the model's regression coefficients and standard errors.

Table 12
Multiple Regression Results of CSS-J Removal Behaviors

Variables	B*	SE
Age	.343	.190
Gender (Ref: Woman)	2.822**	1.041
Sexual Orientation (Ref: Heterosexual)	-.723	.969
Relationship Status (Ref: Single)		
Dating	-.772	.955
Committed	-1.878	1.891
Had Sex	1.062	1.215
Been Sexually Victimized	.899	1.208
Know a Victim	-.916	.868
Had Compliant Sex	-.415	.958
Had Token Resistant Sex	-.264	.932
Consent Familiarity	-.200	1.049
TRSS-J Total	.159*	.078
uIRMA-J Total	-.017	.040
MRMS-J Total	.018	.032

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

The findings for the individual regression coefficients show that respondents' gender (p < .01) and TRSS-J scores (p < .05) are significant predictors of their use of removal behaviors. Men reported a higher likelihood of using removal behaviors when communicating consent compared to women. Furthermore, those with higher TRSS-J scores reported a higher CSS-J Removal score. The findings for the Beta weights indicate that respondents' gender is the most influential predictor in the model, followed by their TRSS-J scores. No significant relationship was found between respondents' age, sexual orientation, relationship status, familiarity with consent definition, sexual experience, sexual victimization experiences, uIRMA-J scores, MRMS-J scores, and the use of removal behaviors to communicate consent.

Logistic Regressions: Experiences

Logistic regression analyses were conducted using SPSS 28 to determine the relationship between respondents' characteristics, beliefs, and sexual experiences. Seven IVs that have been indicated by previous literature to be theoretically influential (i.e., age, gender, sexual orientation, relationship status, TRSS-J score, uIRMA-J score, and MRMS-J score) were included to determine whether they significantly predicted whether respondents had had sex, had been sexually victimized, knew someone who had been sexually victimized, had engaged in compliant sex, and had engaged in token resistant sex. Collinearity was not an issue in all models, as assessed by the correlation matrixes and VIF tests. The number of cases of respondents' who were in a committed relationship was too small to perform logistic regressions with these DVs, so it was not included in this analysis. The results indicate that the IVs significantly predicted all DVs, except for whether respondents knew someone who had been victimized. Table 13 illustrates the summary results of the logistic regressions tests, followed by descriptions of each model.

Table 13

Logistic Regressions Results of Respondents' Experiences

	Had Sex (N = 81)		Sexual Victimization (N = 81)		Compliant Sex (N = 81)		Token Resistant Sex (N = 80)	
Variables	B***	SE	B***	SE	B***	SE	B**	SE
Age	.944*	.391	-.422	.309	.560**	.186	.207	.139
Gender	1.977*	.987	-1.952	1.470	-1.317	.774	-.880	.798
Sexual Orientation	-.030	.864	2.084*	1.050	.330	.696	.077	.771
Relationship	4.005***	1.142	2.978*	1.196	1.458*	.566	1.421*	.587
TRSS-J	.023	.095	-.272*	.115	-.013	.055	-.063	.060
uIRMA-J	-.010	.037	.053	.045	-.011	.029	.101**	.036
MRMS-J	.004	.031	-.047	.039	.019	.024	-.061*	.028

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Had Sex

The Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients results showed that all of the IVs significantly predicted ($X^2 = 49.46$; $p < .001$) whether or not respondents had had sex before. A Nagelkerke R square value of .635 indicated that 63.5% of the variance can be predicted from all of the IVs in the model. The findings for the individual regression coefficients showed that respondents' age ($p < .05$), gender ($p < .05$), and relationship status ($p < .001$) were all significant predictors. More specifically, older respondents were significantly more likely to have had sex before. The odds of respondents who identified as man to have had sex is 7.2 times higher compared to other genders. It was also found that the odds of respondents who were dating to have had sex in the past is 54.9 times higher compared to individuals who were not dating when holding the remaining variables constant. Respondents' sexual orientation, TRSS-J score, uIRMA-J score, and MRMS-J score were not significant predictors of this outcome.

Had Been Sexually Victimized

The results from the Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients showed that all of the IVs significantly predicted ($X^2 = 29.09$; $p < .001$) whether or not respondents had been sexually victimized before. A Nagelkerke R square value of .515 indicated that 51.5% of the variance can be predicted from all of the IVs in the model. The findings for the individual regression coefficients showed that respondents' sexual orientation ($p < .05$), relationship status ($p < .05$), and TRSS-J scores ($p < .05$) were all significant predictors of whether or not they had ever been sexually victimized. It was found that the odds of having been sexually victimized were 8.0 times greater for individuals of other sexual orientations in comparison to heterosexual respondents, and 19.7 times greater for those who were dating in contrast to those who were

not. It was also found that when all other variables are held constant, the odds of respondents having been sexually victimized decrease by approximately 24% for every one-unit increase in their TRSS-J scores. Respondents' age, gender, uIRMA-J score, and MRMS-J score were not significant predictors of this outcome.

Had Compliant Sex

The Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients results showed that all of the IVs significantly predicted ($X^2 = 24.51$; $p < .001$) whether or not respondents had engaged in compliant sex before. A Nagelkerke R square value of .352 indicated that 35.2% of the variance can be predicted from all of the IVs in the model. The findings for the individual regression coefficients showed that respondents' age ($p < .01$) and relationship status ($p < .05$) were significant predictors. It was found that older respondents were significantly more likely to have engaged in compliant sex. The findings also indicated that the odds of respondents who were dating to have engaged in compliant sex is 4.3 times higher compared to those who were not dating. Respondents' gender, sexual orientation, TRSS-J score, uIRMA-J score, and MRMS-J score were not significant predictors of this outcome.

Had Token-Resistant Sex

The Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients results showed that all the IVs significantly predicted ($X^2 = 22.90$; $p < .01$) whether or not respondents had engaged in token-resistant sex before. A Nagelkerke R square value of .353 indicated that 35.3% of the variance can be predicted from all of the IVs in the model. The findings for the individual regression coefficients showed that respondents' relationship status ($p < .05$), uIRMA-J score ($p < .01$), and MRMS-J score ($p < .05$) were all significant predictors of whether or not they had ever engaged in token-

resistant sex. It was found that the odds of having engaged in token-resistant sex were 4.1 times greater for those dating in comparison to those who were single. Moreover, the odds increase by approximately 11% for every unit increase in their uIRMA-J score, and decrease by approximately 6% for every unit increase in their MRMS-J score. Respondents' age, gender, sexual orientation, and TRSS-J score were not significant predictors of this outcome.

DISCUSSION

Extant literature examining factors and processes that lead to or harbor the risks of sexual violence has primarily focused on sexual scripts, rape myths, and sexual consent definition and determination in Western contexts. Despite the wealth of research on these topics, almost none have examined what factors are critical in understanding the liminal arena of sexual intimacy and violence in Japan. This thesis intended to address these gaps in the literature by exploring what factors affect Japanese people's perceptions, beliefs, behaviors, and experiences in ambiguous sexual interactions.

Although not without limitations in how the research was designed and distributed, this study found some evidence supporting the existence of sexual scripts and rape myths in Japan. Relationship and gender roles within heteropatriarchal scripts and token resistance beliefs were particularly prominent in the findings. It was also found that the vignette characters' nonconsent communication styles were influential in determining the consensuality and acceptability of hypothetical sexual interactions. The following sections discuss each of these factors and how they offer a prefacing insight into how sexual consent and intimacy are navigated in Japan.

Perceptions

The first research question of this thesis was to identify the factors affecting how Japanese people perceive consensuality, responsibility, and behavioral acceptability in ambiguous sexual interactions. The results revealed that both situational and respondents'

characteristics affected how individuals interpreted the hypothetical gray zone sexual assaults. More specifically, the victim's nonconsent communication, victim-offender pair, victim-offender relationship, respondents' token resistance beliefs, relationship status, sexual experiences, and consent familiarity were found to be significant. These results mostly supported previous findings on consent communication, determination of coerciveness, traditional sexual scripts, and rape scripts.

Date Scenario

For the date scenario, eight variables emerged as strong predictors in respondents' perceptions of the consensuality, responsibility, and acceptability of the sexual interactions depicted in the vignette. More specifically, the victim's implicit nonconsent communication to kiss and sex, explicit nonconsent to kiss, and respondents' dating and committed relationship status were associated with lower perceptions of consensuality, victim responsibility, and behavioral acceptability of the offender. On the other hand, the victim and offender's romantic relationship, respondents' higher TRSS-J scores, and respondents' intercourse experience were associated with higher perceptions of consensuality and acceptability of the offender's behaviors.

Nonconsent Communication. Implicit nonconsent communication was one of the strongest predictors of low victim consent perceptions. Compared to the absence of nonconsent communicative behaviors, the scenario was more likely to be perceived as nonconsensual when implicit communication of nonconsent was present. Considering that victim resistance is a critical factor in determining whether the encounter was consensual or not (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004), it is not surprising that the presence of some form of

nonconsent behavior resulted in a better perception of the scenario's coerciveness. Several studies have found that consent is often communicated through the lack of resistance or refusal (Beres, 2014; Beres et al., 2004; Hall, 1998; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Jozkowski, 2013; Jozkowski, Sanders, et al., 2014). In line with those findings, the absence of nonconsent in the scenario may have been seen as an indication of consent, or at the very least, not enough to be nonconsensual.

What is unique, though, is that explicit nonconsent behaviors did not emerge as significant for the victim consent variable, but it did predict the acceptability of the offender's behaviors. In other words, even though respondents did not see explicit nonconsent to kiss as indicative of victim (non)consent, they still perceived that the offender's behaviors were unacceptable. A conceivable explanation is that respondents perceived explicit nonconsent as a possible act of token resistance and thus not necessarily indicative of the victim's consensuality. Although young individuals often use multiple modes of consent communication behaviors, consent is more frequently communicated nonverbally (Beres, 2010; Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Hall, 1998; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Humphreys, 2007; Jozkowski & Peterson, 2014). Moreover, Japanese culture has often been argued to lean towards high-context communication, where indirect and reserved communication styles are preferred (Hall, 1976; Hasegawa & Gudykunst, 1998; Richardson & Smith, 2007; Tsujimura, 1987). Perhaps explicit nonconsent was perceived as too explicit to be true in such cultural contexts. Still, respondents also perceived that the offender should not have proceeded with sexual activities, which could be a reflection of their understanding of the importance of respecting the other party's

expressed refusal regardless of the party's inner intentions or an effect of respondents' social desirability bias.

Another interesting point is that only explicit nonconsent to kiss, and not explicit nonconsent to sex, was significant in the models. This finding suggests that the first point of sexual contact may be perceived as a more substantial determinant of consensuality for not only the immediate sexual activity in question but also the sexual activities that follow. In other words, consent is perceived to be given at one point in time and not something reversible or that needs to be continuously provided.

Victim-Offender Relationship. Another situational characteristic that predicted the acceptability of the offender's behaviors was the victim and offender's romantic relationship. Traditional sexual scripts, particularly those involving dating individuals, are apparent, as scenarios depicting a couple resulted in greater behavioral acceptability in comparison to those depicting friends. Consistent with previous research (Beres, 2010; Farrer et al., 2008; Farrer et al., 2012; Humphreys, 2007; Jozkowski, Sanders, et al., 2014; Marcantonio et al., 2018; Williamson et al., 2023), the idea that sexual activities are assumed in romantic relationships, and consent is implied or not considered as necessary, can be inferred from this study's findings. Greater acceptability of the offender's coercive behaviors in couple relationships further demonstrates how sexual assaults that do not fall within the lines of real rape scripts are dismissed, resulting in lower self-acknowledgment and others' support.

Token Resistance Beliefs. Higher token resistance beliefs were among the strongest predictors of higher consent perceptions. The higher the respondents' TRSS-J scores, the more likely they were to perceive that the victim consented, the offender sought consent, and the

offender's behaviors were acceptable. This finding is not surprising considering that these respondents have a broader interpretation of consent, and a range of nonconsent behaviors could be construed as token resistance. Moreover, various elements in the scenario relate to the TRSS-J items. The date scenario illustrates two individuals going on a date, the victim going to the offender's house after the date, the victim drinking with the offender at night, and no physical force. Respondents with higher TRSS-J scores were more likely to classify these behaviors as indications of consent. Thus, the whole scenario could have been interpreted as more consensual and acceptable. These findings suggest the risks of token resistance beliefs, as token resistance behaviors could be perceived as a more influential way of communicating consent to the extent that nonconsent communicated afterward at the beginning of and during the sexual interactions is downplayed.

Respondents' Relationships and Experiences. Respondents' relationship status was also a predictor of low perceptions of offender consent-seeking and victim responsibility. The finding that respondents' dating relationships were associated with lower offender consent-seeking perceptions somewhat contradicts previous research, which found that individuals often perceive that consent does not need to be explicitly communicated as the relationship progresses (Beres, 2010; Humphreys, 2007; Jozkowski, Sanders, et al., 2014; Marcantonio et al., 2018; Williamson et al., 2023). A potential explanation for this difference is that the dating respondents may have used their real-life experiences to determine whether consent was sought in the scenario. If their relationship experiences differed from the scenario—for example, their partners practice more straightforward consent communication—they could have perceived that the offender did not necessarily engage in such behaviors.

Regarding victim responsibility, respondents in a committed relationship were less likely to attribute responsibility to the victim in the scenario. This finding is aligned with the previous literature on relationship expectations on traditional sexual scripts, where individuals in a relationship are expected to reciprocate the other's sexual advances (Farrer et al., 2008; Farrer et al., 2012; Kosaka & Sawamura, 2017). Respondents in a committed relationship might have perceived that the victim could not influence the situation or refuse the offender's advances even if they wanted to because they believe in the "duty" to comply when the parties are involved romantically or otherwise close.

One respondent-level factor that was influential to higher perceptions of the acceptability of offender's behaviors was whether respondents had had sex in the past. Theoretically, it can be deduced that those who had had sex were more likely to think the offender's behaviors were acceptable because they perhaps had experienced and normalized the sexual scripts illustrated in the vignette scenario.

Post-Party Scenario

For the post-party scenario, five variables emerged as strong predictors in respondents' perceptions of the consensuality and acceptability of the sexual interactions depicted in the vignette. These predictor variables are the woman-to-man sexual assault scenario, the man-to-man sexual assault scenario, the victim's explicit nonconsent communication to sex, respondents' consent familiarity, and respondents' token resistance beliefs. The first four variables predicted lower consensuality and acceptability, while the token resistance beliefs variable was associated with higher perceptions that the offender asked for consent.

Victim-Offender Pair. Vignette scenarios that deviated from traditional, heteropatriarchal sexual scripts were one of the strongest predictors of low victim consent perceptions. In particular, the scenarios involving a woman offender and a man victim, and a man offender and a man victim, were more likely to be perceived as nonconsensual in comparison to that of a man offender and a woman victim. Previous literature has consistently shown that sexual scripts are gendered (Ford, 2021; Harvey et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2007; Mukai et al., 2021; Pham, 2016; Rittenhour & Sauder, 2023; Seabrook et al., 2016; Shumlich & Fisher, 2018; Ward et al., 2022; Wiederman, 2005), supporting this study's findings. In the traditional sexual scripts, men are expected to make sexual advances, and women are expected to refuse or eventually accept. As each gender has a specific role and consent communication styles that fit those roles (e.g., consent-seeking vs. consent-enacting), it is possible that one behavior that is indicative of consent or sexual willingness for one gender is not considered as such for another. The focus groups confirmed the genderedness of sexual scripts, as some behaviors that were regarded as token resistance for women did not hold any meaning when enacted by men. Therefore, what could be seen as indicative of consent in heteropatriarchal situations (e.g., touching certain body parts, going home with the other party) may not be seen as consent communication in different situations. As a result, any sexual advances in nontraditional scenarios could be perceived as sudden and out of context, reducing the overall consensuality of the situation.

Interestingly, the scenario with a woman offender and a woman victim did not emerge as significant in the models. This finding potentially relates to the rape myth that female offenders are harmless (Cain et al., 2017; Fisher & Pedneault, 2016), resulting in inconsistent

identifications of the scenario's sexual coerciveness. Another factor that could be considered is the culture of women's friendships. Haptic communication studies have found that women are more comfortable with being touched, especially by the same gender, than men (Hertenstein & Weiss, 2011). Some studies have shown that female dyads interact at a closer distance (Hall, 1984) and touch each other more frequently (Kneidinger et al., 2001; Sugiyama, 1990) compared to male dyads. Although these studies do not examine sexual touch in particular, the culture of and individuals' perceptions of women's friendships' physical closeness may contribute to lower consistent recognition and higher dismissal of the gray zones of sexual assaults between women.

Nonconsent Communication. Unlike the date scenario, implicit nonconsent to kiss or sex was not shown to be significant in the post-party scenario. Only explicit nonconsent to sex significantly predicted lower perceptions of victim consent. In the post-party scenario, both parties were drunk to the point that they stumbled over words and could not walk straight. Their intoxication level could have been associated with their inability to engage in nuanced, indirect communication and to react to lower levels of sexual interactions, such as touching by the offender. In other words, the victim was too drunk that their implicit nonconsent communication was taken merely as a drunken person's behaviors, which do not hold any meaning from a sexual consent standpoint. Supporting this point, some focus group participants commented that intoxication could cloud individuals' interpretation of indirect communication since it is harder to discern whether the drunken individual's behavior has any intentional meaning or is a mere artifact of alcohol consumption. Implicit nonconsent, while

significant when individuals are not heavily intoxicated, may lose its power when such communication can be confused or dismissed by alcohol properties.

Still, a possible explanation as to why explicit nonconsent to sex emerged could be because respondents perceived that individuals could refuse more intrusive sexual advances if they genuinely did not want to participate in it, even if they were drunk. Some studies have demonstrated that young adults were confident in their ability to consent to sex, even when they had impaired judgment due to intoxication (Drouin et al., 2019; Jozkowski et al., 2023). In addition, many focus group participants in this study argued that unless individuals were unconscious, intoxication does not affect their ability to refuse sex much when they truly do not want to engage in it. Respondents could have recognized the influence of alcohol but determined that the victim was not that drunk to the point that they could not explicitly refuse sex.

Token Resistance Beliefs. Like the date scenario, respondents' higher token resistance beliefs significantly predicted higher perceptions of offender consent-seeking. As mentioned previously, individuals with higher levels of token resistance beliefs have a wider interpretation of what constitutes consent. The post-party scenario also included many elements related to the TRSS-J items, such as the victim going to the house of the offender, the victim drinking with the offender at night, and the scenario not involving physical force. In addition, the victim also engaged in potentially suggestive behaviors (e.g., touching the offender, suggesting going to the offender's house) throughout the middle of the scenario. Thus, for individuals with a broader interpretation of consent, various elements could have hinted that the victim wanted to engage in sexual activities with the offender. If those behaviors were indeed an indication of

sexual consent, the offender could have proceeded with sexual activities without seeking further consent. Therefore, the fact that the offender engaged in a lower-level sexual interaction first (i.e., caressing) instead of jumping right to it may have been interpreted as asking for consent, resulting in higher offender consent-seeking perceptions.

Consent Familiarity. Contrary to the date scenario in which many factors predicted the acceptability of the offender's behaviors, not many factors emerged as significant for the post-party scenario. Two potential reasons for this difference between scenarios are that the parties were intoxicated and the victim engaged in more potentially suggestive behaviors in the post-party scenario. These components could have resulted in respondents' uncertainty about the behavioral acceptability of the offender. Rape myths invoked by the scenario, such as "the offender could not have judged the situation properly" and "the victim asked for it," could have contributed to the variation of responses from the survey participants.

Respondents' familiarity with the definition of consent was the only factor that predicted the offender's behavior acceptability. Although sexual consent's definition tends to be vague and interpreted in different ways, it usually includes a clause that consent cannot be given when the individual is in an incapacitated state. The sexual violence law in Japan, which was just recently modified in 2023, also includes intoxication as one of the determining factors of individuals' inability to form, express, or carry through on their nonconsent (see Appendix A). Individuals who were familiar with the definition of consent were more likely to recognize that the scenario was unacceptable because they likely understood that consent cannot be given when the parties are intoxicated.

Beliefs and Behaviors

Through this thesis, the researcher also sought to explore the factors affecting how Japanese people think of sexual intimacy and interactions, especially facets that have been associated with sexual violence in the existing literature. In addition to their beliefs, whether any factors affect their likelihood of engaging in certain forms of consent communication was also examined. Although most of the models did not yield significant results, the factors that were shown significant mostly aligned with previous studies regarding sexual minority status and gendered sexual scripts.

Token Resistance Beliefs

Among different belief scales, the TRSS-J was surprisingly the only one in which significant predictors emerged. The two predictors of lower token resistance beliefs were sexual minority status and sexual victimization experience. The relationship between sexual minority status and token resistance beliefs is consistent with previous studies that have found that individuals who identify with sexual orientations other than heterosexual are less likely to endorse heteronormative rape myths and sexual scripts (Wilson & Newins, 2019; Worthen, 2021). The items in the TRSS-J are mainly heteronormative and based on traditional sexual scripts, which do not fit the reality of non-heterosexual individuals. Since the traditional gendered sexual scripts do not apply to them, it makes sense that they would not embrace such beliefs.

For individuals who had been sexually victimized, the negative association with token resistance beliefs is not as clear. However, it can be speculated that these individuals' own experience is affecting their beliefs. For example, they might have engaged in behaviors that

were perceived as token resistance, despite their unwantedness to engage in sexual activities, and victimized in the process, resulting in lower acceptance of token resistance beliefs. It is also possible that they engaged in behaviors perceived as token resistance due to their low token resistance beliefs and, as a result, were victimized. A causal relationship cannot be inferred from this study, but this finding provides an interesting topic for future examination.

Removal Consent Communication

The results revealed that Japanese individuals engage in various behaviors to communicate consent. However, removal behaviors were the only communication type with significant predictors. It was found that men, compared to women, and individuals with higher TRSS-J scores were more likely to engage in removal behaviors. Previous studies have identified gendered sexual scripts, where men are expected to pursue sexual activities and begin the interaction (Ford, 2021; Harvey et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2007; Mukai et al., 2021; Pham, 2016; Rittenhour & Sauder, 2023; Seabrook et al., 2016; Shumlich & Fisher, 2018; Ward et al., 2022; Wiederman, 2005). This study's finding aligns with such scripts, as most removal behaviors involve taking the initiative. Furthermore, many of the TRSS-J items include some form of removal behaviors. Respondents may be particularly more likely to use removal behaviors if they perceive those behaviors to be solid and early indicators of sexual wantedness.

Experiences

The final research question entailed understanding what factors affected Japanese people's sexual experiences, especially those involving acknowledged sexual victimization and gray zone sexual assaults. Unsurprisingly, individuals in a dating relationship were more likely to

report having had sex, being sexually victimized, and having had compliant and token resistant sex. Other factors, such as age, gender, sexual orientation, token resistance beliefs, and rape myths acceptance, were also found to be associated with respondents' sexual experiences.

Intercourse

The predictors for whether individuals had had sexual intercourse in the past was their age, gender, and relationship status. This finding is not surprising since individuals' encounters of any kind of experience—sexual or not—increase as they age. Individuals who are dating are also likely to have more stable access to a sexual partner compared to those who are not. Their participation in sexual activities could be a natural result of their sexual desires and an influence of relationship scripts that dictate that dating relationships should entail sexual activities (Farrer et al., 2008; Farrer et al., 2012). Furthermore, the emergence of gender as a significant predictor of intercourse experience alludes to the gender-based sexual socialization process in Japan. This study's finding that men were more likely to have had sex compared to other genders could be a reflection of what previous studies have found; men are expected to be the sexual conquerors (Jenkins & Dambrot, 1987), resulting in the external and internal pressures to engage in as many sexual activities as possible.

Sexual Victimization

In this study's sample, respondents' sexual victimization was predicted by their sexual minority status, dating relationship, and lower TRSS-J scores. Various data have demonstrated that sexual minority members are at higher risk of being sexually victimized (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2022; López & Yeater, 2021), which is further supported by this study. Dating also increases the risks of sexual victimization, which is consistent with the literature

that most sexual assault cases are committed by someone the victim knows, including current or ex-partners (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2021, 2022; Spring, 2020). As access to sexual interactions increases by being in a romantic or sexual relationship, so do the risks of nonconsensual sexual activities.

The relationship between sexual victimization and token resistance beliefs has already been established in a previous section discussing token resistance beliefs' predictors. To reiterate this point, respondents with higher token resistance beliefs were less likely to be sexually victimized, perhaps because they perceive a wider range of behaviors as indicative of sexual wantedness and thus able to avoid those situations. When considered with the multiple regression results of respondents' perceptions of consensuality, responsibility, and acceptability of the vignette scenarios, these findings indicate that token resistance beliefs may act as a protective factor against sexual victimization by avoidance of engagement in such behaviors, while also a risk factor for sexual offending by decreasing individuals' ability to identify nonconsensual communication. In fact, past studies have linked higher endorsement of token resistance beliefs with more coercive behaviors (Jozkowski, Sanders, et al., 2014), less likelihood to recognize sexual assault and consent (Shafer et al., 2018), and rape proclivity (Masser et al., 2006).

Compliant Sex

Strong predictors of having engaged in compliant sex were respondents' age and dating relationship status. Older respondents and those who were dating were more likely to have had compliant sex. The age variable could be explained by generational culture and experience-based differences. According to Kalra and colleagues (1998), older women endorsed rape myths

to a greater extent. Older generations may have been exposed to and normalized traditional sexual scripts, in which individuals in a relationship are expected to engage in sexual activities, more so than younger generations who grew up in an environment where sexual diversity is becoming more asserted. Older individuals may also be simply more likely to have engaged in compliant sex because they have lived longer and thus have had more sexual experience in general, which aligns with the finding on the predictors of having had sexual intercourse. Similarly, dating individuals were more likely to have had compliant sex because they might have followed relationship scripts and had more sexual experience, which is supported by the finding presented earlier that they were also more likely to have had sex than individuals who were not dating.

Token Resistant Sex

Dating was also a significant predictor for having had token resistant sex, which the same reasons as compliant sex could explain. In addition to respondents' relationship status, their uIRMA-J scores also predicted their engagement in token resistant sex. Higher uIRMA-J scores resulted in a greater likelihood of having had token resistant sex. The uIRMA-J contains items that reprimand female behaviors perceived as promiscuous and provocative, reinforcing beliefs that women should be sexually modest. Previous studies have indeed reported that some individuals engage in token resistance for fear of appearing promiscuous (Muehlenhard & Hollabaugh, 1988; Muehlenhard & Rodgers, 1998). Furthermore, some uIRMA-J items also relate to the myth that "it isn't really rape" if physical coercion from the offender and physical resistance from the victim are not present. Therefore, it could be argued that individuals who

have higher female rape myths acceptance may believe that their verbal refusal does not really count as a refusal and try to appear sexually modest, resulting in token resistance behaviors.

While the finding regarding uIRMA-J scores makes sense theoretically, an unexpected relationship was found between token resistant sexual experience and respondents' MRMS-J scores. It was found that individuals with higher MRMS-J scores were less likely to have engaged in token resistant sex. The researcher cannot speculate on a potential explanation regarding this relationship at this point, so future research should explore this issue further.

Limitations

Data Collection

Although this thesis has produced valuable exploratory data and opened up doors for future research, its findings must be interpreted cautiously due to several limitations. Some primary concerns associated with data collection are generalizability, internal validity, and the researcher's influence.

First, the study did not achieve strong generalizability because participant selection was not entirely random. Focus group participants were selected through convenience sampling, which was comprised of college-age individuals and lacked the representation of individuals who identified as men and nonbinary genders. These individuals were also in the U.S. studying abroad when the focus groups were conducted, so they were not true representations of the Japanese population.

Furthermore, the online survey was disseminated primarily through the researcher's social media and social circles. Not only was the access to the survey limited to those who had

access to social media or the Internet at the very least, but also mainly to individuals who knew or were virtually "connected" in some way with the researcher or the researcher's acquaintances who re-shared the survey with others. The survey was also posted in some Japanese public forums, such as open group chats in LINE. However, most of the population in those forums were college-age individuals, resulting in a biased sample. In addition, given that the survey consisted of a sensitive topic and was rather exhaustive, respondents who successfully completed the survey were more likely to be individuals who were interested in this topic or wanted to help.

Related to sample bias, the small sample size of this study is also one of the major concerns when interpreting the findings. Two factors likely influenced the sample size: one is the limited distribution avenues, and the other relates to the survey context and length. As mentioned earlier, the survey was disseminated mainly through social media, a few public forums, and the researcher's acquaintances. Hence, the survey did not reach a larger population, which resulted in a smaller sample size. The other factor, involving the survey context and length, is discussed in the Research Design section, along with other potential limitations related to this study's research design. However, it is highly probable that the main factor affecting this study's lack of significant findings is its small sample size.

Next to generalizability concerns are threats to internal validity. To address internal validity, factorial vignettes introduced an experimental component to the study by randomly assigning the vignette variables to respondents. Although this process helped manage spuriousness, it could not fully address other factors that may have influenced internal validity. One possible concern is the effects of external events. Some recent events that may have

impacted the outcome of this thesis were the changes in Japanese law concerning sexual violence, the #MeToo movement, and Johnny Kitagawa's sexual abuse scandal.

In 2017, Japanese laws regarding sexual crimes were significantly revised for the first time since 1907, when the code was first written. These revisions expanded the legal definition of rape to include non-female victims, established a new provision targeting parents or guardians who sexually abuse children, increased the minimum sentencing for rape, and removed a provision that required victims to press charges before a case could be prosecuted (Japan's Ministry of Justice, 2017). More recently, the government passed a new revision effective from July of 2023 regarding the legal age of consent, definitions of rape and sex, grooming, voyeurism, and statutes of limitations for sex crimes (Japan's Ministry of Justice, 2023). The new provisions introduced the language of "nonconsent" in defining sexual assault for the first time in Japanese sexual violence laws and raised the age of consent from 13 to 16 years old.

Outside the legal realm, the Japanese version of the #MeToo movement also brought attention to sexual violence, harassment, and gender inequality issues in Japan. This movement and a series of sex crime cases that were given a not-guilty verdict in 2019 have also sparked a movement called Flower Demo (https://www.flowerdemo.org/) across the country. Furthermore, given the widespread and immense popularity of the boys' idol groups from the Johnny & Associates talent agency, Johnny Kitagawa's sexual abuse scandal has also gained much attention and mixed reactions within Japan and all over the world since 2023 when BBC released a documentary exposing the abuse allegations. These momentous changes were likely

fresh in the minds of the Japanese public, potentially affecting participants' perceptions, responses, and familiarity with consent definitions.

Another limitation of this study is the researcher's influence on the process and findings. As noted earlier, participant recruitment relied primarily on the researcher's outreach, which biased the sample population. Moreover, my own characteristics—such as being young, a woman, a graduate student, a member of the Japanese community, and an international student in the U.S.—also impacted what information participants shared with me. These characteristics were not necessarily harmful to the study, considering that the focus groups' participants seemed more open and comfortable talking with someone around their age with similar backgrounds. Moreover, rapport was already established before the focus groups, which appeared to have encouraged open and honest discussion on a rather sensitive topic. However, in the only-men focus group, I observed moments when the participants felt awkward or hesitated to use some words in front of me, which likely came from our gender differences and the sexual nature of the topic. I embrace that this type of concern cannot be eliminated from qualitative studies, and given the lack of resources to conduct this study, there was not much that could have been done to eliminate the awkwardness except for remaining neutral and nonjudgemental toward the participants' remarks and separating the focus groups based on the participants' gender. However, whenever possible in the future, it is recommended that researchers of different backgrounds participate in a study of this nature to minimize one researcher's influence and collect data of various qualities.

Research Design

This research also faced design limitations and challenges that likely influenced the findings and a lack of statistically significant models and variables. A couple of possible explanations for the overall statistically weak findings of the analyses involving the factorial vignettes are issues with the vignette method to examine gray zone sexual assaults, variable dimensions, vignette-level dependent variables (DVs), and confusion transpiring from heteropatriarchal norms. Other concerns pertinent to variables outside the factorial vignettes include validity issues and participant fatigue.

First, the vignette method may not have been the best strategy for examining nonconsent perceptions in nontraditional sexual assault scenarios. Strong empirical evidence supports vignette use in perception research (Auspurg & Hinz, 2015; Barnatt et al., 2007; Schoenberg & Ravdal, 2000). However, gray zone sexual assaults are often complex and share some characteristics with consensual sexual interactions. Based on the focus group pretests and in an attempt to provide sufficient indications distinguishing consensual interactions and gray zone sexual assaults, it is possible that the vignette scenarios included too many controlled factors that were more influential than the independent variables (IVs).

Second, it is possible that this study's vignette dimensions were not significant predictors of consent perceptions in Japan. Although there is a great amount of prior research consistently demonstrating the association between the vignette-level IVs used in this study, consent determination, and acquaintance rape scripts (e.g., Carroll & Clark, 2006; Clark & Carroll, 2008; Davies & Rogers, 2006; Hlavka, 2017; King, 2017; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004; Ryan, 1988, 2011), there might be other more influential predictors unique to the Japanese culture. However, this possibility is low since sexual scripts in line with previous research and

the vignette dimensions used in this study were identified in the focus groups with Japanese individuals. The focus groups also adjusted the scenarios' language to become more culturally accurate, realistic, and an adequate measure of the intended variables, which were tested and refined in later focus groups.

Another possible concern relates to the vignette-level DVs. The questions were formed based on previous studies administering factorial vignettes and measuring similar concepts (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Humphreys, 2007; Lim & Roloff, 1999; Lofgreen et al., 2021). However, reliability tests showed inconsistent results for the offender willingness scale, in which the two items expected to form this scale showed reasonable internal consistency reliability for the post-party scenario but unacceptable internal consistency for the date scenario. This inconsistency could be either a result of problems with the DVs or the vignette scenario itself. Either way, future research must develop and test more reliable measurements of consent perceptions and responsibility attributions that other studies can replicate.

In addition, another factor that potentially influenced this study's vignette-related findings is the effect of heteropatriarchal norms and respondents' bias. In all focus groups conducted in this study, participants expressed confusion around the vignettes depicting same-gender victimization, whereas no comprehensibility or acceptability issues arose for different gender victimization scenarios. During the early focus group tests, when the vignette parties' gender was conveyed only through their names, some focus group participants noted that, while they recognized the individuals' gender accurately at the beginning, they felt confused as the sexual interactions unfolded and changed their gender interpretations in a way that fits the traditional sexual script of male-to-female sexual assault. For example, when reading a sexual

assault of Yuka by Mizuki, they retrospectively interpreted Yuka as a man and Mizuki as a woman after the sexual interactions unfolded, even though they initially accurately identified both Yuka and Mizuki as women when they began reading the scenario. This phenomenon is likely a reflection of individuals' bias and endorsement of heteropatriarchal norms that posit men as offenders and women as victims (Aosved & Long, 2006; Kassing et al., 2005).

Following this feedback, various steps were taken to clarify the gender of the vignette parties, such as using more explicitly gendered names and adding the parties' gender in parentheses after their names are first mentioned. Some wordings were also modified so that they would not feel too "strange" in same-gender scenarios to avoid the risks of what participants may perceive as implausible and illogical cases (Auspurg & Hinz, 2015). Nonetheless, it is still possible that heteropatriarchal bias created confusion among some respondents. Alternatively, explicitly mentioning the vignette parties' genders might also have distracted some respondents, affecting the results.

Aside from the limitations associated with the factorial vignettes, the other instruments used in this study also experienced potential challenges regarding their validity. Despite the researcher's best efforts to ensure the validity of TRSS-J, uIRMA-J, and MRMS-J scales, not enough pretests were conducted to strongly validate their cultural adjustments. Due to time constraints and limited resources, conducting a few focus groups was the only method to adjust preexisting scales to fit the Japanese cultural context. Although this method provided valuable adjustments and all the scales demonstrated acceptable internal consistency reliability, more testing is needed in the future to ensure that this is the best model to examine rape myths acceptance and token resistance beliefs in Japan.

Lastly, participant fatigue is one of the major concerns in this study, which likely contributed to the small number of valid responses and final sample size. To reduce the risks of fatigue, boredom, and response heuristics (Auspurg & Hinz, 2015), this study adopted a between-subject design in which each respondent received only one version of each scenario type (i.e., date and post-party). Nonetheless, this thesis was exploratory in nature and, thus, included three scales intended to measure respondents' beliefs, one scale to measure respondents' behaviors, and several demographic and personal experiences questions in addition to the vignette scenarios and their related questions. As a result, the final survey consisted of 138 questions in total. The length of the survey, compounded with the topic's sensitivity and lack of compensation, most likely caused participant fatigue and low response and completion rates. Many of the responses had missing data, which impeded the researcher from conducting more in-depth analyses and elicited concerns regarding the study's generalizability. Offering incentives to complete the survey and administering a shorter instrument may be a way to remedy this issue in the future.

Future Research and Implications

Despite the limitations discussed earlier, it is worth noting that this exploratory study offers various avenues for future research that would eventually contribute to policy development. First and foremost, the importance of qualitative studies should be emphasized, given the infancy of research in this area in Japan. Future research should focus on interviews and focus groups with Japanese individuals from diverse backgrounds to better identify Japanese sexual scripts, rape myths, and consent communication. The TRSS-J, uIRMA-J, and

MRMS-J scales adjusted in this study showed valuable insight and great potential. However, due to the sample size, sample bias, and validity issues, the scales must be further tested and refined before they can be used in other studies. In addition to the scales, the vignette scenarios and measurements of consent perceptions also need to be further developed using additional pretests to better identify and address the lack of findings in this study.

While all the factors examined in this thesis warrant further examination, relationship status, different modes of consent communication, and token resistance should be paid special attention to. In this study, relationship expectations within traditional sexual scripts, implicit nonconsent communication, and token resistance beliefs were particularly prominent, indicating the strength of these factors in Japan. Considering that adherence to relationship scripts harbors risks of domestic and dating violence, unacknowledged rape, and lack of support to the victim, it is of crucial importance that relationship norms in Japan are further explored.

Moreover, this study also found implicit nonconsent communication as the strongest predictor of nonconsent perceptions among other communication styles. As affirmative consent laws are being passed in different parts of the world (Featherstone et al., 2024), a more in-depth examination of how Japanese people perceive and ascribe meanings to different behaviors related to sexual consent is necessary before discussing whether affirmative consent is the appropriate and effective model to prevent and address sexual violence in Japan.

Additionally, whereas the female and male rape myths acceptance did not emerge as strong predictors, token resistance variables were consistently shown as significant. Removal consent communication behaviors, which share many elements with behaviors illustrated in the token resistance scale, also emerged as significant. Albeit preliminary and not without

limitations, as discussed earlier, these findings point to the potentially unique position of token resistance in Japan. Moreover, as indicated in this study's findings, the possibility and pathways that token resistance acts as both protective and risk factors should be further investigated.

Other factors related to the gray zones that were beyond the scope of this study are alcohol and authority-involved sexual assaults. Alcohol was included in this study as a controlled factor in order to make the vignette scenarios more realistic following the focus groups' feedback. In the future, it would be essential to examine the effects of alcohol on Japanese individuals' perceptions of consent. Moreover, following the high publicity of Johnny's case and given that a large proportion of sexual assaults of young adults in Japan involve someone in an authoritative position (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2022), it would be interesting to examine how the Japanese public perceive authority-involved sexual assault cases.

Regarding research design, future studies should also implement within-subject designs. One of the advantages of factorial vignettes is that they allow researchers to infer causality. Due to considerations of participant fatigue, this thesis adopted a between-subject design, which prevented the researcher from examining how individuals' perceptions change when provided with the same scenario but different vignette dimensions. Upon further development of the vignette scenarios and variables, within-subject designs could provide beneficial insights for policy development.

Conclusion

This thesis implemented an exploratory sequential research design, utilizing focus groups and an online survey, to examine the nuanced factors influencing Japanese individuals' perceptions, beliefs, behaviors, and experiences concerning gray zone sexual interactions. It aimed to address significant gaps in existing literature by contributing to the emerging field of sexual consent and developing this topic in non-Western cultural contexts. Given the tumultuous changes in the public's understanding of sexual violence and consent in Japan due to social movements, high-profile cases, and recent legal revisions, the questions and preliminary findings propounded by this study are particularly relevant and meaningful.

Through regression analyses, the study uncovered several critical findings. Notably, the findings underscore the pervasive influence of relationship norms and obligations within traditional sexual scripts. Gendered and heteropatriarchal expectations contribute to differential perceptions of consent, which could result in the dismissal of sexual assaults committed in certain relationships. High endorsement of such scripts harbors the risks of domestic and dating violence, unacknowledged rape, and lack of victim support, emphasizing the need to further examine and identify the social constructs that shape sexual interactions in Japan.

Furthermore, this study revealed some aspects of consent that Japanese individuals may find more consistently significant. The presence of implicit and explicit nonconsent communications was found to be associated with improved perceptions of sexual coerciveness in gray zone sexual assaults compared to the absence of nonconsent communication. Such findings demonstrate that the absence of nonconsent communication is often interpreted as

consent, increasing the risks of sexual assaults where the victim cannot express nonconsent due to intoxication, societal pressures, freeze response, and other reasons.

Token resistance beliefs—based on gendered scripts and involving interpreting a wider range of behaviors as consent indications—have also emerged as a consistent predictor influencing individuals' consent perceptions and behaviors. In line with previous research, this study's findings also indicated that higher endorsements of token resistance beliefs lead to diminished perceptions of nonconsent, potentially causing gray zone sexual offending. On the other hand, the analysis additionally revealed an intriguing negative association between token resistance beliefs and sexual victimization, suggesting that such beliefs might act as protective factors against victimization.

While it is too soon to draw any conclusions or inform sexual violence prevention and intervention policies given the study's limitations, this thesis contributes to an opening understanding of sexual consent and intimacy in Japan and provides a foundation for future research in this area. Understanding the complexities of consent dynamics in diverse cultural contexts is crucial for promoting healthy and respectful sexual relationships and addressing the hidden banality of sexual violence.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Changes in Japanese Rape Laws from 1907 to 2023

	1907-2017	2017-2023	2023-
Statute name	Crime of Rape (against Women)	Crime of Forced Sex	Crime of Nonconsensual Sex
Type of behaviors	Vaginal sex	• Vaginal sex • Oral sex • Anal sex	• Vaginal sex • Oral sex • Anal sex • Insertion of body parts or objects into the vagina, anus, or mouth; or forcing the other person to do such things
Requirement	Involve physical force or intimidation	—	Involve making or taking advantage of an individual unable to form, express, or carry through on their non-consent through the following behaviors: • Violence or intimidation • Physical disability • Intoxication/Drugging • Asleep/Unconscious • No chance to resist • Unexpected situations causing shock or fear • Psychological reaction due to abuse • Abuse of financial or social status
Victim definition	Female only	Any gender	—
Offender definition	Male only	Any gender	—
Age of consent	13 years old	—	16 years old[a]
Minimum sentence	3 years imprisonment	5 years imprisonment	—

Appendix A continued.

	1907-2017	2017-2023	2023-
Statute limitation	10 years	—	15 years[b]
Other relevant provisions	• Gang Rape: more severe sentencing when there are two or more offenders involved • The victim needs to press charges to prosecute the offender	Removed • Gang Rape provision • Victim's requirement to press charges Added Sex by Guardian: criminalize sex with individuals under 18 by guardians[c]	Added • Grooming: criminalize demands to meet with individuals under 16 for obscene purposes • Voyeurism: criminalize the taking, distribution, and possession of sexually exploitative photographs or videos of others

[a] Sexual intercourse involving a 13- to 15-year-old is legal if the age gap is less than five years.

[b] If the crime happened when the victim was under 18, the years it takes to become 18 will be added to the statute of limitation.

[c] Guardian refers to an individual who lives with and takes care of children under 18. It refers only to those whose position is equivalent to parents (e.g., parents, adoptive parents, orphanage staff).

Appendix B: Missouri State University IRB Approval Notice

Appendix B-1: Initial Approval

To:
Samantha Tjaden
Criminology

RE: Notice of IRB Approval
Submission Type: Initial
Study #: IRB-FY2023-367
Study Title: Navigating Sexual Consent in Japan (NSCJ)
Decision: Approved

Approval Date: March 21, 2023

This submission has been approved by the Missouri State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). You are required to obtain IRB approval for any changes to any aspect of this study before they can be implemented. Should any adverse event or unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others occur it must be reported immediately to the IRB.

This study was reviewed in accordance with federal regulations governing human subjects research, including those found at 45 CFR 46 (Common Rule), 45 CFR 164 (HIPAA), 21 CFR 50 & 56 (FDA), and 40 CFR 26 (EPA), where applicable.

Researchers Associated with this Project:
PI: Samantha Tjaden
Co-PI:
Primary Contact: Samara Mizutani Cesar
Other Investigators: Samara Mizutani Cesar

Appendix B-2: Modification Approval

To:
Samantha Tjaden
School of Criminology & Criminal Justice

RE: Notice of IRB Approval
Submission Type: Modification
Study #: IRB-FY2023-367
Study Title: Navigating Sexual Consent in Japan (NSCJ)
Decision: Approved

Approval Date: July 21, 2023

This submission has been approved by the Missouri State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). You are required to obtain IRB approval for any changes to any aspect of this study before they can be implemented. Should any adverse event or unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others occur it must be reported immediately to the IRB.

This study was reviewed in accordance with federal regulations governing human subjects research, including those found at 45 CFR 46 (Common Rule), 45 CFR 164 (HIPAA), 21 CFR 50 & 56 (FDA), and 40 CFR 26 (EPA), where applicable.

Researchers Associated with this Project:
PI: Samantha Tjaden
Co-PI:
Primary Contact: Samara Mizutani Cesar
Other Investigators: Samara Mizutani Cesar

Appendix C: Focus Group Guide

Questions about vignette scenarios

1. If I use the word “X gender,” what comes to mind? Do you think most Japanese people will understand the meaning of the word?
2. Was the first scenario understandable?
3. How realistic do you find the scenario?
4. Is there anything that you would change or that stood out to you as problematic or confusing?
5. How drunk do you think the characters in this scenario were?
6. Are the following communications of non-consent implicit or explicit?
    - Laughing and trying to change the subject
    - Saying wait and dodging slightly
    - Turning face away and closing eyes
    - Saying it’s too soon and grasping their arm
7. Was the second scenario understandable?
8. How realistic do you find the scenario?
9. Is there anything that you would change or that stood out to you as problematic or confusing?
10. How drunk do you think the characters in this scenario were?
11. Are the following communications of non-consent implicit or explicit?
    - Saying is tired today
    - Turning face away

- Mumbling something and slightly shaking legs and arms
- Saying, “No, I don’t want to do” while turning body to the other side

Questions about survey instruments

1. Are there any statements or questions that you think feel weird or wrong in the Japanese context or need more clarification?
2. In the U.S., the word “sex” often refers to inserting a body part or object into someone’s vagina, anus, or mouth. In Japan, how do you refer to such behaviors? What is your impression when you hear or read those terms? What term do you think feels natural if you see it on a survey?
3. In the U.S., the word “rape” often refers to inserting a body part or object into someone’s vagina, anus, or mouth through the use of force or threat. In Japan, how do you refer to such behaviors? What is your impression when you hear or read those terms? What term do you think feels natural if you see it on a survey?
4. When you think of rape, what kind of situations do you think of?
5. What social or individual factors do you think lead to rape and sexual assault?
6. How do you think we can determine whether a situation was “real rape” or not?
7. What roles does alcohol play, if any, in sexual intimacy in Japan?
8. During a sexual interaction, what behaviors do you think are normal for man/woman/nonbinary individuals to engage in?
9. What behaviors do you think Japanese people engage in when they want to initiate or invite the other person to participate in a sexual activity?

10. What behaviors do you think Japanese people engage in when they want to express that they are also willing to or okay with participating in a sexual activity that the other person has initiated or invited them to?
11. What behaviors do you think Japanese people engage in when they want to express that they do not wish to participate in a sexual activity that the other person has initiated or invited them to?

Appendix D: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	*n*	*M (%)*	*SD*	Range
Age[a]	174	22.00	7.78	18-73
Home Region				
Hokkaido	6	3.4%	–	0-1
Tohoku	5	2.9%	–	0-1
Kanto	89	51.1%	–	0-1
Chubu	22	12.6%	–	0-1
Kinki	33	19.0%	–	0-1
Chugoku	5	2.9%	–	0-1
Shikoku	4	2.3%	–	0-1
Kyushu	9	5.2%	–	0-1
Education				
Not Attending	49	28.2%	–	0-1
College	118	67.8%	–	0-1
Grad/Law School	7	4.0%	–	0-1
Occupation				
Unemployed	44	25.3%	–	0-1
Part-Time	70	40.2%	–	0-1
Full-Time	42	24.1%	–	0-1
Self-Employed	3	1.7%	–	0-1
Gender				
Man	41	23.6%	–	0-1
Woman	129	74.1%	–	0-1
Other	4	2.3%	–	0-1
Sexual Orientation				
Heterosexual	143	82.2%	–	0-1
Gay/Lesbian	3	1.7%	–	0-1
Other	25	14.4%	–	0-1
Relationship				
Single	82	47.1%	–	0-1
Dating	75	43.1%	–	0-1
Committed	13	7.5%	–	0-1
Number of Children[a]	141	0.00	0.52	0-3
Had Sex[b]	98	56.3%	–	0-1
Been Sexually Victimized[b]	14	8.0%	–	0-1
Know a Victim[b]	35	20.1%	–	0-1
Compliant Sex Frequency	137	1.00	–	1-4
Token Resistant Sex Frequency	137	1.00	–	1-5
Consent Definition Familiarity	137	3.00	–	1-5
TRSS-J	140	20.01	6.63	8.00-40.00
uIRMA-J	106	54.25	16.55	23.00-94.00
MRMS-J	116	53.91	18.37	22.00-97.00

Appendix D continued.

Variable	n	M (%)	SD	Range
CSS				
Nonverbal	122	35.56	6.82	12.00-48.00
Verbal	125	36.85	10.31	14.00-56.00
Passive	124	28.91	6.54	9.00-36.00
Initiator	130	15.26	6.03	6.00-24.00
Removal	134	9.66	3.28	4.00-16.00

[a] The median is reported as the best measure of central tendency for these ratio-level variables since skewness statistics of 4.67 (Age) and 4.21 (Number of Children) indicated that the distributions are skewed.

[b] Values reflect the number and percentage of participants answering "yes" to this question.

Appendix E: Demographic Questions

1. How old are you?

2. What is your current residential status? Please select one.

☐ National resident (Japanese) ☐ Permanent resident (other nationality) ☐ Other type of resident ________

3. What prefecture are you from? (Please select [Abroad] if other than Japan)

☐ Hokkaido
☐ Aomori
☐ Iwate
☐ Miyagi
☐ Akita
☐ Yamagata
☐ Fukushima
☐ Ibaraki
☐ Tochigi
☐ Gunma
☐ Saitama
☐ Chiba
☐ Tokyo
☐ Kanagawa
☐ Niigata
☐ Toyama
☐ Ishikawa
☐ Fukui
☐ Yamanashi
☐ Nagano
☐ Gifu
☐ Shizuoka
☐ Aichi
☐ Mie
☐ Shiga
☐ Kyoto
☐ Osaka
☐ Hyogo
☐ Nara
☐ Wakayama
☐ Tottor
☐ Shimane
☐ Okayama
☐ Hiroshima
☐ Yamaguchi
☐ Tokushima
☐ Kagawa
☐ Ehime
☐ Kochi
☐ Fukuoka
☐ Saga
☐ Nagasaki
☐ Kumamoto
☐ Oita
☐ Miyazaki
☐ Kagoshima
☐ Okinawa
☐ Abroad

4. What is your current educational status? Please select all that apply.

☐ Not attending any educational institution
☐ High school
☐ Vocational school
☐ Community college
☐ College
☐ Grad/law school
☐ Other _______

5. What is your current occupational status? Please select all that apply.

☐ Owner/executive
☐ Full/permanent worker
☐ Contract/temporary worker
☐ Government employee
☐ Self-employed/freelancer
☐ Part-time worker
☐ Full-time homemaker
☐ Not working
☐ Other _______

6. What is your gender identity? Please select one.

☐ Man
☐ Woman
☐ Other ______
☐ Questioning/undecided
☐ Prefer not to respond

7. What is your sexual orientation? Please select one.

☐ Heterosexual
☐ Gay/lesbian
☐ Other _____
☐ Questioning/undecided
☐ Prefer not to respond

8. What is your current relationship status? Please select one.

☐ Single/separated/widowed
☐ Casual
☐ Serious
☐ Partnered (through the partnership system)
☐ Married
☐ Prefer not to respond

9. How many children do you have? (If none, please type [0])

Appendix F: General Personal Questions

1. Have you ever had sex?

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. Have you ever been a victim of sexual violence?

☐ Yes

☐ No

3. Has anyone you know ever been a victim of sexual violence?

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. How often have you expressed willingness or agreement to engage in sexual activity when you actually did not want to at the moment that you expressed consent?

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

5. How often have you expressed unwillingness or disagreement to engage in sexual activity when you actually wanted to at the moment that you expressed non-consent?

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

6. How much are you familiar with the meaning and definition of the word "sexual consent"?

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Never heard of it	Heard of it but unfamiliar	Somewhat familiar	Familiar	Very familiar

Appendix G: Token Resistance to Sex Scale (TRSS-J)

Likert 6-point scale

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

1. Even if a woman wants to have sex, she usually says that she's not interested.
2. Even if a woman appears to be resisting, if a man can easily have sex with her without using much physical force, then the woman is probably just putting up a show and actually wants the man to force her.
3. A woman who rejects sex at the very last minute during sexual interactions, such as kissing and petting, is likely pretending not to want it while actually wanting it.
4. A woman who invites a man on a date is willing to have sex with him.
5. To avoid being seen as promiscuous or too loose, a woman often pretends she doesn't want to have sex, but she's actually hoping the man will force her.
6. When a woman receives expensive branded items from a man, she's generally willing to have sex with him.
7. Going to the other person's or one's own home after a date is a woman's way to indicate their willingness to have sex.
8. When a woman agrees to drink alone with a man at night, it's because she wants to have sex with him.

Appendix H: Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (uIRMA-J)

Likert 6-point scale

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

1. If a woman is raped while she is drunk, she is also somewhat responsible for letting things get out of hand.
2. When a woman is dressed provocatively or revealingly, it's like she is asking for trouble.
3. If a woman goes to a room with a man alone and is raped there, she is also somewhat responsible for the event.
4. If a woman behaves promiscuously, it's only a matter of time before she gets into sexual trouble.
5. Women are often raped because their way of refusing is ambiguous.
6. If a woman initiates kissing or cuddling, she should not be surprised if a man assumes, "She wants to have sex."
7. Men rape often due to their strong sexual desires.
8. Men usually don't intend to force sex on women, but sometimes, they cannot control themselves.
9. Rape happens when a man's sexual desire goes out of control.
10. If a man is drunk, he might rape someone unintentionally.
11. If a man is drunk and unaware of his actions, it shouldn't be considered rape.
12. If both people are drunk, you can't really say it was rape.

13. Even if a woman verbally refuses sex, if she doesn't resist, you can't really say it was rape.
14. If a woman doesn't physically fight back, such as pushing or kicking, you can't really say it was rape.
15. If a woman claims she was raped but has no injuries or bruises, she probably wasn't raped.
16. Unless she was forcibly restrained or threatened with a weapon, you can't really say it was rape.
17. If a woman can openly claim that she was raped, she probably hasn't experienced real rape.
18. If a woman didn't clearly say "stop," it's unfair for her to claim later on that she was raped.
19. Among those women who claim to have been raped, many actually agreed to have sex but then regretted it afterward.
20. As a way of getting back at their ex-boyfriends and bosses, many women accuse them of rape.
21. Among those women who claim to have been raped, many actually led the guy on but then regretted it afterward.
22. Women who are caught cheating on their partners may use rape as an excuse, saying, "I wasn't cheating; I was raped."
23. It's generally unlikely for a woman to rape another woman.

Appendix I: Male Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (MRMS-J)

Likert 6-point scale

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

1. Women who rape men are sexually frustrated individuals.
2. Whether a man has actually been raped depends largely on how much he resisted.
3. If a man claimed to have been raped by a woman, I would suspect there is another side to his story.
4. Rape against men is more commonly perpetrated by homosexual men.
5. Even if a man is coerced into sex when he's not interested in it, he would consider it lucky and enjoy it.
6. If a man is raped by a woman and doesn't escape or forcefully stop her, he's also somewhat responsible.
7. Among those men who claim to have been raped by other men, many initially accepted romantic or sexual relationships with their same sex but then regretted it afterward.
8. Among those men who claim to have been raped by other men, many lie by saying, "I was raped against my will," to prevent others from finding out that they are homosexual (gay).
9. If a man truly doesn't want it, any healthy man can successfully resist a rapist.
10. If a man obtained an erection while being raped, it can be assumed that he became aroused and started enjoying the sexual activity, even if he initially resisted it.

11. Even if a man is raped, the event is unlikely to be as traumatic for him as it would be for a woman.
12. If a man initiates kissing and foreplaying and his partner becomes aroused and coerces sex, the man who let the situation escalate is responsible.
13. Men who are proud of their manhood would never admit that they were raped.
14. Being raped makes men lose their manhood.
15. Rape against men is more serious when the victim is heterosexual (straight) than when the victim is homosexual (gay).
16. Among those men who have been raped, most engaged in promiscuous sex.
17. If a man is raped by another man and doesn't escape or forcefully stop him, he's also somewhat responsible.
18. A man who allows himself to be raped by another man is probably homosexual (gay).
19. Serious, responsible men who don't engage in nightlife or promiscuity are unlikely to find themselves in a situation where they are raped.
20. It's unlikely for a typical man to be in a situation where he's raped unless the perpetrator is older or has a higher social standing.
21. If a man claimed to have been raped by a woman, it's understandable to question and criticize him for allowing that situation to happen.
22. Unless a man is weakened through the use of sleeping pills or alcohol, it's basically impossible to rape a man.

Appendix J: Vignette Scenarios' Questions

Likert 6-point scale

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

1. [Offender name] wanted to [intimate contact (kiss/touch)].
2. [Victim name] wanted to [intimate contact (kiss/touch)].
3. [Offender name] wanted to have sex.
4. [Victim name] wanted to have sex.
5. [Offender name] asked for consent to [intimate contact] through their words or behaviors.
6. [Victim name] consented to [intimate contact] through their words or behaviors.
7. [Offender name] asked for consent to sex through their words or behaviors.
8. [Victim name] consented to sex through their words or behaviors.
9. The approach [offender name] took to initiating sexual activity is acceptable.
10. If [victim name] really didn't want to have sexual relations, they would have stopped [offender name].
11. [Victim name] could have influenced or changed the likelihood of the situation happening as it did.
12. [Offender name] could have influenced or changed the likelihood of the situation happening as it did.
13. The peers in this scenario could have influenced or changed the likelihood of the situation happening as it did. (This question was asked in the post-party scenario only)

Appendix K: Consent to Sex Scale (CSS-J)

Likert 4-point scale

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. There would be skinship (physical contact).
2. I would reduce the (physical) distance between myself and my partner.
3. I would sexually stimulate my partner through caressing and other forms of touching.
4. I would kiss my partner.
5. I would communicate using my facial expressions.
6. I would engage in cuddling or affectionate behavior.
7. I would actively participate in sexual activity.
8. I would smile.
9. I would look into the eyes of my partner.
10. I would watch sexually arousing videos or movies.
11. I would use nonverbal cues or gestures.
12. I would turn off the lights.
13. I would talk about sexual activity with my partner.
14. I would give permission to engage in sex.
15. I would tell my partner what types of sexual activity I want to engage in.
16. I would encourage my partner to have sex by saying, “Let’s do it.”
17. I would invite my partner to have sex by saying, “Do you want to do it?”

18. I would say things like, “I want to do it,” or “I couldn’t help but want it.”

19. I would ask my partner if they want to have sex by saying, “Do you want to do it?”

20. I would verbally communicate my interest in sexual behavior.

21. I would ask my partner if they have a condom.

22. I would ask my partner, “Shall I get a condom?”

23. I would ask my partner if they’re in their period.

24. I would tell my partner that I’m not in my period.

25. I would explicitly state that I’m okay with engaging in sexual activity.

26. I would compliment parts of my partner’s body, such as their chest, legs, or muscles.

27. I wouldn’t stop my partner if they initiated sexual activity.

28. I wouldn’t resist my partner’s attempts at sexual activity.

29. I would let my partner have sex with me.

30. I would let the sexual activity progress to the point of sex.

31. I wouldn’t push my partner away.

32. I would continue with sexual activity.

33. I would let my partner go as far as they wanted.

34. I wouldn’t stop my partner’s advances.

35. I would let my partner touch wherever they wanted on my body.

36. I would initiate sexual behavior.

37. I would begin to undress, such as by unzipping my pants.

38. I would move my partner’s hands to my lower body.

39. I would initiate sexual behavior and see if it is reciprocated.

40. I would make a move and check my partner’s reaction.

41. I would keep moving forward in sexual activity unless my partner stops me.

42. I would take my partner to a private room or location.

43. I would take my partner on a date.

44. I would shut or lock the door.

45. I would ask my partner if they want to go back to my place.

Appendix L: Correlation Matrixes

Appendix L-1: Correlation Matrix with Date Scenario Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1. Age	–	.060	-.141	-.082	.038	.047	.094	-.011	.140	-.079	-.034	-.073	-.064	.134	-.087	.041	-.006	.155
2. TRSS-J		–	.656***	.568***	-.064	.048	-.281**	.276**	-.195*	.378***	.392***	.387***	-.067	.249**	.108	.200*	.215*	.375***
3. uIRMA-J			–	.760***	.038	.286**	-.176	.275**	-.100	.189	.354***	.272**	-.087	.201	.169	.194	.316**	.191
4. MRMS-J				–	.038	-.006	-.227*	.341***	-.159	.267**	.359***	.217*	-.075	.059	.069	.091	.133	.190*
5. Compliant Sex					–	.266**	.051	.136	.141	-.022	-.110	.002	.272**	.020	-.027	.225*	-.008	-.006
6. Token Resistant Sex						–	.140	-.036	.038	-.109	.002	.009	.172*	.112	-.051	.110	.169	.039
7. Consent Familiarity							–	-.112	.332***	-.311***	-.156	-.234**	.248**	-.155	.028	-.008	-.019	-.209*
8. Victim Consent								–	-.236**	.514***	.460***	.409***	.256**	.093	-.051	.046	.075	.211*
9. Offender Willingness									–	-.118	-.090	-.027	.102	.126	.162	.171	.241*	.040
10. Offender Consent-Seeking										–	.291***	.394***	.044	.084	-.046	-.026	.056	.194*
11. Victim Blame											–	.160*	.266***	.155	.058	.147	.169	.240**
12. Behavior Acceptability												–	.027	.132	-.018	.077	.218*	.323***
13. Offender Responsibility													–	.084	.141	.088	.159	.130
14. CSS Nonverbal														–	.171	.411***	.354***	.628***
15. CSS Verbal															–	.239**	.650***	.260**
16. CSS Passive																–	.531***	.340***
17. CSS Initiator																	–	.454***
18. CSS Removal																		–

Appendix L-2: Correlation Matrix with Post-Party Scenario Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1. Age	–	.060	-.141	-.082	.038	.047	.094	.157	-.021	.056	.089	.098	.000	-.161*	.134	-.087	.041	-.006	.155
2. TRSS-J		–	.656***	.568***	-.064	.048	-.281**	.415***	-.071	.435***	.364***	.397***	-.142	-.004	.249**	.108	.200*	.215*	.375***
3. uIRMA-J			–	.760***	.038	.286**	-.176	.280**	-.153	.258**	.231*	.210*	-.234*	-.103	.201	.169	.194	.316**	.191
4. MRMS-J				–	.038	-.006	-.227*	.191	-.121	.151	.327***	.150	-.130	.000	.059	.069	.091	.133	.190*
5. Compliant Sex					–	.266**	.051	-.084	.023	-.116	-.003	-.103	.079	-.012	.020	-.027	.225*	-.008	-.006
6. Token Resistant Sex						–	.140	.034	.144	-.110	.062	-.078	.208*	-.142	.112	-.051	.110	.169	.039
7. Consent Familiarity							–	-.192*	.210*	-.346***	-.224*	-.304***	.297***	.005	-.155	.028	-.008	-.019	-.209*
8. Victim Consent								–	-.149	.540***	.495***	.642***	.039	.048	.221*	-.165	-.045	.007	.125
9. Offender Willingness									–	-.066	-.020	-.151	.249**	-.109	.150	.044	.265**	.144	.087
10. Offender Consent-Seeking										–	.521***	.592***	-.042	-.019	.245**	-.180	.016	.007	.173
11. Victim Blame											–	.444***	.268**	.032	.228*	-.090	.080	.083	.120
12. Behavior Acceptability												–	.066	.044	.317***	-.050	.013	.158	.303***
13. Offender Responsibility													–	.155	.017	-.066	-.140	-.029	-.106
14. Peer Responsibility														–	-.068	-.014	-.034	-.014	-.017
15. CSS Nonverbal															–	.171	.411***	.354***	.628***
16. CSS Verbal																–	.239**	.650***	.260**
17. CSS Passive																	–	.531***	.340***
18. CSS Initiator																		–	.454***
19. CSS Removal																			–