

**‘Voicing Up’ About Sexual Consent: Grassroots
organisations in Tokyo tackling gender issues.**



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Abstract

This doctoral thesis, titled ‘Voicing Up About Sexual Consent: Grassroots organisations in Tokyo tackling gender issues’, examines the activities and motivations of two grassroots organisations based in Tokyo that have produced sexual consent projects—Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action (Chabujo) and the Waseda University Sexual Consent Handbook Team. Although their origins can be found in the 2017 #MeToo movement in Japan, research on these projects demonstrated that these groups had little to no impact on Japanese public consciousness or awareness beyond niche audiences. The thesis explores two main questions: 1) why are grassroots sexual consent projects having so little impact on Japanese society, and 2) why do these groups persevere despite a lack of visible change to prevailing attitudes on consent and sexual violence?

The personal experiences of the anthropologist and other members involved with these project activities demonstrate a certain level of resistance to external people joining sexual consent education campaigns, despite the in-group concerns of limited ‘manpower’ and ‘continuity’ after volunteers move on. These ‘acts of resistance’ are unravelled alongside notions of ‘protecting one’s projects’ and creating a ‘place of belonging and safety’ (*iibasho* or *anzen na basho*) for members. It is proposed that these groups’ resistance to the status quo of hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal norms in Japanese society is largely dampened by backlash and bashing incidents, which are particularly effective over social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram. Ultimately, it is argued, however, that members do not necessarily join these projects expecting social change but instead become involved to fulfil personal motivations and goals. These include goals such as finding ‘like-minded companions’ (*nakama*) who also speak out against gender inequality and sexual violence.

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A Note on Language

This thesis uses the macron symbol to indicate long syllables in romanised Japanese words (i.e., ā, ī, ū, ē, ō). The first introduction of a key Japanese term in a chapter or section includes the English definition without italics, with the Japanese word italicised and enclosed with parentheses. The names of all interlocutors are pseudonyms (except for public figures). These are based on their given name or family name, which they used for themselves when speaking with the researcher in the field. This is not indicated in the main body of the thesis unless relevant. Honorifics are used to refer to all named interlocutors. The suffixes used are the standard honorific for colleagues and acquaintances, *-san*, appended to all members of sexual consent projects and individual collaborators, or *-sensei* for faculty members at Waseda University, designating their role as a teacher/professor. Cited Japanese authors are referred to in the Western format of given name first and surname second, to maintain consistency with the formatting of non-Japanese authors.

Introduction: The Current State of Consent Conversations in Japan

Regarding consent in Japan, specifically sexual consent (*seiteki doui*), conversations can be framed under two major categories: 1) legal and political definitions; and 2) social consciousness debates usually led by grassroots organisations, community centres, and local interest groups. The ethnographic research conducted, discussed, and analysed throughout this thesis will focus primarily on the latter, on the bottom-up grassroots mobilisation of certain individuals who promote recognition of and raise awareness regarding sexual consent. This comparative analysis will be centred around the past and present activities of the two groups. The two organisations have published sexual consent handbooks for university students and hosted workshops on consent, sexual diversity, and bystander intervention at universities, community centres, and symposiums.

Before delving into ethnographic encounters with these organisations, Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action and the Waseda University Sexual Consent Handbook Team, I will provide important context from the legal-political side and outline the sociocultural characteristics of consent conversations in Japan. This is essential to establish the legal precedents and social attitudes which elicit the reactions of the groups I worked with, and many like them. Whether they are a non-profit, non-governmental organisation, a university circle, or an ongoing series of demonstrations or protests, consent conversations emerge from a backdrop of normalised sexual violence and gender inequality that has characterised Japanese economic, political, and social life for generations (O'Mochain and Ueno, 2023, Burns, 2005b, 97).

Endemic violence against women, especially women who are disadvantaged due to minority group status, is reflected in the Japanese Penal Code, which did little to punish perpetrators of sexual offences (Gray, 2022). It was not until June 16, 2017, that an amendment to the existing penal code about sexual offences was adopted. The amendment included men as possible victims of forced sexual intercourse, which led to the crime of “rape” (*gokanzai*) being renamed “forced sexual intercourse” (*kyōseiseikōzai*). The Penal Code had not been revised since 1907. After 110 years of maintaining the legal status quo, this amendment was a partial victory for feminist activists and other proponents. However, their efforts to raise the age of sexual consent from 13 and to have nonconsensual sexual acts counted among the definitions for sexual assault were blocked at the time, visible in the NHK graphics in Figures 1 and 2, respectively.

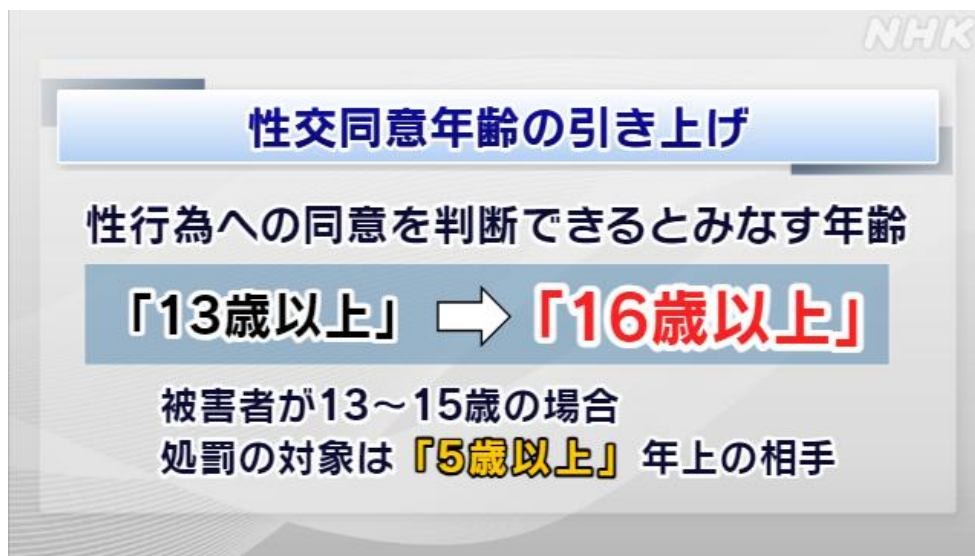


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Figure 2: From the same NHK article as above. This graphic explains that the two previous terms for sexual assault changed to nonconsensual sexual intercourse. NHK 16th June 2023. Link: <https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20230616/k10014101051000.html>.

It was only after this 2017 revision that four acquittals in rape cases in 2019 “highlighted to what extent the judicial process was biased in the favor of rapists and need of further amendment” (Ito 2019 in Osawa, 2023, 4). One of the most widely covered cases was that of a father who was charged with having sexual intercourse with his 12-year-old daughter, but her testimony was ruled as having no grounds—her father the perpetrator, must have misunderstood and saw no sign of resistance (Dalton and Norma, 2022c, Osawa, 2023). These cases also spurred the creation of the ‘Flower Demo’ events begun by Kitahara Minori and some of her close allies. They called for gender education for judges and demonstrated “empathy for victims and showed we believed them” (Dalton and Norma, 2022c, 24).

Japan’s version of the #MeToo movement was launched following the domestic and international news coverage of Ito Shiori’s sexual assault case, wherein a fellow journalist raped her and she went public in a 2017 press conference. Ito has since published a book and directed a documentary about her experiences. The documentary *Black Box Diaries* (2024), which received an Oscar nomination for Best Documentary

Feature at the 2025 Academy Awards, has yet to be distributed in Japan. A Change.org petition has been gathering thousands of signatures to convince Japanese media sources to support its release in Ito's native country.

In the introduction of her 2017 book by a similar name, *Black Box*, Ito writes:

At the risk of repeating myself, I did not write this book because I wanted to tell the story about 'what happened.' I want to raise questions such as 'How can we prevent assault from happening?' and 'When assault does happen to someone, how can they get the help they need?' The only reason I bother to bring up the past is so that we can strive to have these discussions in the future (6).

Ito's account is one imbued with feelings of shame, anger, embarrassment, and frustration. These are all emotions which characterise conversations about sexual violence and harassment, especially in Japan and as a result of 'taboos' on 'speaking out' and 'voicing up' by survivors and their supporters. But it is also no accident that many organisations and campaigns gained momentum around the 2017 release of Ito's book and following the 2017 Penal Code amendments.

Yamamoto Jun remarked on the influence of Ito Shiori's case:

Ito Shiori's impact was big enough that the average person knows about her. When she went public in 2017, she fell victim to an extreme backlash—well, second rape, really. Such was the climate: that someone who had their drink spiked and who was violated while at a work consultation was then punished for speaking up. In the past, that kind of incident would have been swept under the rug. But with Ito Shiori speaking out, and various movements rising up, now more people say, 'I don't think you can do it without consent'. But on the other hand, there are those who will say, 'In that case, then everything will be a crime'. There has been an increase in those believing the former over the latter (Dalton and Norma, 2022d, 33).

#MeToo transformed into #WeToo and #WithYou as leaders of these campaigns recognised how alarming it was for survivors of sexual assault in Japan to speak out amid a social climate which labelled them as 'too emotional' (Hasunuma and Shin, 2019). The categorisation of individuals and groups as overly emotional, and therefore less legitimate, has been discussed by scholars like Sara Ahmed (2014) and Wim Lunsing (2001) as a

strategy to subordinate certain subjects. In this case, the association of femininity with emotion at the expense of rational thought strips power from women who dare to speak up.

But, Ahmed crucially argues:

The response to the dismissal of feminists as emotional should not then be to claim that feminism is rational rather than emotional. *Such a claim would be misguided as it would accept the very opposition between emotions and rational thought that is crucial to the subordination of femininity as well as feminism...* My concern is not only to think about how one becomes attached to feminism, but *how feminism involves an emotional response to 'the world', where the form of that response involves a reorientation of one's bodily relation to social norms* (2014, 170-171)[own emphasis added].

This is significant because Ahmed identifies both the danger of opposition set between feminists and that of feminists and femininity against often patriarchal social norms. It certainly aligns with the common-sense narratives put forth by mainstream Japanese media that often female victims of sexual violence are not trustworthy or rational enough in their claims.

Meanwhile, Kitahara Minori described the dismissal and silencing of survivor victims as a symptom of Japanese society: “Some stopped trying, believing no one would understand. So they were forced into silence. It’s not that victims weren’t able to speak; it’s that society would not listen to them” (Dalton and Norma, 2022c, 25).

Following the 2017 revision that many Flower Demo participants demanded, the government considered further revision in 2020, in which “survivors demanded the adoption of the Swedish model of ‘yes means yes’”(Miura, 2021, 525). A survivor of sexual assault and the founder of Spring, Yamamoto Jun, also “demanded that victims be included in the advisory panel deliberating the next round of penal code amendments” (2021, 525). Miura suggests that the Ministry of Justice’s acceptance of such demands indicates the courts becoming more attentive to the voices of victims, though the steps made in the legal reform process do not extend to unified mobilisation in the grassroots sphere of ‘community organising’. The community organising model was also adopted by

one of my groups of study, Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action, and I will discuss their connections with the NPO Community Organising Japan in the consent activism section of this introduction.

In 2023, these highly advocated for changes by Japanese feminist activists and lawyers, including groups like Spring, who launched entire campaigns and movements like the Flower Demo, were pushed through the National Diet to become an official legal amendment. In June 2023, the parliament raised the age of consent from 13 to 16 and once more revised the definition of ‘rape’. As explained in Figure 3, the term *fudouiseikōzai* (non-consensual sexual intercourse) was adopted from the previous language of *kyōseikōzai* (forced sexual intercourse) and *junkyōseiseikōzai* (semi-forced sexual intercourse). This was a landmark development in the Penal Code because it was the first time sexual acts without consent (*doui ga nai seikoui*) were defined as a punishable crime. For advocates of survivors of sexual violence in Japan and proponents of official legal change around the world, it marked a recognition of bodily rights or the right to self-determination (*jiko kettei-ken*), especially for women.

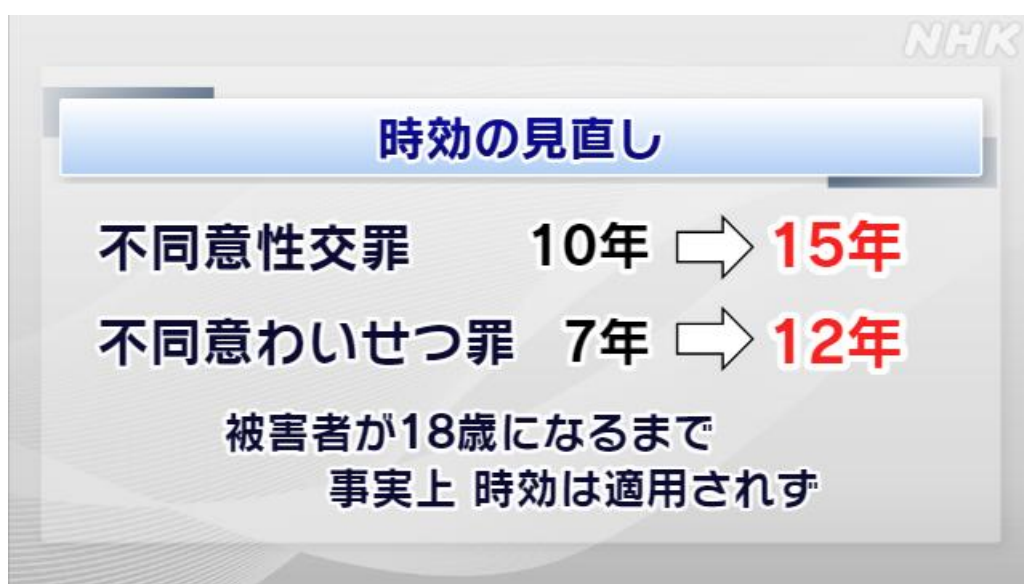


Figure 3: Diagram showing extension of statute of limitations. NHK News. 16th June 2023. Link: <https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20230616/k10014101051000.html>.

This was only adopted after lengthy activist and legal campaigns to push parliament members to be in favour of this new definition. Considering how recent the 2023 Penal Code revision is, it is difficult to say if and how including mention of ‘consent’ will appropriately dissuade and punish perpetrators of sexual assault. The way that consent is communicated, given, and received is nuanced and dependent on both parties speaking to and listening to one another. This overarching question of ‘how do we practice consent’ is a key puzzle which motivated individuals and grassroots organisations to tackle educational gaps through sexual consent handbooks and workshops.

One of the other issues with the Penal Code before the recent revisions was the statute of limitations for cases of sexual assault, which was 10 years for “nonconsensual sexual intercourse” (*fudouseikozai*) and seven years for “nonconsensual indecent assault” (*fudouiwaisetsuzai*) (currently “forced indecency” [*kyoseiwaisetsuzai*]). This was amended respectively to 15 years and 12 years, giving time for survivors of assault to report crimes. The organisation Spring was one of the primary groups to bring attention to the issue of the statute of limitations after they conducted a 2020 survey of sexual violence survivors, finding that “in 799 cases of sexual assault involving penetration, it took 26 years to recognise the harm [to victims]. There were 35 cases in which it took more than 30 years, and 19 cases in which it took more than 31 years” (Hiroki, 2023).

Using Spring’s survey data as an indicator of how long it might take survivors to work through trauma incurred from sexual violence, even this recent extension of the statute is not sufficient. It is also arranged in sharp contrast to how “in 2010, the statute of limitations for murder and other capital crimes, which was previously 25 years, was abolished” (Gray 2022, 94). In the above image shared by NHK news, the extension is explained, using the revised language of “nonconsensual sexual assault” and

“nonconsensual indecent assault”. However, organisations like Spring, whose focus is on recognition, rights, and care for survivor victims, continue to lobby for further changes. This may include the future abolishment of the statute of limitations, although time will tell if such petitioning results in further recognition of the troubles and suffering of survivors of sexual assault.

A case brought forward under the category of *fudouiseikōzai* might have a similar outcome to earlier cases of sexual assault—wherein the survivor’s account of a lack of consent is countered by the perpetrator, and the judge assesses the survivor as less than the perfect example of a victim (Burns 2005, West 2007 and 2011). Burns and West separately discuss how legal cases in Japan, especially those concerning love, marriage, and sexual violence scandals, are defined by methods of legal storytelling. Judges must invoke and interpret a ‘sense of society’ (*shakai tsūnen*), which acts as a measure of what is moral according to the public or community (West, 2011, 25). This may mean the judge or local court adopts the view of a local community to smooth over and justify decisions in difficult court cases. Using usually conservative and normative views as base points, “a judge will sometimes approach the sense of society in a prescriptive manner, stating not what he thinks the sense of society *is* but what he thinks it *should be*” (ibid.: 26, original italics).

This mirrors the storytelling method detailed by Burns, which “aims to identify and analyse the reasons some stories (stock stories) are consistently found to be more persuasive than alternative accounts” (2005,10). The patterns in sexual violence cases are especially salient, such as the idea that the narrative in which “the offender is a stranger, and the woman cannot be construed as blameworthy do not require the same degree of force by the offender and resistance by the victim-survivor to secure a conviction” (ibid). The Japanese judicial system will therefore reflect, ‘believe,’ and be more likely to accept

or reject a sexual violence case based on commonly accepted models of what a perpetrator and what a victim should look like. Even as shifts in consciousness and attitudes towards gendered roles and expectations have occurred through recent decades, the difficulty in prosecuting male perpetrators, including in Ito Shiori's infamous case, and the upward battle women's rights movements continue to face indicate that Japanese courts and their almost entirely male judges tend to lag far behind.

For example, Shigenori Matsui cautions about the reliance on intimidation, force, and criminal intent in sexual assault cases dealt with in Japanese courts and poses that the criminal justice system may need to reconsider the language used regarding 'forcible sexual intercourse'. This all lies within Matsui's claim that Japanese citizens have a right not to be forced to have sex.

Defendants often claim that they believed consent was given...But the defence cannot rely on the fact that the alleged victim didn't say no, resist, or attempt to escape to prove the existence of consent. There is no room for implied consent. It must be explicitly expressed (Matsui, 2023, 116).

According to academics and activists who address the frequency of acquittals and shameful treatment of victim-survivors in crimes of sexual violence, there is a:

Failure to recognise such nuances [i.e., where a victim is rendered drunk or insensible, too terrified to resist physically or is in a relationship with the perpetrator where non-physical coercive control can be exerted] which led directly to...the instances of acquittal, but they also helped to focus a growing sense of public dissatisfaction with the outdated legal strictures (Gray, 2022, 94).

Understanding and raising individual or collective awareness of the harm brought by systematic sexual misconduct and then mistreatment of usually female victim-survivors then falls onto the shoulders of people like Ito Shiori, Kitahara Minori, Tsunoda Yukiko and many other proponents of women's rights in Japan.

I bring these legal changes and challenges to the forefront because they show that, although in many ways less developed than the women's rights movements in South

Korea, lawyers, journalists, and activists in Japan had an impact on recent revisions of longstanding laws. The emotions of frustration, grief, and determination are present in individuals and organisations, usually non-governmental and grassroots. However, for topics such as sexual consent, exploitation and rights for sex workers, and protection for sexual minority groups, what is lacking is education and understanding.

Groups like the ones I volunteered with in Tokyo are not the large, well-connected organisations that Spring, PILCON, and Colabo, a direct-service organisation which offers support for vulnerable girls and young women, have become; they are starting from the ground up to educate young people about consent. This is a difficult task even after the recent Penal Code revision because consent must be defined for Japanese audiences and emphasised as important in all aspects of life. Such emphasis is only made by outlining cultural norms that cultivate unequal and misogynistic attitudes. Sexual consent is an uncomfortable, sensitive, and often emotional topic, which, as with Japan's #MeToo movement and the organisations that have emerged around it, is dominated by female voices.

The shaming, blaming and silencing of victims of sexual assault in Japan is tied to expectations of female sexuality inscribed on the feminine body, including the burden of responsibility. This cultural idea, discussed by Catherine Burns in the context of sexual violence and the law, is referred to as *jiseki no nen* (sense of personal responsibility).

Underlying victim-precipitated rape in Japan, she argues, is the notion that:

...It is commonly assumed and frequently expected of crime victims in Japan that they acknowledge and reflect on their role in the events and circumstances surrounding the crime and thereby assume a measure of responsibility [...] the sense of shared responsibility due to one's involvement lends itself to self-blame and accusations by others (Burns, 2005b, 33).

Juxtaposed against how male sexuality is often framed as both 'natural' and either insatiable or uncontrollable, much of the onus for sexual assault will fall on the woman

who is presumed to have said, dressed, or performed in a manner to elicit acts of sexual violence.

A similar rhetoric was introduced by Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro following the collapse of the 1980s bubble economy, where “Japanese neoliberal terminology glorified actions people could and should perform for themselves—hence, ‘independence’ (*jiritsu*), ‘self-responsibility’ (*jiko sekinin*), ‘being true to oneself’ (*jibunrashisa*), and ‘self-restraint’ (*jishuku*)” (Alexy, 2020, 12-13). Some of this language is co-opted by Chabujo and the Waseda Sexual Consent Handbook team in their handbooks, pamphlets, and SNS posts, and ideas of *jibunrashisa* or *anatarashisa* (being true to yourself). This is visible in Figure 4, which presents a two-page spread in the Chabujo handbook describing the importance of expressing and respecting both emotional and physical boundaries.

The group mission statements (and the title of the Chabujo handbook) make calls to creating a society where it is possible to be true to oneself, which has been problematised as a turn to individualism, which might create a “society without connections (*muen shakai*)” (Alexy, 2020, 13, Alexy, 2019b, Allison, 2013). The Chabujo and Waseda handbooks do not, however, focus on *jiko sekinin* or *jiseki no nen*. In fact, by using the language of boundaries (*kyōkaisen*) and the right to self-determination (*jiko kettei-ken*), they affirm the importance of mutual respect and understanding in relationships while dispelling the notion that one person must assume all responsibility. Examples of pages which illustrate these concepts are included in the text below, and participant observation of these groups will further explore their discourses around sexual consent education.



Figure 4: 'Jibun no Karada wa Jibun no Mono' (Your Body is Your Own), Chabujo's description of 'seiteki jikko kettei-ken' (sexual right to self-determination).

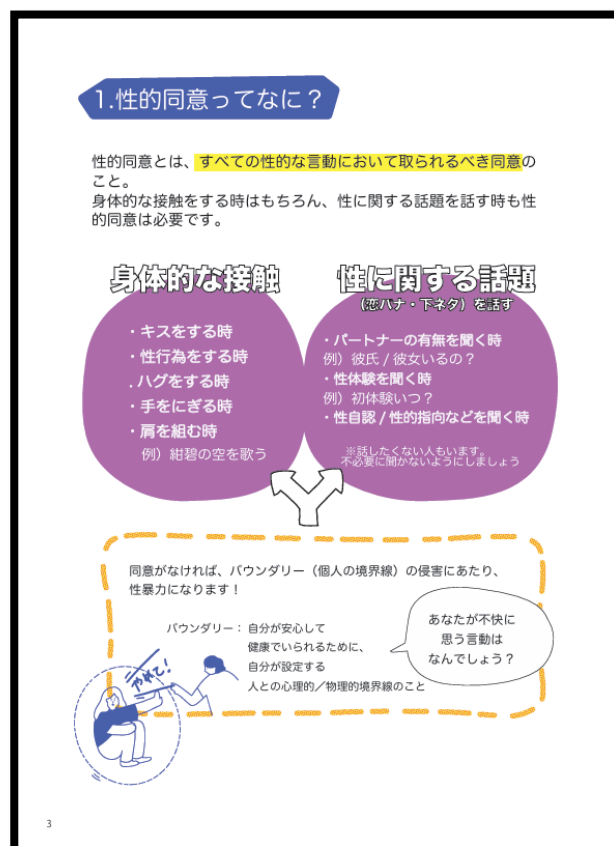


Figure 5: 'Seiteki douitte nani?' (What is sexual consent?), Waseda team's description of inappropriate sexual words/actions and importance of boundaries.

According to many influential figures at the forefront of feminist campaigning in Japan, such as Yamamoto Jun, Kitahara Minori, and Kamata Kanoko, women's voices are the ones that need to be heard. However, perhaps concern should be raised when it is only women who demonstrate continued interest and commitment to these projects. Since gendered dynamics of power place men in historically advantageous positions over women, there remains a need to engage citizens across lines of gender, age, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Campaigning alongside youth seems to be a common approach to reaching diverse audiences who are also motivated to engage in difficult dialogues around what, in the end, often amounts to feminist issues.

Yang Ching-Da, a second-generation *zainichi* Korean Japanese resident and long-term outspoken activist for 'comfort women' issues, has commented on the gendered divide with which male Japanese students and female Japanese students interact with this topic. Whereas male students look through the lens of national interest, she says:

Female students, on the other hand, are more likely to take on the issue in a bodily way, through understanding its sexual violence, and they can imagine more directly its implications for young women like themselves, or girls younger than themselves, in a physical way (in Dalton and Norma 2022, 94).

As a leader of the organisation *Kibōtane*, Yang Ching-Da has observed in youth cooperation projects and tours made up of participants from Japan and South Korea that most or all participants from both countries are female. This was the case in 2019 when the project ran as a "wholly female affair in the end" (Dalton and Norma, 2022c, 94).

In this thesis, I refer to sexual consent projects and other topics which were discussed in the grassroots organisations I interacted with under the umbrella term of 'gender issues' (or *jendā mondai*). I choose this term not only because it is used colloquially within and outside of these groups, but also because dropping the term 'feminism' or 'feminist' reduces assumptions made based on individual experiences with

feminist movements and ideologies. Many people I interacted with, generally from their late teens to mid-thirties, would engage with feminist ideas and even refer to themselves as feminists. But this was often part of a longer conversation about how feminism as a concept has either been equated with a highly educated and liberal status or how people, specifically women, will be considered negatively if they speak under the banner of feminism.

My experience was in some ways similar to Laura Dales with Women's Projects and WWW where "groups did not necessarily organise on explicitly feminist terms... [drawing on] terms such as '*josei mondai*' and '*jendā*', imbuing these with meanings drawn from the reflexive experience of women as members, mothers, wives, scholars and thinkers" (2009, 64). I agree with Dales' assessment then that feminism flowed "from a critical examination of personal and perceived feminine experience" (ibid).

Depending on the generation in which women grew up in Japan experiencing the development of feminist movements, perspectives and definitions of feminism were and continue to be different. Activist Yang Ching-Da, though she often tangles with feminist ideals and the aforementioned 'gender issues', admitted her reservations with feminism, seeing it as "another 'ism'" when she was younger and explaining that "feminism and women's liberation are distinct in my mind" (Dalton and Norma 2022, 97). Although Yang Ching-Da sets herself apart from academic feminists like Ueno Chizuko, other Japanese academics have written similar analyses of attitudes towards feminism in Japan.

Scholar of the Japanese educational philosophy, Takahashi Mai, writes in her 2016 article *Minna ga kirai na feminizumu no kanosei* (The Potential of Feminism That Everybody Hates) about how feminism went from a topic in Japan that was 'hated by men' (*otoko ga kirai na feminizumu*) to something that was 'hated by everybody' (*minna ga*

kirai na feminizumu). This discussion is placed within a framework asking what feminism and gender studies can bring to studies of *education*. The article traces the history of different waves of feminism and how they have been received in Japan. Takahashi describes the tendencies for voices to be silenced through critique of definitions and meanings that seemed to be ‘anti-man’ and frequent references to the work of Kodama Ryoko, Takahashi ends on the note that “included in feminism, the term ‘ism’ expresses a fitting meaning of ‘action’ or ‘effect’ that should also be thought of as important” (Takahashi, 2016, 157). Therefore, the ‘ism’ here for Takahashi becomes more powerful if it is rationalised as a movement that can cooperate with other bodies of thought, including education and policy.

There are two other important dimensions to the consent conversations happening in Japan today, both of which have already been touched upon. These include the significance placed upon education when it comes to sexual consent and intimate topics altogether. Projects around sexual consent are nearly always framed in terms of spreading knowledge and raising awareness—essentially building a foundation upon which the efforts of grassroots organisations can lead to social change. Then, we must also consider the role of scandal, rumours and gossip, which have spurred on activist campaigns and led to the penal code revisions discussed in the first half of this introduction.



Figure 6: Opening banner about 'Inochi no anzen kyōiku' on the Monbusho website.

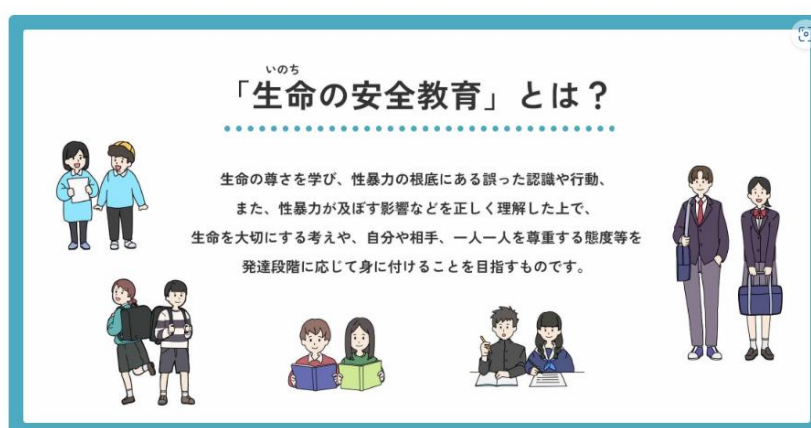


Figure 7: Explanation of what 'inochi no anzen kyōiku' is: respecting and understanding the existence of other people.

Sexuality Education Then and Now

In keeping with recent developments, I'd like to introduce a new initiative of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), commonly known as 'Monbusho', the shortened version of Monbukagakushō, around sexuality education, titled *Inochi no Anzenkyōiku*. The Monbusho introduced this curriculum on 16th April 2021 to 'prevent children from becoming subjects of sex crimes' (*kodomo o seihanzai nado no tōjisha ni shinai*), with model reference materials for educators titled 'Countermeasures for

sexual crimes and sexual violence’ (*seihanzai/seiboryoku taisaku*) (Rintaro, 2022, 130).

Their campaign is detailed on the official Monbusho website, pictured in Figures 6 and 7, including an explanation of what ‘*inochi no anzenkyōiku*’ (life safety education) means, the emphasis being put upon respecting the existence of others and yourself. Other than general guidance documents about how to teach *inochi no anzenkyōiku*, more specific slides, worksheets and videos are available, albeit divided by the educational level of Japanese students. This begins from early childhood to elementary or primary school, then middle school and progresses to high school, which is also mentioned to be appropriate for university students and the public. The differences in life developmental and educational stages in the design, language, and concepts discussed within the materials are immediately evident.



Figure 8: Slide from the material aimed at young elementary school students, instructing them to treat other people's bodies as precious as they would their own.

As seen in Figure 8, toddlers and younger elementary school students are taught the importance of protecting their bodies and respecting the bodies (and space) of other people, usually through examples like not watching other people change their clothes or touching others without their permission. The notion of protecting one's space or distance

(*kyorikan o mamorou*) is expanded upon from older elementary school students into adolescent and young adult materials, shown in Figure 9. This is akin to setting boundaries and discussing the importance of trying to understand other people’s feelings, especially feelings of distaste and discomfort (*iya da to kanjita koto*). Materials thereby identify ignoring or going against the feelings of others as acts of sexual violence.

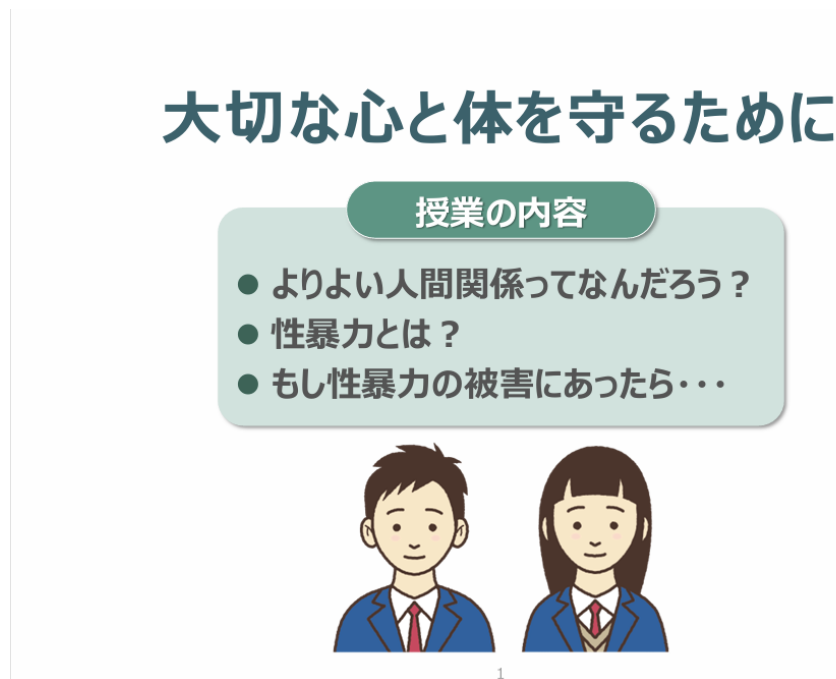


Figure 9: Slide from the material aimed at middle school students and high school students, beginning to introduce the details of having good human relationships and defining sexual violence.

Although Monbusho’s materials appear to demonstrate a move towards comprehensive sexuality education, in their detailed overview of the contents of *inochi no anzenkyōiku*, Kondo Rintaro is careful to state that “these teaching materials are merely reference materials and are not required to be used” and “if a teacher is interested in comprehensive education, they can borrow them for the sake of convenience only under the name ‘*inochi no anzenkyōiku*’ and then modify the teaching materials” (Rintaro, 2022, 138). It is therefore up to individuals to access the materials and decide if and how they use them, rather than forming the basis for the adoption of a new SE curriculum across the Japanese school system. And, even if some teachers do incorporate elements of these

slides, worksheets, and videos into their syllabi, it does not include topics which make up UNESCO's definition of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), and which Japanese scholars also identify as necessary, even or especially at the university level.

Japanese university students have already experienced formal sexuality education (SE) in their junior high and high schools. However, as the work of different scholars from the 1990s to the 2020s demonstrates, what content is taught and in what manner is still largely up to the individual instructors. In her 1990s study of two high schools in the Greater Tokyo Metropolitan Region, Yukari Kawahara examined what occurred in a sex education classroom where certain teachers emphasised abstinence and the importance of controlling one's sexual desires, while others tackled issues like teenage pregnancy by comparing the outcomes of childbirth or abortion.

At Kida High School, multiple instructors advised students not to have sex at all to 'make wise decisions about [your] sexual behaviour' and that:

Ultimately, 'wise' decision-making here implies 'abstinence'. To make the choice plausible, he emphasised that students would not be able to follow their dreams if they had a child. Mr. Noma did not discuss the choice of 'safe sex' with a condom. (Kawahara, 2010, 299).

Other Kida High teachers adopted a similar abstinence-only approach, from which Kawahara concludes that "it is apparent [...] that Japanese health textbooks present sex as a socially unacceptable behaviour for high school students, and that this message was endorsed by teachers"(2010, 303).

Tomei High School was vocational, with few graduating students going on to university, and had a more urgent issue with teenage pregnancy. This significantly impacted how teachers led SE classes. Mr. Ide was one such teacher who presented multiple options to his students.

Because students may already be sexually active, he knew that advising abstinence was not realistic. More importantly, however, presenting options reflected his own educational goal. He once told me that you cannot teach ‘one value’ according to the textbook, because such a value might be changed five or 10 years later (Kawahara, 2010, 304).

Kawahara’s research presented Japanese school teachers as agential subjects who integrated their values and teaching strategies while using curriculum guidelines from the government’s sexuality education. This observation holds decades later as Takahiro Sato discusses in his 2021/22 work on online SE workshops and professional development for health education teachers. Multiple participants in Sato et al.’s study expressed frustration with abstinence education and supported a shift to more comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). Yet, there remains a lack of support for professional training on delivering a meaningful and respectful class for students, especially when teachers wish to emphasise topics like ‘gender-and rights-based expression.’ According to results from a demographic questionnaire, Sato explains:

Although teachers were confident teaching topics that were clearly outlined in the manual (e.g. sexually transmitted diseases), other content (e.g. on pregnancy, abortion, and sensitive sexual behaviour) triggered feelings of anxiety, confusion and doubt, and were those where professional development was desired (2021, 9).

The introduction of online formats for SE classes and workshops, which the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated, also altered the interactions between instructors and students. In multiple ways, the physical distance and anonymisation offered by the digital courses assuaged the concerns participants had about discussing intimate issues. Students said they appreciated that the workshop facilitator “did not require them to use cameras, as they would not have felt comfortable showing their private space or learning environment” (Sato et al., 2022, 5-6). Notably, although the perceived anonymity of sharing images and audio online helped some workshop participants overcome shyness, embarrassment, or other feelings of discomfort, many others still hesitated to share their opinions. This is where discussion forums or chat rooms were especially conducive to participation and connection.

Another element of SE in Japan, as discussed by social anthropologist Huiyan Fu (2011), is the focus on controlling risk factors of sex and sexuality, including STIs and teenage pregnancy. There has been an emphasis on HIV education, which also encourages young people to avoid promiscuous sexual behaviour. However, despite the Monbusho's curriculum, which has historically encouraged sex primarily for reproductive purposes, mass media often plays a larger role in informal SE.

Fu describes the role of mass media messaging:

People of all ages have easy access to pornography, which is available in several genres including comics, videos, magazines and photographs. In contrast to the 'token' sex education in schools, teen manga (comic books) and magazines have taken up the slack and provide young people with a wide range of information about sex (2011, 907-908).

Fu adds that these informal sources can "prove confusing rather than instructive" and this is perhaps best demonstrated through Hambleton's (2020) analysis of Japanese pornography as pedagogy (2011, 908). Hambleton writes that "the pedagogical work of celebrity porn stars Kato Taka and Suzuki Ittetsu provide an insight into the scripts available to Japanese men, and the ideologies that operate to create a male-first narrative that inscribes sexual agency in the male form"(2020, 294). With different approaches to their pedagogical porn content, Kato and Suzuki represent tensions between stereotypical Japanese masculine personas. Whereas Kato takes on "a paternal persona through both the teaching of men (the performers who appear in the videos as well as viewers) and the women with whom he is having sex", Suzuki, in Silk Labo films, "is charged with making sex a pleasurable experience for his female partners"(Hambleton, 2020, 296 and 298). But, as Hambleton concludes in her research of these stars and their materials, both Kato and Suzuki are focused on teaching their viewers how to be 'men' through the 'correct' sexual techniques. This depicts only limited options for people to aspire to, ignoring the diversity of masculinities and sexualities.

Mayuko Ogawa and Ikumi Hikita open their investigation into SE among junior college students by stating: “Sexuality education should be provided throughout one’s life and is essential for living a rich life. Universities have the potential to be the last educational institution for students before they enter society, and therefore have a large role to play”(2016, 1).

Ogawa and Hikita’s study is far from the only one that has assessed university-age students' general awareness of sexuality education. Many researchers and educators discuss the right to self-determination, gender equality, and sexual diversity. (Shinomiya et al., 2018, Nishioka, 2018, Tadatsu et al., 2008). Specifically, the UNESCO CSE is education, which is considered scientifically, incremental, age- and developmentally appropriate, curriculum-based, comprehensive and based on a human rights approach.

Their handbook reads:

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality and is intended to equip and empower young people with the necessary knowledge to build healthy relationships (UNESCO, 2018, 16).

The free use of the *Inochi no Anzenkyōiku* materials somewhat parallels the methods adopted by the grassroots organisations with which I volunteered. Sexual consent handbooks produced by these groups were similarly used as supplementary and optional teaching and learning references rather than as part of mandatory first-year university student orientations. However, unlike the Monbusho materials, which focus firmly on bodily autonomy, fostering mutual respect, and building good relationships (*ningen kankei*) to reduce sexual violence, the handbooks from Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action and the Waseda team push harder to address common attitudes around sex and sexuality. Their handbook content includes mentions of discrimination not just based on gender, but also due to sexual orientation, nationality, and existing disabilities. Specific examples of how

the handbook, flyer, and workshop materials differ from Monbusho content will be provided in later chapters.

Continuing Scandals: Johnny Jimusho and the Fuji TV Problem

When it comes to intimate, specifically sexual, topics, incidents of assault, harassment, and discrimination are prone to the circulation of rumours and gossip. And, for the most sensational of news, usually involving public figures, a string of incidents may become a full-blown scandal. This was the case with Johnny Kitagawa, the founder of Johnny and Associates (or *Johnny Jimusho*) and one of the biggest names in the Japanese pop scene. The sexual abuse committed by Kitagawa against many of the victims he managed in the J-pop industry was not thoroughly investigated by the Tokyo courts and Supreme Court, nor legitimised until 2023.

As Osawa explained: “It took the BBC documentary *Predator: The Secret Scandal of J-Pop*, which aired in March 2023, to goad the domestic media to investigate a scandal that was hidden in plain sight and acknowledge having remained silent too long” (2023, 2). The sexual abuse that Kitagawa continued to commit for decades across his career emerged from not just a culture of silence in the face of shame in Japan, but also from his power over media channels.

Tokyo correspondent for the BBC, Shaimaa Khalil, wrote:

Johnny Kitagawa held sway, not only over the talent at the agency but also the channels clamouring to feature his bands and the advertisers who work with and pay the channels. The media and entertainment landscape is intertwined, and Johnny Kitagawa was in command (2023).

For the individuals I interviewed throughout my research in Tokyo, Johnny’s scandal became one of the most recent and shocking examples of a lack of understanding around sexual consent. Kanato-san, a young woman in her twenties, although she was disturbed

by the scandal, shared that some of her friends put their loyalty to the company and its legacy before such sordid details.

I think it's a huge problem. But in terms of like, sexual abuse, I feel like many, many Japanese people do not feel the same way. Because Johnny is a kind of king of entertainment, some people very much respect... like high-status worship... I think what Johnny did was a criminal thing, but some people do not think so... that's the problem. Like some Japanese people do not even realise that what Johnny did was sexual abuse.

She paused for a moment, visibly collecting her thoughts and perhaps also choosing the right words to explain.

So, my friend... I asked my friend 'What do you think about Johnny's incident?' But she was like, 'Oh, I do not care.' She loves Johnny's, like the idols. 'What would that incident affect?' The way she likes the idols, she was not that affected by that [the incident]. Like nothing has changed. So yeah, it sounds very crazy.

Kanato-san identified similar factors that scholars and journalists identified as to why Kitagawa inspired such loyalty, even while abusing many of the aspiring J-pop idols he mentored. He was the 'king of entertainment', inspiring many to, as Kanato-san said, 'worship' his high status. Even as allegations of Kitagawa's actions were covered, first by *Shukan Bunshun* in 1999 and 2000 and then later by the BBC documentary, fans of the idols, like Kanato-san's friend, were able to distance themselves from the scandal. (Osawa, 2023, 2). Their admiration for what Johnny Kitagawa had built and the idols' music has remained separate from the testimonies of the young male idols Kitagawa took advantage of.

The case of Johnny Kitagawa was a popular conversation topic during my fieldwork, but since then, a new scandal has emerged. Former member of now disbanded boy band SMAP, Masahiro Nakai, was accused of assaulting a former announcer at Fuji television network in what has been referred to as a 'work-related' incident (News, 2025, Khalil and Ewe, 2025). The sexual misconduct occurred during a dinner party in 2023, resulting in the female announcer being hospitalised and diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. BBC Tokyo correspondent Shaimaa Khalil reported that executives

resigned while apologising “to viewers as well as stakeholders for the trouble and anxiety caused in a scandal that has rocked Japan’s entertainment industry” as well as Nakai’s denial of sexual violence against the Fuji TV announcer where he stated “that he had ‘resolved’ the matter with her through a settlement”(2025). A committee and panel have since been formed to examine the incident, wherein the panel said, “owing to Nakai’s position as major talent for Fuji TV, there was an overwhelming difference in authority (between him and the woman)”(News, 2025). The head of the panel, Akira Takeuchi, also shared with reporters that there was a “persistent culture of sexual harassment at Fuji TV” (ibid).

The story of Nakai’s harassment scandal was released by the weekly magazine *Shūkan Bunshun* in December 2024. Since then, Japanese and international news outlets have been reporting the developing details and reports from Fuji TV executives and revealing a deeply embedded culture of sexual harassment. These multiple incidents of harassment following in-depth reports are referred to as the Fuji Television problem (*fujiterebi mondai*) and are reflective, journalists argue, of issues with corporate culture and governance.

Dan Byrne, reporting from The Corporate Governance Institute, remarks on the benefits of a strong corporate culture. But he also considers what happens when company culture and governance don’t align.

Culture separates a company that can weather a crisis from one that collapses under the weight of its failures. Fuji TV is a textbook case of what happens when governance and culture fall out of sync. A truly good culture is all about corporate integrity, even when no one is watching. As multiple scandals have shown, someone will eventually be watching (Byrne, 2025).

The report by a third-party committee investigating the issues around Nakai’s ‘troubles with women’ was released on 31st March and has determined the following:

The woman, a former Fuji TV announcer, ‘was a victim of serious human rights violations through sexual violence by Nakai as an extension of her job.’ The report pointed out that the company was aware of the situation but did not prioritise relief for the victim and continued to allow Nakai to appear on its programs, which constituted secondary victimisation, and severely criticised the company’s low awareness of human rights and widespread harassment (Tabuchi, 2025).

Tabuchi Toshiko, who summarised parts of this report in the passage included above, concludes that what is needed to change this corporate culture and prevent future human rights infringements is to “value people and support a return to a culture one can take pride in.” From his and other reporters' engagement with the ‘Fuji Television problem’, perhaps we are seeing a shift in how perpetrators and victims of sexual assault are being portrayed in Japanese media. However, much as Ito’s case took many years to reach a conclusion and some form of compensation for her suffering, it took until late 2024/early 2025 for the harassment faced by Fuji TV female announcers to reach a boiling point. There is an urgent need to investigate and educate about inappropriate behaviours in the workplace, certainly before they escalate to secondary victimisation or ‘second rape’ of the assault victim. The care of the people involved should come first, even before considering that, as the many sponsorships Fuji TV has lost over this incident have proven, a company’s reputation has much to lose as well.

To conclude this section, similarly to corporate scandals, higher education in Japan is often defined by the emphasis on institutional perspectives over individual members, with frequent concerns regarding the protection of an institution’s reputation. Now, in the 2020s, many Japanese universities have official harassment policies, specialised committees, and consultation offices, which are typically the first point of contact for students wishing to file a complaint. However, cases of sexual harassment and gender discrimination at universities continue to provoke outcries from activist groups and gender issue-based NPOs. In 1995, at Naruto University of Education in Tokushima Prefecture, a former postgraduate student filed a civil lawsuit against one of her former professors. She

stated that his sexual harassment, in the form of private letters and sexual messages sent to her parents' home, caused her to miss months of classes and led to a diagnosis of depression. The harassment prevented her from continuing her PhD, largely because she felt unable to complain to the university, as the professor had the authority to either pass or fail her master's degree (Creaser, 2006, 6). Although the professor received a twelve-month suspension, he protested this punishment as unfair and filed for damages due to defamation of character while also demanding a public apology in a newspaper.

The result of this case, Creaser describes, was as follows:

It took three years for the student to win her case of sexual harassment. During this time, Professor A had filed over forty claims against his former student, her family, the president of the university, professors of the university, and the mass media for defamation of character...The above case illustrates the quagmire of accusations, counteraccusations and abuse that cases of sexual harassment produce (2006, 8).

The case of Naruto University of Education was one with similar strains of gendered 'common sense' and sexism as that found in a 1971 debate at Kyoto University wherein a young woman, referred to only as 'R-ko', was not able to enter a graduate programme in Western European history, spurring an activist support movement among fellow female students who protested "the 'common sense' that defined a woman's primary social ambition as marriage"(Schieder, 2020, 616). These students decried such 'common sense' thinking as *nansensu*, a term which had multiple uses in the Japanese New Left, implicating 'common sense' "as a set of tacit, held-in-common beliefs that often obscure the actual instability of their premises" (2020, 617).

Chelsea Schieder explains that student activists' conflicts with male professors and especially Professor Fujinawa Kenzō of the Western History Department, who had stated that gender discrimination was an excuse for R-ko's poor performance on the graduate school entrance exam, reflected their feelings about the gendered dynamics of their academic institution. Schieder describes that: "The student activists at Kyoto University, in

the course of the dispute over ‘R-ko’, articulated the precarity of their position at the university; they studied (or did not) at the pleasure of the faculty”(2020, 618).

I highlight the above examples as important intersections between sexual harassment and gender discrimination reported on by the Japanese media and dimensions of power and authority. These patriarchal and hierarchical relationships are often made more visible in institutions' structure by reports on scandals and activist mobilisation. Since much of this research took place within Japanese universities, it is vital to consider how inequality is expressed across and within institutional processes, especially when it comes to sensitive issues like sexual consent and discrimination based on gender.

Searching for Consent Activism

In my participant observation of Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action and the Waseda Sexual Consent Handbook Team from September 2022 to July 2023, all the above legal challenges, shifts in attitudes towards feminism, and social movements related to gender issues make up the group's motivations for projects. However, individual views of feminist approaches in Japan vary, as do which scandals and legal cases are the primary concern at a given time. Even in the relatively short period of one year, I witnessed the levels of activity and topic focuses of these organisations fluctuate dramatically. And, like the accounts of female activist leaders in Japan in Dalton and Norma’s anthology, these groups were led by women, specifically women with university-level or beyond education and experience living overseas.

Originally, I had planned to base my fieldwork in two regions of Japan: the Kanto area, including Tokyo, and the Kansai region, which encompasses Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe. I initially considered the benefits of observing the sexual consent and sexual

harassment projects at public, private, and religious-affiliated universities in both regions. However, being a single researcher meant that this was not the most feasible approach for the project, and preliminary research while still based in the United Kingdom indicated that, at least during and immediately after the Covid-19 pandemic, much of the student groups' activities focused on online campaigning.

Following the social media accounts of multiple grassroots organisations lobbying and campaigning against sexual violence in Japan proved vital for my fieldwork before, during, and after the conclusion of in-person fieldwork. Through Instagram, Twitter, and organisational websites, I became aware of past and current projects and whether groups were actively recruiting volunteers. Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action (Action by Ladies Flipping Tables) was one of the first organisations I learned about that developed a sexual consent handbook, attended university panels and seminars, and offered community workshops. The main page of their updated website is depicted in Figure 10 on the following page. Founded in 2015 by Osawa Sachiko and Kamata Kanoko, the organisation is guided by the values and mission statement of the NPO Community Organising Japan. Osawa Sachiko remains an executive director and representative of the organisation along with Yasuda Akiko. Kamata Kanoko also co-founded Community Organising Japan after being trained in this approach to grassroots action at Harvard Kennedy School in the United States. She worked with Yamamoto Jun, a survivor of sexual assault, to found Spring in July 2017 (Dalton and Norma 2022, 31). Kamata was also involved with the Believe Campaign, which worked to reform the Penal Code, Japan's national rape law, mentioned earlier in this chapter, researching the campaign itself. The campaign had its successes, but "Kamata was aware that their members were relatively homogenous—predominantly cisgender, middle- to upper middle-class Japanese women"(Shaw and Kamata, 2025, 9-10). Many individuals involved in campaigns against sexual violence in

Japan know or at least are aware of one another, as seen in Kamata Kanoko's connections across three organisations: Chabujo, Community Organising Japan, and Spring.

Individuals with different expertise and training collaborate to help each other create diverse organisations focusing on various aspects, all under the broad umbrella of addressing gender issues.



Figure 10: Chabujo's website page was updated in 2023 with the message 'Let's make a gender-equal society through connecting with our friends and taking action with our power'.

Once I interviewed with the recruiting officer of Chabujo and became a volunteer in November 2022, I was able to observe the actual size of the organisation. Within the Slack workspace, the number of members fluctuated between 30 and 40, usually staying at around the mid-thirties in the general chat channels. Whereas, in the digital team channel I was a part of, there were roughly six to seven of us. There were multiple other teams whose channels I did not have access to, though, based on what members involved in these other teams described, all the different teams had up to a maximum of 10 members. The majority of Chabujo members identified as female, with issues of women's rights being the primary concern of the feminist grassroots organisation, which is a registered non-profit (*ippanshadan houjin*). Many of the leaders of other similar organisations in Japan are

women, which will colour and define the ethnographic descriptions and analyses I share throughout this thesis.

コミュニティ・オーガナイズの5つの要素

1. ストーリーテリング (パブリック・ナラティブ)

人が行動を起こす時、そこには必ずストーリーが生まれます。
また、人が動くためには、まず心が動かされるものです。
なぜ自分が行動を起こしたか、自身のストーリーを語って聞き手の共感を呼ぶこと (= Story of Self)。聞き手と自分自身が共有する価値観や経験といった私たちのストーリーを語り、コミュニティとしての一体感を創り出すこと (= Story of Us)。いま行動を起こすことについてのストーリーを語ることで、共に行動する仲間を増やすこと (= Story of Now)。これらが有機的に組み合わせられた、人の心を動かす物語を、パブリック・ナラティブ (公で語る物語) と呼んでいます。

2. 関係構築

自主的なボランティア活動を継続的に行うためには、メンバー同士の強い関係を構築することが鍵となります。金銭関係や雇用関係がないボランティア活動では、共通の目的を持ち、互いに、関心を持ち合い、成長し学び合える関係であることが必要です。さまざまな関係構築の方法がありますが、○○では特に一対一で話すことによって関係を構築していくことが重要となります。

3. チーム構築

活動を推進していくためには、コアとなる数人から10人程度のチームが重要です。多様性のある性格、スキル、ネットワークを持つ人を集め、共通の目的のもとに、相互補完しながらリーダーシップをチームで発揮することのできる組織を構築します。

4. 戦略立案

課題を解決したり、社会のシステムを変えるためには、ステークホルダー (利害関係者) を分析し、自分たちの置かれている状況と、自分たちの持っているリソース (時間やお金、スキル、ネットワークなど) をどう使って状況を変えていけるか、創造的な戦略を立てることが不可欠です。

5. アクション

社会課題の解決は少数でではできません。アクションを共に起こすコミットメントを作っていくこと、楽しく、かつ実際に社会が変えられる、やる気が出るアクションを設計することが欠かせません。
引用：特定非営利活動法人コミュニティ・オーガナイズ・ジャパン

Figure 11: Description of the 'Five Elements of Community Organising' on Chabujo's Website.

Even just within the digital team, all the members were highly educated and passionate about topics like feminism, policymaking, and addressing social issues in Japan. Their high level of education was often packaged with experience overseas, usually in Western countries like the USA, UK, Australia, France, or Germany. Whether they spent months or years working or studying in these other countries, it has characterised both the individual and group approaches of many Chabujo members as one where theories and ideas from overseas, such as community organising, are adapted to local approaches of campaigning or hosting workshops. Community organising is defined by five elements: storytelling (or 'public narrative'), relationship structures, team structures, strategic planning, and action, shown in Figure 11 in the original Japanese. Unsurprisingly, the adoption and adaptation of what may work in the United Kingdom to Tokyo is far from seamless. During various conversations, members shared anecdotes about misunderstandings and disconnections which would occur when teaching about topics like sexual consent.

Chabujo's primary activities following the 2017 #MeToo/#WeToo/#WithYou movement included a focus on sexual consent and sexuality education (SE), which resulted in the development of their sexual consent handbook published in 2018. It was then distributed to various universities, including Waseda University, as a guidebook to relationships, mutual understanding across genders, and common misconceptions about sexual topics. Their activities were introduced and explained in colourful graphics on their Instagram account, such as in the screenshot included in Figures 12 and 13.



Figure 12: Chabujo's Instagram post introducing their sexual consent handbook, dated 22nd June 2022.

Many of the concerns of activist individuals and grassroots organisations in Japan, notably urban areas such as Tokyo, are rooted in nation-building narratives to embrace concepts such as globalisation or the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Highlighting how Japan's progress or power is 'lagging' or 'waning' as compared to other G7 countries, is the prescient "notion of Japan as an agent that must 'voice' and 'express' itself" (White, 2022, 52).

In the context of nation branding campaigns and soft power strategising, Daniel White observes that rather than a “calculated assessment of national interest”, there is a “low-level sense of anxious urgency” (2022, 85). He places this within what he phrases as a “politics of anxiety” with affective contestations that lead to the idea of “melancholic belonging” (85, 177). I suggest that this anxiety over a loss of status, discussed by White, including the emphasis on speaking up or out, which characterises the names and movement of feminist campaigns in Japan (Miura, 2021, 524-525), can also apply to the state of conversations around sexual consent.

A thrum of concern fuels the projects of either lobbying for revisions of the Penal Code, protesting acquittals in rape cases, or pushing for increased awareness of sexual violence. Along with raising one’s voice, these groups also discuss the importance of visibility (*kashika*), almost always framed within what is lacking or what has been lost. Or, perhaps in the case of education around sexual consent (*seiteki doui*), what had never existed in public discussions until this spread of feminist and gender activism.



Figure 13: Timeline of the activities of the Waseda University Sexual Consent Project, posted on Instagram by the Voice Up Japan Waseda branch.

Japanese social scientists like Tanaka Toko have observed how “in the case of the popularisation of feminism and visibility, there is a hegemonic struggle regarding ‘what kind of woman has spoken out’” (Tanaka, 2020, 23). They set this within the growing visibility of ‘hashtag feminism’ and the role ‘online feminism’ continues to have in creating new meanings and strategies for people to engage with what are often issues of human rights (Mizoroki et al., 2023, Tan and Liu, 2022).

The other organisation my thesis is focused on is the sexual consent project led by undergraduate and postgraduate students at Waseda University, a prestigious and well-known private institution based in central Tokyo. The university has a long history going back to the Meiji period (1868-1912), which places value on international collaboration and learning. Waseda’s main campus in the Takadanobaba area of Shinjuku-ku also has a high percentage of international students, gaining the institution a reputation for being diverse and globalised, at least by local standards. The Waseda Sexual Consent Project began in 2021 through the collaboration of students from two *sākuru* (student circles, societies or clubs), Shaberu, and Voice Up Japan Waseda, and faculty members who served as advisors and editors. Most of the faculty members were involved with the Waseda University Gender Studies Institute and the Student Diversity Centre, including many individuals whose own research was focused on gender, feminism, law and literature.

Whereas Chabujo’s sexual consent handbook was distributed at a variety of university campuses and feminist organisational events, the Waseda project’s scope was much narrower, as it focused on producing a handbook by and for students at the university. Also, unlike Chabujo, who operated multiple different projects to do with the rights of marginalised groups in Japan, the Waseda team’s primary focus is on sexual

consent and how raising awareness about this topic can dig up the ‘roots’ of sexual violence at Waseda’s campuses.

From the timeline of their activities on the Instagram post shared in Figure 13, we can see that the activities of the student-led sexual consent project were concentrated over a period of just a few years. This began from June 2021, when a survey was conducted of Waseda students asking about their experiences and views on sexual violence and harassment. The group’s activities have continued until the present day, where they hold external lectures and internal workshops by using their completed sexual consent handbook as the source content. Notably, the data gathered from the university-wide survey form the foundation for much of the statistics in the handbook itself.

Following the survey of student experiences with sexual violence at Waseda University, the sexual consent project team submitted a ‘letter of request’ (*yobōsho*) to President Tanaka Aji, asking for sexual consent education to become a part of Waseda’s formal curriculum. Even though they received 278 responses to their survey and collected multiple signatures, 45 from Waseda faculty and staff and 501 from current Waseda students, an officially backed form of sexual consent education has not been instituted at the university. Figures 14 and 15 provide updates to Instagram followers on the reception to this letter of request. More events have been organised, such as the informational booth discussed in a separate Instagram post in Figure 16.



Figure 14: Completion announcement of the Sexual Consent Handbook in March 2022.



Figure 15: Petition for sexual consent education at Waseda, which the university president did not approve.

During my work with the sexual consent handbook team, I learned about the procedures required even to have student-run workshops in some classes and seminars. Without official recognition from the university administration, the project continues with the support of faculty who are willing to have student team members come to their classes to give their workshops, including conversations about the length of the presentation, what content to present, and when to give it during a given university term. Later in this thesis, I

will discuss the nuances of the student-faculty collaboration that has sustained the sexual consent project campaign for the past few years.



Figure 16: Instagram notice of upcoming informational booth for people to share (iitai koto stekkaa) their various worries (moyamoyasuru koto)

Koseki as a Form of Patriarchal State Control

Existing forms of legitimisation in Japanese society, particularly the *koseki*, or family register, which is a remnant of the Meiji era *ie-seido*, or family household system, still exerts a powerful influence on these grassroots groups and individuals. Interlocutors often pointed to the *koseki* as a significant barrier to changing society to be more gender-equal, diverse, and inclusive. This was a common concern which was voiced in organisational meetings and casual conversations, and which I will refer to throughout my thesis.

Akin to the state control afforded by the *koseki*, Bonjour and De Hart elaborate on how the politicisation of intimacy and belonging produces collective identities and boundaries:

From colonial times to the present day, defining who ‘We’ are and how ‘We’ are different from and better than ‘Them’ inevitably involves reference to proper roles of men and women, proper dress, proper parenting, and proper loving. The politics of belonging are intrinsically connected to the politics of intimacy (2020, 8).

The ‘intimate domains’ Bonjour and De Hart observe above are often arranged in contrast to the missions and movements of feminist activists in Tokyo. These activists craft belonging with other women and queer individuals who are discomfited by the idea of slotting into a standardised intimate practice constructed and approved by state legitimisations such as the *koseki*. Marriage in Japan is legitimised through entering the family register (*nyūsekisuru*), as stipulated by Article 739 of the Civil Code. As this is the only method by which partnership is truly recognised in Japan, belonging and intimacy are undoubtedly tied to the ‘public’ spheres of policy and law.

Akiko Shimizu describes in her paper on ‘imported’ feminism and ‘indigenous’ queerness the power that the *koseki* still has in the public and private sphere:

The marriage system in Japan is both based on and intended to support and help prolong the family system [*ie seido*]. Buying into the marriage system, those opposing the system would argue, you are upholding the family register and therefore, in effect, helping to continue the colonial-patriarchal legacy of Imperial Japan (2020, 94).

In the second half of this thesis, especially when discussing the gender backlash of the 2000s and anti-transgender feminist discourses in the 2020s, I will consider how protecting the *ie-seido* leads to the exclusion of many different forms of intimate relations and belonging in contemporary Japan.

Feminist non-governmental groups struggle to organise and manage their members to address various gendered social issues. Part of the challenge appears to be the innate complexity of tackling even just one ‘gender issue’, which is tied to matters such as whether to change the family register system (*koseki*).

As a Waseda faculty member who specialises in gender studies, Matsui-sensei expressed:

So, I think that the ruling party’s idea that they do not want to talk about the gender issues, maybe I mean, probably because they do not want to change the *koseki*. I think that’s the big issue.... Prime Minister Kishida said [...] if they introduced the same-sex marriage the

society will change, *shakai ga kawatteshimau*, so if he's not willing to change the society at all, so that and then we... in my understanding that if they talk about the same-sex marriage, they have to talk about a *koseki*...

Matsui-sensei's mention of the role of *koseki* in these conversations and debates is a significant one, demonstrating how it is impossible to disentangle issues of gender and sexuality from each other in many contemporary Japanese contexts. This is tied alongside notions of body politics and the creation of the family (*kazoku*). As Tama Yasuko writes about shifts in family planning and roles for women in pre- and post-war Japan: "When a certain relationship is constructed as 'family,' the bodies of its members become embroiled in body politics"(2009, 121).

The *koseki* and *ie seido* both define some relationships and bodies as legitimate 'family' while others remain on the marginalised fringes. Akiko Shimizu states that "it is impossible to discuss marriage in Japan, same-sex or otherwise, without discussing the family register" and explains that this "almost inseparable connection... has been one of the major reasons, and arguably the most crucial one, for feminist (especially post-colonial, anti-imperial feminist) objection to the institution of marriage itself in Japan" (2020, 94). The *koseki* stands for the remnants of the patriarchal family system (*ie seido*), preserving traditional ideals and gender inequality in much of Japanese society (Hendry, 2019). In heterosexual relationships as well, the *koseki* is a barrier to change because it does not permit couples to have separate surnames. As Yuki Asahina writes:

One persistent gender-related topic in Japan is marriage with separate surnames (*fufu bessei*)—Japanese law mandates either bride or groom change their surnames when they enter marriage" and "in 95% of all marriages, women do so with pain of a nightmarish amount of paperwork (Asahina et al., 2023, 105).

The family registration system limits the individual freedoms of many people in Japanese society. Due to the same surname requirement of the Civil Code and the inconvenience of renouncing their maiden names, "some choose not to legally marry and opt for a de facto

marriage,” which does not prevent couples from having sex but does still come with social prejudice (Matsui, 2023, 57).

Akiko Shimizu also connects the inconveniences of the current *koseki* system to the issues faced by many looking to marry because of the separate surname issue.

For decades, people have been pointing out the inconvenience and also the feelings of loss of their identity that are caused by having to change their official surnames to get married. This, however, has never been legalised, due to very strong resistance from the conservative side: that would confuse the family register and destroy the family, they have argued (2020, 96).

The hurdles are even greater for LGBTQ+ couples. For same-sex marriage to be enshrined in law, rather than ‘symbolic policies’ like same-sex partnership certificates, the family register system would need to be drastically altered or dismantled (Shimizu, 2020, 97).

Matsui-sensei continued her critique of the *koseki* system:

[About same sex marriage and koseki] ...I mean, they should abolish... that’s the thing is we, we do not need it. But if we talk about those issues, then I’m sure that people will not vote for the ruling party...so that’s why they do not want to talk about it.

In Shimizu’s paper and Matsui-sensei’s interview, gender issues—including same-sex marriage, anti-discrimination laws and sexual violence- are a source of anxiety and tension at almost every level of society. And, unfortunately, “anti-gender discourses exploit anxiety over gender and sexual deviance to justify their extremism: they represented homosexuality and bisexuality as symbols of immorality caused by ‘gender-free’ feminism, which destroys the traditional family” (Kawasaka 2023, 188).

From the NGO side, Kazuna Yamamoto-san also struggled with issues of capacity and how many projects Voice Up Japan could feasibly take on:

...You look at reality and you can’t do everything, because also everything that we do is, you know, voluntary, which means if you have school, if you have a full-time job to sustain yourself, it’s not quite easy...

Because also, at one moment, we were keen to move forward on more LGBTQ issues... But there are a lot of organisations that are talking about LGBTQ issues, there are already big organisations like Marriage for All that are addressing the issue of same-sex marriage.

And then it goes back to what can we do...if there are already other organisations... because if there are already people doing it, we do not want to step on top of like, you know, kind of distract their movement...

We can see here how often these groups and individuals express concerns over not just the issues themselves, but the politics of managing and organising members to ‘voice up’ and act. In many scenarios, in both Yamamoto-san’s description and in the Chabujo meetings I took part in, grassroots organisations were careful to assess their resources, the available knowledge on said issue, and the broader activist landscape to ensure no one overstepped into what could perhaps be described as another adjacent group’s ‘territory’, for, as Yamamoto-san termed it, fear of ‘distracting’ from an already existing campaign or movement.

Frameworks of Affect and Practice

This year-long fieldwork, involving participant observation of two Tokyo grassroots organisations with sexual consent projects, utilises a combination of affect and practice theories as applied to the contexts of education and social movements/activism. Other than volunteering with workshop activities, I conducted roughly 20 interviews that ranged from one to two hours in length with members of these groups and other relevant organisations. I have combined these traditional ‘in the field’ methodologies with aspects of digital research because of the abundance of materials shared via social media and many groups’ tendencies to hold meetings online. Due to the significance of materials shared by the organisations during their campaigns, this thesis is embedded with pictures of SNS posts, website layouts, presentation slides and physical pamphlets gathered on site.

The power to act (or even just to react) defines the context of sexual harassment and consent in Japan today, from the touchstone legal case of Shiori Ito in 2017 to the cases of sexual assault by male Keio University students in 2018 and 2019. It was these

emotionally charged and widely covered scandals which spurred the formation and mobilisation of multiple grassroots initiatives like the Believe Campaign and the development of sexual consent handbooks and workshops. Narratives matter whether they are the original telling of people's lives by the people who have lived them or tested through the ethnographer's ability to capture the details which produce emotions.

Andrew Beatty describes narrative importance in eliciting emotion of a particular landscape as threefold, including "the construction, understanding, and reporting of emotions" (2019, 109-111). This may be achieved by capturing an 'emotional episode' or 'sequence' and linking emotions to create an understanding, then communicated through writing. Beatty argues that emotions are like narratives in their structure, through time, across place, and between persons, often as a sort of event.

This capacious framework has the double advantage of making no assumptions about what an emotion is while including within a relatively small scale all that interests us in human behaviour—feeling, meaning, relationship, circumstance, action, implication, history (Beatty, 2019, 20).

I observed that, for some interlocutors, their narratives about intimate relationships were felt and shared as an emotional event or episode. This may be especially the case if they have experienced feelings of deep love and attachment towards an intimate partner or if, on the flip side, they are suffering from negative emotions of grief, anger, guilt, or embarrassment due to an instance of sexual assault. However, rather than the 'louder' expressions of discontent or protest, such as crying, shouting, or gesticulating, that may be popularised in depictions of activist mobilisation in Western contexts, members of Chabujo and the Waseda team engaged in very different forms of 'voicing up.'

The traditional Japanese context does not gauge intimate, interpersonal relationships through elaborate displays of public affection or verbal affirmations of closeness. This also applied to Lynn Jamieson's discussion of 'practices of intimacy',

communicating intimate ways of being through different shifting styles —and shifting selves (Alexy, 2020, Jamieson, 2011). Such a flexible definition of intimacy works alongside *kejime*, which refers to intimacy adjusted for time, place, or person, as well as Daniels' discussion of *kūki wo yomu* (or 'reading the air'), the sort of implicitly said and understood messages essential to both Japanese home and public life that one of Daniels' interlocutors described as being 'able to adapt to a certain setting', including if it means concealing one's own opinions (2015, 51). Traditionally, much of the communication between people, including partners in intimate relationships, was predisposed to these principles of understanding socially crafted boundaries and picking up on non-verbal signals. However, as Alexy's research demonstrates, many younger couples are shifting their relationship styles. This change can be likened to the shifting selves discussed by Jamieson.

The construction of *honne* (one's real feelings) and *tatemae* (public behaviour) and its public versus private negotiations has brought many scholars to refer to Japanese as possessing and using 'multiple selves' (Fruhstuck, 2005, 167, Hendry, 2019, 60-61). These are different selves that they show to different people in different contexts. But this contextual change is not especially unique across cultures and societies. What is often exaggerated is the obvious distinction, the lines drawn between the different selves, observed in social interactions in Japan. In the case of intimacy between Japanese university students, my research findings suggest not a case of multiple selves, but a case of shifting selves moved by emotion, by a desire for connection, for *ningen kankei* (human relationships).

In the Japanese sociolinguistic world, *ningen kankei* is an important term, appearing in the title of Nakane Chie's 1973 work on Japanese society, タテ社会の人間

関係 *Tateshakai no ningen kankei*. Nakane's book covers the intricacies of group formation, internal group structure and value orientations. The Waseda sexual consent handbook similarly uses the term *ningen kankei*, beginning in its title 'How to build better relationships' (より良い人間関係を築く方法 *yorī yoi ningen kankei wo kizuku hōhō*), which is, as Alexy argues, a common term which opens a familiar conversation and allows one to reference an intimate or private topic.

When people discuss or debate tensions between people who have or might want particularly close relationships, they regularly refer to a catch-all term, *ningen kankei* (人間関係), which literally means 'human relationships.' Often used to discuss relationality, this term represents a category broader than the intimate but has come to symbolise both a central aspiration and conundrum of the contemporary moment (Alexy, 2019a, 6).

Nakane connected group formation and human relationships to emotion by suggesting that a "cohesive sense of group unity... is essential as the foundation of the individual's total emotional participation in the group; it helps to build a closed world and results in strong group independence or isolation"(Nakane, 1973, 35). Jeff Davis considers the nuanced context of *ningen kankei* as a meta-value within Japanese education and educational leadership, whereby he uses Nakane's theories to assert that "this intensity of contact is a key feature of human relationships in Japan" and that "a concern for the value orientations of others remains a powerful force in Japanese leadership and organisational behaviour"(Davis, 2012, 4-5).

In an anthropology of the body, these 'processes of self' may fall under crafting an 'awareness of fragmentation and multiplicity' (Wolputte, 2004, 264). As in Japanese Studies, anthropologists like Steven Van Wolputte assert that traditional boundaries defining the body are blurring, and how a multiplicity of selves may emerge when people work to create or maintain a sense of belonging. And a sense of belonging and becoming a part of a community, a network of relationships, is very important to intimacy in any

context. For example, without forming connections to their peers through university club activities, Japanese university students may miss out on meaningful relationships and opportunities during their youth and perhaps even successful job positions later in life. This is inclusive of platonic, romantic, and sexual relationships with other people. Of course, what separates individuals' wishes to emotionally 'get out' of intimate experiences and relationships varies.

Embodiment in intimacy may be captured in the darker sides of relationships as well as in happier times of feeling connected to and understood by one's partner(s). And, unfortunately, violence and trauma are common occurrences in intimate relationships. Robin G. Nelson describes the role of embodiment in different forms of violence as "providing a metaphorical bridge for our understanding of the relationship between structural, emotional, coercive, and physical violence" (2021, S97). Occurrences of these different types of 'embodied violence'—often against more vulnerable individuals, include 'intimate partner violence (IPV)'. Returning to the earlier discussion of hegemonic masculinity and gendered power, IPV is a way to explore these occurrences and see how they "are often anchored in particular ideas about oneself in relation to larger communities and global systems" (ibid). An example of IPV in Japan would be, of course, domestic violence (DV), which the Ministry of Justice recorded as experiencing a 10% increase in cases in 2020, corresponding with a similar dip in sexual harassment cases that same year (Saunders, 2021). In the case of IPV, or DV, women are at higher risk of experiencing emotional and financial, as well as physical and sexual abuse.

These communities and their projects are framed in terms of intimate practice or citizenship (Jamieson, 2013, Jamieson, 2011, Plummer, 2001). They likewise emerge within models of agency as intention (Ortner, 2006, Ortner, 2001). Judith Butler and Lauren Berlant consider separately how gendered bodies are perceived within alternately

private and public spaces. The notion of ‘precarity’ as a “politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death” is significant here as gender norms impact appearances in public, determining who is legitimised or criminalised (Butler, 2009, ii, Butler, 1993).

In discussing recognisability of a subject in law or political life, Butler links performativity to precarity, to say: “The performativity of gender has everything to do with who counts as a life, who can be read or understood as a living being, and who lives, or tries to live, on the far side of established modes of intelligibility”(2009, iv).

There are multiple ways to engage with Butler’s analysis of gender performativity, bodies and sexual politics. Caterina Nirta examines legal gender recognition for trans individuals in the UK while considering the relationship between recognition and visibility and suggests that: “It is through the exposure of visibility that recognition is produced and distributed with crucial consequences on those minoritarian subjects that remain outside of the field of visibility and cannot access the benefits of recognition”(2022, 4).

Nirta expands upon Brighenti’s 2007 work in her discussion of the legal processes, the Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC), which recognises and makes visible certain marginal subjects over others. Social legitimisation is gained through accessing and abiding by the ‘correct’ procedures to cross the boundary to be recognised as the new gender. But this requires a precarious set of performances in itself as the individual must play into preconceptions and assumptions of how a woman and a man “should look, act, talk, and behave like, which will inevitably have an impact on their decision” (Nirta, 2022, 7).

Gabriella Lukacs' research on labour and gender in Japan's digital economy is also of special relevance and interest to this discussion, especially due to the digital and virtual modes of communication that Japanese activists seem to prefer when conducting their projects. There is a distinctive overlap between Japanese women's move to work online and the increase in irregular (or freeter) or precarious employment following the late 1980s bursting of the Japanese real estate bubble. Many of the women Lukacs spoke with emphasised that they believed good work was meaningful work (*imi ga aru shigoto*), even if it is not guaranteed for a lifetime. Lukacs interprets "women's commentaries on meaningful work as critical reflections on Japan's gender-stratified labour market and pervasive gender discrimination in the realm of work, characteristic of the lifetime employment system that, contrary to women's hopes, did not disappear with the breakdown of this system"(2020, 11-12).

With considerations of recognition, precarity, performativity and visibility in mind, we return to the notion of 'intimate citizenship'. Ken Plummer defines intimate citizenship as "a sensitising concept which sets about analysing a plurality of public discourses and stories about how to live the personal life in a late modern world where an escalating series of choices and difficulties around intimacies confront us"(2001, 238). Plummer's 'square of intimate citizenship' covers multiple areas relevant to this research on consent activism, such as negotiation of public and private spheres and multiple voices emerging in contested public discourses. Most importantly, Plummer's concept discusses how intimacies are impacted by contemporary social change—a concern which pervades the projects and narratives of individuals I worked with. Bonjour and De Hart take the concept of intimate citizenship into their studies of mixed-status families to "understand citizenship as a lived, intimate practice and experience"(2020, 7). The politics of intimacy they

discuss is inevitably gendered and interacts with state constructions of femininity, masculinity, and the family.

These identity-making and place-making activities can be considered “practices of intimacy that cumulatively and in combination enable, create, and sustain a sense of closeness and special quality in a relationship between people” (Jamieson, 2011, 3). We can apply Jamieson’s conceptualisation of intimate practice in conjunction with Allison Alexy’s definition of intimate relationships as:

...(1) marked by particular emotional, physical, or informational closeness or aspirations for such; (2) taking place within realms commonly understood to be ‘private’... (3) often, though not always, framed through bonds of love and/or sexual desire and contact (Alexy, 2019a, 6).

Although the utilisation of terms like *moyamoyasuru*, which denote ‘fuzzy’ feelings of uncertainty and concern, was not marked by bonds of love and/or sexual desire as we might understand some forms of intimacy, Chabujo and Waseda’s consent projects asked members to rely upon and trust each other in often ‘private’ ways.

Even standardised meetings were premised on the knowledge and reassurance that all members present agreed on the need to shift the status quo and cultivate a society where it was easier to live as yourself. Members were aligned on social issues such as legal protection for sexual assault survivors and a need for education on sexual harassment for university students. Soft voices, bodies angled together during small group discussions, and heartfelt divulgements of uncomfortable workplace and school experiences of gender inequality all mingled and blurred together. They are indisputably a part of what Alexy, Jamieson, and Wetherell refer to as either ‘intimate’ or ‘affective’ practices.

Affect is an elusive concept for scholars, the theory of which “points at bodily capacities to affect and be affected, which become socialised and eventually embedded into the realm of the sociocultural”(De Antoni, 2019, 1). It has often been conceptualised

in terms of ‘immaterial labour’ or ‘affective labour’ which Michael Hardt explains is “better understood by beginning from what feminist analyses of ‘women’s work’ have called ‘labour in the bodily mode’” and “what affective labour produces are social networks, forms of community, biopower”(1999, 96). Since Hardt and Negri have considered ‘affective faces’ of immaterial labour, other scholars, like Lukacs, have applied an emphasis on labour’s embeddedness within systems of gender inequalities. She introduces the term ‘feminised affective labour’ to analyse digital labour in Japan while traversing and eroding “the line between visibility and invisibility”(2020, 17-18). The DIY digital work pursued by Japanese women, such as writing cell phone novels, becoming net idols or full-time bloggers, and working as digital traders, is argued by Lukacs as both affective and intellectual, yet often perceived as not producing surplus value and belittled as being equivalent to unemployment, falling under categories of freeter or NEET. Even though “their online activities were not readily recognised as labour does not mean that women did not experience these activities as labour” (2020, 16). Lukacs' book asserts the continuous commitment and engagement Japanese women have with a still-growing digital economy.

Affective practice “is a figuration where body possibilities and routines become recruited or entangled together with meaning making and with other social and material figurations” (Wetherell et al., 2020, 14-15, Wetherell, 2012b, 19). As a framework focusing on landscapes of emotion and embodiment, affective practice is a fitting backdrop for a concept as elusive as sexual consent, whose understanding, even with a legal definition, comes down to practices of ‘everyday activism’ (Wetherell et al., 2020).

In the specific Japanese context, I analyse social movements (Shibata, 2020a), perceptions of precarity and uncertainty (Allison, 2013, Butler, 2009), and ideas of ‘passive participation’ as a form of engagement with sensitive topics like sexuality and

sexual health (Dales, 2009, 97). Group efforts to increase social consciousness (*ninshiki*) and public awareness (*ishiki*), often from the ‘bottom-up’ by educating Japanese youth, do not have obvious visible or physical impacts so much as emotional ones. Considering how both Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action and the Waseda Sexual Consent Handbook Team call upon and embody their understandings of consent as an absence of sexual violence, necessitates a social practice approach to affect, which “is to recognise that human social actors and their affective capabilities are neither entirely norm defined nor rule following” (Wetherell et al., 2020, 18). Wetherell and others often observe and identify communities and individuals being ‘moved by or with’ their world and ‘feeling with’ the activities and environments navigated in their daily lives (De Antoni and Cook, 2019, De Antoni and Dumouchel, 2017).

In proposing “embodiment as the existential ground of culture and self” as critical to analyses of body processes such as in medicalisation and commercialisation, Csordas drew upon similar notions of “being-in-the-world as fundamentally conditional” and wrapped up with both “existence” and “lived experience”(1997, 6 and 10). Additionally, Csordas’ concept of “somatic modes of attention”, defined as “culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one’s body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others”, is significant in the context of research on activist practice (Csordas, 1993, 138). This is because the practices of the groups I worked with actively engaged with and depended on the attention paid to fellow members. We were all constantly reading bodily cues of discomfort and respecting each other’s boundaries, whether in prolonged pauses or moments of empathetic speech.

An embodied emotional, or affective, capacity is echoed in Sarah Ahmed’s discussion of feminist attachments, in which she connects three emotional areas of anger, wonder, and hope. As feminist anger forms the crux of ‘against-ness’ (i.e., of gender

hierarchies), feminist wonder can represent a ‘for-ness’ which can stand on its own and not be defined just by what it is not. Although “feminist anger involves a reading of the world”, she argues that “it is through wonder that pain and anger come to life”, allowing us to realise the objects and reasons for that pain as well as that it “can be unmade as well as made” (Ahmed, 2014, 176, 181). In their separate works, Wetherell and Ahmed appear aligned when they examine how a practice approach to affect and the loss of a defined object to be ‘against’ can serve to broaden the possibilities in human action.

Ahmed suggests moving beyond the ‘against-ness’ and ‘other-ness’ within feminism by “taking care not to instate feminist ideals as ideals that others must embody if they are to pass into feminism”(2014, 178). This turn away from reaffirming or even policing certain types of feminism can be a disconcerting one. She states it as such: “To avoid such a politics, we may need to stay uncomfortable within feminism, even when we feel it provides us with a home” (ibid).

Considering the theoretical frameworks of both affect and practice in this research highlights an ongoing circulation, movement, and level of engagement that communities and organisations have with their chosen projects. However, the sexual consent projects by Chabujo and the Waseda team do not translate to a nascent form of a social movement, even though #MeToo may have jump-started their campaigns. Regardless of whether sexual consent handbooks and workshops at the grassroots level were considered impactful or successful, my research considers the deep emotional motivations of members and the often-intrinsic value to their efforts.

On Positionality, Affect, and Being a Scholar-Activist

As a white, nonbinary American raised in the United States and educated in higher institutions in both the US and the United Kingdom, I accessed my field site from a place of privilege and of difference. The primary distinction between me and my interlocutors was ethnicity and nationality, and, to a lesser degree, my gender identity. However, as Laura Dales and Beverly Anne Yamamoto posited about their research on ‘unconventional women’ in Japan, my “non-Japaneseness may have made it easier for these women to break the taboo of silence around the issues we discussed”(Alexy and Cook, 2019, 242). Dales and Yamamoto mention the women they interviewed felt less likely to be ‘judged’, and I noticed a similar effect—and ‘affect’—at play, when attending intimate sharing sessions and talk events with fellow consent activists.

The expectation that we would not judge one another was extended to all participants and members, perhaps for the reasons of shared ‘unconventionality’ that Dales and Yamamoto examine wherein they were “producing an intimacy based on the shared experiences of women who do not quite fit in, be it for reasons of ethnicity, age, marital status, or sexuality”(2019, 242). I argue that consent activists were and still are situated outside the mainstream of socially acceptable behaviour and values in contemporary Japan. Perhaps because of this, my automatic outsider status was softened if I adopted similar values and platformed the same social issues as other group members.

And I did. Despite the relatively short time of volunteer participation in both Chabujo and the Waseda consent handbook team, I strongly allied myself with their mission statement. I adopted their activist values to such a degree that it took months to critically examine their activities as a scholar instead of a collaborator. Then it took years and multiple drafts of this thesis to strike a balance of academic critique and as-it-happened recollection of the field and my interlocutors as close to their true selves as

possible. In the end, I could not and would not remove all the emotion from this thesis, the affective ways of ‘feeling with the world’, acknowledging the connection between emotional language and sensory perception, which were a constant undercurrent characterising my fieldwork encounters (De Antoni, 2019, De Antoni and Cook, 2019, De Antoni and Dumouchel, 2017).

Farzana Bashiri’s discussion of the characteristics of ‘scholar-activism’ as a concept helps me understand my position in and outside of the field in retrospect, since she concurrently analyses broad themes such as criticality, active engagement, and normative orientation (2024, 65-66). Within these concepts, Bashiri further examines topics like hegemony, power, reflexivity, emotions, teaching, and collaboration. Criticality is tied very strongly to active engagement in Bashiri’s assessment: “When practising criticality, scholars confront existing assumptions, question the prevailing norms, and challenge dominant beliefs, ideas, and discourses... critical scholarship must transcend mere critique and actively strive for positive change” (2024, 68).

The need for active and emotional engagement is echoed in the work of Closs Stephens and Bagelman, who question both the potential and limitations of the scholar-activist with a framework of transversality and ambivalence (2023). By placing the scholar-activist at various in-betweens, Closs Stephens and Bagelman challenge the notion that engagement is confined to specific sites, particularly the sites of neoliberal universities. The mobilisation of scholar activism between sites, as “a figure traversing various spaces” and “never fully occupying a pure position as an ‘active’ citizen” is a compelling one (Stephens and Bagelman, 2023, 333-334). Working ‘in-between’ and recognising the “need to embrace and engage with feelings as inseparable elements of their identities as both academics and activists” was fundamental to my ethnographic experience

(Bashiri, 2024, 72). Both discomfort and fulfilment existed in parallel, in a miniature terrarium set apart yet together with the intimate worlds of my interlocutors.

Speaking of being together, much of my fieldwork was conducted online, even while I was based in Tokyo. I had to adapt to the intimate and affective dimensions of the digital through online meetings and events. Scholars like Jamieson have discussed the challenges of ‘disclosing intimacy’ without ‘physical co-presence’, expressing doubts that “the depth of empathy and affection some couples achieve through physical co-presence with few words seem unlikely to be reproduced ‘silently’ in disembodied virtual co-presence” and would require “modes of interaction involving talk, such as chat rooms, email and Internet telephony”(2013, 10). However, in the past decade, it has become all too common for personal relationships of all kinds to be mediated through digital technologies.

This was the case with consent activism as I experienced it. In this context, I suggest that the lack of physical co-presence helped smooth and ease conversations around sexual harassment and violence, similar to Sato’s observations of students’ appreciation of the option to turn off video or mute their microphones during online SE classes (Sato et al., 2022). Although Chabujo and the Waseda team encouraged video to remain on in most cases, it was expected for our audio to be muted unless we were actively engaged in the current conversation. Despite possible consequences of digitally mediated intimacies, which have been theorised to bring “increased burdens of expectations and new opportunities for surveillance and control”, intimacy and affect can still be felt through the digital (Jamieson, 2013, 20). By keeping our videos on, the Chabujo and Waseda online meetings and talk events still offered reassurances that we were accompanied by other individuals. This was likely more effective because the number of people who attended

rarely increased to more than six or eight, enabling every person's digital visage to remain visible at any given point, no matter who was talking.

There are challenges, of course, in conducting digital participant observation, especially on intimate and sensitive topics. Sometimes I still felt detached or distant from fellow members, especially in the beginning when I was learning how to be a volunteer, and nothing they talked about was familiar. The option to go out for food or drinks in a nearby *izakaya* (a type of casual Japanese bar) was not available in the case of Chabujo, either, because we were all living in different parts of Tokyo, Kanazawa, Chiba, or Saitama. It was exceedingly rare to get more than two or three Chabujo members together in one place, and sometimes it happened by pure happenstance because we all attended the same public event about gender equality. But perhaps because we all had separate work or school lives and were volunteering on the side, the digital format felt more normal, natural even. The tensions between the online and offline were more keenly felt by me when it came to the Waseda team because we practically could have met in person, but a choice had been made to continue meeting online. There is something to be said for Jamieson's concluding comment about technology playing an active part in social systems shaping lives, where "personal relationships are also social systems that modify the powers or 'affordances' of digital technologies"(2013, 24). Online with Chabujo had the quality of taking time and giving care and attention to fellow members and activists, but being online with Waseda was more akin to a preferred convenience in the busy lives of students. The 'affordances' of our technologies offered entirely different opportunities for an affective exchange of sympathetic nods and disappointed exhalations. But how intimate our relationships to one another became was highly dependent on our priorities and motivations, whether we were digitally co-present to gain firsthand experience for a future career or to find the semblance of community, among many others.

Anthropologist Akiko Takeyama discusses the emotional engagements and entanglements which arise during fieldwork as a form of ‘affective fieldwork.’ I also adopt this term to better define and understand my journey from literature review to the field to analysis to writing up my findings on consent activism in Tokyo. According to Takeyama, affective fieldwork “is a tool to invoke one’s feelings to sense and study the often invisible dimensions of human experience”(2020, 227). Whether it is the intimate domain of seduction techniques within a host club, as was the case with Takeyama’s vivid fieldwork, or the careful sharing of experiences of casual misogyny and sexual harassment within consent activist groups, as with my research area, drawing from the accounts of more veteran ethnographers, I am even more resolute in my decision to preserve my presence and feelings so strongly in this thesis. Takeyama suggests that affective fieldwork is set apart from more traditional approaches “that prize objective knowledge”, and that may be the case, but so much of the intimate is “what is unknowable—the territory that is somewhat like the experience of an eclipse blocking out the line of clear sight”(2020, 229). Interestingly, even the answers to my primary research questions, which I will summarise shortly, are somewhat ‘unknowable’ or ‘invisible’.

In a single blip of time, it is difficult to gauge the impact an activist campaign can have on broader social attitudes. We may not know the extent to which limited social movements or short-term educational campaigns will be influential until we fast-forward into the future, where one person or group may have taken their cues from what came before. Since this is not a longitudinal study and activist campaigns are continuously evolving, I emphasise the significance of consent projects for groups and individuals in their present moment.

Outline of Chapter Discussions

Group members believed these projects to be urgent and important, mattering to a degree that outweighed the social risk of participating in activism around intimate issues of gender, sex, and sexuality. Events, workshops, and informal gatherings carried a particular emotional charge that did so much more than linger on frustration, on exhaustion, or suffering. These places and people cultivated a moment to not just speak but encourage careful and considerate listening. I believe this is no coincidence, because a deep desire to be listened to and feel heard underlies so much of the conversation around sexual violence and consent in Japan. Therefore, this thesis attempts to navigate the complex affective practices and landscapes of the Chabujo and Waseda team's interpretations of consent activism.

I will explore two questions across five chapters focused on different themes and problems which emerged during my fieldwork.

- 1) Why are grassroots sexual consent projects having so little impact on Japanese society?
- 2) And why do these groups persevere despite a lack of visible change to prevailing attitudes on consent and sexual violence?

The first chapter will introduce the initial barriers I encountered when attempting to speak with and join the volunteer activities of my chosen organisations. Following my participant observation, I understand why gender-issues organisations seem to not only resist the status quo of hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal norms in Japanese society but also resist the involvement of people who might impact their current campaigns. The reasons for such 'acts of resistance' are framed in part through Sherry Ortner's notion of

‘protecting one’s projects’ as applied to everyday practices. In the Japanese context, the emphasis on ‘protecting’ emerges from the taboo around speaking on sex and sexual violence in public spaces and the fear of backlash from mass media and online media critics (Yamaguchi, 2018; O'Day et al., 2018). The role of social media and digital networking, and ‘footprints’, is a core aspect of this research that cannot be overstated. (Tan and Liu, 2022).

I use comparisons with past student activism and social movements to indicate how, even with similar technologies and strategies available to mobilise beyond a campus or niche community, sexual consent campaigns without a legal reform focus are less likely to push for attention from mass media channels (see Ogawa, 2023, Ogawa, 2022, Cassegård, 2022, Falch and Hammond, 2020, Chiavacci and Obinger, 2018b, Kingston, 2004). These analyses of activism in a gender and consent context are set within the idea of ‘civil society’, which Ogawa defines as “a public sphere that broadly refers to nonstate institutions and associations that are critical to sustaining modern democratic participation”(2022, 299). The significance of NPOs and social movements to Japanese civil society appears to be an evolution from Kingston’s notion of a ‘quiet transformation’, which Japan underwent following the bursting of the economic bubble in the 1990s. Kingston argued that, in the early 2000s, “ordinary citizens are demanding a more democratic society marked by more transparent governance, more public participation and oversight, and greater accountability based on the rule of law”(2004, 3). According to Kingston, this phenomenon was evidence of a previously stunted civil society recovering and transforming. Ogawa, Cassegard, and Kingston’s examples will be discussed throughout this paper, questioning the concept of ‘ordinary citizens’, ‘ordinary people’ or ‘normal people’ which is used to appeal to broader audiences and stay safe within the ‘common sense’ status quo.

Emerging from these challenges as well as from the concept of ‘voicing up’ adopted by many Japanese feminist and grassroots groups today, the second chapter will discuss the language of emotion organisations use to recruit new members and nurture a sense of community. The act of sharing common grievances and recounting experiences of harassment, discrimination, and injustice may create both a ‘safe place of belonging’ (*iibasho*, or *anzen na basho*), as well as remove any perceived hierarchies within these groups. However, as interviews and anecdotes from the field reveal, individual members’ feelings are not always acknowledged or respected in the way they wish, pushing them to look elsewhere for a sense of fulfilment and camaraderie.

Chapter three elaborates on the institutional and administrative perspectives towards student-led sexual consent projects, specifically the case of Waseda University. Much of the chapter puts forth the positions of outright support, of cautious reluctance, or of overall neutrality that faculty or staff tend to adopt. These conversations are analysed within the context of one of the founding ideals of Waseda: *zaiya seishin* (or a grassroots spirit). This chapter argues that pushing ideas of community, progress, or *gakusei no chikara* (the strength of students) onto project members is at odds with what students hope to get out of their involvement.

Chapters four and five will take descriptions of meetings, workshops, and content from interviews to address a handful of common topics or concerns, which characterise the campaigns about sexual consent and other gender issues in Tokyo. These will include discussions of continuity, growth, and transformation in the fourth chapter. Consistent action is absent from the organisations, and reaction from their target audiences, usually undergraduate university students, is often neutral, which will tie into comparisons with earlier student protests and demonstrations like that of freeter activism and precarity movements in the 1990s and 2000s. Perhaps inevitably, this is tied once more to the

changes in Japanese civil society, in protest styles and public engagement, and the internalised beliefs of many younger folks that “neither institutional politics nor social movements... are capable of addressing social problems” (Asahina, 2021, 723).

In the fifth chapter, I will question if, how, and to what extent the feelings that brought members together to talk about sexual consent develop into longer-lasting bonds. The field anecdote this will be framed by is an incident of transphobia within one of the grassroots groups, Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action. This analysis will likewise consider the methods by which individuals felt aligned with different interpretations of feminism and activism, approaches to intersectionality, and even theories of anti-capitalism or anarchism.

Finally, I will conclude with the implications and outcomes of my ethnographic research, including any questions that could be addressed in follow-up projects. This thesis examines the impact of sexual consent projects in urban Japan. Consent activism is, in many respects, distinct from anti-nuclear activism, freeter activism, and other waves of protest and demonstrations dating back to the 1960s and 1970s (Cassegård, 2022; Cook, 2013). Even with such a narrow focus on two grassroots organisations in Tokyo, there are many other aspects from which these campaigns can be explored, whether through their collaborations with groups that specialise in legal lobbying or by examining disagreements or splits with other organisations. I propose that these limited projects are intertwined with individual motivations and institutional resistances, which hinder the emergence of a broader change in attitudes toward sexual consent among the Japanese public.

Chapter One: Acts of Resistance and ‘Voicing Up’

When I planned to participate as a volunteer with grassroots organisations based in Tokyo who worked on sexual consent awareness campaigns, the reality of recruitment and then eventual membership hit me hard. Some frustrations were attached to the absence of responses, and of presumed interest, and then a lack of activity. I was left wondering if the groups were interested in recruiting new members at all. An assumption going into the field was that these organisations would, one, be eager to increase their volunteer numbers and, secondly, that they would then wish to utilise member skills to continue their projects. Such assumptions were formed not just from my experiences volunteering in other countries, mainly in the USA and the UK, but also by the images projected online of their campaigns and activities in domestic Japanese newspapers and sporadic international coverage of activist groups responding to ‘scandals’.

In written narratives and accompanying pictures of student groups speaking out and voicing up against sexual violence on university campuses, including the occasional video clip of a speech or statement, sexual consent education was painted in 2018 and 2019 as an active campaign—and a budding movement. Considering how normalised sexual harassment (*sekuhara*) is throughout Japanese society, the advertised activities of these groups suggested that they would demand considerable involvement and dedication from their members (Gray, 2022, West, 2007a, Burns, 2005a). However, without a clear aim to actualize change, for example, Spring’s campaign for penal code revision to recognize sexual assault as being acts done without consent, or the student group SEALDs’ protest of security bills allowing the Japanese Self-Defence Force to be deployed overseas, grassroots organisations which are anti-sexual violence are uncertain as to how to focus their efforts in a way which is both meaningful and sustainable for all members involved.

In this chapter, and throughout the thesis, I argue that the sexual consent campaigns of universities and affiliated organisations are not the true successor of the #MeToo movement. The #MeToo movement's interpretations and incarnations in Japan have, in many ways dispersed and disappeared entirely. This is in part because the many differentiated grassroots groups and non-government women's groups in Japan "tend to be organized around specific concerns rather than broad concepts of women's issues" and are not connected with one another except when they agree to rare collaborations, such as Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action's 2016 Believe Campaign with Ashita Shoujo -tai (Tomorrow Girls' Troop), NPO Shiawase Namida and the Association for the Consideration of Sexual Violence and Criminal Law (Dales, 2009, 43). Additionally, as the case of SEALDs and the recent discontinuing of Voice Up Japan as a registered NPO indicates, activist organisations in Japan often have a limited life span, and, as much as individuals express a hope or desire for continuation of activities, the activists themselves have other ideas of what is an effective means to communicate their ideas and adapt their messaging.

How to Be an Activist: Recent Social Movements and Fear of Backlash

For Kazuna Yamamoto, one of the co-founders of Voice Up Japan, existing as a structured organisation was not a long-term option, much less a solution. She commented:

We always say, I mean, we've seen other activist organisations, and I think all of them last between three to four years. Because I think that's the difference between you know, what, are we going to become an NGO? Or do we [choose] activism?

Yamamoto-san's matter-of-fact statement emerges from what she and other activists often identified—that it was the structure of organisations in Japan which often proved a barrier to 'true' activism. To Yamamoto-san, an activist was an individual 'fighting' for or against

something, voicing their opinions, opinions which were often not shared precisely or accurately with the larger organisation.

I mean, when I started the petition, I was like, I was really, really pissed. And I started this organisation, processes and people and politics, and I think that kind of destroys the core of activism. Like, you know, if you're not even able to stick, to kind of fight and say your opinion then, but that doesn't make anyone happy. You know? Yeah. More than the registration part... I think the registration was just more than anything to help us kind of protect ourselves.

Perhaps because Yamamoto-san had begun Voice Up Japan and had a role in its eventual dissolution as a registered NGO/NPO (*ippan shadanhōjin*, lit. general incorporated association), of the people I interviewed she was the firmest when it came to the idea of activism being at odds with an operating organisation. Voice Up's registration as a NPO emerged from necessity, for the protection of group members who, if they stood alone and took interviews by mass media outlets in Japan, may have been forced to divulge more personal details of their lives. Striking a balance between legitimacy and recognition and being able to say what one wants was not unique to other activist organisations which came before Voice Up Japan or the groups I volunteered directly with.

The grassroots groups I interacted with in the field arguably had similar tools available to them as the student-led group called the Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy (SEALDs), which emerged in 2015 to protest policy bills being discussed by National Diet members during the Abe administration. However, they are far from an example of a student activist movement successfully resonating with previously apolitical and ambivalent young people.

Falch and Hammond (2020) and Robin O'Day, David Slater and Satsuki Uno (2018) lay out the SEALDs movement in their respective works as an example of the changes—especially in mobilisation through social as well as mass media messaging—that student activism has adapted since the high levels of political engagement by Japanese

students in the 1960s and 1970s. One of the highlighted tensions of SEALDs was the struggle to maintain control over their public image while maintaining some level of legitimacy with mass media outlets, with news programmes like Tokyo Broadcasting System TV (TBS)'s *Sunday Morning*. O'Day et al writes about how "in today's mediated environments, these moments [of transformation—of initiation, of prominence, and of decline (Staggenborg 2010)] are almost always connected to media, which they depend on if they seek to shift the larger public perception of legitimating or framing issues to a wider audience or to mobilise participants" (2018, 184). In the case outlined by O'Day et al, being interviewed on a program known to feature professors, politicians and other prestigious figures, gave the students at the core of SEALDs an opportunity to 'be taken seriously'. But the recognition by media also opened up SEALDs to comparisons, even well-meaning cautionary ones, to other student activist movements like the anti-Anpo protests of the 1960s and 1970s, and concerns that students were either ignorant of activist history or were prone to radicalism.

The anti-Anpo movement was formed as a response to the return of LDP leadership and the possibility of a renewal to the Anpo agreement. The Anpo agreement was a bilateral security treaty between the United States and Japan (Anpo) made in 1952 which was part of the then Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida's doctrine (commonly referred to as the Yoshida Doctrine). Under this treaty, "Japan accepted not only nuclear protection by the U.S, but also the presence of U.S. military bases on Japanese territory"(Chiavacci and Obinger, 2018b, 5). When this treaty was due to be renewed in 1960, many student and grassroots groups, along with left-wing parties and labour unions, saw this as a chance to abolish the treaty as they feared the U.S. would drag Japan into a war as their ally and "they envisaged a neutral Japan honouring its peace constitution"(2018b, 6). Protests and demonstrations garnered hundreds of thousands of participants, becoming a national

movement which had a lasting impact on the Japanese political and public consciousness despite their opposition to the renewal failing.

During the period immediately following the 1960s anti-Anpo movement and Miike coal mine labour strike, student groups mobilised to demand university reforms as well as to uphold Beheiren's (the Citizens' Alliance for Peace in Vietnam) demands to honour Japan's peace constitution. These groups "had split from established political parties and pursued their vision of a class-free Japan through direct action", and as "students began occupying universities throughout Japan... ideological rifts between the various groups... [were] eventually leading to violent clashes"(Chiavacci and Obinger, 2018b, 6-7). Unfortunately, this escalating violence also turned public perceptions against these activists and "handed the conservative establishment the justification and opportunity to initiate a tough police crackdown on the student groups to restore national order in the early 1970s" (2018b, 7).

Yuki Asahina points to this violent history of public protests, demonstrations and social movements in Japan as a significant contributor to the lack of interest and support in politics that younger generations of Japanese students and workers possess. They write that "violent terrorism such as lynching, killing and bombing that put an end to the left-wing protest cycles of the 1960s and 1970s remained as a collective trauma and forever tarnished the images of social movement activities"(Asahina, 2021, 724). Asahina also remarks that "neoliberal tropes of self-responsibility" were visible in the narratives of some interviewees in their study (ibid). Similar to Asahina's comparison of Japan to the comparatively 'stronger' civil society within South Korea, Chiavacci and Obinger describe how "in Japan, social movements had lost influence in national politics, while public protest became an increasingly socially stigmatised activity"(2018b, 9).

Carl Cassegard uses Nishikido's (2008) phrase 'ice age' to characterise the lack of social movements in the aftermath of radical left-wing student activism ending in the 1970s. He goes on to describe the development of new protest waves such as 1990s freeter activism, "a style of activism characterised by its own oppositional discourses and lifestyles" and, in the wake of legacy of protests associated with the New Left, spaces outside of campuses were set up where "freeter activists were brought into contact with constituencies that had been left aside by the labour or student movements"(Cassegård, 2022, 756). Freeters have often been discussed as a symbol of structural precarity and labour immobility in contemporary Japan, defined by Cook as "part-time workers aged between 15 and 34 years who are not students or housewives"(Cook, 2013, 29, Cook, 2014). Cook and other scholars focusing on the phenomenon of freeters and irregular workers in Japan often focus on *male* freeters and their negotiations with masculinity, specifically masculine adulthood. However, these studies have found, akin to Cassegard's discussion of freeter activists "dissociating themselves from hegemonic discourses", that while "structurally limited—as a result of their limited education or lack of the right kind of work experience—they are not victims without any control"(2022, 756, Cook, 2013, 40).

Both Cassegard and Asahina use the term 'collective trauma' to refer to the impact incurred by the New Left protest cycles, capturing the resistance to more outspoken protest methods by audiences and would-be activists. Cassegard argues that the lack of return to protest in the 1990s was due to "the collective trauma that hampered the mobilising ability of subsequent protest movements in Japan by discrediting protest and thereby limiting the discourses, practices and networks through which young people could express their discontent"(2022, 755). Such a negative view of past protest methods was tied to the overall narratives of many of the young Japanese people Asahina interviewed who,

especially in contrast to the criticism young Koreans had for civil society and political efficacy, “tend to downplay expectations for changes, young adults do not talk about the inconsistency between what they think about how things should be and how things are”(2021, 725).

The struggle to recognise and address inequality in Japanese contemporary society is inextricably linked to the history of preceding social movements and activism. Feminist and gender issues activists in Japan must not only manoeuvre around the collective trauma of these legacies but also the resistance of hegemonic patriarchal discourses which expect women to maintain their socially given roles with little to no protest. Extending their activities to other spaces, including online ones, has allowed feminist organisations and communities to increase awareness and participation, even if just through an accumulation of ‘likes’ and ‘retweets’ on social media platforms.

Anonymous interaction with these groups’ posts is similar to Dales’ engagement with Japanese women’s consumption of sex goods and erotica via the website and shop called Love Piece Club, a form of agency which “requires that the definition encompass pragmatic acts of unintentional resistance”(Dales, 2009, 95). In many ways, Ortner’s agency of intention, which Dales applies to the case of the Love Piece Club and female consumers of their content, more easily includes both forms of ‘passive participation’ and of everyday and affective resistance to mainstream forms of sex and sexuality (2001, 80). It also permits different forms of feminist practice, even ones which are “acts performed with an expressly un-feminist intent” (ibid). If we apply this model to both the development of protest and demonstrations in contemporary Japan and to the self-contained community organising of consent projects, we begin to see how consent activism and gender issues activism in general are less likely to ‘openly’ challenge existing power structures.

Dale describes, however, the way Love Piece Club (LPC) negotiates power:

The LPC promotes this negotiation among readers and consumers of its work and goods, presenting the means (for example, critical feminist literature and sex goods) by which women may act and/or enact social change. In this case, to act might simply be to understand, to consider or to question (2009, 96).

Notably, the student group and movement SEALDs, even though it did not persevere for years as some scholars and journalists speculated, ending in 2016 after the legislation they protested passed anyway, demonstrated how effective the use of ‘networked cyberspaces’ could be. Online campaigning moved out from Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube to more internal methods of communication through the Japanese messaging app called LINE.

Instead of having formal membership and a newsletter like previous movements in the country, students simply ‘joined’ the LINE group to receive immediate updated messages regarding protests and political news alerts (Andrews 2015). Through LINE, SEALDs’ members were able to directly converse and share ideas and information anywhere, anytime (Falch and Hammond, 2020, 438).

Kyodo News, NHK, Huffington Post Japan, The Mainichi Shinbun... multiple Japanese news broadcasting agencies covered the projects of a group of fed-up Japanese women speaking out against the norms of silence and ambivalence around sexual violence. These women were typically young, well-educated, and accompanying photos showed them taking the podium at prestigious institutions, like Keio University, one of the highest-ranking private universities in Tokyo. The group’s, or group representatives’, elevated importance in the article was in either direct or indirect response to a case of sexual violence which was brought to the level of a scandal, thanks to the individuals or institutions involved. Such incidents became platforms, even opportunities, by which organisations could advertise their own related projects—be it an upcoming handbook on consent, a push for mandatory workshops for university circles, or a request to sign a

Change.org petition which would, hopefully, reach the Ministry of Justice or other relevant government departments like MEXT or the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare.

Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action (Chabujo) received multiple forms of news coverage around 2016 and 2017 when the #MeToo/#WeToo/#WithYou movement reached Japan. It was, in many ways, the “nature of media coverage which dampened the #MeToo movement in Japan” when stories of sexual harassment began to be posted on Twitter, the backlash began to put pressure on victims to remain silent and to question their integrity” (Hasanuma and Shin 2019, 102-104). When Japanese journalists like Hachu and Ito Shiori spoke out about their experiences of harassment and rape, “the media coverage of her lawsuit was very critical of her dress and behaviour” and “media attention perpetuated the narrative of sexual harassment and rape as being the victim’s fault or responsibility rather than the perpetrator’s” (ibid: 104). Ito Shiori described in her memoir the difficulty in providing evidence of nonconsensual sexual assault when things happened out of sight.

In my case, the hotel security video plainly shows that I was dragged through the lobby, but after that, a certain amount of time elapsed while I was in Mr. Yamaguchi’s hotel room.

During that period, was there consent or not?

It was pointed out to me repeatedly that a third party can’t know what occurs behind closed doors. The public prosecutor referred to this as a ‘black box’ (Ito, 2021, 144-145).

This ‘black box’ which prevents consent, or lack thereof, from being established is unfortunately in line with previous media approaches and legal authorities in Japanese cases of assault where if women do not play the role of the perfect or ideal victim, they are considered less legitimate, and their case weakened as a result (Burns, 2005). Burns phrases this as “the presentation of self as a credible witness”, which requires the woman to perform a tremendous amount of ‘emotion work’ to “distance herself from the sexualized prostitute body and possibly align herself with the weak and vulnerable feminine body” (2005, 39). This is in addition to properly demonstrating that she did all

she could to protect her body from the perpetrator in question, such as by wearing appropriate dress and performing the ‘correct’ feminine behaviour.

In 2019, typing in my browser search bar ‘sexuality education and sexual harassment in Japan’ unearthed a *Kyodo News* article titled ‘Students take stand against sexual violence at Japan’s universities’. In this article, Chabujo’s co-founder Osawa Sachiko, spoke about efforts to end sexual violence on university campuses. Osawa-san’s statement followed on the heels of news that several male students at Keio were suspected and then apprehended for sexual assault, only for the perpetrators to be let off thanks to family connections in an out-of-court settlement (*jidan*). Osawa-san compared the increase in discussions on consent at Japanese universities to the earlier prevalence of consent education in the United States in the statement, indicating how many activists petitioning against sexual violence get their cues from overseas and the typical language used to appeal to a local audience.

The English version of the article is still available on Kyodo News. Phrases such as ‘safe environment’ and ‘raising voices’ are common messages for gender-issue-focused and feminist grassroots groups in Tokyo. Near identical phrases appear in handbooks, pamphlets, and social media posts, including the sexual consent handbook produced by Keio University students in collaboration with Safe Campus Keio and Voice Up Japan depicted in Figure 17.



Figure 17: Sexual Consent Handbook produced by Keio University students in March 2021.

‘*Iya yo iya yo mo suki no uchi*’: Establishing ‘No’ Means ‘No’

Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action (Action by Ladies Flipping Tables), continued to make appearances in online articles that same year. In March 2019, several months before Osawa took the podium about the Keio case of multiple male students being apprehended for sexual assault, *The Mainichi Shinbun* also interviewed members of Chabujo to discuss the central message of their sexual consent handbook: “Sexual words and actions without consent are sexual violence” (*doui no nai seiteki gendou wa seiboryoku*).

One of Chabujo’s other founders, Kamata Kanoko, and co-representative director, Kasai Takayo, spoke in that interview about the cultural background of pervasive sexual harassment and violence, specifically about the phrase *iya yo iya yo mo suki no uchi* (often used to mean ‘saying you hate it means that you like it’) and how it encourages victim blaming and shaming. This phrase also fits in with Japan’s “visible mass culture and ‘pornographic society’ that promotes sexualization of women and girls and eroticises sexual violence” (Hasanuma and Shin 2019, 104).

They [Kamata and Kasai] point out that [*iya yo iya yo mo suki no uchi*] and phrases like it indicate that the will of the person on the receiving end of the act is disregarded. Disregarding consent in sexual acts can lead to victims being blamed for their inability to

resist or refuse, leading to them crying themselves to sleep and appeals to the phrase [*doui no nai seiteki gendou wa seiboryoku*] (Yamada for *The Mainichi Shinbun*, 2019).

Daniel White addresses similar issues with the nationally backed Ambassadors of Cute program which “designed and presented by men, invokes more specifically male-oriented practices of consuming images of young women” (2022, 132, original emphasis). He considers his questions as to the effects these often erotic and pornographic images have on young men and women as a form of “dangerous affect” (ibid). Drawing from the work of scholars of popular culture in Japan like Patrick Galbraith, White critiques the often-simplified representations of both the Ambassadors of Cute program and Cool Japan, stating:

More importantly, practices of representing and reproducing cute girls in Japan do not take place in gender-equitable space, materially or semiotically—a fact that suggests a number of unaddressed points on the gendering of Cool Japan via selective images of otaku and girl culture (2022, 139).

Chabujo members and scholars of Japan are not alone in their awareness of widespread and harmful consequences of the eroticism of sexual violence and sexualization of young, even underage, women. A student member of the International Christian University (ICU) Voice Up Japan branch, referred to here by the pseudonym ‘Toyomi’, shared with me in August his experience with the phrase *iya yo iya yo mo suki no uchi*.

So yeah, you know, so there’s a saying that ‘iya yo iya yo mo suki no uchi’, and some manga or anime so have a scene where, like, female says ‘no’, but it means kind of ‘yes.’ And as I mentioned that [adds] more excitement to the situation. But like, many people went through reading those, went through seeing those scenarios in dramas and movies...I think that’s why those refusals are very common in Japan. Also, it’s problematic because when they actually mean ‘no’, the other person doesn’t take it as ‘no’, they take it as ‘yes.’ And they force those people to, you know... a problematic situation.

The inclusion of the pornographic context of these phrases is vital to understand how these attitudes towards consent, or a lack thereof, are so popular and so widespread. Burns (2005) and West (2007) mention the existence of a typical ‘rape script’ in their discussions of the legal storytelling and handling of sex and scandal in Japanese courts. Many young Japanese men and women have internalized a ‘relationship’ or ‘sex script’ which emerges

from the mass media they consume. Of course, this is not unique to Japanese society, and, increasingly, social media applications and websites have a significant influence on how young people learn about sex and relationships.

The ‘rape script’ discussed in the context of judging sexual assault cases in Japan also fall under the ‘rape myth’. It is an assumption of:

...Patriarchal complacency about rape and sexual assault [...] that when someone is raped or violated sexually in some other way, that individual suffers both shame and self-doubt” and “a vicious cycle of silence, shame, unawareness, and inertia continues to allow this hidden plague to flourish (Osawa, 2023, 2).

However, intimacy continues to be considered an incredibly private matter in Japan, with few opportunities to openly discuss—much less question, nearly ‘common-sense’ phrases like *iya yo iya yo mo suki no uchi*, which essentially promises that a ‘no’ may also be a ‘yes’. The division of private and public in conversations around the intimate cannot be ignored regarding a topic such as consent, which seeks to reassert the importance of boundaries (*kyōkaisen*) and the right to self-autonomy (*jiko kettei-ken*). And both concepts consistently come up in the handbooks discussed and in interviews with group members.

As Paul Reynolds remarks, “privacy and the private are hegemonic in demarking a boundary between what is held as intimate and what is regarded as part of common associations and relationships”(2010, 36). What is permitted with public spaces becomes the dominant, accepted, and normalised processes, organisations, and values. What remains a private matter does not get the choice nor chance to be known, much less be understood, which is a fundamental barrier sexual consent projects face, especially when they attempt to work with or within higher education institutions.



Figure 18: Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action produced the first comprehensive handbook in 2018.

The reference to Chabujo's activities in *The Mainichi Shinbun* and similar articles was no accident. The feminist grassroots organisation was one of the first to develop and publish a sexual consent handbook aimed towards university students in 2018, titled *Anatarashiku daigaku seikatsu wo okuru tame no hōhō* (or How to Live Your University Life as You Are). As seen in Figure 18, the handbook's lower left-hand corner more explicitly says in English, 'Sexual Consent Handbook', and in Japanese, *sekusharu consento (seiteki doui) handobukku*. The choice to put the Japanese in both katakana, with its overseas loan word connotations and with a more native term in kanji was a conscious decision on the part of active project members. It recognised the connection people often made with foreign ideas—that they may not concern Japanese audiences nor apply to Japanese contexts, while suggesting 'consent' (*doui*) as a concept that was very much related to the problem of sexual violence in Japan. Although the handbook is specifically meant for university students, it is clear within the first pages in the sections about 'Background of Consent Being Made Light of in Japan' and the 'Three Important Things

Regarding Sexual Consent’ that the organisation is attempting to set the harassment and violence witnessed and experienced at Japanese universities within a broader cultural lexicon of behaviours, terms, and their construed meanings.

A considerable amount of thought went into the framing of language within Chabujo’s sexual consent handbook, especially as expressed by one of the Chabujo members who helped develop its contents, Chisato-san. She repeatedly mentioned how ‘privileged’ many Chabujo members were due to a background of living, working, and studying in foreign, usually Western countries and recalled:

Like I remember when we created the handbook like we were very careful of this [the privilege of members], because we knew that we are a bit different from the Japanese students who are born and grow up in Japan. So, we tried not to use katakana or English words. For example, when we say ‘sexual consent’ we can understand. But for some people, for some Japanese people, it’s difficult. So, we have to use *seiteki doui* like Japanese words. Like bystander intervention as well we also use *daisansha kainyū*. So, we try to avoid katakana.

The Waseda Sexual Consent Project, specifically the Sexual Consent Handbook Team, has had a more local platform to introduce their activities through the Waseda University newsletter, Waseda Weekly. Though rather than learning about the handbook and later workshops through Waseda Weekly, it was the student-run Instagram account (@voiceupjapan_waseda) which provided a clearer, more accessible picture of how the sexual consent project was progressing. This included updates on the letter of request (*yobōsho*) made to the university president, Tanaka Aji, to have sexual consent education at Waseda and a petition for signatures to submit to the president. Any wider form of raising awareness was through their affiliation with Voice Up Japan and their university branch at Waseda. Voice Up Japan, another, much larger, gender issues grassroots organisation with activist inclinations, was a useful resource for many individuals and groups, to read about and look further into the projects of separate universities.

Although Waseda University did not yet have its handbook published when my research into consent projects began, other universities, specifically Keio University, had published a free online consent handbook in March 2021, following the series of sexual assault scandals involving male Keio students. The handbook, pictured in Figure 21, was made in collaboration with Safe Campus Keio and Voice Up Japan. Similarly, to the Chabujo handbook, the Keio version defines *seiteki doui* and why it is essential to learn about it within the first couple pages, acknowledging that their definition, “Sexual consent is consent that should be confirmed for all sexual actions” (*subete no seiteki na goui ni oite kakuninsareru beki doui wo seiteki doui*) is borrowed from the definition used by Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action.



Figure 19: Waseda Sexual Consent Handbook, first published in March 2022.

When the Waseda VUJ branch, in collaboration with another student circle called ‘Shaberu’ came out with the first draft of their handbook in March 2022, there was no explicit reference to the Chabujo handbook project, but the wording on pages defining

sexual consent stating “sexual consent is something that should be given for all sexual words and actions” (*seiteki doui to wa, subete no seiteki na gendō ni oite torareru beki doui no koto*) and “when sexual consent has not been received all sexual words and actions are sexual violence” (*seiteki doui ga torareteinai seitoki na gendō wa subete seiboryoku desu*) seem derived from older handbooks. After I spoke personally with members of the handbook team, they confirmed that the Chabujo handbook was one of the resources they consulted when creating a Waseda University-specific handbook. This is all mentioned now to illustrate how these teams and organisations are intimately interconnected, even if they do not campaign together and conduct activities independently of one another. It was thanks to the multiple mentions of Chabujo in digital media that led me to the group’s website and Instagram account. And it was the involvement of Waseda with Voice Up Japan which made me aware that this university too had an ongoing project on sexual consent.

Considering these introductions to the activities of Chabujo and the Waseda sexual consent handbook team, there appeared to be much more work to be done. The goals and missions of these organisations were to spread awareness about sexual consent, have collaborations with other organisations, and to raise their voices together while taking action to change today’s society (*ima no shakai wo kaetai to omou hitotachi ga...Tomo ni koe wo age kōdōsuru koto de*). Although the phrasing of missions and values varied across platforms and groups, the overlap in intentionality and practice continued to appear along with the words *koe wo ageru* (raising one’s voice or voicing up).

Emerging Value Differences and Communicating Affect

Voice Up Japan’s founding emerged from specific individuals’ experiences and feelings regarding sexual violence and harassment, like the magazine *Shūkan SPA*’s ratings of ‘easy women’ at different universities, which indicated which female university students were

the easiest to have sexual encounters with, and the cases of sexual assault by multiple male Keio University students. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, one of the co-founders, Kazuna Yamamoto, relayed her initial emotions to me during an online interview after I had departed Tokyo.

Her story relays her relative position and personal investment in activist and feminist organising.

So it was in a sense, starting Voice Up was like an accident as well because, back then, I actually had another organisation already that did more things around education in Peru... And then when I started the petition, it was really like, it wasn't really planned or anything, it was just really casual. I was going home one day, saw this article, and was really pissed. And I was like, 'Why is no one doing shit about this', it's, you know, it was kind of like a really big trigger to me... And since I knew about Change.org, I started the petition and then, literally overnight, it kind of blew up.

Yamamoto-san mentions how many different people began to reach out to her, expressing how they thought it was a good idea to build a group around voicing up against issues like sexual violence. The move to make a group emerging from the petition for the *Shukan SPA* article to be taken down and for similar articles to cease publication emerged from common sentiments communicated by Yamamoto-san that 'raising your voice in Japan is not an easy thing' and 'doing activism alone is definitely scary.' When asked about how the organization chose which issues to focus on, Yamamoto-san expressed the importance of selecting issues which were not already covered by larger organisations like how petitioning for same-sex marriage rights is covered by Marriage for All, as well as ones which Voice Up members had knowledge on and were considered an urgent, time-sensitive issue like an imminent law around immigration for asylum seekers.

Knowledge was often stressed by Voice Up, Chabujo and the Waseda team, and if individual members were not considered well-versed enough to circulate knowledge around something like sexual consent or LGBTQ+ rights they may choose not to cover it in their own projects.

Yamamoto-san described:

We think our team had enough, you know, leaders that had experience on learning about sexual consent and educational academic pieces as well. But other issues we would like [to tackle] for example, sex work, was always one thing that we said, ‘I do not think it’s an issue.’ We’re like, we’re not educated enough. Like we shouldn’t just go around saying our opinion, just because [we do not have] the proper research and the knowledge.

Although there is something to be said for being careful, even cautious, about which topics and issues they campaign on—Yamamoto-san stressed how difficult it was to correct misinformed or misguided opinions of individual members, usually students at semi-independent university branches, the resistance or reluctance to engage with something like sex work or pornography because of a lack of knowledge could perpetuate rather than challenge existing attitudes. Laura Dales observed a similar reticence by members of the WWW and Women’s Projects, citing a member called Ohara-san as being less interested in campaigning about pornography. According to Dales, this reflected her relative position and demographics as an older member married with two kids and her engagement with the Working Women’s Network. Dales writes about Ohara-san’s positionality: “Her reservations over pornography and the yakuza can therefore be seen to reflect other considerations, such as the perceived intimacy of sexuality and sex issues” (2009, 45).

Even neutrality and silence regarding pornography and sex work can be harmful to educating people on the situations of sex workers in Japan. Still, as illustrated in these few examples, groups working on gendered issues often consider these topics too uncomfortable or outside their know-how to address in earnest. This is despite the sexual violence and consent issues in, for example, Japan’s adult video (AV) industry. Takeyama delves into “the way that sex workers’ consent—defined as neither overtly forced nor completely voluntary agreement to do something—is obtained but also how it recedes from focal awareness, even though consent is central to sexual labour in Japan’s AV industry” (2023, 621). Her focus is on the dynamics of ‘involuntary consent’ which emerge

when young women are contracted into the AV industry, and the lack of attention paid to systemic abuses of power.

Takeyama writes:

The existence of involuntary consent complicates longtime “anti-porn versus sex-positive” feminist debates about the relationship between gender, sexuality, and human agency. Anti-porn feminists have claimed that a woman’s “choice” is never made freely, as the choice to become a “respectful” housewife or “promiscuous” whore is, for example, a choice between two sides of the same coin of patriarchal control over women’s sexuality (2023, 621-622).

Suppose even anti-sexual violence organisations resist engagement with certain issues. In that case, there is room for individuals in these groups and then the groups themselves to foster ideas that even more stigmatised groups, like sex workers and transgender people living in Japan, are a barrier to better treatment for women. A brief, yet potent example of this I witnessed in the Japanese Twittersphere—and which was preserved on Japanese user ZINEyokikoto’s website, Hatena Blog, was the tension between the well-known Flower Demo group and sex workers .

Members of Flower Demo protest sexual violence towards women and have demonstrated across many Japanese cities since the #MeToo/#WeToo/#WithYou movement first emerged. Meanwhile, SWASH (Sex Worker and Sexual Health) was established in 1999 and aims to provide resources and support for sex workers as well as educate about the sex industry in Japan. ZINEyokikoto titles an article ‘*sekkusuwākā sabetsu e no kōgi kōdō wo shijishimasu*’ (I support the anti-discrimination protests for sex workers). The article includes pictures of two Twitter posts, one by the official Flower Demo account and one by sex workers, shared in Figures 20 and 21.

The Flower Demo statement was posted on 28th February 2023 and advertises a demo occurring on 8th March, which reads:

From 8 pm on this day we will be holding a stand in Kabukicho, Shinjuku, to express solidarity with all victims of sexual violence, including victims of sexual violence (*seisakusha higaisha wo fukumu subete no seiboryoku higaisha e*).

The text on the attached image includes the phrase ‘*seiteki doui wa okane de kaenai*’ (sexual consent cannot be bought with money).

On 6th March 2023, only two days before the Flower Demo event was scheduled, the sex workers’ account posted a response announcing a countermovement taking place at the same place and time. The first part of their statement, only part one of a twelve-part Twitter comment thread, reads:

We will be taking counteraction against the Flower Demo stand scheduled to take place at 8 pm on March 8th at Cinecity Square in Kabukicho, Shinjuku (commonly known as To-yoko), as the message it conveys clearly puts sex workers at risk (*sono messēji ga meihaku ni sekkusuwākā o kiken ni sarasu mono de aru koto kara, kauntā kōdō o okonaimasu*).

The post includes the hashtags ‘*#sekkusuwaka no koe o kike*’ (listen to the voices of sex workers) and, in English, ‘*#SexWorkisWork*’.



Figure 20: Twitter post about upcoming Flower Demo event, 28th February 2023.

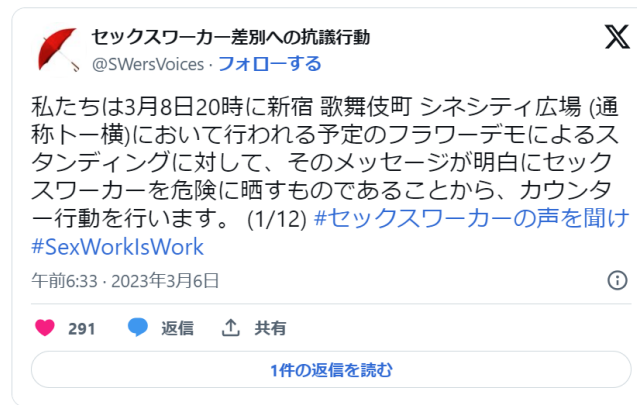


Figure 21: Twitter post by sex workers, responding with the announcement of a counteraction, 6th March 2023.

I share these online interactions between separate rights groups to paint a more accurate picture of how disparate and occasionally at odds these organisations can be. Especially as groups like Flower Demo persist after the initial buzz around #MeToo in Japan has long since faded, their leaders have begun to express adjacent opinions about who counts as victim of sexual violence and, as they phrased it, sexual exploitation (*seisakusha higaisha*), which sex workers on Twitter took issue with, expressing that such views may endanger sex workers, many of whom are choosing if and how they engage with the Japanese sex industry. There is also significant overlap in SWASH with concerns for the rights of transgender and foreign sex workers, who are even more vulnerable to violence from customers (Nswp.org, Global Network of Sex Work Projects).

Of even more relevance to my research on sexual consent campaigns and understanding in a Japanese context, is the way the Flower Demo post uses the phrase ‘sexual consent’ and adds a definition that says, ‘it cannot be bought with money’. This understandably victimises sex workers who provide sexual services in exchange for money as their livelihood. All in all, these Twitter posts also demonstrate how online activism and organizing around gender issues are far from a unified movement and are a site of contestation about who can give and receive consent, what defines a victim of sexual

violence or sexual exploitation, and then the different ways by which these groups of people resist and voice up.

When it comes to Japanese gender issues groups' acts of resistance, through voicing up and developing educational materials, I draw on Sherry Ortner's discussions of practice theory. This includes the earlier work of scholars to define practice as "anything people do" and something intertwined with motivation, which involves actors going "after what they want" in the context of a system which binds and places certain burdens on those same individuals (Ortner, 1984, 149-152). This consideration of social subjects as being balanced between 'structure' and 'agency' that Ortner, Bourdieu, Gramsci, and Giddens consider is also about the everyday. That, if "the word is 'made' through the actions of ordinary people it could also be unmade and remade" and could involve both social and cultural transformation (Ortner, 2006, 16-18). This mention of 'transformation' whether potential or eventually realised, will be a crucial theme for analysis in chapter four.

As Ortner describes, "social transformation involves the rupturing of those schemas and subjectivities [through which people feel about themselves and the world]" (ibid,18). Feeling and emotion, and therefore 'affect' as an ontological and methodological tool to make sense of how bodies feel is tied up in practice, in its subjectivities and politics, in its intentions and precarity (White, 2017, Clough and Halley, 2007, Ahmed, 2014).

Margaret Wetherell's approach to 'affect' is especially applicable to the activities around sexual consent projects and their methods of 'voicing up' within Japanese society. She considers "performance and pretence" as well as "habit and character" when settling on affective practice as a better way to understand the make-up of people's social lives (2012b, 4). According to Wetherell, "affective practice focuses on the emotional as it

appears in social life and tries to follow what participants do” and often observes patterns which move, shift, and arrange themselves in lines of action instead of a static state of being (ibid). An emphasis on practice and affect in motion also emphasises the body’s ability to inscribe meaning, which the ‘voice’ aspect of Chabujo and the Waseda handbook team’s projects often places at the forefront. The voice becomes the advocate for the often trespassed or disrespected body. A lack of communication, often arising from a lack of knowledge on *how* to communicate, is explained by group members as a reason why no consent is received, and harassment of the body and self occurs. Notably, these organisations do not blame this on the victim, which is a precedent set by Japanese mass media and consumers of said media. The groups are painfully aware of the victim-blaming and shaming culture prevalent in Japan, both online and offline.

The ideas of ‘feeling with’ and ‘feeling with the world’ should be discussed when relaying interactions within the organisations in Tokyo working on sexual consent projects. De Antoni and Dumouchel’s emphasis on practice-based “affective correspondences” which consider “how” something emerges within the social more than “what”, better encapsulates the subtle entanglements, emotional and sensorial, of gender issues projects in Japan (2017 in De Antoni and Cook 2019, 144). De Antoni and Cook propose within their theoretical framework a focus on feeling: “It is about *how* bodily feelings interplay with the entanglements of the discursive, the social, and the material. It is about practice and doing” (2019, 145).

What was meant by ‘voicing up’ for these Japanese organisations was one of my first questions when entering the field. Was it just a metaphor for their brand of activism or a call for a greater social movement? And the increasingly entangled and nuanced issue: was there any difference between their external message of ‘let’s voice up together’, and their everyday practice?

Accessibility: Online and Offline

The best way to begin discussing these issues and their possible answers is through personal experiences. For an issue as important yet invisible as sexual consent, the challenges, contradictions, and undercurrent of behind-the-scenes conflict began before I joined a single organisation.

I was working in Tully's Coffee, located a few minutes from Waseda's main campus, when I opened an email that had been lost in my junk folder for about a week. I read the response from Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action with a mix of relief and elation, as well as renewed optimism that the 'participation' part of 'participant-observation' for this fieldwork was underway. It was a simple, professional email in Japanese following an enquiry I'd made a week or two before on the Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action (Chabujo) website through their standard enquiry form. The recruitment lead, Saya-san, contacted me to thank me for my interest in becoming a volunteer and to arrange a time for an 'interview' that would take about an hour. Saya-san explained this is where I'd talk with her about why I wished to conduct activities on the theme of gender issues. Professional terms and polite language were used throughout our email conversations, and I noted the use of interview (*mendan*) instead of explanation session (*setsumeikai*), which was used for similar one-on-one meetings or seminar-style events with Chabujo and other organisations I attended. Saya-san did, however, offer reassurance that the interview was a formality in many ways. The Zoom meeting was more for us to get to know each other than to gauge qualifications and abilities in the way an internship or job interview would.

Saya-san was an easy person to speak with, a young woman with bright eyes and a quiet smile, who spoke either with measured, yet impassioned tones or with a curious expectation. Much like I had prepared questions for her about the organisation—was the handbook still a current project of theirs; were workshops online, in-person or both; what

was the organisations future goals or plans?—Saya-san wanted to know about my interest in Chabujo, specifically in sexuality education (SE) and sexual consent. She shared that it was the area of SE, of educating young people about these hard to talk about topics, that was her primary interest. Like the team leads and founding members of the Waseda sexual handbook team and Voice Up Japan, Saya-san’s perspectives and motivations influenced the direction of the project group, and, in my experience, recruitment. She was concerned about the mixed messages provided around sexuality education in Japan, seeming to stem from the same issues as outlined by academic scholars. The conflict between ideology learned through state education and the reality of young people’s lives was a key aspect of Huiyan Fu’s argument, where she states: “Significantly, sex education is utilised as a means of supporting the most (re) productive elements of society; it is not based on the reality of young people or the voice of local educators”(2011, 907).

Saya-san’s interest also appeared to be driven by her current work with university administration, though she did not share which university she was based at, and I did not press her to give explicit details.

Saya-san explained a bit more about Chabujo, introducing some of the organisation’s past projects—such as the Girls Power Parade 2016 in Omotesando, the effort to not only create the handbook for university students, especially ones who were victims of sexual violence or harassment, but also to create a book aimed towards middle school students, and their alignment with the values of Community Organising Japan, which is a separate organisation that emphasises the power of citizens to take action for themselves and with each other to enact change on their societies. Saya-san referred to Community Organising Japan as an ongoing collaborator. The ‘community organising approach’ Chabujo uses is very similar to the one adapted by Community Organising Japan. Chabujo highlights five elements or principles on their website, which are adapted

from the five on CO Japan's website: storytelling, relationship building, team building, strategy planning, and, lastly, action. In general, these principles highlight the need for group efforts or widespread community engagement to effectively address and change social problems.

Saya-san did not spend much time on the connection or relationship between the two organisations as she quickly flipped through PowerPoint slides that had been prepared for a much longer, in-depth explanation session. As she lingered on a diagram of the structure of Chabujo, consisting of multiple teams and a central steering committee, she mentioned that some of these teams were being restructured or no longer existed under the name jotted on the slide. Some team names I managed to write down in my notes (generally following the naming convention of 'topic' and then '*kai*' (denoting group gatherings) were the research or study team, a sharing team or circle, and the digital team. There were also publication and editing-focused teams as well as ones focused on forming collaborations with external, but still like-minded organisations. The image of Chabujo painted for me during this interview was a bottom-up grassroots organisation that had an established legacy of completed or ongoing projects, as well as large enough groups of volunteers to make it happen. This was only half of the entire picture of the current Chabujo. The organisation I experienced as a new member of the digital team was of a community attempting to revitalise itself after several years of intensive activity, followed by the Covid-19 pandemic, which naturally limited their in-person activities.

Before we ended the roughly hour-long Zoom meeting with next steps and niceties, I learned several interesting details from Saya-san—some directly about Chabujo and others about the current social climate at universities regarding sexual consent discussions. She provided an example, without providing the name of the institution, that some university students had wanted to distribute pamphlets about *sekuhara*, consent and other

matters of SE, but faculty and staff had seemed afraid this would be bad for the university's reputation. The students were then asked to put covers on the pamphlets before distribution. There was a belief and assumption that the distribution of these pamphlets (especially if they did not have covers hiding the content) would project an image that 'sex is visible', and it is 'that kind of university.' This struggle to hand out pamphlets or handbooks had clear parallels with the fears and concerns of Waseda University faculty about what university involvement in projects around sexual consent might mean.

A pattern had formed where there were continuous discussions and interactions between people who were supportive of these projects and people who protested institutional policy and administrative decisions which blocked student action. Though, I later learned that some of the students themselves, based at Waseda, International Christian University (ICU), Tsukuba and so on, were less focused on the perceived structural or cultural problems of these barriers to distribution and awareness, and more interested in finding alternate routes to turning their ideas—whether they were handbooks, pamphlets, workshops, or seminars, into a tangible product. The underlying desire or need to 'produce something' is also worth questioning, and the possible motivations of these sexual consent projects themselves will be discussed in a later chapter.

Returning to my interview to join Chabujo, another matter Saya-san mentioned to me was an incident with a member of Chabujo who made discriminatory comments about transgender people. They ended up leaving the organisation, and Chabujo members had to discuss how to avoid such discrimination in the future. Though when Saya-san first told me about the incident, the details were not consistent with what other members had informed me, or at the very least, the interpretation of it was left open, so that I originally thought that a transgender member of Chabujo was the one who faced discrimination and

then left the organisation. But it turned out that the scenario could have been reversed and that the perpetrator of said discrimination, who was rebuked by the steering committee members, had 'left' or otherwise 'resigned' from Chabujo. It was an eerily similar cycle of actions and reactions as with university scandals, where a professor accused of sexual harassment will often resign before being fired or otherwise face more serious consequences for their misconduct.

This incident was concerned with transgender recognition and rights and had come to a resolution before I became a Chabujo volunteer. So, why did Saya-san tell me about it? The answer she gave me that day was that it was one of the reasons they had such a strict no-tolerance policy around discrimination based on any individual's characteristics. This policy was in the Chabujo activity participation pledge, which Saya-san sent to me to read and sign if I was still interested in joining. Part of the pledge stated that:

Age, sexual orientation, gender, nationality, religion, affiliation and any other discrimination based on someone's origins or attributes, as well as discriminatory comments or violence, will not be tolerated (Chabujo pledge, my translation).

Initially, I did not find the wording on its own particularly strange, strong, or even radical.

It was an administrative document with dry, even legal-sounding language. But now knowing the narrative context Saya-san shared with me, it casts the necessity of this clause in a new light. I thought to myself: *'Ah, so even organisations fighting for equal rights have issues with inclusivity and diversity...'*

And, months after joining, when I learned a few more pieces and contradictions about the incident in question, it became an indicator that conversations around gender in Japan were increasingly including mention of gender non-conforming and transgender people's existence.

I read, signed, and submitted the pledge to Saya-san, who seemed both delighted and relieved when, even after hearing about recent internal issues like the transgender discrimination, I still wished to join. The delight multiplied when, after she said I could try out multiple different teams before deciding which to work with, I firmly decided upon the digital team, which managed the blog and SNS platforms for Chabujo. This was the team Saya-san oversaw, and she also admitted that they were short on members, so my joining would be a great help. Because of the delighted surprise I read from Saya-san, who seemed to expect I would take some time to mull over our conversation and then perhaps withdraw my intention to volunteer, I received the impression that potential volunteers withdrawing interest had happened before. Why prospective volunteers would change their mind and not join could be due to any number of reasons, but I did wonder... what was the biggest barrier to this organisation when it came to recruitment and membership growth? Were they mainly external problems (i.e., level of commitment and scheduling conflicts) or internal ones (i.e., interpersonal relationship dynamics and misaligned values)?

I received an invitation by email to join the Chabujo Slack workspace almost immediately after I submitted my signed pledge. Slack was already a familiar co-working platform for me, a mobile and PC compatible application which many organisations and companies use to send messages, share files, and hold audio and video meetings. After I was admitted to the Slack workspace, then introduced, and welcomed to the digital team channel, then introducing myself in turn, I looked forward to seeing firsthand how one of these feminist grassroots organisations operated even in the face of many potential obstacles.

As promised by Saya-san, the first Chabujo meeting I attended as a new digital team member was not even a month after the interview. At the time, I took this as a positive sign of the team's level of activity and coordination. Saya-san used different time

scheduling applications to gauge everyone’s availability, usually TonTon, a website through which you can input dates over the month and see which ones work best for most team members (see Figure 22 below). Considering how different everyone’s schedules were, this was the most efficient way to organise the team. Eventually, Saya-san went through all the dates people had previously input, posting in the Slack channel to remind any individuals absent from the list to fill in their preferred dates. After confirming everyone’s responses, Saya-san then confirmed that the next meeting would be held on a late October evening.



TONTON
スケジュール調整ツール「トントン」 つかいかたはカンタン 日程をえらぶ

I 日程をえらぶ

STEP 1 → 基本情報を入力

タイトルがなもの: (例)〇〇さん歓迎会

予定時間: (例)移動時間こみで4時間くらい

補足・備考:

利用マーク: ☐ ★ 希望 ☒ ☆ 参加、可
☒ ▲ 未定 ☒ ✖ 不参加、不可

主催者パスワード:
※主催者パスワードは削除時に必要となります。

STEP 2 → 日付を選択

2024年11月

日	月	火	水	木	金	土
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2024年12月

日	月	火	水	木	金	土
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4

◀ 前の月 今日 次の月 ▶

※下にタイムラインが表示されます。
[タイムラインに移動する](#)

STEP 3 → 時間を選択

タイムラインのホワイト部分をクリックまたはドラッグで時間の選択・取り消しができます。
すべての日付を一括で選択したい場合は一括設定が便利です。

06:00 ~ 06:00 まで一括設定する | [全てリセット](#)

→ 登録

Figure 12: TonTon is a meeting scheduling application used frequently by Chabujo and Waseda team members.

It is also important that I emphasise that, for the Chabujo meeting, it was not a rush to get to a physical office or similar venue where we would meet in person. Saya-san had confirmed by the end of our interview that the regular once-a-month team meetings, with each team organising and meeting independently of one another, always happened online.

It was a matter of convenience and not just a holdover from the COVID-19 pandemic. In general, members found it easier to join a Zoom meeting from the comfort of their home.

As soon as I shut the door of my room in the shared house, I opened my laptop and logged onto a Zoom call. I was the last one to join, with only 30 minutes left in the one-and-a-half-hour meeting and immediately felt the urge to apologise. However, Saya-san swiftly noticed my presence and asked me to provide a brief self-introduction before explaining what they had already discussed. Despite my late arrival, I was still able to experience what a typical meeting structure would look like, with a check-in from everyone who was participating. Like a professional work meeting, there was a division of roles which included a note taker for meeting minutes (*gijiroku*), a timekeeper who would make sure we did not spend too much time on one agenda point, and a meeting lead who would run through each task as well as the action points for the next meeting. The individuals who took up these roles rotated; all of us were meant to take turns managing these online meetings. The meetings always ended in a ‘check-out’ which consisted of each person going around to share ‘something good’ (*yokatta koto*), ‘something we learned’ (*mananda koto*), and ‘something we thought could be improved upon’ (*kaizenshitai koto*). However, since the first meeting did not involve a details discussion of actions to take or the types of SNS posts to make, the ‘check out’ turned into more of a first impression about this new team, with everyone sharing *hitokoto* (a brief word or comment).

As I met Mariko-san, Haruna-san, Jay-san and Yui-san and learned a little about what their interests were, there was an atmosphere of openness, of friendly curiosity and excitement. We were all here for similar reasons, after all. This shared desire to ‘act’ seemed to operate as a sort of ‘security blanket’ and made it easier for people to speak more candidly about themselves.

Like me, Yui-san was a new member of the team, while Jay-san was new to the team but had been a member of Chabujo for at least a year as part of their Change Leadership Program (CLP). I later heard from Jay-san about their participation in this program, but also vaguely knew from the Chabujo website that this had been an online series of workshops for young people, mainly students, who wanted to learn how to create and support a more equal society. This translates to a society ‘without sexual discrimination or sexual violence’ (*seisabetsu, seiboryoku no nai, jendā byōdō na shakai*), which is consistent with Chabujo’s general mission statement. Because the team was only now revitalised after a few months of dormancy, Saya-san had mentioned that some members had essentially ‘retired’ from activities either permanently or temporarily, which gave most of us equal footing from the start. Yet, we were also not at a complete loss for what to do or how to do it. Saya-san, Mariko-san, and Haruna-san had prior experience, with Haruna-san especially taking time to organise meeting agendas ahead of time and conduct research about topics we could post online.

Even at this first welcome meeting, the idiosyncrasies of Chabujo and the Chabujo digital team were beginning to emerge. By being present at this meeting and future ones, it was possible to disentangle what mattered not just to the organisation, but to the individuals who volunteered their spare time to support activities like women’s empowerment, sexuality education, and ending engrained sexual violence. Chabujo did not feel like a political group, but rather a community one with ties between members within the organisation as well as to groups of people outside of it. Discussion during meetings and through the Slack channel, including Saya-san mentioning that previous team members had resigned or changed teams, as well as the indication of future availability through scheduling applications, demonstrated an important point. This point was that of

participation, especially continuous participation, and how it was valued in terms of both an indicator of interest and expression of enthusiasm.

This experience parallels Dales' discussion of agency as expressed in feminist engagement, particularly feminist engagement in Japan. She remarks: "In the context of the women's groups examined, agency is rarely revolutionary, but rather manifests in the subtleties of ongoing participation" (Dales, 2009, 5).

Dales focused on three women's groups in her analysis: Women's Projects, WWW and Benkyō, which were all non-governmental organisations at the time, although Benkyō was no longer active and had dissipated by the time she wrote up her findings. The use of an "agency-of-intention framework" and inclusion of exploration of topics through SNS as a form of "passive participation" can also work for Chabujo and Waseda students' sexual consent projects (Dales, 2009, 97). Certainly, for individuals who follow the group's activities on Instagram or Twitter, and occasionally even for 'dormant' members who cannot engage at a certain point in time due to work, study, or family obligations, having the option to participate less explicitly is a great boon. The consumption then of SNS posts, of handbooks, and corresponding 'likes' and 'comments' also then declare intentions which, although diverse, all fall underneath that shared sense of values and support for a world view which might be spurned in other contexts online or offline.

Another characteristic I noted first in my email communications with Voice Up Japan Waseda and Shaberu, then in the makeup of members on the Chabujo digital team was the assignment of value to 'equal footing' or 'equal relationships'. In the handbooks and other materials created by these organisations, this was often expressed as *ningen kankei* or *taidō na kankei*, the first of which is used to encourage communication and respect between people and the second, which more explicitly describes 'equal

relationships’ and how they are essential for communication. The Chabujo sexual consent handbook includes three points under ‘communication through equal relationships’, including: “try to understand yourself, try to talk about things you like and dislike regarding sex beforehand, and the party who wants to act should receive consent” (一般社団法人ちゃぶ台返し女子アクション, 2018, 11). For the case of the Waseda team’s handbook, *taidō na kankei*, or equal relationships, were framed in terms of specific examples where sexual consent could not be achieved. According to their ‘principles of sexual consent’, you cannot establish consent with people who are above you in status, including teachers, coaches, and employers (2018, 6). This is because of the possible consequences of refusing a romantic or sexual invitation when the other person has power over aspects of your life like grades, pay, or a position on a sports team.

This was also emphasised in Instagram posts and the sexual consent handbooks, but it took on a different form when seeking to become a member of the groups that produced this content. Shaberu’s emphasis was tinged with concern, as they admitted their desire to prioritise the recruitment of undergraduate students. Chabujo was more nuanced. Saya-san and the other members did not outright claim that the new structure of the digital team ensured that everyone had ‘equal footing’ or formed ‘equal relationships.’ The implications of this would have been distinct from those in the Waseda student circles. It was not age, university year, or department that precluded membership as a volunteer.

As the interview had confirmed for me and then again, the first online meeting, it was about shared passion and motivations for discussing how to change society. I choose to phrase it as ‘discuss how to change’ instead of simply ‘change society’ because Chabujo members did not express an intention or belief that their activities could straightforwardly impact the passage of inclusive bills in the National Diet or the attitudes of people across

generational lines. Instead, it was education and organisation-focused, assembling and cultivating members of society who would go on to enact said changes in, for example, the penal code on sexual assault or women keeping their family name post-marriage. I will continue to expand on these comparisons between the Waseda sexual consent project and Chabujo's, but for now, the treatment of the term and feeling of 'equal footing' points to Waseda's team being more goal-oriented and Chabujo's digital team being more *value-focused*.

Questioning Intersectionality

During and near the end of my work with sexual consent projects, intersectionality was a sporadic conversation topic which grew to be a concept that group members wished to identify with, especially in Chabujo. As I was leaving Tokyo, Chabujo's digital team was morphing into an 'intersectionality team' and beginning to meet, even in person, to discuss potential new projects. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to engage with these nascent projects. However, in this section, I discuss and question the move towards intersectionality and what it could mean for the organisation's values, which was visible while I was active in the Chabujo Slack channels.

To begin, intersectionality as a concept was first introduced by feminist scholar Kimberle Crenshaw to discuss the intersection of race and sex, particularly the erasure of Black women's experiences in analyses of antidiscrimination within the United States. Crenshaw states that "problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including Black women within an already established analytical structure...because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated"(1989, 140). Her proposal is a reimagining of the entire

feminist and antiracist framework. Only after this can a concrete and meaningful policy that is inclusive of all experiences be born.

Even at its inception, intersectionality was a difficult concept to realise and to practice. Crenshaw applies it most strongly to U.S. legal cases, which have been and continue to be racialised and gendered. More recent scholars reference the co-production and activism, which intersectionality has become, like Vivian Shaw and Kanoko Kamata, who propose a new theorisation where they “define *compartmentalising intersectionality* as a grey zone of intersectional practices, wherein social actors attempt to remedy multiple dimensions of social inequality while nonetheless reproducing social exclusion”(2025, 4). They write that this emerges from whether and how activists know about intersectionality “as either a term or a political-intellectual tradition” (ibid). Since Kamata herself was a key figure in the founding of Chabujo and the implementation of the Believe Campaign fighting for revisions to the Japanese Penal Code, her and Shaw’s feminist ‘translations’ of uneven intersectionality as seen and experienced in Japan are vital to mention as it relates to Chabujo in general as well as patterns of gender activism throughout urban Tokyo.

In the case of the anti-rape movement, Believe Campaign, Shaw and Kamata discuss the strategisation involved in “crafting a gender-neutral visual identity...choosing a wing motif...and in their cartoons, all characters were depicted with unspecified genders”(2025, 19). The Campaign did this to move away from the popularised myth that men cannot be victims of sexual assault, and by “actively recruiting men as allies *and* recognising men as victims”, Believe Campaign was distinguished “from past Japanese feminist movements which framed their causes as exclusively women’s issues” (ibid).

As evidenced from the above examples, the Believe Campaign attempted to include men and sexual minorities but “tacitly deprioritised other dimensions of inequality

and identity, such as race, ethnicity, and class” and “their attempts to collaborate with potential allies, such as disability advocates, were often hindered by the institutional dominance of men within these organisations”(Shaw and Kamata, 2025, 20). Political controversies, such as statements regarding reparations for Korean ‘comfort women’, also limited the choices leaders of the Campaign could make. Due to warnings in 2017 by external senior advisors, the Believe Campaign could not offer allyship on the longstanding issue between the Japanese and South Korean governments.

On the other hand, attempts to reach out to multiple disability organisations resulted in mostly rejections. Even those sympathetic to the cause often declined to collaborate because they saw sexual violence as “a sensitive issue and wanted to avoid triggering traumatic flashbacks for group members” (Shaw and Kamata, 2025, 21 and 22) When Hiromi Nakano, one of the campaign’s leaders, asked for participation in a survey on the status of sexual violence and disabled people, including children, the primarily male leaders of these organisations were disinterested.

Intersectionality is often wrapped up in identity politics and, as Crenshaw elucidates, “the problem with identity politics is...that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences” and “in the context of violence against women, this elision of difference in identity politics is problematic fundamentally because the violence that many women experience is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class”(Crenshaw, 1991, 1242). Shaw and Kamata acknowledge in their analysis of the Believe Campaign and the politics of sexual violence that it “compelled activists to make concessions that ultimately contributed to their exclusion of certain groups” and “reflected assumptions that operate within Japanese society about ‘normal’ and ‘ideal’ victims”(2025, 23). The qualities and values assigned to ‘ideal’ victims have been discussed briefly in the introduction chapter but will be further explained in the following paragraphs. Significant,

as well, to mention in the context of projects like the Believe Campaign and groups like Chabujo and the Waseda team, are the expectations and assumptions made within the groups. Although ignoring the differences among groups is problematic, as Crenshaw declares, she does not stop there. She acknowledges that “ignoring difference within groups contributes to tension among groups, another problem of identity politics that bears on efforts to politicise violence against women”(1991, 1242). The members of even a dedicated feminist and activist group are not a monolith, and this is proven by my in-depth conversations with multiple group members, all whose values and goals shifted to some degree from the mission statement declared by campaign leaders.

The notion of different values as strongly associated with certain social movements, grassroots organisations and community organising is explored in other studies of Japanese users interacting with content from the original #MeToo movement in Japan and the later #Furawādemo events. One such study examined the intersection of perceived values and social media platforms through a VTM (values, topics, media) framework, to help explain “the weak presence and transmutation of #MeToo in Japan”(Mizoroki et al., 2023, 2). Whereas #MeToo tweets and posts were read as “emotionally intense or led by affect”, the #Furawademo posts were understood as “aligning with the perceived Japanese values of reserve and conflict avoidance, without the harder, more ‘masculine’ communicative style of anger (Mizoroki et al., 2023, 9). Communicative values were examined alongside societal values, which illustrated an even deeper clash between #MeToo and perceived values of ‘Japaneseness’ echoed by respondents in this study. One of the most striking aspects was what researchers described as a clash between “courage and autonomy on the one hand, and conformity/group emphasis, homogeneity, hierarchy, and endurance on the other hand”, with autonomy in particular displaying tension between posters wishing to ‘speak up’, ‘voice up’ and express

their true opinions but being hesitant to do so aloud (Mizoroki et al., 2023, 9-11, Tan and Liu, 2022).

Overall, the #Furawādemo posts were read by respondents as being ‘softer’ and more aligned with their ideal images of femininity. The “conformity and association with the group were identified as governing the local version of the movement. For example, Naomi explained that its participants might have employed terms such as ‘everyone,’ ‘together,’ and ‘all of us’ to effectively engage with and inspire others” (Mizoroki et al., 2023, 11). The struggle for social movements and organisations to manifest in a way which resonates with the public can also be compared to a sense of inequality. In the case of interviewees and informants in Japan, even though they “are aware of the gaps, they maintain highly ambivalent attitudes” and “believe in the promise of meritocracy but are also aware of structural barriers”(Asahina, 2021, 718). This sociological analysis will be referenced again in chapters three and four as I introduce concepts like ‘grassroots spirit’ and social transformation in more detail.

To conclude this initial fieldwork of the two organisations, the first meeting of the ‘new’ team was the perfect opportunity to hear about not just the reason why people joined Chabujo and this team specifically, but what they hoped to achieve going forward. From wishing to write articles about transphobia and people with disabilities to housework and sex work, to SDGs, to developing educational content for working people, to making an environment where everyone could participate easily, and addressing what type of information was best for Chabujo’s audience... the interests everyone had were distinct and diverse. It was easy to look forward to the next meeting, where we were to think about the topics we wanted to post on and begin to work together as a team. And, despite the challenge, it was in the beginning to be thinking, reading, writing, speaking, and listening to complex topics entirely in Japanese, the sensation of a shared understanding between

the members often overcame bursts of anxiety. Although we used the word ‘team’, we were also forming or becoming part of a budding ‘community.’ This offered ongoing comfort and deepened my desire to contribute to the activities of the team and organisation. All of which would only become more important the longer I became immersed in different groups and activities in Tokyo.

According to Chabujo and similar groups, the idea of a mutual understanding (*kyoutsū ninshiki*) is essential for conversations around sexuality education and sexual consent. Academic papers on sexuality education (*seikyōiku*) in Japan also consider the importance of having self-awareness about sex and sexuality, often in the context of potential sex-based discrimination, as Shinomiya considered under the category “*sei no jiko ninshiki to seibetsu*” (2018). Calls to work together (*tomo ni...suru*), raise voices (*koe wo ageru/koe ni dasu*), and improve communication, especially across gendered divides, are common in SE-related campaigns. More recent projects, like those at universities such as Waseda and by newer NPOs like Chabujo, are also more inclined to include queer voices and other diverse concerns related to race, nationality, and disability, to the ongoing conversations. The first indication of this at Chabujo was the listed interests of digital team members, which were often about researching and posting articles about minority groups in Japan. For the Waseda handbook team, I noted this tendency to include more ‘voices’ in the handbook itself on pages 10 and 11 in the section “*samazama na zokusei to seibōryoku*” (various attributes and sexual violence)(シヤベル et al., 2022). The pages further divide sexual violence statistics and common problems faced by the following groups of people: sexual minorities, people with disabilities, children, and foreigners.

Chabujo’s digital team and Waseda’s sexual consent handbook team often cited and shared the sources from which they got their information, including lines of clarifying

text about terminology (i.e., sexual minority) and statistical survey names and years. In many ways, the language and atmosphere used by these groups, by these communities, determined their actions against not just the status quo, but against criticism by potential allies. Their projects were in many ways being ‘protected’ through not just the soft disclaimers in the footnotes of pamphlets or handbooks, but by maintaining core membership instead of actively recruiting. A focus on ongoing and passive participation, by first volunteers and collaborators, then by intended audiences (primarily university students or young professionals), was a curious characteristic for these projects, which I originally assumed would have benefited from further recruitment and expansion of activities. The sexual consent projects at these two organisations have been created from the motivations of distinct collections of individuals set apart from a larger feminist or otherwise activist movement. Brought together through a starting desire to end sexual violence on university campuses or, more broadly, reduce sexual discrimination against women across Japan, Chabujo and Waseda team members use these projects and associated spaces to resist value identification with mainstream society.

Their language of ‘voicing up’ emerges from emotions, expressed through affective practice and quiet resistance, but remains rooted in a shared concern and worry rather than anger or frustration. Arguably, anxiety, concern, worry, and uncertainty can persist longer than stronger bursts of indignation or outrage. But I will examine in the next chapter how even drawing in members and interested spectators with a recognisable emotional language about a common issue is not enough to bind a group together, especially when individual members’ feelings are not fully addressed, as they may have come to hope or expect.

Chapter Two: ‘Moyamoya,’ Emotion in Grassroots Practice

In this chapter, I introduce and analyse the emotional language used by grassroots groups to garner interest in sexual consent projects. These occurrences in my ethnographic study are tied to theoretical concepts such as affective practice and potential social reasons for feelings of anxiety and unease. Although my comparative fieldwork of two grassroots groups and their projects captures only a single snapshot of their activities, both Chabujo and the Waseda team are responding to established attitudes towards topics like social movements, youth activism, *iyashi* (healing care, usually emotional) as labour, and appropriate labels for girls and women at various stages of their lives. This discussion of what is emotional and affective is crucial to understanding current reactions to accepted norms and the relationships of power which motivate these individuals to build and occupy a space of safety and belonging. I will tackle these themes in several sections. The first will focus on the terminology used in physical materials and in-group discussions to define ‘feelings of uncertainty.’ Section two examines the notion of caring for the self and others through the lens of *iyashi* and affective labour in various studies of sex work and host clubs. And, lastly, the third section will consider the framing of safety and belonging, of *iibasho*, used by these groups, especially Chabujo, in more intimate sharing sessions.

¹On 16th November 2022, after multiple emails with both VUJ Waseda and Shaberu, as well as a lunch conversation with Waseda Gender Research Institute faculty members, several student circle booths caught my eye. They were clustered at the centre of the Waseda main campus, by the statue of Okuma Shigenobu, the university’s Meiji era

¹ Figure 23’s photo includes the bulletin board with both pamphlets and sticky notes from the April 2023 new student welcome days, at which many *sākuru* sign up to have a booth space and advertise their club activities. Shaberu, one of the circles which manages the sexual consent project, had a booth at which other members and I volunteered. The bulletin board, however, has the same ‘*moyamoya koto*’ messages, which were gathered in November 2022.

founder, which served as a common meeting place, popular photo spot, and the symbolic 'heart' of university activities. It was also an ordinary sight to witness different circles and organisations affiliated with Waseda overseeing informational booths or recruiting for upcoming events. Already acclimated to these occasions, I walked by the booths on my way to the research room in the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies and realised why one looked so familiar. Members of VUJ Waseda x Shaberu had a booth of their own, sitting behind a display board and small piles of pamphlets, on their phones or speaking quietly among themselves. While I worked on my laptop in the research room, I kept thinking about the student booth and whether in-person interaction and expression of interest would be more successful. Would it help both me, as the foreign outsider, and current members, as the creators and distributors of the sexual consent handbook, to match face to name? I returned to the statue of Okuma later that afternoon.



Figure 22: Shaberu circle booth, including 'moyamoyasuru koto' sticky notes. Photo by the author.

No one was speaking to the sexual consent project members when I drew near to their table, and there had been no lingering students when I walked by them around the

lunch break. As the lone interested person at the time, I approached and was immediately greeted by one of the female students watching over the stall. She gestured to the bulletin board display (included in Figure 23) at the front and said that if there was anything I was worried about lately, I could write it on a sticky note and attach it to their board. The board was already dotted with notes in yellow, green and pink with messages written in Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and English—the most spoken languages of Waseda students. Above this array of notes was the phrase “*nanka moyamoya koto ga areba, kaite, tsukete wa ii desu*” (if there is anything concerning you, you can write it and attach it).

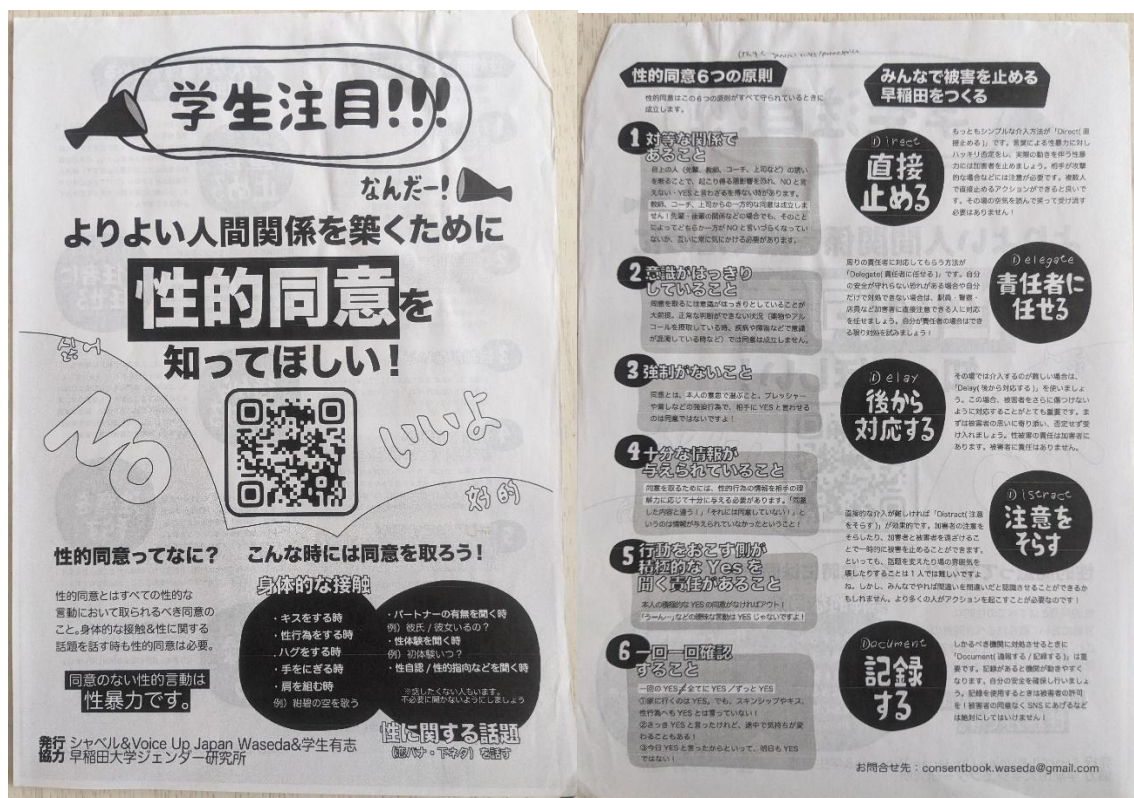


Figure 24 Flyer (chirashi) advertising the sexual consent handbook (front and back). The email for enquiries is in the bottom right-hand corner of the back side of the flyer, which is also available to read and download online.

Although I did not add any messages of my own to this bulletin board, acting as a means for students to anonymously express their current concerns, another member instead offered me their pamphlets (Figure 24) and began explaining their projects. They said that

anyone could join, and they were open to all sorts of help. The emphasis was, understandably, on their sexual consent handbook, the updated version of which had been produced only a couple of months prior in September 2022. With some hesitation, I admitted that I had read parts of their handbook and even emailed them about my interest in their activities because I was researching similar topics. On my part, this ‘confession’ served two purposes: to further describe why I was interested in participating in the consent project and to gauge whether anyone recognised me (my background if not my name or face) from the stilted email conversations we’d been having for months. I did not go into much detail, only mentioning my status as a researcher interested in gender and sexuality, and this on its own was met with excitement and even appreciation for my engagement. There was no guarantee these three students were the same members I had emailed, nor that the ‘enquiry’ being made about my possible participation (which VUJ Waseda had explained was the next step) was shared knowledge. It was an encouraging encounter regardless, even if it had me wondering if my transparency with student circles early on had contributed to persistent challenges in communication and access.

A major reason why coming upon this in-person booth was so helpful is that the members present directed me towards the consent handbook team’s email address. This was at the back of one of their pamphlets that included a breakdown of the handbook’s main points: what sexual consent is (defined by when it isn’t present), their six principles of sexual consent, and the 5 Ds of bystander intervention (direct, delegate, delay, distract, document). The pamphlet also included a QR code that people could scan with their mobile phones to be directed to the PDF version of the handbook online, which was free to read, download, and print for individual use. Now equipped with a new means to contact the team working on the handbook and the workshops, I sent one more enquiry, to which I

did receive a response from Shikano-san, a veteran member (*senpai*) of the group and, as I learned later, one of the founding members.

I kept my message brief, and Shikano-san responded similarly, explaining that other international students also helped with the project activities and that there were various ways to get involved. She suggested that we organise a Zoom meeting first to discuss. The only concern Shikano-san expressed at this stage was to check whether, because she was not confident in her English, the conversation would be all or mostly in Japanese. As I had to VUJ Waseda's members months earlier, I reassured her that this would be fine, and if there was anything I did not understand during her explanation, I would ask. This was all communicated by email in Japanese, and there did not seem to be any major misunderstandings in these professional communications. I suppose that, like my 'interview' with Chabujo a month or so earlier, Shikano-san mentioning her lack of skill in English was to seek reassurance and avoid unnecessary confusion during our online meeting.

This email conversation occurred in early December, which was the earliest I could reach out to the consent handbook team at Waseda, using the address I had confirmed from the in-person booth and above pamphlets. After some coordination of our schedules, Shikano-san and I met on Zoom in mid-December. The meeting lasted about thirty minutes, including self-introductions, an explanation of how the consent handbook team worked, and time for me to ask questions as well as figure out next steps. Shikano-san was very curious about my area of study and background, so I answered as many of her questions as I was able and shared more about how I was a visiting researcher at Waseda for a year, working with Sawada-sensei as my host faculty advisor. This elicited a surprised 'eh?!' of recognition from Shikano-san who as a former undergraduate student in the faculty of law (*hōritsu gakubu*), had taken classes with Sawada-sensei and knew him

well. It was an unexpectedly welcome connection that we both had this Waseda academic in common, although Shikano-san had a longer relationship with Sawada-sensei than I.

Shikano-san was a veteran member in the sense that she had gone on to postgraduate training to study for a doctoral law degree, with a specific interest in human rights. Naturally, this extended academic training did influence her and other consent handbook team members' perspectives, impacting what they considered important to discuss both on and off campus. And, all the members were full-time students, with third and fourth-year undergraduate students involved in job hunting (*shūkatsu*). Other older members went on to a postgraduate degree or had just found a career post-graduation. This meant that everyone had different levels of commitment. If there was one thing in short supply for almost every member, it was the luxury of time. Even if, from my perspective, the team meetings, workshops, and occasional events did not demand much from student members, it required coordinating workshops when students did not have their own courses to attend and, over weekends, hosting events when members did not have part-time jobs (*arubaito*). The analysis by Marina Lee-Cunin of student perspectives and experiences of university clubs helps establish the context for the limitations on students' time when it came to even activist projects like sexual consent. The majority of handbook and workshop team members were also members of an affiliated *sākuru*, Shaberu or Voice Up Japan Waseda. Lee-Cunin's field site was at Shiga University, but the cycles she describes also fit Waseda to a degree, as she writes:

The annual cycle of club events and activities was standardised at Shiga, a common practice in most public and private universities. New students would have the opportunity to join a club or clubs at the beginning of the academic year in April. It was rare for students to choose more than one club because of the commitment involved. Many students were likely to have had previous experience of clubs from their high school days so they were already prepared for what was in store (2004, 145).

Cave's study of *bukatsudō* in junior high, vocational and high schools also observed that "almost all students belonged to only one club" and "it is regarded as the norm that

students remain with only one club throughout their school years”(2004, 399). He adds that this is supported by the belief that students should not spread their attentions between too many different activities, instead ‘immersing oneself in one thing’ (*hitotsu no koto ni uchikomu*).

Notably there is a distinct difference between sports clubs (*taiiku-kai*) and arts clubs (*bunka sākuru rengo*), with the internal (or *uchi*) group attitudes of *taiiku-kai* stressing the values of perseverance, resilience and discipline (*gambaru* or *gaman*) to the point that some of my interlocutors said that *taiikukai-kei* (sports-oriented types) were some of the most intimidating to facilitate workshops for (see also Sylvester, 2023, 299-300, Lee-Cunin, 2004, 152-153). Lee-Cunin also begins her chapter on Japanese university clubs, distinguishing between circles (*sākuru*), which are arts-based and ‘clubs’, which are more sports-based. This aligns with the distinctions made by students during my fieldwork at Waseda in 2022-2023, where only sports clubs were considered akin to the *bukatsudō* of earlier education, thanks to more rigid schedules and training.

Interestingly, the sexual consent handbook team may operate as a third body between *sākuru* and *bukatsudō/bukatsubu* (club activities/clubs), because student members take on an activist-educator role when teaching about consent. In this way, they were neither pursuing what Lee-Cunin describes as a “non-academic” extracurricular nor an “out-of-class experience” because their goals took them right back into the classroom to unofficially teach what was not part of a compulsory course designed by Waseda professors.

Over the course of this and the following chapter, I will discuss the intricacies and nuances of balancing responsibilities and time for the sexual consent handbook team at Waseda, as well as the digital team at Chabujo.

The team and project which Shikano-san pitched to me was a good one. She informed me that their goals were to improve the handbook, hold more workshops next year, and host more events. Meetings were every two weeks, so twice a month we could be expected to meet online to organize activities, follow-up on communication with external parties, and discuss any issues. During this explanation session (*setsumeikai*), Shikano-san painted a picture of the handbook team having smaller groups and teams, such as one which worked on translation and one that focused on events. She said that there were both smaller meetings for the handbook/workshop branch and general meetings (*zentaikaigi*) where everyone would attend. Activities were organised both online and offline.

Overall, the *setsumeikai* with Shikano-san gave me a better understanding of the sexual consent handbook team's past, current, and future activities. It established expectations regarding meetings and scheduling, as well as the goals that the team aimed to achieve for the coming year, starting with the new school term in April 2023. Since I mentioned my intention to research the group's activities and participate in them, Shikano-san requested that I share more information with her via email, which she could then share with other team members. These documents included my participant information sheet and informed consent form, available in both English and Japanese.

Shikano-san had a basic understanding of how anthropology research is conducted and seemed to grasp my project aims better after I explained participant observation (*sanyō kansatsu*) as my methodology. I also believe that mentioning Sawada-sensei and my loose connection to the Graduate School of Law helped establish my legitimacy and enhance my trustworthiness as a foreigner intending to participate and conduct research on these sexual consent projects.

At the end of December, I heard from Shikano-san that my application to join the Waseda University Sexual Consent Handbook Team had been successful. She requested my LINE ID² or QR code to add me to the group chat, and then I was officially a team member. I was part of the LINE group for about two weeks while I was out of Japan for winter holidays and a temporary respite from fieldwork. I did not participate in the group conversations to begin with because of different schedules and the fact that I was not yet connected to the faculty collaborators who were being discussed among older student members. Conversations I observed in these initial weeks were generally updates shared from the group email account, responses to enquiries about distributing handbooks in a specific academic department or about whether professors would have the time for the workshop team to come in during a class to present the handbook material. Just reading these messages before the training for new members began in the new year did raise some questions about how this student organisation operated and how ‘effective’ their campaigning for consent awareness was. This was due to the often neutral or tepid responses Waseda faculty and staff seemed to express to the student requests to present sexual consent handbook contents.

Veteran members of the team shared the email responses of faculty members who either gave a neutral, ‘waiting’ response to say they needed to check with administrators about where pamphlets or handbooks could be shared or confirm their teaching schedule about whether there was room for a workshop. This was a placeholder for some faculty who later might respond positively or negatively to the enquiry. Though even a polite refusal would be dampened with an alternative suggestion or solution, such as ‘we can

² LINE is a popular messaging application which is used throughout Japan. It is the main method to connect and communicate with friends, as well as being useful for university *sākuru*. University students use LINE’s chat, media sharing, polling, and customisation features with ease to organise their internal and external activities.

hang up your flyers if you have some.’ Members reacted to these less positive replies with emoticons or with brief, disappointed exhalations over text. My initial impression was that this translated to either resignation—there wasn’t much they could do if the professor did not have time, or a department did not ‘allow’ (or want) handbook copies in student common areas; or determination to press on—there were always other people at Waseda to contact or who would contact them regarding their interest in the sexual consent materials. Considering how soft and polite these communications between student team members, and faculty members were in the LINE chat, perhaps rejection did not sting as much as it could have, but I had a sinking feeling that the barriers to dissemination of this sexuality education (SE) knowledge were often too deep to penetrate both bureaucracy and cultural attitudes.

Fuan, Fukai, Ki ga warui: Feelings of Uncertainty

This is what brings me back to the emotions involved in the projects of both the Waseda Sexual Consent Handbook Team and Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action. For many members (if not all), being involved in campaigning for sexual consent awareness meant keeping feelings, often negative ones, to the fore. The recruitment efforts I encountered both at the in-person campus booths and online through websites and Instagram posts garnered interest through emotional stakes. We can apply the idea of “affective practices” and “feeling with the world” to everything from the production of pamphlets, the tone of meetings and to the organisation of workshops, as members’ experience “*how* bodily feelings interplay with the entanglements of the discursive, the social, and the material” (Wetherell, 2012b, De Antoni and Cook, 2019, 145). De Antoni and Cook’s notion of “feeling with the world” engages with “affective practice” by investigating the

relationships between affect and, more generally, feelings and broader socio-cultural aspects of life, as well as power relations” (2019, 143).

This may include the notion of affective labour used by Michael Hardt to bring together two strands of research about “gendered forms of labour that involve affects in a central way” and “the increasingly intellectual character of productive practices and the labour market as a whole” (Clough and Halley, 2007, xi). Akin to Ahmed’s chapter on feminist attachments, Hardt discusses the need to bridge divides of emotion and reason, the mind and the body, by examining various forms of affective labour.

Affective practice, including labour, is characterised by specific terms in Japanese consent activism. Much as entire movements and petitions have a call to action or a rallying mission statement, I noticed the widespread use of the onomatopoeia term ‘*moyamoya*’, which can function as a noun, an adverb and as a ‘*suru*’ (to do) verb. Interestingly, for the campaigns of the Waseda student members, ‘*moyamoya*’ was often written in katakana instead of hiragana. Rather than designating that it was a foreign loan word (*gairaigo*), the choice to write in katakana may have been motivated by the desire to get people’s attention as well as to hint at a new usage for the term.

‘*Moyamoya*’ can be defined as a hazy, fuzzy, or foggy feeling, often associated with uncertainty or gloominess. But when used in the context of the ‘*moyamoya koto*’ which were written on those anonymous sticky notes at the Shaberu x VUJ Waseda joint booth, the phrase was transformed into an invitation to share concerns, worries, and other personal troubles. This was not the first nor the last time I would see this word used in projects related to gender issues, especially sexual violence, and consent. And there were many other emotion words such as *fuan*, *fukai*, *ki ga warui*...that appeared frequently in verbal discussions and written materials both digital and physical.

Daniel White identifies the significance of “the reification of anxiety by labelling it in emotional language—in other words, by moving across the affect-emotion gap”(White, 2022, 152). White places this in the context of his work with various administrations such as the Japan Foundation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), noting how the use of defined emotional language in media programming and public broadcasting “reveals the degree to which anxiety (*fuan*) and insecurity (*fuantei*) have become naturalized as common components of Japan’s modern national character” (2022, 153). Regarding White’s examples, the use of these words, as well as *moyamoya* or *moyamoyasuru koto*, moves from concerns of Japanese administration officials about economic precarity to concerns of youth about what might be defined as ‘gendered precarity.’

A gendered precarity in conversation with the emotional language of the sexual consent project group members I worked with induced an “affective response” that is, it was at odds with some of the cute images of women in Japanese popular culture, of depictions of *bishōjo* (beautiful girls) which pervade manga, pornographic magazines, dating games, and more (White, 2022, 140). These depictions are not reflective of real Japanese women and girls, but the individuals I spoke with during my fieldwork constantly referenced their discomfort, gnawing concern and sense of uncertainty (*moyamoya*) when it came to how their actions and words would be perceived. And felt, referencing the possible discomfort of listeners as well as their hesitance in sharing private, intimate experiences.

A relevant point of comparison for my research on consent activism in Japan is Margaret Wetherell’s study of individuals utilising everyday acts of resistance to express disapproval with Anzac Day remembrance rituals in Aotearoa New Zealand. Emotions are heightened during these ceremonies due to the divisions between those who wish to honour armed service work during and after the New Zealand Wars and those who critique

the lack of commemoration for indigenous Māori victims of these conflicts (Wetherell et al., 2020, 19).

This analysis, despite being based on a separate cultural context, demonstrates elements of the affective practice approach also applied to my comparisons of two grassroots groups. Wetherell comments that: “For these participants [in the dawn Anzac ceremony], their resistance is sustained by the *collision* of affective practices... This collision creates affective dilemmas, as we have seen, and struggles that can lead to creative new becomings” (2020, 30, original emphasis).

By acknowledging a range of practices which produce a variety of occasionally conflicting emotions, Wetherell adds further nuance to these landscapes of practice and emotion. This is exemplified by the anecdote of an individual trying to reconcile the emergence of expected ‘nationalistic feelings’ with annoyance and frustration. Such feelings emerged from the contrast between his current practice of ‘defrosting the freezer’ at home and past practice of honouring the day with his family and going to an Anzac Day celebration. I witnessed and experienced similar ‘collisions’ with both groups, as well as with friends and colleagues who referenced their struggles with gendered expectations.

For example, one of my friends, at the time finishing her undergraduate degree at a private university on the fringes of Tokyo, while shopping in the fashionable district of Harajuku would point out the accessories and items which were popular with ‘JK’, or *joshi kosei*. This had become a popular term for high school girls, and a way of distinguishing between the likes and dislikes of a younger group still coming into their own from, in this case, young women in university. This friend was keenly aware of the common depictions and assumptions of female high school students, usually shown in uniform. Whereas there is no commonly used equivalent for male high school students (proposed *danshi kosei*, or

DK and discussed in the comic strip in Figure 25)³, *joshi kosei* is a common method to simplify the characteristics of high school girls, which is then reflected in media like dating simulation games. These oversimplified representations are also carried over to female university students, even or especially for those at a well-known school like Waseda. Understandably, even while being aware of and using the term ‘JK’ for their younger cohort, female students did not wish to be perceived as the flat characters depicted in media. A reaction to terms carrying similar simplified stereotypes as JK is laid out in the pamphlet developed by the circle Shaberu.



Figure 25: *Joshi kokosei wa [JK]. Danshi kokosei wa?* Posted on Note by Maruyama Kei.

³ Multiple blogs and forums seem to agree that, in addition to *joshi kosei*/JK having roughly the same meaning as *joshi kokosei*, just while denoting a more ‘dazzling and cute girl’ (*kirakirashita kawaii joshi kosei*), there is no common adoption of a term for high school boys. A humorous comic strip by author Maruyama Kei, suggests that the use of DK would make people think of ‘Donkey Kong’ in the popular Nintendo series, and as a result *danshi kosei* would build an association with gorillas whereas *joshi kosei* have the images of princesses (like Princess Peach). Link: <https://note.com/maruke/n/n4b535c63b79a>.

In the pamphlets pictured in Figure 26 titled ‘*Korette dou na no...? Waseda no bunka*’ (*What is this thing...? The Culture of Waseda*), members of Shaberu introduce the stereotypical language which is used to describe female Waseda students. These words and phrases are often introduced by male students but end up being adopted by female students who identify the connection between these labels and basic behaviours like how high their grades are, how much they care about their appearance, and how much they can drink.

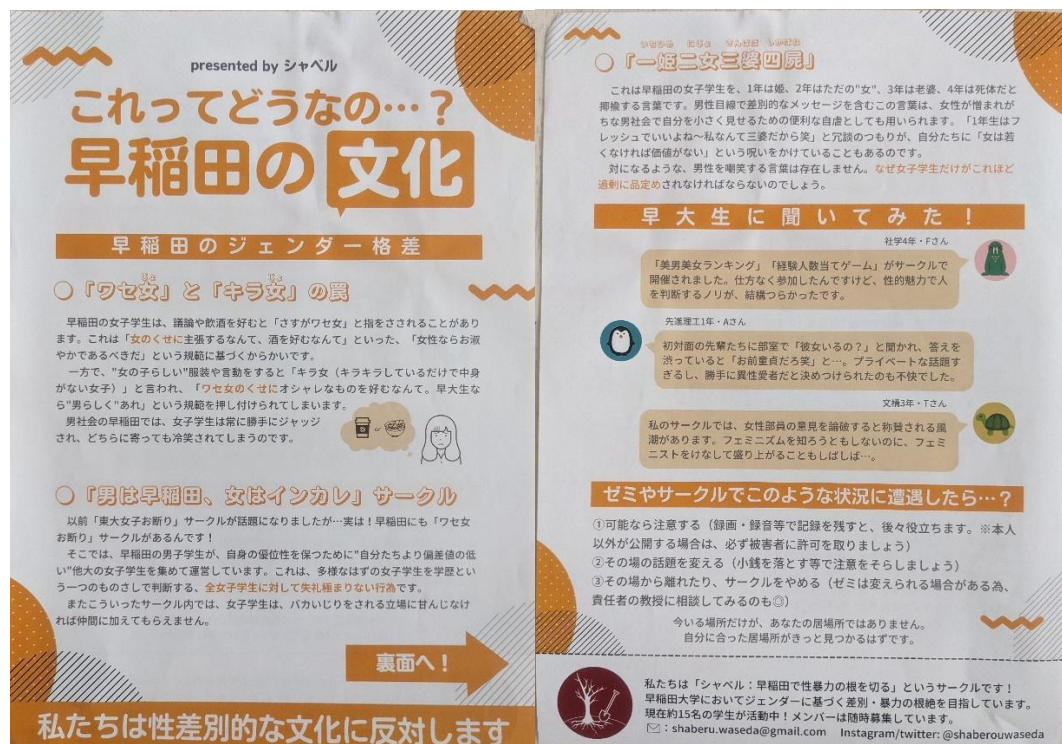


Figure 26 Flyer (front and back) collected from the same booth which introduces harmful labels that contribute to gender discrimination at Waseda University.

There are several sections in this pamphlet which include numerous expressions the Shaberu students define, including *wasejo* and *kirajo no wana* (trap of the Waseda girl and glittering girl), *otoko wa waseda, onna wa inkare sakuru* (men are in Waseda circles, women are in intercollegiate circles), and *ichihime nijo sanbaba shikabane* (first year a princess, second year a girl, third year an old woman, fourth year a corpse). The Shaberu pamphlet (and various online blogs) describe ‘wasejo’ as individuals who ‘even though they claim to be women, like to drink alcohol’ and people who use these terms might say

‘if you are a woman than you should be more lady-like.’ Someone who is perhaps the opposite of a ‘wasejo’ nevertheless received just as much disdain as the ‘kirajo’. This is defined as someone who ‘only glitters and has no substance’, someone who cares about woman-like clothes, words and actions. If a female Waseda student is also interested in fashionable things she may hear comments such as: ‘Aren’t Waseda students supposed to be more masculine?’ It can be deduced that the Shaberu members refer to ‘wasejo’ and ‘kirajo’ as a ‘trap’ because of double standards and assumptions which criticize women at Waseda no matter what they do or how they look.

All these expressions are common examples of sexual discrimination (*seisabetsu*) at Waseda University, normalised to the extent they become jokes (*jōdan*) or are accepted as a social fact (*atarimae na koto*), which is also a form of common-sense (*jōshiki*) framing. Notably, there are multiple blogs and collections of short stories which discuss the idea of ‘wasejo’, including the book *Wasejo, Onna, Otoko* by Yuzuki Asako. In the first few pages of the story titled ‘*Ai no tamashi, seigi no kokoro*’ (‘A Soul of Love, A Heart of Justice’) two female characters have a conversation about the image of a ‘wasejo.’

‘Huh? Are you going to the circle drinking party dressed like that? You’re such a Waseda girl...’

A Waseda girl is of course a female student who goes to Waseda University. But there is no adaptability, they’re like a man, with a bare fighting spirit. Said only half-jokingly, Michiko is sometimes surprised by her best friend’s strict adherence to the image of the Waseda girl. Even among Waseda girls, there are plenty of gorgeous, ‘gal-type’ beauties, as well as smart and laid-back girls.

‘Is it that weird?’

(Yuzuki, 2015, 10)

Michiko goes on to describe her friend Kanako’s appearance as wearing second-hand clothes marked by worn-out denim, shoulder-length black hair, a ‘buckwheat figure’, white cheeks and wise, sparkling eyes. It is not an entirely negative appraisal of her friend, and

Michiko even seems confused that Kanako would not utilise her natural beauty. But it is indicated in the passage as a potentially undesirable way to present oneself.

In truth, there is no single way to be a female Waseda student, but this gender gap or disparity (*jendā kakusa*) on display at a single prestigious university in Tokyo can be easily seen and experienced in other places within Japanese society. Perhaps this is what makes these ‘zoomed in’, tight focus grassroots projects *more* emotional. And pent-up emotions of frustration, of being ‘fed-up’ with an existing status quo, can be released through participation in a group like the consent handbook team. Frustrated feelings morph into ones of reassurance and relief for the individual who participates in a project or community meant to treat women as equals deserving of mutual respect.

This Shaberu pamphlet covers an impressive breadth of topics, including several quotes from anonymous Waseda students identified only by their major and school year. A fourth-year student studying sociology writes about their discomfort with attractiveness rankings and games of sexual experience, saying: “It can’t be helped that I participated, but the trend of judging people by their sexual charm (*seiteki miryoku*) is very painful (*kekkō tsurakatta*).”

Meanwhile, a first-year student in advanced science and technology spoke out against comments asking if they had a girlfriend and which assumed they were a virgin if they hadn’t: “It is because these topics of conversation are too private that people decide on their own that you are a heterosexual person is uncomfortable (*fukai*).”

Shaberu, VUJ Waseda, and the Sexual Consent Handbook Team, which comprises members from both circles, have put forth these common narratives to frame their activities and value systems. It is a practice of entangling and relating their emotions (and those of anonymous student voices) with current problems faced by the Waseda

community. Rather than using a broad example from mass media sources, which often uses legal or political terminology, they chose to adopt everyday language familiar to fellow students and paint similar ‘ordinary’ scenarios. These are not problems which exist in a social vacuum or that plague people in far-off places or unimaginable situations. This is a side of Waseda that most people overlook. And so, this group of students, and the faculty who support their activities behind the scenes, craft an environment which permits concerned individuals to vent their complaints and air their concerns. The intent seems to be to create a sense of ‘shared understanding’ and ‘sense of safety’, which may be necessary to open meaningful dialogues often lodged in personal narratives.

The concept of affective practices, introduced as a primary theoretical framework, will be referred to throughout this thesis. However, Daniel White’s notion of the ‘affect-emotion gap’ also resonates with these Waseda students’ emphasis on emotion and feeling, particularly on negative ones which arise from unfair, unequal situations based on gender and sexual orientation.

White considers affect and emotion fitting together in terms of “how bodies feel and how subjects make sense of how they feel” and identifies a gap which can be utilised to great effect. He says that “active projects of knowing affect generate the potential to, in turn, transform emotion” and “projects of knowing become projects of power as narratives seeking to close the affect-emotion gap” (2017, 177). The Sexual Consent Project at Waseda and other universities use their active project of knowing about consent, boundaries, and active bystander intervention to tap into the potential for power, for change in social consciousness for their peers. While the students involved in these projects at universities may not actively be thinking of turning nonconscious sensations into perceivable, visible emotions, in their choice of language and corresponding practice, they pull on very similar heartstrings.

Additionally, their ‘projects of knowing’ and protection of said projects are often fixated upon ‘visibility’ itself. Writing down, speaking up, and laying out emotions can and have turned into a powerful practice of this grassroots organisation and many others. Because bringing a voice to negative topics makes oneself vulnerable to judgment, to blame, and to shame. Public cases and scandals of sexual harassment and violence, such as Ito Shiori’s civil suit against fellow journalist Yamaguchi Noriyuki in 2017 described in the introduction chapter, further fan these flames of frustration and ire (Ito, 2021).

The broader Japanese public are witnesses to barrages of online hate towards survivors of assault like Ito, as well as towards self-proclaimed feminist activists expressing their views on Twitter. One of the primary forms of discourse in online news comment sections following Ito’s rape case was “a victim-blaming discourse that defends Japan’s rape culture and affirms the patriarchal order” emerging from the notion that rape was a “personal problem” or “private matter” (Tan and Liu, 2022, 6-7, Dalton and Norma, 2022c, 4 and 33). This also aligns with the gendered inequality which emerges through the discourse of self-responsibility (*jiko sekinin*), which I will later discuss in more detail as sex and relationships being reframed by sexual consent groups as a matter of self-determination (*jiko kettei-ken*). By redirecting the responsibility and blame away from women and survivor-victims of sexual assault, Waseda and Chabujo projects attempted to craft a new common-sense notion where male behaviour was not controlled by ‘misbehaving’ or ‘inappropriately-dressed’ women representing “the sexualised prostitute body” (Tan and Liu, 2022, 7, Burns, 2005b, 39). Therefore, charged discussion boards and comment sections further discourage individuals from speaking about their own experiences.

Other groups and individuals using these social media platforms have begun to form negative associations with terms like ‘feminist’ and ‘activist’, which they assign to

people speaking about cases of sexual assault or harassment regardless of how they identify. Unfortunately, as Ueno observed in their study of labour immobility and stability discourse among queer young adults in Japan, this has set back LGBTQ+ social movements as well as feminist ones. Ueno writes that “activists not only face a lack of enthusiasm but also experience resistance from those who see these movements as an unwanted Western influence that ignores Japanese history and culture”(2022, 3-4). Part of this comes from a somewhat correct perception that the Japanese government's move to foster a more LGBTQ+ friendly attitude are part of nationalist interests, as reflected by studies on popularising Japan as a destination for LGBTQ+ tourism.

This research demonstrates that the lack of legal recognition for same-sex couples to marry and have similar rights to heterosexual couples is a barrier to attracting LGBTQ+ tourists, placing Japan at number 60 on the Gay Travel Index in 2021 (Nakajima, 2022). Akiko Shimizu likewise views the introduction of supposedly progressive policies like the same-sex partnership system and ‘marriages’ between certain LGBTQ+ activists as “symbolic performances coupled with symbolic policies”(2020, 95).

Citing Ando (2013), Ueno mentions that an additional, and I argue, significant factor of this resistance is “Japanese people’s tendency to hold animosity and scepticism toward activists, who are often seen as imposing personal interests and engaging in irresponsible behaviours” (2022, 4). Even where resistance to demonstrations and protests is not fuelled by hostility, there is a general ambivalence, uncertainty or fear which holds back youth who are often the first to create counter-movements pushing for social change (Asahina, 2021). The ‘collective trauma’ discussed by Cassegard following the activism of the 1970s (2022, 755, Chiavacci and Obinger, 2018b). There is also the issue of youth problem debates raised regarding groups like otaku, NEETs, and freeters. These youth problem debates or “moral panics” are argued by Toivonen and Imoto to be “industries”

within themselves, which, more often than not, dull the voices of and ignore the agency of youth themselves (2013, 79, 2012, 19).

Although these voices are often muted out of very reasonable reactions of fear, unease, and uncertainty, it is unlikely that those feelings disappear even if given significant amounts of time. This ties back to my earlier introduction of the ‘collective trauma’ inherited from previous student protest cycles (Ogawa, 2022, 2019). In Japan, now more than ever, grassroots projects can emerge, and larger campaigns can thrive given enough resources, time, and committed leadership. The Waseda and Chabujo teams may rely on their language of emotion and speaking events more than larger organisations because of their small size, the busy schedules of participants, and, across their membership, the differing levels of experience with speaking about gender issues.

Significantly, even if the call to action and raising awareness within the Waseda project are focused on *moyamoyasuru koto* and relevant terms of emotion such as *fuan*, *fukai*, and *ki ga warui*, the feelings of specific individuals do not always receive attention. This can be attributed to the normalisation of silence on topics considered intimate or private, as well as the organisation and atmosphere created by a group. For instance, the Waseda handbook team prioritised industriousness over in-group activities like shared meals or parties once members joined and began to participate. This was due to the founding members’ strong initial desire to end sexual violence incidents on campus.

In a report on the handbook team’s activities, the team members wrote that there were two triggers for creating the handbook.

Firstly, in the case of activities about sexual consent by the Shaberu circle, materials from outside the university were being used. To localise information to be compatible with Waseda University, we felt that it was important to create a booklet which would improve upon the insufficiency of existing materials. Of course, the premise for carrying out such activities in the first place is that each of the circle members had their own experiences

where they felt that university life was not safe, and that some kind of activity was needed (性的同意ハンドブックチーム, 2022, 90-91).

Safety was one of the common concerns of *sākuru* members of Shaberu, who then formed a dedicated handbook team. This aligns with the theme in the third section of chapter two, where I analyse how consent project groups nurture a sense of safety and belonging in internal, often intimate, settings. In chapter five, I include sections of my interview with the team founder, Shikano-san, which further describe the process of localising consent materials from other universities and organisations, including the Chabujo handbook. The second reason for creating the Waseda-specific handbook was to address what the team referred to as a ‘public awareness deficit’ (*keihatsu fusoku*).

However, the students suggest that this deficit comes less from the students, but more from the university system.

...it is not a lack of student awareness, but the university system which tolerates such violence so that these serious matters have not stopped. This is the first step to requesting such large system reforms (*soushita ōki na seido no kaihaku wo motomeru daiippo to shite*), in negotiating with the university to proactively distribute and utilise the handbook, we communicated the real situation of students and devised a strategy to incorporate sexual violence into existing systems (2022, 91).

From this and the above passage from the handbook team’s report, we observe that the project’s goals to encourage reforms of existing university systems and policies would require a significant amount of time and effort by student members. It was therefore vital for the handbook’s success that at least a handful of individuals would have sufficient emotional investment for the handbook—and later, the workshops—to be realised.

Eventually, I met the other non-Japanese member of the handbook team in person, and we spoke at length about her experiences. A then current master’s student at Waseda and originally from Austria, Sabrina-san had joined the team about a term before me but experienced a similar sense of confusion and being lost when first adapting to the project as I had.

Sabrina-san said:

My first meeting I was like ‘What do I do? Should I actually actively participate? Like what’s happening? I didn’t really know. So, I think in the beginning I would have wanted some more guidance... that maybe was a bit challenging... But also, overall, very rewarding, obviously, was getting to know many people that shared the same goals as I do... Unfortunately, I didn’t really get to make any friends out of this, which is fine, because we, like everybody’s busy.

As with other members of both Chabujo and the Waseda team, Sabrina-san cites ‘getting to know many people that shared the same goals as I do’ as a primary draw to get involved.

But, despite having this mutual understanding, the group’s tendency to meet and organise online proved a significant barrier to building friendships.

But yeah, I think like with some people, I do not even know what they look like, even though we’ve been like, I do not know, working together on an important project for months now. So that’s a bit sad, I think.

When I heard this from Sabrina-san, I had already been with the team for several months and noticed the lack of team building and bonding between members. In this way, the handbook team was very unlike *sākuru* I had participated in before, whether they were focused on farming or on martial arts, where the main goal was often socialisation and making new friends. In stark contrast, the sexual consent handbook team gave the impression of a strictly professional work environment, intent on fulfilling requests and continuing said project. But it was interesting that the lack of communication and identification between members was so extreme that Sabrina-san did not even know what other members looked like.

Describing it as ‘a bit sad’ almost felt like an understatement; the vocalised emotion was also touched with resignation. Both Sabrina-san and I had accepted that a connection with other members was not the priority, or even a feasible reality. Our ‘otherness’ as foreigners and as postgraduate students or researchers may have exacerbated this disconnectedness. But even taking that out of the equation, the group dinners and

events were kept to the bare minimum, only being scheduled on such occasions as when a team member was graduating or leaving.

These negative emotions, which unfortunately emerged even after finding a like-minded group, are just as important as the positive ones and display the collision of feeling and of affective practices among members like that posited by Wetherell in her studies of participant responses to Anzac Day ceremonies. It also serves as a sombre contrast to the atmosphere I experienced at the team bonding sessions cultivated by Chabujo, known as ‘sharing sessions.’ I will describe these in more detail in the following chapter section.

Iyashi: Caring for the Self and Others

Before returning to discuss the welcome event hosted in April 2023 by the Sexual Consent Handbook Team, I will outline the structure and content of Chabujo meetings. That there was one type of ‘meeting’ is especially relevant to the conversation of emotion, affect, and practice in Japanese grassroots activities. This was the ‘sharing session’ (*sheakai*), which occurred about once a month and was an opportunity for team members to have a friendly and open discussion about their daily lives. Such discussions could include, but were not limited to, relating uncomfortable sexism experiences at the workplace, sharing perceptions of feminism in Japan, and describing events they had attended in the past month. Although topics did naturally overlap with gender issues, there was no focus on creating meeting action points and delegating tasks for SNS posts.

Instead, *sheakai* were scheduled conversations between people, all female presenting, who, even if they were not close friends, could speak comfortably with other like-minded individuals about problems and observations that they felt they could not share with coworkers, family members, or friends. This was primarily because other people in their lives might not share a strong interest or concern about addressing

workplace harassment or campaigns for marriage equality. These silenced, nearly invisible topics could be shared in these Zoom sessions.

Just as with the standard digital team meetings, the sharing sessions were always scheduled in the evening on a weekday to accommodate people's work schedules. The one I joined in mid-December 2022 had five people in attendance, me included. Often there are similar numbers of people who commit to these sessions, though people may join halfway through or cancel at the last minute due to other obligations. Unlike the meetings I had participated in as a new Chabujo member, these sharing sessions were open to all members of Chabujo across the four or five teams making up the organisation. Such a sharing session provided an opportunity to meet and get to know individuals who I would not have otherwise, but excepting general meetings and training sessions, which happened very rarely.

There were already a couple of people in the Zoom meeting room when I arrived, including the host of the sharing session, Jay-san, a fellow member of the digital team. Jay-san acted as a moderator of the conversation, providing structure through a check-in and check-out, much as in standard meetings, and asking individuals for their opinions if they had not yet spoken up on their own. The others who attended this December 2022 sharing session were Osawa Sachiko-san, Sakura-san (also called Saku Saku-san), and Kamata Kanoko-san. Although I hadn't spoken with any of these members before, they welcomed me to the organisation and chatted in a relaxed manner, with less formality than I had become accustomed to when in professional settings such as Japanese offices or research seminars. Our check-in involved sharing our names, how we were doing lately, and talking about what we wanted to eat in the winter. Commenting on seasonal foods and the weather was a common topic at the beginning of the gatherings I attended while in Japan, serving to break the ice and easily relate to one another.

The conversation lasted about an hour and a half as personal stories and experiences were shared alongside complaints and advice. In the first ten minutes of joining the sharing session, when everyone who confirmed attendance hadn't yet arrived, a couple of members were talking about an organisation called 'MOTTAINAI JAPAN' which ran a Facebook page where foreigners returning to their countries could put up listing of their unwanted belongings for free. A lack of a set agenda and the freedom to discuss almost anything put me at ease quicker than I expected. Though perhaps I would have been more tense if I had remembered during the meeting that Osawa-san was one of the co-founders and directors of Chabujo.

The fact that I did not note any added formality, politeness or hesitation when the other members addressed Osawa-san may point to how these sessions served to dismantle potential hierarchies and blur certain social boundaries which may have ordinarily made it difficult to share direct opinions with someone of a different status. Or it could be that Osawa-san and the other co-founder Kamata Kanoko-san, did not view themselves as being of a higher status or possessing more power than newer Chabujo members. I think both reasons are likely to exist side-by-side based on the equality-driven values of the non-profit feminist organisation, its community organising activist goals, and the internal structuring and behaviour of members in the Slack workspace and online meetings. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to attend an official Chabujo event in person because one did not occur during my time in the field, so I cannot speak to the interpersonal dynamics and potential social hierarchies that might have been reestablished during face-to-face communications. Although when I met and befriended individual members in person, generally people in their twenties and thirties, the warmth transmitted over calls and text messages was still present.

Throughout the *sheakai*, people shared about events they had attended such as the Trans March and Trans March afterparty which occurred in November. Jay-san described how they dealt with many complicated feelings (*fukuzatsu na kimochi*) when participating in this public event, but found that bonding through a shared experience, such as transness itself and support of trans rights, was very uplifting, even hopeful. For Chabujo members who were not part of the LGBTQ+ community themselves, Jay-san added the additional context that there were not many trans-friendly (*toransu muke*) spaces in Tokyo, not even in the infamous gay district of Shinjuku Ni-Chome. This led to comments about how it was important to hold onto, maintain, and grow ‘traditions of hope and hoping’ (*kibōsuru shūkan*). Although we all had different identities, backgrounds, and experiences, such broad messages of inclusivity were ones we could all agree on. It was embedded in the notion of community organising, which Chabujo and many other organisations in Japan are either directly or indirectly based on. The struggle to have women’s voices heard more while resisting negative rumours and critiques was a strong thread through many Chabujo member conversations, especially because of the misconceptions that many people have had about what a ‘feminist’ is and what ‘feminism’ might entail (see Kawasaka, 2023, 189-190, Shaw, 2022, 769, Thurlow, 2022, 4, Shimizu, 2020, 100-101, Bullock et al., 2018a, 7-8).

The individuals present expressed that these terms, even if they weren’t broadly or well-known across Japanese society, were more accepted and less demonised than in past generations. This supports the discussions of authors like Bullock (2018), Yamaguchi (2018), Shimizu (2020), and Kawasaka (2023), who have observed the progress of feminist-driven social movements in Japan. However, this led me to share that, in my and my friends’ personal experiences in both the USA and the UK, adhering too strongly to perceived feminist values could lead to name-calling, condescension, and full-blown

bullying episodes. Some of the members expressed surprise that this would occur even in Western countries, which were often considered the source of such ‘progressive’ ideals and movements. By sharing this example from my own life, the conversation broadened to how feminists are perceived in Japan today. However, in retrospect, I also must acknowledge that these Chabujo members all had at least one higher education degree each, had experience living, working, or studying abroad, and were well-studied in general about the academic theories around feminism. When we met in person later to discuss academic research, one of the digital team members mentioned to me that she was from a rural part of Japan where topics related to gender were not discussed nor understood beyond what people just lived and breathed.

This is not to say that my small questions and comments were anything more than a mild surprise. But it was a rare chance to express myself candidly just as these women were doing, and perhaps like them, to sense and expect that I would not be criticised, judged, or silenced for expressing something negative or sensitive. Every single person present had multiple unsavoury experiences related to gender. These included complaints about the way women were treated in the workplace, expected to complete more administrative office tasks, as well as being victims of careless, discriminatory remarks about being feminine or emotional. These constant reminders, or ‘microaggressions’, were a backdrop to Chabujo *sheakai* discussions. However, even after these aired frustrations, a couple of people suggested that it was best if we did not dwell on *just* the bad things. Their advice was to think about ‘brighter’ spots in our lives. This gentle urging returned us to the idea of achieving a ‘balance’ which was important for our mental health. It was framed within the concept that ‘sometimes you do not need to fight with the people you meet but maybe accept that people like this exist.’ Most of us murmured our understanding or agreement at what was viewed as a piece of wisdom that could be applied to various

situations. There were occasions when fighting and clashing with divisive and abrasive opinions would do little or might even harm the person making the complaint.

Indeed, some people's attitudes were so ingrained that they would never change. People like this exist and will always exist. Even if this was meant to be a call for us to take care of ourselves, to think positively, and enjoy life, to myself as a researcher and as a participant, it also read as a solemn message of acceptance verging on resignation. But the Chabujo members instead morphed this topic into a conversation about how it was part of 'emotional labour' or *iyashi* (healing, often of the heart and mind as well as body), as it is often referred to in Japanese. Some people may have little to no awareness of the role emotional labour can play in daily life, but *iyashi* was phrased by Chabujo members as just as vital as caring for one's physical body.

To contextualise the Japanese term *iyashi* within social practice and policy, I provide an additional example that the emotional, affective, or psychological (*seishinteki*) is often emphasised and is not unique to activist or feminist conversations. A 2023 report by the Gender Equality Bureau on the current state of violence against women in Japan includes multiple figures about the types of domestic violence (DV) referenced in the contents of consultation appointments. According to this report, "approximately 60% (64.8%) of the consultation topics involved psychological domestic violence"(2023, 5). The psychological DV statistic is much larger compared to 26.8% discussing physical domestic violence, 17.9% economic or financial domestic violence, and 8.3% and 5.9% involving sexual and social DV, respectively. Reports like this indicate two important trends. Firstly, psychological abuse or violence against women is the most frequently reported in such counselling contexts, although the use of *seishin* or *seishinteki* is less

commonly used by the grassroots groups examined in this research⁴. Instead, when discussing types of sexual violence, abuse or trauma, Chabujo used the categorisation of mental wounds (*kokoro no kizu*) and physical wounds (*karada no kizu*)(一般社団法人ちやぶ台返し女子アクション, 2018, 7). Alternatively, the Waseda team divided sexual words and actions into two types: physical contact (*shintaitteki na sesshoku*) and topics related to sex, like love talk and dirty jokes (*sei ni kansuru wadai, koibana/shimoneta wo hanasu*)(シヤベル et al., 2022, 4). The second trend deduced from the Gender Equality Bureau data is that the categorisation of domestic violence in the 2023 report may overrepresent psychological DV and underrepresent sexual DV because sexual abuse which is not physical is counted as psychological abuse. Quantitative survey data is therefore a useful form of evidence to gauge how powerful concepts and languages of emotion can be outside of a consent activist and feminist context.

Conversations shared between members of this Japanese feminist organisation in many ways embody Sara Ahmed's (2014) concepts about feminist attachments and "how feminism involves an emotional response to 'the world', where the form of that response involves a reorientation of one's bodily relation to social norms" (170-171). Chabujo members were in the process of orienting themselves differently from these aspects of Japanese society, which are premised upon patriarchal traditions and expectations of rigid gender roles. This is similar to the central claim in Ayako Kano's book which suggests "that feminist debates and gender policy in modern Japan have existed in a complex

⁴ The idea of *seishin*, or spirit, is nuanced and vital to the discussion of organisational and hierarchical models in Japanese society. Moeran emphasises its qualities of "spiritual fortitude from self-discipline", while Cave examines how *seishin kyōiku*, education of the spirit, is applied to socialising children through involvement with *bukatsudō* (extracurricular school clubs). *Seishin* as a concept applied to activism, will be discussed at length in chapter three of this thesis.

relationship, grounded in and further strengthening the category of ‘all women as potential mothers’...feminists have disputed this definition but also relied on it to make their arguments”(Kano, 2016b, 5). When individuals in meetings and *sheakai* discuss feminism, they are reading the world in a way that is inevitably entangled with emotion. Of the emotions Ahmed discusses, I believe ‘anger’ and ‘wonder’ are less present within the Chabujo organisation than ‘hope’ and ‘endurance.’ The encouragement of fellow members to ‘hope’ swiftly emerged in the first *sheakai* I attended and was accompanied by a sense of endurance, patience, and resilience (*gaman*).

This hope *in* feminism, instead of “feminism as the object of hope” is about continuing to engage with objects of feminist critique even while hoping for a world where feminism is no longer necessary.

Ahmed writes: “As such, placing hope in feminism is not simply about the future; it is also about reorganising the persistence of the past in the present” (2014, 187).

The persistence and presence of these feminist organisations and gatherings in Japan, as in other countries, is evidence that many people believe that there is still ‘work to be done’. Yet, more private dialogues between group members acknowledge that not all battles can be won, and not all dissenting opinions need to be addressed. According to these members, in everyday public settings where gender discrimination is the norm, it is best to engage in practices that encourage *iyashi*. And, arguably, venting frustrations and confiding concerns amidst hopeful comments is a way to cope with ‘the world.’ This is a outworld which often dismisses or oppresses feminists.

Another point of Ahmed’s that feels especially relevant to the emotion present in Chabujo *sheakai* is the notion of not just persistence or resistance, but of ‘opening up’ which allows “the feminist ‘we’ to become affective” and “through the work of listening to

others, of hearing the force of their pain and the energy of their anger, of learning to be surprised by all that one feels oneself to be against; through all of this, a ‘we’ is formed, and an attachment is made” (2014, 188). Even the shortest of anecdotes shared at these Chabujo sessions had the potential to form a connection or attachment. And just by us all being Chabujo ‘members’ we shared a mutual trust that what we discussed would not be used against us.

Any type of gender activism, including about consent, is both burdened and empowered by emotion. The notion of ‘emotional labour’ or ‘affective labour’ is often used to describe “work that aims to evoke specific behaviours or sentiments in others as well as oneself” and may involve work “that often proves hyper exploitable, precarious, and unstable precisely because it is hard to determine when affective labour begins or ends”(Ditmore, 2007, 171). Koch and Ditmore both categorise sex work under affective labour, and the Japanese concept of *iyashi* is also classified alternatively as affective, emotional, or even performative labour. However, what is interesting regarding conversations of *iyashi* even outside of sex work, like that at a Chabujo *sheakai*, is how it can be characterised as ‘healing’ and downplayed as labour.

According to Gabriele Koch:

Sex workers go to great lengths to produce something understood by their customers as based on an effortless and intrinsic femininity even as its successful achievement obscures the labor involved in their work. What is notable about *iyashi*, then, is that Japanese sex workers’ own discourses about the importance of their work for male productivity are related to their own insecure and unstable labouring conditions (Koch, 2016, 705-706).

In Koch’s discussion, *iyashi* is entangled with conceptions of femininity, gendered divisions and expectations of labour, and the notion of ‘exhausted men’ who need women to care for them to remain productive members of society. The precarious conditions of labour and care also impact Japanese men, especially after the late 1990s. In Akiko Takeyama’s extended fieldwork about Japanese host clubs and the labour of young men,

we see another side of the struggles to find stability and recognise value. The work of the Koizumi administration in the early 2000s is credited with pushing the popularity of neoliberal discourses, which, as discussed throughout this thesis, encourage self-responsibility (*jiko sekinin*). Market and labour reforms were accompanied by rhetoric about Japanese youth realising their own ‘hopes and dreams.’ This was referred to as an ‘empty promise’ as “citizens thus must envision, feel, and commit to the substance of the message on their terms” and “imagining a future, though, is not mere daydreaming but a national project in which citizens are expected to participate”(Takeyama, 2016, 9).

Within this framework, male hosts operating in a service industry, adjacent to that of female sex workers, described themselves as being in the “business of selling dreams” (*yume o uru shōbai*) where women paid for a service where they were “allowed to dream” (*yume o misasete kureru*)(2016, 10). An emphasis on the fantastical and on dreams likewise echoes the work of Jennifer Robertson on Takarazuka Revue players where the women playing male characters (*otokoyaku*) used their androgyny (*chūsei*) to depict “a ‘dream world’ free from the constraints of fixed, dichotomous, and hierarchical gender roles”(Robertson, 1998, 71, Robertson, 1992, 429). Chabujo discussions are characterised by a similar struggle marked by narratives of hope and responsibility. This is a struggle with care, healing, and navigation of an uncertain future.

During the *sheakai*, the conversation was focused more on the anger and frustration that many feminists are assumed to base their movements and communities upon, including the venting of individual experiences with dating applications. The dating apps are commonly used on mobile phones to chat and meet with romantic or sexual interests. Like in many other countries, dating apps are very popular in Japan, but are also the source of considerable strife, disgust, and frustration. In this case, the Chabujo member was irritated by the profiles of men who try to seem pro-feminist and anti-discrimination. She

stated they write things such as ‘I’m also against sexual discrimination of women’ (*boku mo josei sabetsu wo hantai desu*). But, according to her, when you engage in direct chat with them, they say the same sexist things as other men. For this Chabujo member, this was a jarring and disappointing outcome. The members listening were similarly disappointed but did not show any surprise.

This anecdote also demonstrates an increasing awareness in the Japanese heterosexual dating world that younger women might be actively searching for a man who genuinely supports gender equality and is less likely to expect strict gendered division in love, labour, and life (see Endo, 2018, 167-168, Cook, 2013, 33-34, Lin, 2012, 322-323). And, to some degree, the Chabujo member’s account of the difficulties of using dating apps are similar to the tensions Kumiko Endo outlines in the reversal “of the ‘active-male/passive-female’ gendered binary”, wherein men are described as now becoming ‘herbivore-types’ (*sōshoku-kei*) and being unsuitable partners while women are more ‘carnivore-types’ (*nikushoku-kei*), pursuing men who “can take initiative, hold a conversation and has a stable job”(Endo, 2018, 174-176). Complaints by women, especially ones identifying as feminists and activists, demonstrate an expectation for male partners to be more engaged and more proactive in their relationships. In heterosexual partnerships, women and men continue to draw upon traditional gender norms when thinking about their ideal partner, with many of the male respondents Endo interviewed wishing for “the ‘comforting-type’ (*iyashikei*)” who would be “‘not voracious’ (*gatsu gatsu shiteinai*)”(Endo, 2018, 178). According to Endo, more aggressive strategizing by Japanese women when it comes to dating apps, group dates and marriage hunting increasingly does not align with the expectations of young Japanese men.

At the end of the Chabujo *sheakai*, we collected our thoughts about how the conversation went, with most of us expressing our sense that the meeting was a source of

relief (*anshin*) or even healing comfort (*iyashi*) like we had mentioned before. The informal, natural bouncing back and forth between topics was reassuring for those of us participating because ‘whether it was being able to share our worries or random things, anything was fine’ (*moyamoyasuru koto kyoyūdekiru demo randomu mono mo ii shi*). Rather than a source of anxiety that many social encounters might become, the Chabujo *sheakai* was in some ways an act of group therapy, as well as of community bonding (not necessarily organising in this context). As a new member of the group, it was the first time I thought of, referred to, and wrote in my field notes that rather than the ‘Chabujo group’ or ‘Chabujo organisation’ it was the ‘Chabujo community’ that I had joined.

Making an ‘*libasho*’

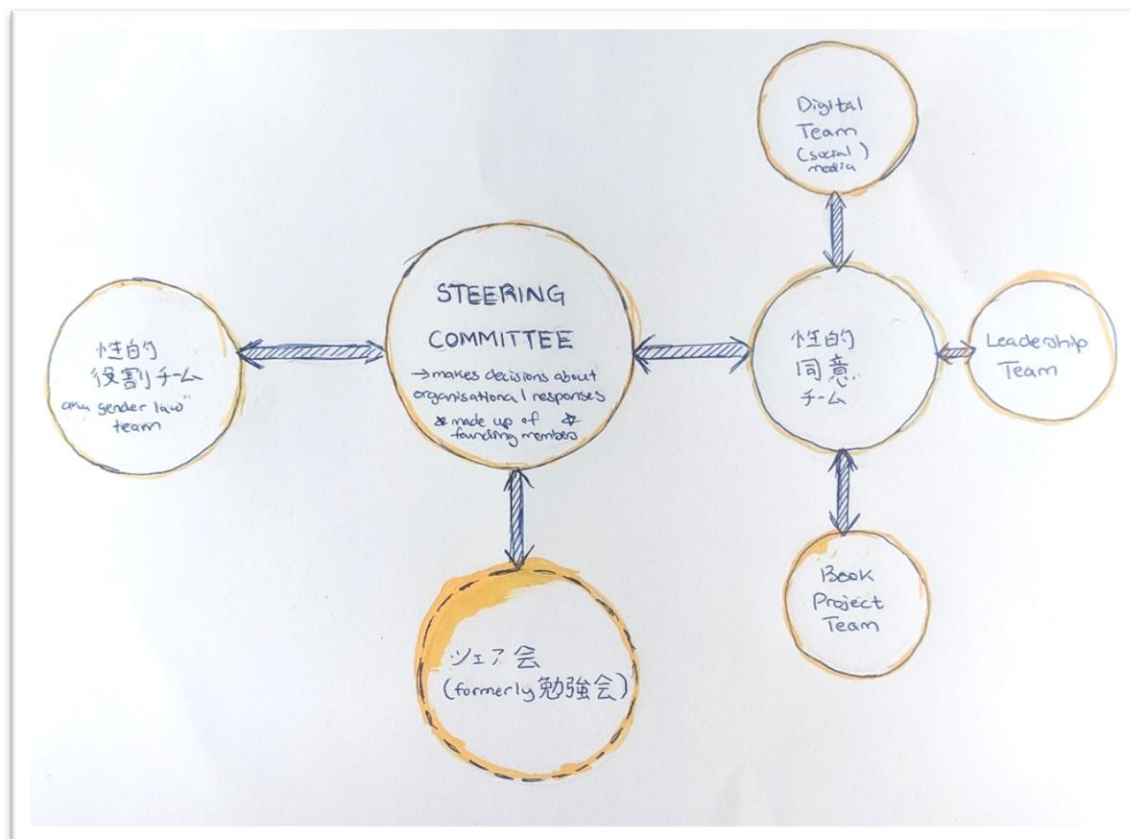


Figure 27: Organisational chart of Chabujo, created by the author.

Jay-san and I later chatted privately about this sheakai and the organisation of Chabujo.

The interview was conducted in English, and I transcribed the recorded segments of our

conversation, keeping the exact phrasing except where natural repetition or pause hinders the flow of the text. Overall, Jay-san was optimistic about the organisational snowflake model⁵ they described Chabujo using. They also appreciated the flexibility with which individual members could engage with projects and lead sessions.

[From my notes]

“But it’s very much a team effort kind of thing where you never have to worry, at least from my understanding, you never have to worry if you’re overstepping someone’s area of responsibility. Like no one’s going to take offence at like ‘Hey, how dare you? This is my work’, kind of thing. You know what I mean?” They look towards me for a moment in an expectant pause.

It is with complete honesty and enthusiasm, I agree: “I know exactly what you mean.”

“Like, for example [...] I’m also part of the benkyōkai team, which has been rebranded as the sheakai, right?”

“Oh yeah...!”

Since Chabujo’s founding in 2015, the names and purposes of project teams have inevitably shifted and been ‘rebranded’ as Jay-san phrased it.

They continue: “And there was only the two of us who showed up. And technically...someone different is supposed to take charge, be ‘tantō’ of each month, but I noticed that like, no one’s doing it.”

Jay-san references a later *sheakai* they had organised in the early spring. Originally, four or five people responded that they would attend. But, in the end, it was just the two because of several last-minute cancellations or messages that said they couldn’t join for another 30 minutes. As *tantō*, Jay-san made the call that it would be better to reschedule the session for another day.

“Yeah, it’s been you for the past months.” I reply.

“So, I’m just like, oh, by the way, I remember like, do you want to schedule, and I just did that I didn’t have to worry about ‘it’s not my job’, do you get what I mean?”

This conversation with Jay-san reflects some of the benefits and some of the struggles which go into providing a space and time for open discussion between Chabujo members.

⁵ Defined by Marshall Ganz (2014,7), a snowflake model is “a distributed approach to leadership...where no one person or group of people holds all the power; responsibility is shared in a sustainable way, and structure aims to create mutual accountability.” GANZ, M. 2014. Organizing: People, Power, Change. Leading Change Network New Organizing Institute.

Such opportunities to talk without reviewing action points and having a goal to accomplish are valued by people who take on the burden of organizer, of *tantō*, like Jay-san. However, due to the low turnout of members who are already only intermittently involved with their respective project teams and the frequency with which people reschedule, I propose that these discussions be viewed as a luxury instead of a necessity or a priority.

Throughout my fieldwork, there also emerged the points of privilege and power held by members of these sexual consent projects, often in terms of who possessed knowledge about sexual consent terminology adapted from English-language words. A Chabujo digital team member and contributor to the consent handbook, Chisato-san, described to me how the team carefully selected words in the handbook.

...We try to avoid katakana. And I try to make it more accessible to like Japanese audiences, because that was the target. And I think we're very careful about that. And we acknowledge that, like, we are different. In many ways. We could access English education in Western countries. But also, we knew that Western countries, or Western universities, are not always superior to us or to our context.

Chisato-san made several references to how the handbook creation team and Chabujo, in general, were inspired by leaflets and handbooks from universities in other countries. She presented it as a practical step towards developing a consent handbook in a language and context that did not yet have any local examples. However, for Chisato-san, this was an early and essential stage in a longer process that involved adapting and localising the educational content for Japanese audiences. Our interview was mainly conducted in English, but included segments and phrases in Japanese, especially when Chisato-san reflected on events from previous years.

And we also use that [other handbooks and leaflets], but we tried to make it more Japanese. Yeah, but at the same time, I think there are still like some people... who do not really acknowledge the privilege or different status from other Japanese students. So sometimes like they use just English when we talk and because I think it's easier for them to talk. But for me, it was a bit uncomfortable. Because, for example, when we conduct workshops, or when we give presentations about what we do, like I wanted to, like how do I say, approach more audiences. Yeah... *nanka muzukashii kedo* [but it is kind of difficult].

I do not know how to say. I think it's hard to describe because you must be there to feel it, the differences or some tension.

In this narrated moment where Chisato-san felt uncomfortable when fellow members were switching languages in a way that she felt excluded the audience, we can consider scholars' interpretations of "feeling with the world" and identifying "affective-discursive patterns" in experiences, episodes or situations (De Antoni and Cook, 2019, 139, Wetherell, 2012c). The concept of patterns goes back to Wetherell's definition of affective practice as comprised of bodies and meaning-making (2012b, 20). Affective-discursive patterns emerge through routines, through "familiar practice or ritualised sequence" which "depends on reflexive awareness about how the practice plays out and how the scene works" (2012c, 83). Wetherell suggests that these patterns provide crucial material in determining how we evaluate interaction, and "because they [affective-discursive patterns] act back on feelings and narratives of personal efficacy, they contribute strongly to ongoing senses of being-in-the-world"(2012c, 84-85).

Chisato-san and other members I got to know throughout my fieldwork recounted their thoughts and emotions when conducting their practice as activists, as feminists, and as individuals. Occasionally, as in this example with Chisato-san, it is the inability to assign descriptors to the atmosphere of an interaction or environment that communicates how emotionally significant, even taxing, a situation was for the person present.

Although both Chabujo and the Waseda Sexual Consent Handbook Team emphasised emotions and their associated practices such as group talk or sharing sessions, Waseda student members were much more explicit in the use of the emotional terms introduced at the beginning of this chapter. In the case of *moyamoyasuru*, this may be partially attributed to a more widespread use of the term among youth, but, since *moyamoya* has existed as an onomatopoeic feeling word for some time, the consent team's continuing use of the phrase is likely for advertising and recruitment purposes. This is especially true for the welcome events that occur in the autumn and spring of each academic year, with the spring recruitment by *sākuru* being by far the largest and busiest. It was important for *sākuru* to use eye-catching phrases like the title of the consent handbook team's welcome event (Figure 29): '*Shingakki hayabaya, moyamoyashitenai? Moyamoya otakiagekai*'; which poses the question: 'Are you feeling anxious at the start of the new school year?'



Figure 28: Instagram post about upcoming welcome events, including details of when, the types of 'moyamoyasuru koto' which might be discussed, and how to express interest in participation.

The phrase which followed was a creative mixing of *moyamoya* with the term '*otakiage*' which usually denotes a type of ritual performance at Shinto shrines and

Buddhist temples where sacred items such as *omamori* (charm), *ofuda* (amulet), or *engimono* (talisman) are burned (*moyasu*) to express gratitude to the respective kami who offered their support and ending in the suffix ‘*kai*’ which is often used to denote a meeting or assembly of a group’s members.

Significantly, the consent activism on the Waseda University central and Toyama campuses led by student members is set within a larger model of *bukatsudō* extracurricular club activities, which occur throughout Japanese secondary education. At differing points in production and distribution, two *sākuru* participated in the sexual consent project at Waseda, Shaberu and VUJ Waseda. Peter Cave writes how club participation helps “to socialise children into the hierarchical, self-disciplined behaviour demanded by adult life”(2004, 385). By the time students attend university, participating in *bukatsudō*, in sports clubs (*taiiku-kai*) or arts and culture extracurriculars (*bunka sākuru rengo*), is no longer an expected commitment, but many individuals join *sākuru*. In Lee-Cunin’s study of first-year students at Shiga University, 66.9% of 272 respondents joined *sākuru*, 32.4% of respondents said they did not, citing the following reasons. That they chose “to spend more time working part-time jobs and not having enough time to commit to club activities after classes because of a long commute from the university to the student’s home”(2004, 141-142).

While the history of *bukatsudō* goes back to ideas and practices from the Meiji era, learning values of perseverance and fellowship within a group, and cultivating *seishin kyōiku*. Some of these qualities are more visible than others in the *sākuru* of elite Japanese universities. Cave observes that “many teachers named *nakama-zukuri* (forging a group with a sense of solidarity) as one purpose of *bukatsudō*”(2004, 395). When conducting consent activism, finding a *nakama* is undoubtedly important for many members.

However, in chapters four and five, I present multiple cases where bonds of camaraderie

between members do not necessarily unify an entire group. Despite being premised on an often-hierarchical group formation, student activist groups like the Waseda Sexual Consent Handbook Team face the conundrum of organising multiple differing voices and emotions.

The name of the handbook team's welcome event was decided during one of the bimonthly handbook team meetings online at the end of March 2023. Up to this point, all the meetings I had joined had been concentrated on two primary tasks: the coordination of workshops with professors, followed by deciding which team members would 'take the podium' (*tōdansuru*) to present the handbook materials; and the preparation for the spring term and welcome events (*shinkan ibento*). Originally, we discussed having two different welcome events in early April after the new student welcome fair. One of these events would be an in-person workshop, which would include the consent-building 'ordering a pizza' exercises as a pair or a group of three. The handbook team commonly used the pizza activity to introduce the concepts of communication and consent. Members acting as workshop facilitators would share a list of different pizza sizes, types of crust, and assorted toppings and the pair or group would be given five to ten minutes to order their preferred pizza.

The key takeaway was for people to communicate and listen to one another. This could include asking how hungry someone was (if they had eaten recently maybe they only wanted a small size), checking whether they were enthusiastic about a topping like anchovies, or, at any point in the conversation, confirming that everyone's voice was heard, and that no one was expressing agreement just to lessen group conflict. Groups were also not permitted to have half or quarter pizzas where one part was cheese, and the other was a pepperoni because this was not an example of deciding on a pizza 'together'. In the fourth chapter of this thesis, I will share a deeper description and analysis of this

activity, including pictures of the slides used in both the Japanese and English versions of the Waseda sexual consent workshops.

Challenging the Normal: A Space to Listen

For the welcome events, other than this in-person workshop, organised by the sexual consent handbook team, an online event would be held, which was more like a conversation session (*oshaberikai*). Both events would be about an hour each and be aimed at incoming first-year students. However, in April 2023, after the handbook team helped manage the welcome fair booth, alongside Shaberu members who worked on other student activities, speaking out against sexual violence and discrimination on campus, the plan was changed. Even after posting about these welcome events on Instagram and talking about them at the booth, which was set up on the main Waseda campus, only one first-year student directly messaged the consent handbook team's Instagram account to confirm their attendance at the '*moyamoya otakiagekai*'. As a result of this low interest, two potential welcome events in the spring were condensed into a single event, which we held in a reserved room in the student centre (*gakusei-kaikan*) where most *sākuru* had either permanent or temporary rooms reserved for a variety of activities.⁶

The night before and on the day of the event, two of the handbook team members had to cancel their participation. Shikano-san was not feeling well, and another member had an unexpected schedule conflict due to a part-time job. This left three current members to hold the event: Kanao-san, Sabrina-san, and I. On the day of the event, we thought we

⁶ There was no evidence that the sexual consent handbook team had their own club room in the *gakusei-kaikan* during the time I volunteered with their activities in winter and spring 2023. When interviewing Sabrina-san, she also mentioned the struggle to meet with fellow members, especially during COVID, describing: "...I suppose this sexual consent handbook team is not big enough to get their own, like club room or something like that. It was never really, it would have probably never been possible in the first place, even without COVID."

might have more than one potential new member attending because the team had received a few other expressions of interest from first-year students. Honestly, any interaction with incoming students was a boon for the handbook team, which always seemed to be passively recruiting volunteers through QR codes on PowerPoint slides, or messages on Instagram posts, and these few events, which, although open to any student at Waseda University, always looked towards first years. The focus was on first years, for not just the handbook team but for other *sākuru*, because recruitment is for members who would ideally be active for three to four years, allowing the *sākuru* to be recognised by the university administration as well as divide group responsibilities and, ideally, maintain a thriving community.

As I stopped by a convenience store to pick up a variety of snacks for everyone, buying extra with the expectation and hope that at least a few new students would show up, I ran through the script for the explanation session (*setsumeikai*) and the kind of conversation about various social issues that might ensue. When I arrived outside the room in the *gakusei-kaikan*, Kanao-san, with whom I later conducted a workshop, had already fetched the keys and was beginning to unlock the door. We greeted each other and headed inside. Kanao-san wrote the event name on the whiteboard while I took out the welcome script we had prepared as a team beforehand. This, along with a physical copy of the handbook, flyers left over from the campus welcome fair, and the snacks I had just bought, were carefully arranged on the table at the centre of the small room.

We began to review the script and organise who would speak on each section. There would be an introduction from the current members as well as a summary of the handbook team's activities up until that point, then self-introductions from other participating students. We planned for this to last about ten minutes. Another ten minutes were allotted for a different member to introduce the 'ground rules', which were the same

as the ones we explained at the start of every consent workshop we held. They included guidelines such as how this conversation was not meant to leave this time and place, how it was inappropriate to laugh or joke about the content shared, not to judge people by their appearance, and a reassurance that if they did not want to talk about something it was okay to stay quiet and listen. Thirty more minutes were allotted for people to divide into two groups to share their concerns (*moyaymoya wo kyōyūsuru*).

Sabrina-san arrived, and shortly after, so did our final participant, a first-year student from the engineering department who went by the name Teru-san. Kanao-san had heard from one of the other potential attendees that they could no longer come, so we all sat down at the table with scripts, handbook and flyer copies and a pile of snacks that the four of us could not eat in one sitting. Immediately, we realised that there would be no need to split into two groups with such a small number of people. The *moyamoya otakiagekai* turned into a very informal and intimate event.

Even after an awkward start when we went through introductions, explanations, and guidelines and given the tension of four individuals who knew each other a little bit to not at all, by the end of the hour, which went by surprisingly fast, a burden had been lifted off my shoulders. Lowered voices, considerate pauses, and heads angled in to better catch each word another person said, we were filled with an emotional charge, which I still remember the sensation of years afterwards. Our emotions during this conversation were calibrated and expressed differently than other activist events I had attended myself or heard about second-hand, but feelings of mutual respect and care suffused every movement made and work spoken.

I had spoken candidly with these people whom I had met either within the past few months or on that same day about topics ranging from discriminatory experiences in

school, to structurally embedded sexism, to questions of identity and participation for minority groups in broader Japanese society. Because both Sabrina-san and I were foreigners, we often volunteered or were asked to share opinions about how Japan's approach to topics of gender and sexuality differed from other countries. Fortunately, our points of reference differed, since Selina could speak about experiences in Austria and other EU countries, while I referenced situations common to the USA or the UK.

While micro-aggressions by schoolteachers or professors weighed on the minds of the other three people present, I mainly juggled in my head whether it was safe or appropriate to bring up LGBTQ+ issues. If I shared personal accounts, as the others were about dividing classrooms by gender and making assumptions because people were born female, I would speak about my recent concerns regarding gender identity, belonging, and finding community. And even though the sexual consent handbook team contained two pages acknowledging some amount of diversity in Japan and how the characteristics of sexual orientation, ethnicity and disability affect understandings and realities of sexual violence... There was no guarantee that it represented the acceptance or tolerance levels of each participant. I at first declined to speak on the topic of a current worry, an especially personal one, beginning to speak but then saying (and apologising) that I did not want to talk about it yet. My request was respected, and they moved on to a different person's comments.

I tried to listen to the flow of everyone else's conversation even while being stuck in my entangled anxieties, the discomfort leaking away slowly as the attentions of the three young women seated at the rectangular table drifted to other topics. Teru-san had by now reached for a snack, Kanao-san confidently shared about how the handbook team's activities were connected to her concerns and could spread to address the concerns of other students, especially female students who were more disadvantaged by the emphasis on masculine traditions at Waseda. Sabrina-san added her thoughts to Kanao-san's comments. She asked fewer questions of our small group than Kanao-san but made observations which kept the conversation going with relatively few lingering, uncomfortable pauses.



Figure 29 First post of the consent handbook team on April 1, 2023, following images describe the goal of the activity to spread 'thinking about sexual consent' around campus and end all sexual violence at Waseda.

At some point, the conversation turned to events we had recently gone to that instilled more positive emotions than solely worrisome ones (*moyamoyasuru koto*). So, I mentioned that I had attended and volunteered at the 2023 Tokyo Rainbow Parade (Figure 31), which had made a triumphant return on the weekend of the 22nd and 23rd of April. I remarked on my surprise about the scale of the event and how many people attended. While volunteering in the performance stage section, it was easy to be moved by the fact

that other than individuals and couples, families were a common sight as they walked through the event booths, enjoyed the musical performances, and cheered on the parade sections from the sidelines winding from Yoyogi Park to Shibuya and returning to the Harajuku neighbourhood. My fears that this would be met by any number of neutral to negative reactions were quickly assuaged as the first-year student, Teru-san, said she also had gone to the Tokyo Rainbow Parade and enjoyed the festivities. Kanao-san and Sabrina-san had either also attended or knew someone who had. Instead of an awkward moment, discussing the Tokyo Pride events created a transition into a discussion about minority groups in Japan and related concepts.

One such concept was about finding a safe place (*anzen na basho*) or a place of belonging (*iibasho*). In a single moment of mutual sharing of people's attendance at Tokyo Rainbow Pride 2023, I felt supported and an intense sense of relief. With these three handbook team members, I was 'safe' and 'accepted'. The lack of surprise or judgment in their outward reactions also affirmed that a statement like the one I made, 'I went to the local Pride, and it was meaningful to me', could be 'normal' (*futsū*). Having this moment in such an intimate setting was a privilege given as I had believed telling them more about myself had also been taking a risk. But my desire for these 'confessions', as I shared more about how I identified with the LGBTQ+ community, to be seen as more ordinary and commonplace, helped me understand the assessments of social safety and appropriate time or place that LGBTQ+ people in Japan needed to navigate. Being treated as any other fully-fledged member of society (*shakaijin*) and able to access the same benefits as everyone else often took priority. My fear of judgment or rejection was a firm reminder that, in Japan, a group being feminist and supportive of consent education was not necessarily supportive or invested in exploring other groups who lacked visibility, recognition, and rights.

This testing of the waters in which I engaged during the *moyamoya otakiagekai* event can be connected to the historical division of feminist and queer activists in Japanese social movements and online discourse. According to Kawasaki Kazuyoshi, from the early 2010s, when the nationalist and conservative backlash against LGBTQ+ rights picked up steam and effectively elicited fear and anxiety towards queer subjects, “both Japanese mainstream feminists and gay activists failed to embrace intersectionality and to push back against the backlash movements” and “they tried to protect themselves by distancing themselves from each other” (Kawasaki, 2023, 192). More recently, as Japan prepared to host the 2023 G7 summit, the Kishida administration passed the bill on the Promotion of Better Understanding of LGBT Issues, causing social conservative politicians to form “a parliamentary caucus for ‘Ensuring the Safety and Security of All Women and Fairness in Women’s Sports’ in June 2023 and the group membership grew to more than 100 lawmakers”(Kawasaki, 2024). Lawmakers' reactions demonstrate how LGBTQ+ issues continue to be viewed as a cause for concern, fear, and anxiety. This lack of cooperation and dialogue between interest groups and grassroots organisations were reflected in the feminist but not necessarily intersectional areas I interacted with. Perhaps without this precedent for distrust and fear between groups, there would be ‘opening up’ as Ahmed discusses in the emotional politics of feminism, about issues relating to a wider array of identities and issues affecting minority groups across Japanese society.

At an event like the *moyamoya otakiagekai*, we also witness on a smaller scale the earlier consideration of how social models of group formation and participation, like *bukatsudō*, interact with more intimate and private domains. Conversations around sexual violence and consent certainly cross these boundaries, which in turn lead to the creation of national policies and initiatives to control the intimate lives of citizens. There is evidence of this across many modern nation-states and cultures, including in Turkey, whose medico-

legal processes for transgender individuals to change their pink or blue national ID bear significant parallels to the changes required for Japanese transgender citizens to have their gender identity recognised in their *koseki* (Zengin, 2024, Yamada, 2022). Yamada Hidenobu (2022) and Kawasaki Kazuyoshi (2024) separately discuss the ongoing debates around people with GID (gender identity disorder) and the medicalisation of trans identity via sex reassignment surgery. It was “the 2003 Act on Special Cases in Handling Gender in People with Gender Identity Disorder (GID Act), which allowed people diagnosed with GID to change their legal gender in the family register (*koseki*)”(Yamada, 2022, 502). However, as will be discussed in further detail in chapter five, the GID Act divided the trans community through notions of acceptable and recognised minority groups, especially as the term ‘transgender’ became more widely used in Japan.

Asli Zengin, in her fieldwork on violence and intimacy in the everyday lives of transgender people in Turkey, states:

Modern states have always been intimate with their citizens”(2024, 14). Such socialisation “is a process in which the workings of state power operate through the establishment of intimate (including sexual) links that reach into the inner bodies and lives of its citizens (Zengin, 2024, 14).

What Zengin discusses here echoes in part Plummer’s proposals to consider the concept of ‘intimate citizenship’ introduced at the beginning of this research. Plummer acknowledges that in both the modern world and modern states, there are “multiple, hierarchically layered and contested public spheres”(2001, 243). A growing diversity and globalisation of spheres, worlds and voices, to Plummer, means that past ‘blueprints’ are no longer applicable (2001, 246). Perhaps, Chabujo and Waseda team members are part of a growing number of individuals in Japan who cannot be expected to adopt unchanged models that were once accepted as ‘common sense’ (*jōshiki*) or ‘natural’ (*atarimae*). The organisation of not just policies on same-sex marriage or Penal Code revisions recognising nonconsensual sexual intercourse as a criminal offence, but of the intimate gathering of

consent activists at Waseda or within Chabujo, reflect a dissonance between past and present models of gender, sex, and sexuality.



Figure 30 Photos from Tokyo Rainbow Pride 2023 taken by the author. The slogan for 2023 was 'kawaru made tsuzukeru' (Press on till Japan changes).

Within the boundaries of the Waseda welcome event, discussing rights for the LGBTQ+ communities in Japan naturally transitioned into more general discussions about how safe places could be created and whether public consciousness around human rights

issues could become more widespread. This was a question to which none of us had an exact answer, although we all believed that attaining this level of social change to be difficult based on our experiences at Waseda University or previous educational institutions. Kanao-san and the rest of us were keenly aware that the sexual consent project at Waseda had not yet expanded past the Waseda and Toyama Campuses. The Nishi-Waseda campus was where most people studying engineering, technology, and other sciences would transit. She and other consent handbook team members said that the mostly male professors teaching these courses were not eager to have the handbook team host their workshops for their classes.

Based on my previous email communications with professors, I imagined the well-structured, yet brief response which would apologise for not being able to welcome the team to present their material but explain that it was due to constraints of class time. Or perhaps they would say it was not the right group of students to explain the handbook to? There was a correlation between course title, professor's speciality, and whether the professor would be amenable to sparing anywhere from 10 minutes to over an hour for a consent workshop. Regardless, I doubted that, in an official capacity, a professor from the engineering department or sports health department would decline a workshop enquiry based on a personal disagreement with the content.

All of this is to say that the sexual consent handbook team still faces barriers just within Waseda. So, when I asked about whether there had been consideration of sharing with or adapting the handbook for the Waseda junior high and high schools, Kanao-san hesitated before responding, 'Not that I know of.' The idea of expanding or spreading (*hirogaru* or *hiromeru*) awareness and knowledge about consent (with an emphasis on setting boundaries, being informed, and having relations on equal footing) is the foundation of the team's activities. Yet, the scale of it is small, perhaps 'realistic'.

Kanao-san and other more veteran members of this consent project focus their energies on the environment, which was familiar to all Waseda students—the university itself, while also ‘targeting’ first-year foundational classes (*hisshu kisoenshuu* or *kisoenshuu*) for their introductory handbook material. Inevitably, as we discussed in this sharing event among the four of us, the seminars and the professors teaching them, which focused on topics of politics, economy, literature, history, and sociology, were more receptive to having consent workshops. The ‘expansion’ of the Waseda consent project appeared to me to be rooted firmly in one part of the campus. As the new engineering course student Teru-san confirmed there remained a need for consent education for these male-dominated courses.

We ended our conversation on these observations and reflections of the social structure at Waseda and even Japan more generally, which made change regarding gender particularly slow and gradual. It was neither a sombre nor an uplifting topic, more contemplative than anything. We then expressed our final thoughts about the event, primarily gratitude to each other for it proceeding despite only a few participants showing up, and for this opportunity to talk openly. Before going our separate ways, we took a commemorative selfie in front of the whiteboard, and I convinced everyone to take as many of the leftover snacks as they could conceivably eat or carry. It was a memorable way to spend an early spring Saturday afternoon, and I made the brief ten-minute walk back to my apartment in Kikuicho thinking that, without attending the *moyamoya otakiagekai*, I would never have reached this level of understanding with people I ordinarily only met and spoke with online and in a semi-professional context. Being a part of the handbook team was a matter of commitment and passion to maintaining the workshops, which, by extension, required maintaining positive relationships with faculty members who supported the consent project. But, in the process of attempting to continue

these activities, sometimes the emotional foundation shared by the project's members was forgotten, only to be recovered during an intimate sharing event.

Even just a few months into the group's volunteer activities, there was always a sense of urgent diligence at meetings, training, workshops, and booths. The tension was and is reminiscent of people convening because they must, because sexual consent is a topic which must be addressed and brought to more students at Waseda University. Yet, we were making a stand in front of a sea of apathetic or ambivalent listeners, a captive audience that was not representative of a professor's dedication or the team's commitment.

This is a daunting prospect, and I do believe many people would give up faced by such an abundance of discouraging reactions. Instead, the team doggedly proceeds with events like the *moyamoya otakiagekai*, fiercely protecting their ideals and the very existence of the group. However, it was this welcome event that closed the 'affect-emotion gap' (White 2017, 2022) the most for me, and made explicit the messages of addressing unease, uncertainty, and being unsafe that were laid out in the handbook and workshop slides and script. Like the sharing session with Chabujo members back in December 2022, this handbook team meet-up showed me how important connection through honest conversation was for cultivating community around gender issues like consent education.

This event was a chance to share anxieties, a similar 'anxiety' as that which White defines in his studies of popular culture in Japan and how affect is administered as "that palpable but imperfectly identifiable impetus to change an uncomfortable present" (2022: 23). The Waseda sexual consent project members are at least in their stated goals and current activities, defined by and limited by the institutional boundaries they operate within. These express themselves differently from time constraints due to work, which

hinders Chabujo members' activity in separate teams, but they are all engaged in affective practice impacted by expected and real social interactions.

The Waseda project's practice struggles to establish its significance outside an intimate group context, which is perhaps related to the fact that consent activism is not yet a widely known effort, much less embedded in common-sense (*jōshiki*) views about Japanese society. Margaret Wetherell writes, however, that the base knowledge for an affective practice and performance already exists for all members:

Because we engage in affective practice all the time, every member of society possesses a wide-ranging, inarticulate, utilitarian knowledge about affective performance: how to enact it, how to categorise it, and how to assign moral and social significance to affective displays (2012:78).

These dialogues, even when they were internal to the organisation and therefore did not run the risk of being judged by external participants, did not occur regularly. Even during the handbook team's bimonthly meetings, there was something dispassionate, even clinical about sorting through email communications to confirm workshop schedules, editing slide content, or planning future events. When meetings were necessary--and some of them were mere placeholders because not enough people could make it or insufficient information was available to discuss the next activities-- they took on the structure of business meetings. Often, one person, usually Shikano-san if she was present, would lead the conversation to explain a situation, confirm details with specific members, or delegate tasks. I do not know if having more internal sharing sessions would have tightened the bonds between handbook team members, or if something else would have altered the atmosphere of meetings and workshops to make them 'warmer' or 'more familiar.'

There is also something to be said that both the *sheakai* with Chabujo members and the *moyamoya otakiagekai* demonstrated that even members of the same group and project team had conflicting ideas of which issue should be tackled next. Each member wished to

emphasise separate concerns about discrimination based on gender, sexuality or race—even under a shared umbrella of group goal to, in these cases, decrease sexual violence on university campuses. One of the standout differences between Chabujo and the Waseda team is that the individual motivations of Chabujo members were actualised with greater visibility than those of the sexual consent handbook team members at Waseda. Chabujo's organisation and the relative ages and experiences of its members allowed individuals to propose and begin new projects within the group.

Laura Dales's accounts of other feminist and non-governmental women's groups, including one called WWW, reveal similar conflicts between members, even if they are not always expressed loudly. She recalls:

Thus, in WWW, conflict arose not only from sociolinguistic issues but also from explicit differences in interpretation of the group's function. Some members believed the group should remain tied to its original functions and foci (namely supporting a Japanese group that worked against sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace.) For other members, this represented stagnation. They believed the group should develop new aims and activities, and that it should make concrete moves towards either activism or discussion (2009: 46).

Stagnation is a recurring concern, even *fear*, of these feminist and grassroots groups.

However, the sensitive nature of their projects demands at least some emotional labour from participants. Perhaps the emotions being called upon by the Waseda project were only put to practice in certain situations, when it was convenient for their activities, such as the recruitment of new members and when describing consent scenarios during workshops. Contrary to the specific events' personal, emotionally charged atmosphere, the typical meeting was characterised by an expressed need to get the work done seriously and efficiently. It was necessary to keep the meeting notes updated, check all communications in the shared Gmail account and documents in Google Drive, and continue to have the project produce tangible outcomes. By comparing the sharing sessions conducted by Chabujo and the talk events arranged by the Waseda team, we can see how language is

mobilised affectively to encourage participation in general group meetings and events. Event titles and website-published mission statements promise a safe, nonjudgmental space for individuals to share their concerns. Yet, these more intimate sessions, which foster feelings of mutual trust and respect between members, are not prioritised amidst other project activities. I observed this especially in Waseda because students have limited time while in university to engage with extracurriculars and may feel pressure to meet project goals, which can be compiled in a report with set timelines and numbers. An example of the Waseda sexual consent project team's activity report for 2023 will be shared in chapter four's detailed analysis of two consent workshops I helped facilitate.

The question of how important continuity is as compared to growth or other perceived indicators of the project's successes or 'impact' will be analysed at length in chapter four. But first, I will introduce in chapter three what became a crucial segment of my fieldwork—the involvement of university faculty members and other external collaborators with sexual consent projects at the grassroots level.

Chapter Three: Consent Activism and University Reception

Very little in my ethnographic research points towards sexual consent as a social issue, becoming a platform for a broader social movement. Consent activism lacks the characteristics of more confrontational protests like those following the 2011 Fukushima disaster and the 2014 public demonstrations by SEALDs (Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy) against the legislative decisions of Japan's conservative government (Chiavacci and Olinger, 2018, 14-15).

This chapter provides examples from my fieldwork, the existing literature, and materials, including university websites and PowerPoint slides, to discuss how student activists struggle to receive support from educational institutions. My focus in these sections is on the Waseda University Sexual Consent Handbook Team because their project is embedded in the university's administrative, bureaucratic, and political processes. Particularly in the aftermath of past student movements and sexual harassment incidents at Japanese universities in general, raising awareness about sexual consent on university campuses presents a unique challenge. Student members must balance their calls for improved consent education with institutional approval. As the descriptions of interviews with various individuals will demonstrate, this often requires revising handbook material to depict the issue of sexual violence as less 'extreme' or risk projects losing what little visibility they have.

Comparing the activities of consent project members to the student movements of prior decades, I was taken aback when a Waseda faculty member, Aoyama-sensei, identified the sexual consent handbook team as possessing an 'activist spirit'.

It's been our official identity. *Zaiya seishin* was the word to describe Waseda's spirit. Until well, maybe around the turn of the century, the late 1990s... That's been our school

identity for a long time, though. Maybe that's been lost somewhat in the past one or two decades, again, because of increasing concentration on Tokyo, kind of well-to-do students who've won the *juken sensō* [exam competition or 'war'] ... Yeah. *Zaiya seishin*. If you asked anyone from the 1960s-70s Waseda, they would be thinking about *zaiya seishin*.

'*Zaiya*' can be roughly translated to 'grassroots.' However, some common definitions use 'zaiya' to describe a member of an opposition party or political group. '*Seishin*' is often defined as 'spirit' and used in many contexts like martial arts, Confucian and Buddhist teachings, and politics to characterise the individual and the group. This is in addition to the usage of *seishin* in the previous chapter, where '*seishinteki*' was described in the context of 'psychological' or mental well-being, specifically psychological abuse experienced by women in domestic relationships (内閣府男女共同参画局, 2023).

Brian Moeran draws from Doi and Befu's work to explain that, as a keyword in Japanese internal cultural debates, "*seishin* refers to one's inner being, which often derives spiritual fortitude from self-discipline" (1984, 255). Likewise, Waseda University's founding principle revolves around fostering a spirit of determination. According to Aoyama-sensei, such a spirit is embodied by students who specifically address attitudes and ideals they oppose. In group activities and rituals like high school baseball tournaments, Moeran suggests that the *seishin* concept's ideological importance for Japanese society has waned over the years. However, if we compare with Peter Cave's analysis of *bukatsudō* and constructions of the peer group, certain values linger. These could be termed as the qualities of endurance, strength and perseverance and, Moeran wrote that "*seishin* is being called upon to combat what are seen to be the evils of Western capitalism and individualism"(1984, 259). This was to be conveyed most strongly to Japanese youth, a message which is also embedded in "the *seishin kyōiku* [education of the spirit] tradition, which not only values discipline and hardship as enablers of learning, but in some cases even sanctions physical punishment"(Cave, 2004, 411-412).

The emphasis on youth, particularly ‘problematizing youth’ is relevant to Toivonen and Imoto’s discussion of how these ‘problems’ reflect youth not fitting into “any universally accepted ‘Japanese’ norms but rather to middle-class norms” (2013, 78). The part-time (and precarious) labour of freeters in the late 1990s and 2000s is one such case discussed by Slater, Ogawa, and Cassegard. It has been argued that a ‘youth problem’, such as freeters, can shift focus to a broader social issue, such as the debate on *ijime* (bullying), and the irresponsibility of freeters in the 1990s shifted to being seen as irregulars who “in fact desired stable jobs even when they could not get them” (Toivonen and Imoto, 2013, 79-80, 2012, 9). The issue for freeters was the crisis of masculinity, of being unable to achieve the idealised salaryman masculinity, which maintained connections to samurai values, akin to the values of discipline, perseverance, and self-responsibility, echoed in *bukatsudō*. Cook observed these concerns in her male freeter informants and explains: “Men who were considered unmasculine (*otokorashi-kunai*) were often described as lacking a sense of responsibility to others, of being weak emotionally/spiritually (*seishinteki ni yowai*), and of lacking the ability to make decisions without help”(2013, 33).

We see here the emphasis on both self-responsibility (*jiko sekinin*) and the idea of *seishin* or *seishinteki*, demonstrating once more the powerful impact they have had on Japanese consciousness, including on constructions of masculinity. By extension, this affects the relationships people have in their club or circle activities before becoming full adults (*ichininmae*) or productive members of society (*shakaijin*).

Cave points to hierarchical power relationships and their potential for bullying and abuse as reasons why the traditional structures of *bukatsudō*, especially in sports clubs, are being reassessed. But the relationships of *senpai* (senior) and *kōhai* (junior), a ranking of responsibility and discipline defined vertically by age, remain present in Japanese

university *sākuru* (Toshinao Yoneyama et al., 1986, 49, Nakane, 1973, 44-45). This ‘ranking consciousness’, as Nakane described the many interpersonal relationships which make up everyday Japanese life, is not necessarily negative, and not all *bukatsudō* in junior high and high schools or *sākuru* in universities have strict roles for different members. The work of *senpai* is difficult and often appreciated by their *kōhai*, preparing students for “institutional roles (especially age-status roles) that carry responsibilities and behavioural expectations” and crafting “communities of practice” (Cave, 2004, 405-406). Lee-Cunin remarked that the *senpai-kōhai* seniority system was evident in university clubs and that “in the club environment, it seemed quite likely that *kōhai* would listen to and heed the advice of their *senpai* on academic career choices” (2004, 151). She therefore observed that ranking consciousness and behaving respectfully towards senior members were prominent features of these activities.

But, in the case of attempted student activist projects, the emphasis on reaching one set goal—the creation and dissemination of handbook materials—seemed to break down the rules of guidance between *kōhai* and *senpai*. The founder and leader, Shikano-san, was the respected source of knowledge for all project activities, but, in my brief time as a volunteer member, there were few opportunities for a *senpai* like Shikano-san to provide advice to newer members. This can be partially attributed to her graduate student status and responsibilities as well as, I argue, the pragmatic or “instrumental activism” approach the Waseda consent project adopted as a whole (Stammers, 2009, 166).

Neil Stammers defines instrumental activism as “activism directly oriented towards achieving specific goals” and, although often focused on political or economic change, “it can be directed towards the cultural realm, for example when feminist activists demand an immediate end to male violence”(2009, 166). Stammers states that both expressive and instrumental forms of activism can be cultural, political and/or economic. However, he

uses ‘expressive’ “to designate the affective and normative dimensions of social movement activism... as foundational for what social movements are and what they try to do”(2009, 164). Whereas the specific goals of sexual consent projects by both the Waseda team and Chabujo share qualities of instrumental activism in social movement theories, expressive dimensions are evident in the way the handbook and workshop content attempt to address cultural norms and values. Lile Otaki Donohue argues that the #MeToo movement was heavily reliant on the expressive dimension since its success depended on:

...Whether or not the expressive dimension—women working to change perceptions of sexual harassment and assault through individual contributions—is taken seriously, to access the instrumental dimension-social political and legal change that is brought about *because of* a change in norms and values (2020, 76).

In discussion with Stammers’ models of activism, Donohue writes that the interplay of these dimensions created a movement incompatible with current Japanese society. The #MeToo movement in Japan met with an environment that could not push the goals of the mainly female victims forward, and so it failed. This struggle, whether it is marked by success or failure, is perhaps inherent in expressive activism itself. Because: “It is not just about ‘who we are’...but also about ‘how we are’ in the world, consequently requiring evaluation of ‘what we do’ and ‘how we do it’”(Stammers, 2009, 165). An emphasis on ‘being’ or ‘feeling’ in the world resonates with the work of De Antoni and Cook referenced earlier and ties it to movement activism, which attempts to recognise or transform existing ways of living. In the case of this comparison of two different grassroots projects on sexual consent, it is about projecting alternative methods of building relationships and boundaries, which share the responsibility among participants in intimate activities.

Overview of Grassroots Organising, Labour and Social Movements in Japan

To connect ranking dynamics, group structures and responsibility narratives to the dimensions of movement activism, we must consider interlocutor references to grassroots and community organising in the 1960s and 1970s. Aoyama-sensei indicated that it was 1960s-70s Waseda students who would have invoked or embodied *zaiya seishin*. Student or university member alignment with this founding principle was fading by the late 1990s. There were multiple reasons why students preferred not to associate with clubs or *sākuru*, which might be connected to politics or activism, including “the political crackdowns making campuses unsafe for political discord” and how their activities might be perceived during the job-hunting period (*shūkatsu*) (Falch and Hammond, 2020, 442). Yet, the most applicable factor when it comes to recruitment and participation in groups like the sexual consent handbook team may be, as Falch and Hammond write: “...Generally speaking, university in Japan has often been regarded as a time of ‘responsibility-free’ living before entering the workforce. As such, in many clubs and circles, politics has often been seen as ‘uncool’ and ‘unwelcoming’” (2020, 442).

Incoming first-year students may perceive groups like the handbook team as ‘uncool’ and requiring too much responsibility. And, if Waseda students have internalised the belief that activist engagement may affect their *shūkatsu* period in their third and fourth years, this could be an additional deterrent to participation. This is related to Asahina’s findings that there is a “low sense of political efficacy” among young Japanese people, where their narratives “point to senses of resignation: neither institutional politics nor social movements, in their views, are capable of addressing social problems” (2021, 723). In brief, the risk is not worth the presumed outcome.

Without the Waseda faculty member cited earlier, Aoyama-sensei, explicitly mentioning the character of student activism in these decades, the parallels with historical patterns of social movements and precarious, irregular labour are clear. In the 1960s, student groups mobilised with demands for university and labour reforms. Their protests and demonstrations led to aggressive clashes with the politically conservative establishment. Many left-leaning groups like Zengakuren, Zenkyoto, Chukaku-ha, and Beheiren mobilised students as well as other citizens to their cause, but Falch and Hammond discuss:

...Violent clashes with police led to arrests, injuries, and even death (as in the case of the Narita and Haneda Airport riots), acts of suicide (like the self-immolation that occurred outside the prime minister's residence to protest the Vietnam War), and infighting between leftist factions (some of which resulted in the death of their members) (2020, 441).

Groups with student members like Sekigun-ha, Rengo-Sekigun, and Nihon Sekigun used militant means to advocate for revolution, such as kidnapping, bombings, and airliner hijackings, which left lasting scars on Japan's collective consciousness, and caused Japanese activist movements to become intertwined with terrorism" (Falch and Hammond, 2020, 441). By the 1970s in Japan, "social movements had lost influence in national politics, while public protest became an increasingly socially stigmatised activity" (Chiavacci and Olinger 2018, 9). It was not until non-profit organisations and officially recognised civil society organisations (CSOs) gained legitimacy in the late 1990s that civil society developed, albeit rather 'invisible', under the eyes of governmental institutions.

I was introduced to the concept of '*zaiya seishin*' in the well-appointed, yet cosily cluttered, office of a Waseda academic and faculty member, Aoyama-sensei. Most of the room's walls were lined with books. Our interview was occasionally punctuated by the elevators' soft ding, taking graduate students and researchers to their respective seminars or study rooms. Including faculty members as my interview participants was part of my efforts to gain multiple perspectives from Waseda affiliates or 'community members' about

the sexual consent project, and related projects to promote the often-mentioned concept of ‘D and I’, or ‘Diversity and Inclusion’. This is why I met with several individuals involved directly or indirectly with the Student Diversity Centre, which includes the Intercultural Communication Centre, the then Office for Students with Disabilities (now renamed as the Accessibility Resource Centre), and the Gender and Sexuality Centre. But, as the conversation with Aoyama-sensei, quoted above, demonstrates, awareness, education, and implementation of diversity and inclusion at Waseda remains a work in progress.

A refrain of concern and frustration echoes in other social movements and campaigns for change within Japan in recent years and past decades. But the popularisation of terms and ways of alternative thinking or ‘spirit’ like *zaiya seishin* becomes an approach which is significant and puzzling. Given the identity that had been part of the history of Waseda and part of the consciousness of veteran faculty members like Aoyama-sensei, there was a stunning lack of visibility and voice by current students. According to Aoyama-sensei, the issue stems, at least partially, from regional diversity, from the overrepresentation of wealthier students from Tokyo, Chiba, Saitama, and Kanagawa prefectures. But, for others, even those who signed the petition requesting sexual consent education at Waseda and who remain collaborators for student members, the lack of visibility, awareness, and diversity holds a different meaning.

I will return to my conversation with Aoyama-sensei later in this chapter, after introducing the earlier dialogues with faculty members who identified themselves as supporters of the sexual consent project on Waseda’s campuses. Most of these members were involved with the Waseda University Gender Research Institute. Despite these people and groups all expressing some level of support for consent education and diversity and inclusion initiatives, there was a tremendous amount of nuance and variation in their narratives (Takashino and Keeni, 2023). Even when discussing the same general activities,

such as the creation of the sexual consent handbook or the formation of the Gender and Sexuality Centre, there was not as much of a common understanding or shared narrative as expected. Each person interpreted the same events or activities differently. And some were more critical of the process of introducing sexual consent education to campus than others.

The calls to either a ‘grassroots or ‘activist’ spirit (*zaiya seishin*) as well as acknowledgement of students’ efforts to develop and then promote their projects on campus can be placed within a larger context of social movements and youth activism in Japan. Specifically, we can examine the movements which protested government policy and law, like the Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy (SEALDs) movement in 2015 and 2016, as well as ones which sought greater rights for nonregular workers, leading to protests from the 1980s to the 1990s and again from 2008 on (Falch and Hammond, 2020, 436, O'Day et al., 2018, 182, Chiavacci and Obinger, 2018b, 13). Disillusionment, frustration, and upset over current decisions by either government bodies or corporations led to groups mobilising through union organisations, nonprofit organisations, and citizens’ groups, which included youth workers and students. Akihiro Ogawa’s analysis of the movements which have helped form civil society in contemporary Japan indicates that the type of social issue had a tremendous influence on the organisation and impact of a given campaign. Following the 2011 March 11 disaster, for example, anti-nuclear demonstrations exploded in popularity and were “mobilised by a diverse collection of people, encompassing women and men of all ages from all different social classes and across cultural barriers”(Ogawa, 2022, 310). Ogawa adds: “No particular type of individual or group has controlled this social movement”(2022, 310).

The historical development of anti-nuclear demonstrations has also been examined by Carl Cassegard, who writes:

It should be emphasised that anti-nuke activism remained a primarily grassroots-based and locally oriented form of activism which never took part in the increasing institutionalisation of environmental organisations that gained force in Japan in the 1990s (2022, 757).

These grassroots and local characteristics exist because the anti-nuke activism was suppressed by governmental initiative and the political regime, which fought to maintain Japan's image as a 'pro-nuclear' civil society and a 'green' state before the 2011 March 11 disaster. The Fukushima nuclear catastrophe altered and dispersed the techniques of previous anti-nuke activism and freeter activism from the 1990s and early 2000s.

Cassegard also argues that: "Freeter activism provided a template for activism that could easily be adopted by others with no previous experience and that the relative success of the precarity movement in previous years helped rehabilitate activism as a legitimate activity to many people"(2022, 759).

This was possible as well because of a shift from "a 'minoritarian style' of protesting which was more anarchistic to a 'majoritarian style' that encouraged uniformity and self-identification as 'the people' or 'ordinary people'" (Cassegård, 2022, 759).

Saori Shibata argues that "insufficient attention has been paid to workers' agency and contestation" in her book on precarious labour, the Japanese capitalist model, and growing inequality. She suggests that a revised account should consider "the scope for agency that has been witnessed by Japan's new group of precarious nonregular workers and an understanding of how this has contributed to the instability of Japan's socioeconomic model" (Shibata, 2020b, 4-5). Shibata's work provides useful insights from a socioeconomic and political perspective on trade union activism and nonprofit campaigning organisations. Although the focus is on labour activism rather than gender issues or consent activism, such as in Chabujo and Waseda's sexual consent projects, this overview indicates how the style of protests and campaigning has changed in response to shifts in the Japanese political economy. Of specific significance to my analysis of

grassroots activities around consent is the similarity in how workers and activists organised and coordinated horizontally across various groups and multiple locations (2020, 62-3). The ‘snowflake model’ organisation of Chabujo, including a steering committee alongside specific teams, and the project team organisation of the Waseda sexual consent handbook project, are constructed on roughly the same grounds. Even the collaboration with external organisations appeared to be working with partners instead of superiors. This was often the case with Chabujo’s larger projects like the Believe campaign which involved the non-profit organisations, Spring, Shiawase Namida, and Ashita Shoujo-tai, which together pushed for significant revisions to the Penal Code on sexual violence and crimes.

Spring began as a volunteer organisation but was then reformed on 7 July 2017 as a legal entity registered with the Legal Affairs Bureau and the founder, Yamamoto Jun, describes: “We formed as an organisation centred around victims, and then we became the first organisation in Japan to have been incorporated as an association of sexual abuse victims” (Dalton and Norma, 2022c, 31). Many of these organisations have members involved with multiple projects and Yamamoto Jun also spoke about her involvement with Shiawase Namida (Happy Tears), “which is an organisation concerned with the sexual abuse of people with disabilities”(2022c, 37). Meanwhile, Ashita Shoujo-tai (Tomorrow Girls Troop), the third and final collaborator with Chabujo on the Believe campaign, describes itself on its Instagram profile as an “art collective working towards gender equality in East Asia” (*subete no sei no byōdō wo mezashite gurōbaru ni katsudōsuru feminisuto, aatisuto, akutibisuto gurūpu*). The group frequently posts events in three languages, Japanese, Korean and English. They also identify themselves as LGBTQ+ allies and have created multiple posters with messages such as “feminism together with trans” (*feminizumu wa toransu to tomo ni*). Chapter five will analyse the tensions of

Japanese feminist activism with sexual and gender minority recognition, especially for transgender people living in Japan.

Despite their varied goals, these separate groups joined hands over a significant current issue, the Penal Code revisions introduced at the very beginning of this thesis. This collaborative partnering between issue groups somewhat echoes Nakane's theories on vertical organisation within groups. She writes:

The Japanese always use an existing structure of vertical personal relations for the organisation of any inter-institutional or inter-professional group, such as an organising committee of a large convention of the kind that requires the co-operation of experts from various fields (1973, 98).

For example, Chabujo members did not describe the group's organisation as vertical or hierarchical, even though the steering committee, comprised of veteran and founding members, would have private discussions about future directions before bringing them to the rest of the team. The existence of this committee echoes the group models in other aspects of Japanese society, including the reality that "an organising committee always consists of a relatively large number of members, among whom only a handful are active or productive" (Nakane, 1973, 99). For grassroots feminist groups and consent activists, Nakane's vertical structure is pared down to 25 to 40 individuals. Small grassroots organisations still follow the model of having only a few active, productive members. This is led by people such as the Chabujo founding members and the Waseda sexual consent handbook team founding member Shikano-san, who intimately understand the ins and outs of the organisation, because they are the ones who created it.

Japanese members of both groups did not consider it an issue that only some members were productive at given times while the rest remained part of the LINE group chat or Slack workspace as 'dormant' participants. However, there were difficulties in maintaining even the horizontal coordination discussed by Shibata because of how

members treated and viewed the project in terms of peer groups. This is related to finding ‘*nakama*’ who are arranged differently from these other contexts such as corporate work offices, sports clubs, and hobby-based *sākuru*. Toshinao Yoneyama had an interesting addition to Nakane’s traditional group model by emphasising the role of the peer group and *nakama*, which he translated as ‘peers’, rather than the ‘like-minded companions’ or ‘comrades’ definition I adopt for the context of consent activism. He suggests that the relations between *nakama* are based on the principle of equality even though, while “equal members in principle, the leader-follower relation arises naturally”(1986, 49).

Yoneyama also argues that:

A leader among human *nakama* society also does not arise solely through ability or wisdom or role assignment from outside. Rather, through the long association of *nakama*, the total qualities of each member emerge, and the leader is determined spontaneously (1986, 50).

However, as evident in the leadership and organisation of both Chabujo and Waseda consent projects, it is rare for leaders to arise ‘naturally’ or ‘spontaneously’. They are instead made. But the groups’ leaders also do not demonstrate a level of unpopularity or lack of skill, which can make a workplace become ‘miserable’ as Yoneyama comments. Instead, the ‘leaders’, like Shikano-san for the Waseda team, have become so by circumstance, by being one of the first students to propose such a project. In the next two chapters, I will examine how the *nakama* relations touched upon by earlier scholars like Nakane and Yoneyama are, in consent activism, arranged vertically and horizontally. It may be due to the shift in the understanding among young feminist activists that *nakama* can be defined by a ‘principle of equality’ and is now about having a shared purpose or goal, and has the potential for intimate qualities verging on close friendship (Nanba, 2005).

In the Waseda case, horizontal coordination occurred with fellow students, alumni, and faculty members. Although faculty often acted as advisors, like the many members I

spoke with and later interviewed, they actively stepped back from the everyday running of the project to allow students to determine the shape and direction of sexual consent activism at the university. There were, however, natural barriers and resistance to discussing sexual consent from other branches of the university that I did not observe in the broader, university-independent actions of feminist activist groups like Chabujo. The first hint of this emerged early on in conversations with faculty members and was observed through SNS updates on ongoing campaigns. And, as I gradually learned, the absence of an online presence for a grassroots group was often an indicator of a significant reorganisation occurring out of sight. Themes of visibility, reorganisation, and dissolution are strongly represented in Japanese consent activism and will be discussed throughout this chapter and all the following chapters.

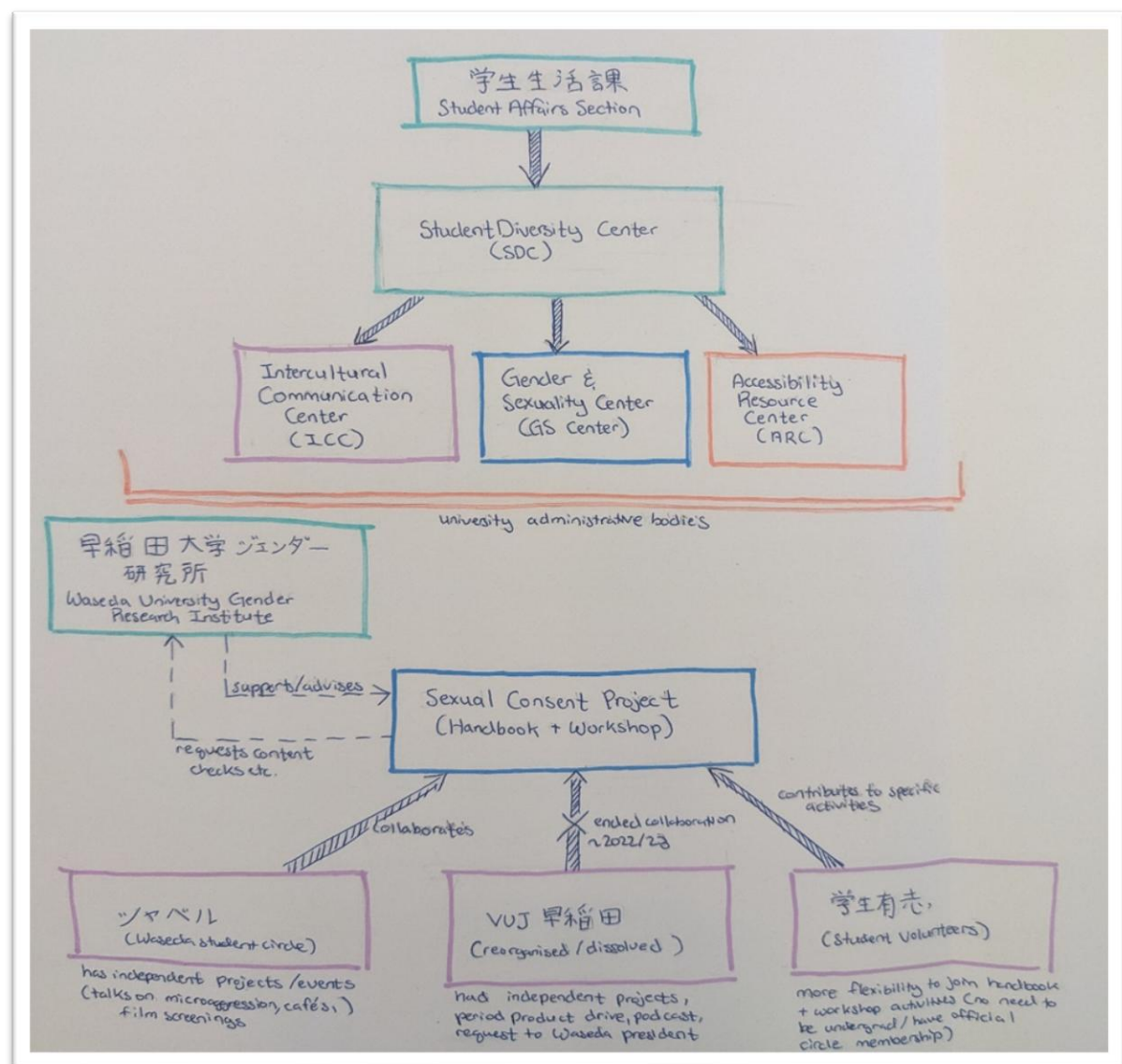


Figure 31 Organisational chart of Waseda Sexual Consent Project, created by the author.

A Bit ‘Extreme’: Questioning Handbook Content

Faculty members who were more directly involved with the project acknowledged that the students’ handbook content required a lot of editing and revision from Waseda professors.

Taito-sensei, a member of the Waseda University Gender Research Institute and a professor at the Faculty of Letters on Toyama Campus, shared:

...At first, students made the draft themselves, by themselves. And they wanted professors and teachers to check the content. Many of the professors found a lot to be revised. Because there are lots of things which are more [like] academic papers or final reports for

the classes, than the handbook, which should be written to, you know, written to get readers to understand. But it was more like academic papers.

Taito-sensei had been chosen by a more senior professor, Murayama-sensei, to be the primary faculty advisor for the sexual consent handbook project. Our one-on-one semi-structured interview was conducted in a mixture of English and Japanese. Any Japanese language sections have been translated and adapted for this thesis. Taito-sensei's responses reflect her analysis of the university administration's reactions to student efforts to raise awareness around sexual violence via the sexual consent handbook. The interview excerpt focuses on this levelling of sexual violence concerning institutional reputation through the perspective of faculty members rather than myself⁷.

The students had approached Murayama-sensei, who then shared it with her colleagues, many of whom read through and edited the drafts as Taito-sensei describes. Although the student members of the handbook team openly acknowledged the help provided by faculty, I couldn't envision exactly how essential these revisions were until I had individual conversations with professors.

[From my notes]

The finished byproduct of the handbook project lay on the table between Taito-sensei and me. I gesture at the thin handbound booklet and continue my questions:

"I wonder if you remember, out of this handbook, which parts do you think have changed the most? ... You said it was a lot more academic before. It was a lot thicker."

"It was. Yeah, it was almost only letters. I mean, you know, no pictures, no illustrations. And that's a good question, but it's... almost everything has changed."

Taito-sensei lets out a soft, short laugh, touched with the weariness of one remembering a long and arduous process.

⁷ The reference to groups which were identified by their viewpoint on a specific project/campaign as being 'in support' or 'in opposition' can perhaps be tied to the political origins of the term *zaiya seishin*, wherein the 'spirit' supposedly belongs to the group or party which is 'anti-ruling party'. If we adopt this comparison, then being supportive of small social issues groups on a university campus, like the sexual consent project, aligns with the ideals of *zaiya seishin*, though perhaps revised for a contemporary context rather than the social movements of the 1960s or the revolutionary nature of Okuma Shigenobu and his peers during the 1880s around Waseda University's founding.

She begins flipping through the handbook, scanning the contents with clear familiarity and commenting about changes both minuscule and significant.

“It was just this, the numbers, at first, and they had no notes like this. What kind of the, you know, sexual harassment or sexual violence, then it’s in concrete sentences here. And it wasn’t here [before]. So it was, I think the university side who **insisted** that they should include this.”

Taito-sensei refers to page five of the handbook, within the first section titled ‘seiteki douitte nani?’ (what is sexual consent?) The first page in this section outlines both physical forms of touch, which require consent, and sexual conversations, which need consent. Opposite it are examples collected by Waseda students of sexual violence they have experienced at the university. It ends with a section stating ‘*korera wo hitotsu demo keikenshita koto no aru waseda daigaku kankeisha wa nanto! Kaitousha no 46.8%!**’ (People related to Waseda University have experienced these things at least once! The number of respondents who said this is 46.8%).

“Because it’s so small still, too...” I remark as we read the contents.

“They were shocked by the number,” Taito-sensei said simply.

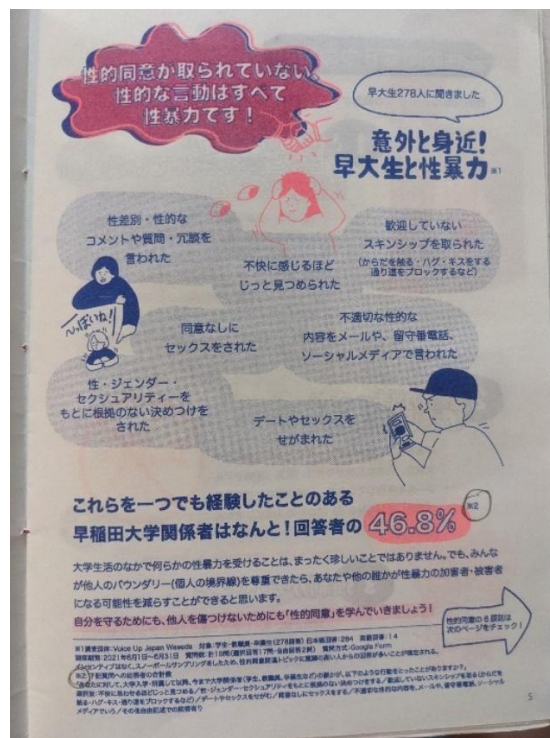


Figure 32: Page 5 of the handbook discusses Waseda students' experiences with sexual violence.

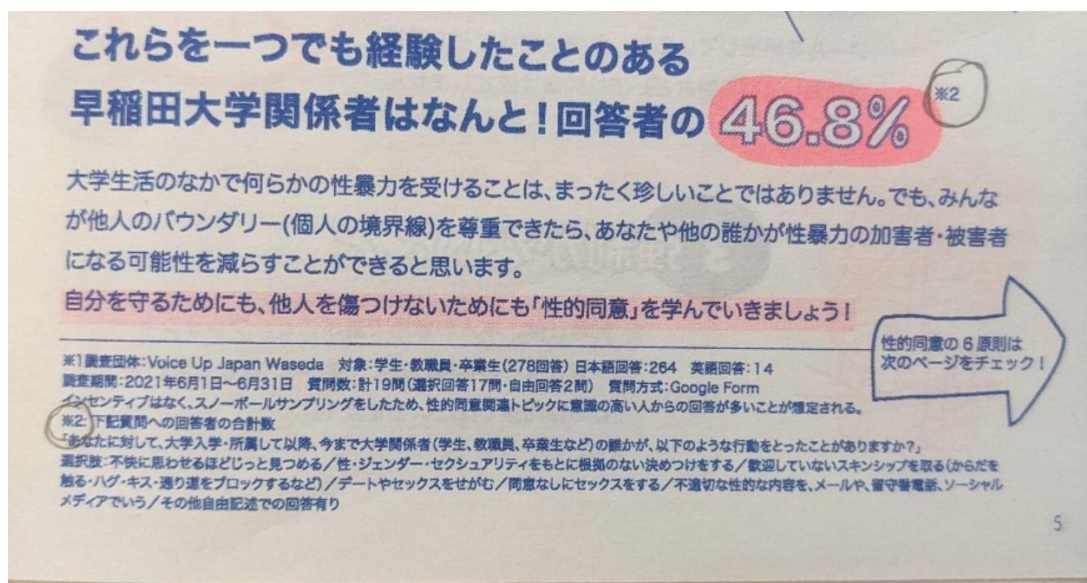


Figure 33: Close-up of the footnotes section describing the types of sexual violence included in the survey.

The part that the ‘university side insisted they should include’ is a footnote at the very bottom, the second note, which explains that the question respondents were answering included a broad variety of forms of sexual harassment or violence. This may have been sexual comments on one’s appearance, inappropriate email or text messages, being hugged or touched without permission and so on. I commented that the note was small and difficult to read. Like footnotes in many contexts, be it academic papers or government documents, there may be no guarantee that someone would take the trouble to read this addition. However, Taito-sensei explained that it was something added because of feedback from Waseda University, because of how shocking the number of 46.8% was.

During this conversation and almost a year after having this addition pointed out to me, I still find the footnote’s presence telling. Although someone could argue that it is important to let readers know the context of the survey questions from which the handbook members are drawing significant numbers and conclusions, the survey’s format over Google Forms and number of respondents, as well as collaborators, are acknowledged in the first footnote. Moreover, interested individuals could reach out to the handbook team for more information. Adding this second footnote did seem to serve the purpose of

cleaning up the university's reputation rather than indicating the students' motivation to describe an environment in which incidents of sexual violence and entrenched misogynistic traditions would commonly occur.

Harassment Policies and Addressing Misogyny

We observe in the final version of the handbook (images included with captions) evidence that even supposedly 'independent' student projects are under external pressure from university faculty and staff to keep their criticisms within certain boundaries. The notion of independence and even freedom when it comes to the consent project and university circles in general hearkens back to this chapter's engagement with *bukatsudō*, specifically, the perspective of teachers on high school clubs. Cave emphasised clubs as playing a role "in social reproduction and in training for the world of work," while some teachers, he observed, "saw the value of *bukatsudō* in the freedom they offer students to choose to participate in something they like doing, along with others who have the same enthusiasm"(2004, 396). However, even though the handbook's creation and subsequent workshops were attended by students voluntarily, university policies still limit activities. While avoiding censorship at the cost of not being officially recognised, which Taito-sensei also mentions at the beginning of our interview, the students could not just do 'whatever they want.' They were still affiliated with Waseda University after all.

As with my observation of the wide range of behaviours which constituted the experiences of sexual violence or harassment in the handbook, Taito-sensei described the definitions as being very broad. But she also provided another instance where the students' choice of content did not match the university's wishes.

[From my notes]

“It’s more like harassment things to violence things... Sexual assault as well. So, it’s very broad definition of *seibōryoku*.... And, also, this one, ‘*sensei kara tsukiatte hoshi to iwareta*’ [teacher had said that they want to date]. That was the thing that the university didn’t want to be noted.”

She points at the first page following the handbook’s table of contents. The one which is emblazoned so clearly with the title ‘*soudaisei no koe*’ (Voices of Waseda University students). There was no doubt that these phrases were meant to be taken as being direct from the students themselves. There are five short examples of sexual violence, from people being touched and having their photos taken without consent on public transit to seniors in a university circle saying, ‘it’s tradition so drink alcohol and take your clothes off.’ And, of course, the one which Taito-sensei says was ‘the thing the university did not want to be noted.’

“But it made it.”

The words slip out because the phrase is somehow clear and unobtrusive.

Taito-sensei makes a sound of agreement.

“Yeah. They didn’t like it.”

At this point, I’m aware the handbook is not an ‘official’ Waseda booklet.

“But it’s not official. So, it’s okay.” It is a comment, but also a confirmation request.

“Yes, that’s true. It’s one example.” Another short response from Taito-sensei, conceding that, despite the controversy, the phrase remained and became an example of not just something that wasn’t there before and not just an alteration during the handbook’s creation. This was an incident of teachers also having inappropriate behaviour and relations with students.

Amidst the commentary of multiple faculty members at Waseda University about reactions to the consent handbook material collected within my fieldnotes and from interview transcripts, we must examine the harassment policies which already exist at the university. Like many higher education institutions in Japan, Waseda maintains an official set of guidelines for harassment prevention (*harasumento bōshi no gaidorain*). In both Japanese and English, the guidelines are outlined under the harassment prevention committee. A definition of harassment is included along with specific types of harassment, including sexual harassment, academic harassment, and power harassment. On the Student Affairs Section webpage, additional forms of harassment are added, including ‘alcohol harassment’ defined as violent and inappropriate behaviour while drinking, and ‘SOGI

harassment’ which is described as discriminatory words and actions based on sexual orientation or gender identity, whether they cause emotional or physical damage (Section, 2024). Harassment is defined by Waseda University as follows:

The term ‘harassment’ as used in these guidelines refers to any disadvantage or discomfort caused to another person, or any undermining of their dignity resulting from unfair discriminatory treatment or prejudicial words or actions relating to gender (*seibetsu*), sexual orientation (*seiteki shiko*), gender identity (*seijinjin*), race (*jinsu*), ethnicity (*esuninshiti*), nationality (*kokuseki*), creed (*shinjō*), age (*nenrei*), disability (*sawagai*), occupation (*shokugyō*), social status (*shakaiiteki mibun*), etc, or words or actions relating to attributes such as physical characteristics or broadly relating to overall character (Initiatives, 2024).

After descriptions of the broad categories of harassment, the guidelines page includes how the guidelines apply to faculty, staff and students at Waseda, advice on harassment complaints at the harassment consultation desk and the role of the Harassment Prevention Committee in investigating individual cases of harassment. The procedures indicate that members should take their complaints to the consultation desk before proceeding to more serious investigative matters handled by the committee. In the wording within the official guidelines:

The consultation desk will respect the feelings and intentions of the individual or individuals concerned, and work with them to find solutions. In addition, after consultation at the consultation desk, those who wish to may file a complaint with the Harassment Prevention Committee. The complaint filing system is designed to help victims of harassment. Through these consultation and complaint systems, the University will take prompt and appropriate action to remedy harm and resolve problems (*hongaku wa, korera no sōdan ya kujosarutate no seido wo toshite, higai no kyusai to mondaikaiketsu no tami ni jinsoku katsu tekisetsu ni taiōshimasu*) (Initiatives, 2024).

Therefore, the consultation desk acts as a source of advice to individuals before helping them to decide if the complaint should be filed with the committee via a web application form or e-mail.

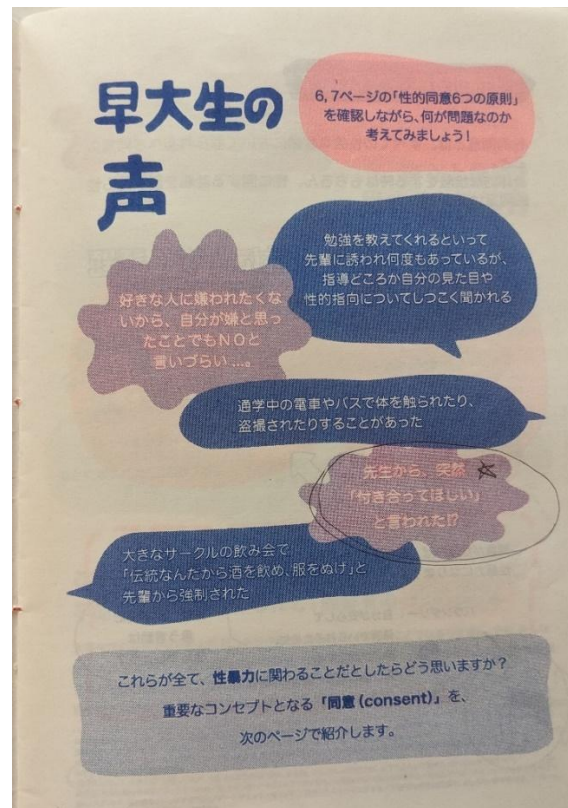


Figure 34: Page 3, first page after the contents, including quotes from various Waseda students (*sōdaisei no koe*).

Other faculty members familiar with the consent handbook pointed out sections of the material that they found significant or relevant to a broader conversation about consent education, sexuality, and gender equality—or the lack thereof—in contemporary Japanese society. Sada-sensei and Matsui-sensei, as well as members of the Gender Research Institute and part of the Faculty of Letters at Waseda, were especially emphatic about specific examples of university culture that they found outdated and often harmful.

Near the beginning of the sexual consent handbook are lists of two types of activities which require consent: physical or bodily contact (*shintaiteki na sesshoku*) and conversations related to sex (*sei ni kansuru wadai*), including ‘love talk’ (*koibana*) and ‘dirty jokes’ (*shimoneta*) (シヤベル et al., 2022, 3). The physical contact examples include actions such as kissing, hugging, holding hands, and sexual intercourse, but also putting

arms around someone's shoulders, like when singing 'Konpeki no Sora' (or 'Azure Skies') (see Figure 35).

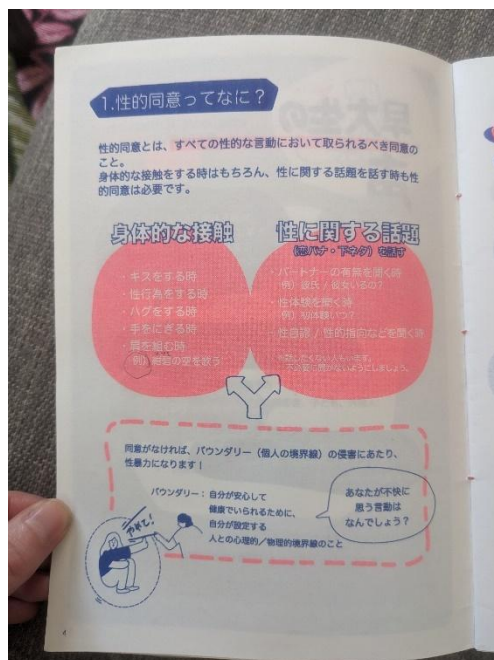


Figure 35: Explanation of words and actions which require consent, including an example of the 'Konpeki no Sora' tradition under the physical contact section on the left. It reads 'kata wo kumu toki (konpeki no sora wo utau)' 'when putting arms around eac

The professors enquired whether I had experienced a *sotsugyōshiki* (graduation ceremony) at Waseda and whether I had sung 'Waseda... Waseda...' I replied that I had when I was an exchange student. However, I later confirmed that it was not 'Konpeki no Sora' I had sung, which was the school song and anthem adopted in 1929, but an even older song composed in 1908 called 'Miyako no Seihoku' (or 'Northwest of the City').

[From my notes]

Matsui-sensei launches into her comment after I confirm I had heard at least one of these songs: "So before the pandemic, they were doing all this together without consent, hugging each other. That's the way they do."

Sada-sensei agrees.

"Yeah. So, students are very aware of that kind of sexual... not sexual, but of the body contact. 'Konpeki no Sora', you know, is the name of the school song."

"And then there was one issue that the university did not like...", Matsui-sensei adds, eagerly launching off her colleague's comment. "Yeah, I remember right, that there it is,

because this is very, very bastardised, kind of the... the cultural representation, and they love it. So, they do not want to stop hugging.”

I listen closely, also eager to hear the women’s take on the culture around school songs at Waseda. I had witnessed some people ‘hugging’, putting their arms around their peers as they sang, but had not been involved myself when I attended my *sotsugyōshiki*, which was also largely attended by international students.

“They were basically going like, ‘no, we want to keep the tradition’,” I attempt to confirm.

“That’s right...because Waseda is proud of its very masculine identity,” Sada-sensei replies.

Matsui-sensei also nods. “We are so proud of their homosociality [...] The basic idea is that they’re [Tanaka-socho’s] willing to have the evidence-based diversity, but their committee members are only male, except for one woman. So, it’s really restricted diversity. That’s what I understand. So, what I’m saying, it is homosociality.... These members of the university show their homosociality.”

Diversity and Inclusion at Waseda University

An initial meeting with Sawada-sensei continued with a series of comments about the culture at Waseda around not just projects like the sexual consent handbooks I was interested in but also around other issues of diversity and inclusion (D and I) which have become a visible concern in Japan over the past decade (Yonezawa, 2023). For Sawada-sensei, who was the former Director of the Student Diversity Centre, and other faculty members like Aoyama-sensei, concerns about diversity on campus in terms of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity and economic background were at the forefront of their minds. It was events such as the Waseda Vision 150 Student Competition in March 2015 which were a turning point (see Figure 36). A proposal titled ‘Japan’s First LGBT Student Centre at Waseda’ won the President’s Award and led to the establishment of the Gender and Sexuality Centre in April 2017. The Student Diversity Centre (SDC) was also established around this time to include the GS Centre, the already existing Intercultural Communication Centre and the Office for Students with Disabilities (in December 2023,

this was renamed the Accessibility Resource Centre).⁸ The timing and increased focus on diversity, inclusion and equality at universities like Waseda mirrored in many ways the government actions made earlier (see Figures 37 and 38).



Figure 36: Official website of the Waseda Vision 150 Student Competition. The student proposal for the LGBTQ centre won the President's Award the third year the competition ran.

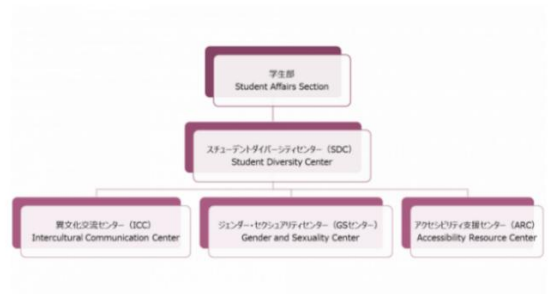


Figure 37: Diagram depicting the structure of diversity-aligned centres at Waseda University.

⁸ Over the course of my fieldwork, the student proposal which won the competition and led to the GS Center was mentioned several times by both students and faculty. It matched information on Waseda websites such as Support Anywhere (https://wnpspt.waseda.jp/student_en/supportanywhere/2021/07/27/diversity/). Later, student members of the handbook team shared that it was the success of the GS Center proposal which motivated them to put in their Autumn 2021 petition for sexual consent workshops and education on Waseda campuses.



Figure 38: Mission statement of GS Centre (English version).

To confront a variety of social and economic issues, such as women’s employment and support for people with disabilities, the Japanese government issued the Japan Revitalisation Strategy in 2013 to “promote a diverse workplace for women and to increase employment opportunities for the elderly” (Alcantara and Shinohara, 2023, 6). One of the defining features—and greatest weaknesses—of Japanese university education from the 1990s was slow progress on internationalisation (Breaden and Goodman, 2023, 20). However, private university programmes did push for greater diversity, inclusion, and internationalisation before government schemes became more widespread. Even in the 2010s and 2020s:

Government support has been focused overwhelmingly on the elite institutions, supported by flagship funding schemes such as Global 30 and the Top Global University project which are designed to raise the standing of Japanese higher education internationally and to aid the cultivation of elite talent (Breaden 2018 in Braden and Goodman 2023, 164).

Such a focus on elite private universities, which score high on the *hensachi* score index, undoubtedly means the move towards internationalisation is uneven (Goodman and Oka, 2018, 593-594). Where there are universities whose international student populations and resources have increased exponentially, there remain institutions that have no international

students (Goodman, 2008, 18-19, Goodman, 2010, 81-82, Yonezawa, 2023, 233-234). And D and I initiatives have not yet solved adjacent issues of uneven gender distribution across departments and a lack of protection for SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity) minorities.

Sawada-sensei's change of roles seemed recent, and it was with a regretful expression and multiple apologies that he shared he was no longer the director. Though there was a lingering sensation in my mind that the setting and topic, as well as our separate positionalities, transformed this in-person coffee shop meeting into a moment for confession and an airing of complaints about how Waseda does things. One memorable example was when Sawada-sensei elaborated that, within the past couple of years, a student had complained to the Waseda administration about the way gender is broken down by exact figures from department to department.

The student reported that this could lead to 'outing'. During a course, if the number of male students and female students changed by say 'one', people could realise that a student had transitioned. This apparently would be more evident and a greater concern with graduate departments than undergraduate schools, as some of the graduate student programmes at Waseda are very small. Published statistics on the university website confirm that out of thirteen undergraduate schools and twenty-three graduate schools, in 2023, there were 38, 776 undergraduate students and 8, 490 graduate students.

In recent years, Waseda has had an 'outing' incident among the students, which caused a fair amount of trepidation and worried students, staff, and faculty alike. This 'fear of being outed' was later echoed in some of the conversations I had with the Gender and Sexuality Centre staff and students. One of the specialist counselling staff at the GS Centre, Akemi-san, explained to me that outside of the centre and its organised events,

staff members would avoid greeting LGBTQ+ students who visited, even if they saw them around campus. This, she assured me, was to prevent any accidental ‘outing’ in case, even with friends, that individual student was not ‘out of the closet’. Even without a wealth of points of comparison to other similar LGBTQ+ centres in different countries, this cautious attitude and attention to student circumstances took me by surprise. And these two separate conversations presented two important pieces of a larger puzzle: the broad scale of minority student group concerns, in the case of the gender statistics for university departments, and the narrow, individual-level efforts made to assuage student anxieties.

The backdrop to both these cases of possible ‘outing’ on Waseda University campuses involves the mixed attitudes towards and few official policies about anti-discrimination based on SOGI. As described earlier in this chapter, Waseda has recently added SOGI harassment under their examples of harassment on the Student Affairs Section webpages. Even when compared to other Asian countries, Japan stands out for its lack of legalisation of SOGI policies, which protect the rights of LGBT individuals—legalising same-sex sexual activity and same-sex marriage considered in this instance as important indicators of shifts in cultural attitudes. Despite ranking highly in terms of GDP and international visitor proportion, Japan has yet to legalise SOGI policies. This gap persists despite Japan having no religious tradition of barring acceptance of such legalisation. However, the opposition of religious right-wing organisations, like the Unification Church (*Tōitsu Kyōkai*) lends an additional dimension to this discussion, which will be examined briefly in the following pages.

Takashino and Keeni suggest that “with a legalisation score of 1, the non-legalisation of SOGI policies in Japan may be attributed to the strong belief in the traditional and patriarchal concept of a family by the ageing population of the society,” as well as “the government’s fear of its impact on the natality rate of the country” (Takashino

and Keeni, 2023, 52). Also impacted by the ageing of Japanese society is “the decrease in the youth population [which] has also led to a shrinking domestic talent pool” and “the government is trying to increase the enrolment of female students in the fields of science and technology, as well as to recover and further increase the enrolment of international students”(Yonezawa, 2023, 233).

Japanese awareness of the diversity of gender and sexual identity possibilities, in addition to having traditional practices of cross-dressing and gender-bending, may have shifted. At least, as Sabine Frühstück states, “ The first two decades of the twenty-first century seem marked by a somewhat smaller but visibly increasing presence of other LGBTQI+ subcommunities,” which includes having openly transgender people in public offices and more self-help or counselling services available to the broader public (2020, 79). SOGI and LGBTQ+ issues are still tackled unevenly, as the Gender Identity Disorder Act (or GID Act) proves, which requires transgender people to undergo full sex change surgery to have their gender legally registered in their family registry (*koseki*)—a significant barrier to individuals who do not have the resources or time to have this surgery (Frühstück, 2020, 80, Yamada, 2022). Frühstück and Yamada similarly argue that the medical requirement for legitimisation pathologises transgender people, as well as creating divisions and ‘othering’ groups within the LGBTQ+ community.⁹ Frühstück uses the term “highly stratified LGBTQI+ community” to great effect to describe:

Some groups have created specifically designated semi-public spaces that provide for a certain level of ‘being out’ while also protecting from the ignorance and scorn of mainstream society, a majority of which has yet to accommodate a multitude of sexes, genders, and sexualities (2020, 80).

⁹ The nuances of recognising, legitimising, and judging within the LGBTQ+ community are investigated at length in the fifth chapter, focusing on transphobia and gender critical feminism in Japanese online and offline spaces. Frühstück and Yamada’s comments are further expanded upon and framed by transphobic comments of an ousted Chabujo member.

Sawada-sensei explained that SE is very underdeveloped in Japan and that there has not been much discussion about it in the past decade. For the most part, this lined up with what papers and articles written both in Japanese and English had to say about SE's history in Japan—the early 2000s backlash against methods of SE taught across schools seemed to have been one of the more recent 'scandals' about sex and sexuality in the Japanese media which directly had to do with SE curriculum (Kawasaka, 2023, Shimizu, 2020, Yamaguchi, 2018). When it comes to other sex scandals, there is a wealth of stories which have caught the attention of and have been sensationalised by journalists.

According to Sawada-sensei, in the past decade, from around 2012/2013 to 2022/2023, SE had not been an important *political* issue, such as the discussion about whether a married woman can choose to keep her maiden name (typically known as the 'family name') or not. The emphasis added on 'political' is my own because throughout our chat, I sensed that Sawada-sensei paid more attention to political or legal discussions related to gender and sexuality. Sawada-sensei does specialise in history and law, so this shaped the direction of our conversation. But perhaps there is an overarching, pervasive idea in higher education institutions that the political is more official or legitimate than the 'social/cultural.' This is what Sawada-sensei implied as we conversed.

Regardless of the weight Sawada-sensei himself assigned to the difference between an important or unimportant issue, he expressed a strong belief in the connection between a lack of SE and Japanese students being 'naïve' as a result. He explained that some students may not know anything until university, when they are suddenly introduced to drinking, sex, and other aspects of adult life that they did not experience in high school. I did not loudly contest this 'myth' of ignorant university students, even though many friends and classmates from my first time as an exchange student in Tokyo certainly knew more than faculty members believed. But there was something to be said about the sources

of sexual knowledge and the comprehensiveness of it. And it was difficult *not* to nod and make a sympathetic sound when Sawada-sensei said that male students were doing “all sorts of dumb things on campus.” Without elaborating on what those ‘dumb things’ were, I was left to imagine they could be anything from awkwardly making out with a partner on campus to groping a younger student during a club meeting.

What was included in ‘dumb things’ for male students? Where did female students fit into this general complaint? Was it only ‘dumb’ if the students in question were ‘caught’? And were there ever meaningful consequences for an activity, even a coerced sexual activity, if even well-meaning, highly educated faculty members considered it a ‘dumb thing’?

During one of my conversations with Akemi-san, a specialist staff member at the GS Centre, she suggested multiple websites, organisations, and events which might be relevant to my research. This included Girl Up, an international rights organisation promoting SE for young women; #nandenaino, the GS Centre’s blog through the platform Note, which student staff posted on; and an upcoming seminar with guest speaker Sakai Hiromi on SRHR, titled ‘*Neta ko wo okose! Ima hajimeru, otona no seikyōiku*’ (“Wake the sleeping child! Start now, adult sex education). I did end up attending the latter online, taking notes about the content, particularly on what the speaker spent the most time on, which was defining the terms of SOGIE, reproductive health, abortion, STIs, and domestic violence (DV). At the very end was a mention of sexual consent, communication, and private zones, which, according to the presenter’s materials, ‘even children can understand.’

The title of the seminar was likely both a reference and a response to the phrase ‘*nemureru ko wo okosu mono de aru*’ (an issue which wakes sleeping children), which has

been used since the 1940s to argue against teaching sex education to children. This was an issue related to the development of morality or ‘purity’ education (*junketsu kyōiku*) in Japan at the time. Some scholars argue that the concept of ‘*nemureru ko wo okosu de aru*’ is still core to the Monbusho’s ‘master narrative.’

Castro-Vazquez and Kishi write: “In 1949, Monbusho prepared some textbooks with illustrations of the sexual organs, but teachers opposed its use. They argued that there was no need to teach children, because, somehow, they would learn later”(2002, 466). Older accounts of Monbusho sex education materials and teachers’ reactions to delivering the materials are still relevant if current guest speakers invoke the older phrase, reversing it to ‘*neta ko wo okose*’ (wake the sleeping child). This reversal argues for new developments in teaching sex education in Japan by proactively teaching concepts like SOGIE, DV, and consent, not just the biological components necessary for family planning and protecting against STIs (Nishioka, 2018). After surveying 65 students at a nursing science university, Shinomiya discussed the content of sexuality education and noted gaps in the categories identified. They suggest a greater focus on comprehensive sexuality education:

Future health education for university students regarding sexuality education should not only acquire knowledge about sexuality, but also include attitudes, values, and the nature of relationships, and should include the right to self-determination (*sei ni kansuru chishiki wo shūtoku suru dake de naku, taido ya kachikan, kankeisei no arikata nado wo fukumete*), [as well as] gender equality, respect for sexual diversity and the need for healthy behaviours to prevent unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS (Shinomiya et al., 2018, 69).

In the past decade, sex, or sexuality education (SE) in Japan has been undergoing a variety of changes both due to the introduction of new reference materials through the Monbusho website and thanks to the use of online teaching formats which can make it easier for students and teachers to discuss such sensitive issues. (Rintaro, 2022, Sato et al., 2022, Sato et al., 2021, Nagamatsu et al., 2021).

Murayama-sensei, the senior faculty member who was the first point of contact for Shikano-san and other student members of the sexual consent handbook team, also believed SE was insufficiently addressed in Japanese curricula. She connected it to several broader historical and cultural shifts, including gender bashing and backlash, the rise of the religious right, and conservative responses to the so-called ‘radical’ teaching of sex.

Japan is really behind in sex education (*nihon wa hontō ni seikyōiku ni okureteru node*)... there was a movement in the 80s and 90s but it was gender bashing . You may have heard about it, but it was the religious right, or rather, it’s not a religion but the Unification Church (*Tōitsu Kyōkai*). Really conservative people, how should I put it, said that teaching about sex was somehow radical. So, they didn’t know anything, and when they became university students, that kind of thing was suddenly opened, that kind of environment (*pātto akarechautte iu kana, kankyō ga*). So, they became victims, and in the worst cases, the perpetrators had to be stopped (*dakara hontō ni higaisha ni nacchautari, hidoi keesu wa mou kagaisha no kata ga ne*). I want to prevent that somehow because neither boys nor girls have received proper sex education.

In our interview, she mentioned conservative institutions, like the Unification Church, that played a role in controlling and even censoring the development of comprehensive sex education in Japanese schools.¹⁰ Considering that the Unification Church has been reported to have ties with the current ruling party, the LDP, especially during former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s terms, there appears to be a continuous and persistent trend of conservatism preventing SE reform as well as anti-discrimination laws for sexual minority groups. Tomomi Yamaguchi (2022) discusses in detail how the Unification Church’s influence and the Abe administration’s close ties with the organisation had a significant impact on Japanese policy regarding gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights. Following the end of the Cold War, the organisation shifted focus to family values, which “meant a renewed attention to issues of gender and sexuality, such as blocking the introduction of separate surnames for married spouses, attacking sex education in schools, and resisting

¹⁰ Murayama-sensei used the older name for the organisation, Unification Church, or *Tōitsu Kyōkai*, despite the group’s application for a name change to Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, or *Katei Rengō*, finally being accepted in 2015 (Yamaguchi 2022, 22). Because my interlocutors, news sources, and other scholars still use the organisation’s previous name, I will likewise refer to it as the Unification Church.

legalisation of same-sex marriage and partnerships”(Yamaguchi, 2022, 22). Asahina’s interviewees’ “assertion that politics has done little to change society reflects the particular political trajectory of Japan... for the last 65 years, party politics has been largely dominated by the conservative party of the LDP” (Asahina, 2021, 724).

The influence of the ruling LDP government has also had undeniable effects on feminist and gender activists, resulting in the ‘gender bashing’ that Murayama-sensei mentions. Particularly on social media platforms:

...Some have started to argue that they have no choice but to support the LDP and moral conservative’s view as more agreeable to ‘ordinary women’” and “some even go as far as to argue that ‘gender backlash’ in the noughties was justifiable, for they have come to the understanding that the concept of ‘gender’ actually is, just as the LDP ‘Project team’ put it, a mere ideological device without a clear definition (Shimizu, 2020, 102).

During the anti-feminist backlash in the early 2000s, the Unification Church’s leadership was particularly anti-LGBTQ+ and attempted alongside the organisation *Sekai Nippō* “to block the passage of a local gender equality ordinance in Miyakonojo City, Miyazaki Prefecture in 2003 specifically due to the inclusion of the language of ‘sexual orientation’”(Yamaguchi, 2022, 23). The Church’s resistance continued in 2015 when it attempted to block the “so-called ‘Partnership Ordinance’ of Shibuya, which for the first time introduced same-sex partnership certificates (for residents of the ward)”, which, according to Yamaguchi’s interview with the Church PR representatives, was apparently of a greater threat because the Unification Church’s Japanese headquarters is in Shibuya Ward. (2022, 23). These alliances between moral conservatives and anti-LGBTQ+ proponents, particularly those voicing anti-trans or gender-critical feminist rhetorics, also contributed to anti-gender equality politics.

As Kawasaka describes:

Just before abandoning the LGBT Equality Act, the same social conservative group in the LDP opposed and politically ‘postponed’ a marriage reform, which allowed a couple to choose different family names. Thus, the ultra-conservatives are tactically opposing

socially liberal policies in general while inflaming anxiety and fear over social changes including the marriage system and LGBTIQ rights (2023, 196-197).

The passive or ambivalent support of the ruling party in Japan has not been overturned by social movements, protests or demonstrations for long. This is partly due to the “violent terrorism such as lynching, killing and bombing that sentenced an end to the left-wing protest cycles of the 1960s and 1970s” and which “remained as a collective trauma and forever tarnished the images of social movement activities”(Asahina, 2021, 724).

SEALDs, in their efforts to get coverage and support through mainstream media channels, also faced concerns over their political mobilisation of youth. The President of Hosei University, Professor Yuko Tanaka, spoke about the anti-Anpo protests of the 1960s and 1970s, where the movement had split into various factions focused on internal issues and interests, attributing “the breakdown to extremism and violence that had caused people to lose faith in student movements generally” rather than “the post-war economic boom making people apathetic”(O'Day et al., 2018, 184). The history of social movements and organisations, as well as student protests, has not been forgotten and may have given pause to unanimous support by Waseda faculty and staff for the student-led sexual consent project.

It is not unusual to hear about harassment incidents involving teachers and students at Japanese universities, or universities. Most of the incidents of sexual violence at universities, which are covered by the mass media, involve a teacher or professor and a student. Waseda University also has a track record of faculty members abusing their positions of authority in exchange for sexual favours. One of the more recent cases was a former Waseda professor, Watanabe Naomi, who was dismissed from the university after he sexually harassed a student by asking to have dinner together just the two of them and saying ‘I’ll make you my woman’ (*ore no onna ni shiteyaru*)(Tanaka, 2024, Tanaka, 2023). This sexual harassment case was first reported by the Asahi Shinbun in 2018, before my

fieldwork in Japan. Since then, in 2023 and 2024, the Tokyo High Court has declared and increased the damages the former Waseda professor was required to pay. The case ended in the professor being ordered to pay 550,000 yen in damages to the student for the sexual harassment. However, the most infamous case of sexual indecency associated with Waseda was the existence of the club, Super Free, in which many of its members committed sexual assault, which I'll describe in more detail below.

These sorts of references to various sexual scandals that students, usually male, get up to during their university years recall not only the more recent 2019 cases of sexual assault by Keio University students but also the older incident of the Waseda circle called 'Super Free'. The social circle started in 2001 by Waseda student Shinichiro Wada promoted rave parties packed with young women which often turned into drunken gang rapes. (West, 2007b, 144). Mark West (2007) discusses Super Free as an example of a sexual scandal desecrating higher education in Japan which, "is seen as a kind of sacred ground on which professors, teachers, and the institutions that house them and perpetuate the status hierarchy are worthy of respect" (2007b, 144). It is particularly embarrassing for universities and indeed a blow to their reputation when a scandal like that of Super Free becomes the target of widespread media attention. "The scandal became a public one for the university... the Super Free manual stated that one of the best pick-up lines was '[T]his party is organised by a Waseda University student circle'" (West, 2007b, 144).

Super Free's identification with the university led to Waseda's president issuing a formal apology for the actions of these students and Wada receiving a fourteen-year prison sentence. Significantly, West notes in his summary that the Super Free scandal followed a "basic pattern of accusation, arrest, and university apology," further solidifying that Waseda is not unique in how it handles incidents which besmirch its reputation (2007b, 144).

The notion of a ‘degreeocracy’ (*gakureki shakai*) mentioned by West (2007) in the context of educational institution-related scandals, including how a university’s position in the hierarchy is assigned through *jūken* and comparative *hensachi* ratings, is likewise important to understanding Waseda’s reactions to projects related to sexual consent. (Breaden and Goodman, 2023, 15-16, Goodman and Oka, 2018, 582). In Japan, the prestige of the institution, individual status, and the degree of misdoing are all factors which may elevate a ‘dumb thing’ that students do while experiencing youth to an actual scandal. Super Free remains one of the most infamous, which older informants referenced. Notably, younger informants switched to discussing the scandal involving Johnny Kitagawa, founder of the Johnny and Associates talent agency, and his regular sexual abuse of the young men under his care (see Osawa, 2023, 1-2, Khalil, 2023). Multiple people I spoke with either used Super Free or Johnny Kitagawa as an example of nonconsensual sex, sexual violence and rape. Every institution has its scandals, and higher education is not exempt from them.

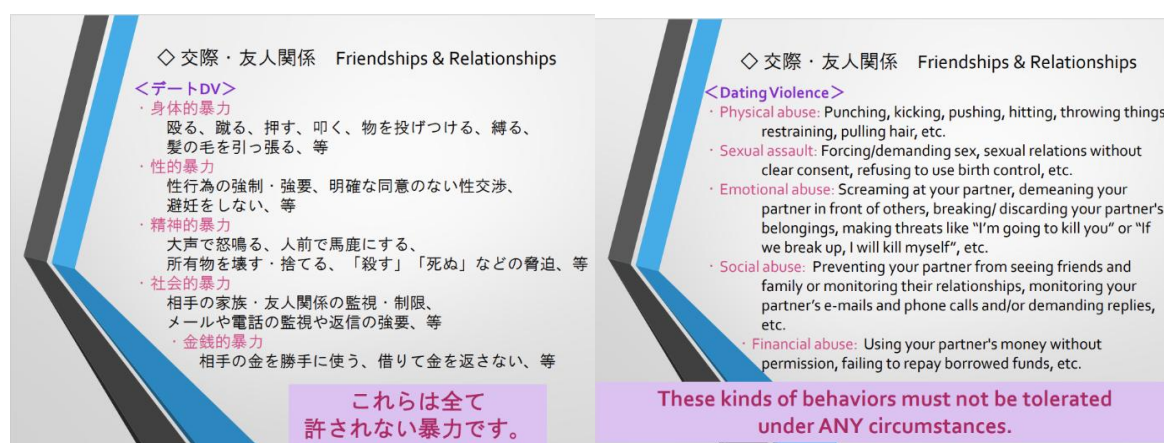


Figure 39: Japanese and English versions of University B orientation slides.

Later in my fieldwork, I made connections with researchers and administrative staff at other Japanese universities, including in other regions like Kansai and Kyushu. An administrative staff member working in Kyushu within a university Office for Student

Affairs was kind enough to not only share the slides for their sexual consent and relationship orientation talks but also had a remote interview with me. This helped me gauge how typical or exceptional the Waseda case might be, especially considering the very different demographics of students attending a small university in Kyushu versus a prestigious private university in central Tokyo. At the request of the members of this university, I will keep its identity anonymous and refer to it by the general region, Kyushu, or University B. I have included pictures of the orientation content shared with me, which highlight cases and examples of building relationships based on consent (see Figure 40 and 41).

[From my notes]

I briefly looked over the material before entering the Zoom call with the staff member, Inoue-san.¹¹ And eventually brought up the contents of the slides:

“Thank you again for the orientation content that you all made. I was wondering if it was all from [University B] cases and examples of student experiences or if you also researched what other organisations or universities were doing?”

“These are from our students’ real cases, unfortunately.” Inoue-san makes an apologetic smile and laughs softly. Although she appears slightly embarrassed by this, she also speaks with familiarity, even confidence, about what is occurring at the university.

“The movie one... the movie case, you know, they will be watching a movie together and one person will start to touch the other one, but that’s not only once several cases. But DV, dating violence, information, what’s the definition of DV, that comes from other sources... Cases our ours. But we had some, as I told you before like a Japanese student had a problem. So, we did a special lecture on the particular group.”

Inoue-san narrates further:

“It’s still happening recently. So now, I think that we want to empower the female student. But, you know, recently we heard not all the students are reporting sexual violence. So, I want to tell everyone that not having sexual consent can be a crime and all the students [...] should report and stand up for it... I want to send a strong message to the community. So, kind of thinking about what we can do about it at the moment.”

She continued to explain the process of reporting cases and counselling for students who visit the Office for Student Affairs. The two main options were to conduct interviews and

¹¹ As with the rest of my interlocutors, ‘Inoue-san’ is a pseudonym, intended to further protect individual identities. University B, Inoue-san’s affiliation, is the only case where the university name has been anonymised upon request of the institution’s members.

navigate the ‘university punishment system’, as well as to introduce the victim to the university counsellor, where they could separately and anonymously discuss their experiences. Inoue-san mentioned that they did not recommend students go to the police because ‘going to the police is not easy’ and the ‘Japanese policy is you’re not ready for this kind of issue.’ The lack of resources and services for survivors of sexual assault and abuse is evident in Inoue-san’s advice for students not to report their experiences to the police for fear they will not be taken seriously. This is partly due to perceptions that they are not yet mature or adult enough to provide a credible account, which is incredibly damaging considering an online NHK survey on sexual violence found that “74.6% of victims were under 20 years old” (Osawa, 2023, 5-6). Additionally, data from the questionnaire revealed that revictimization of individuals who sought help was extremely common, with 23.5% being told it was ‘no big deal’ or a ‘common occurrence,’ and “of those who went to the police, in only 10% of these cases was the perpetrator found guilty, just 1% of the total number”(Osawa, 2023, 6).

So, we explained that but if student still wishes to go then we support them... So, they tend to come to our office first. Or do not tell anyone or only tell the students. They do not do anything. Usually, it’s come to our office or sometimes the other is they confess the problem with professor and professor reports to us.

An element of my conversation with Inoue-san which was distinct from talks with Waseda faculty members and staff related to student reporting of sexual violence and counselling services in general, was her emphasis on international students coming to University B ‘carrying their cultural norms’ and finding their community at the university. Inoue-san said that it depended on how big their community, often based on nationality, culture, and religious background was, because there was a subtle (*bimyō*, Inoue-san inserted) balance between being too big to get to know everyone and being small enough to know each other—and also for word to get around if a student was involved in a case of sexual assault, for instance.

This was a very nuanced complication which Inoue-san had observed in the diverse student body of University B where many international students with different understandings of physical relationships between genders observed and upheld cultural practices. It often resulted in, as Inoue-san phrased it, ‘gender discrimination’ and cases of, especially involving female students, not feeling comfortable speaking about sexual harassment or assault. In addition to Japanese policies and attitudes cultivating an environment of shaming and silencing survivors of sexual violence, University B also contended with having to educate students with their cultural conceptions of what is appropriate behaviour.



◇ 交際・友人関係 Friendships & Relationships

ケース/Case:

AとBは友人である。
 何度か二人だけで出かけたことがある。
 今日は二人でBの部屋で映画を見ることにした。
 部屋を暗くして映画を見始めた。
 映画がはじまってしばらくし、AはBの体を触り始めた。

A and B are friends.
 They sometimes go places together and hang out.
 They decided to watch a movie together in B's room.
 They turned out the lights and started watching the movie.
 Soon after the movie started, A started to touch B's body.

これ、許されますか？
 恋人同士だったら大丈夫ですか？
 Is this acceptable?
 If they are in a relationship, is this okay?

いいえ
 NO

Figure 40: Friendships and Relationships, consent orientation content for university students (provided by University B).

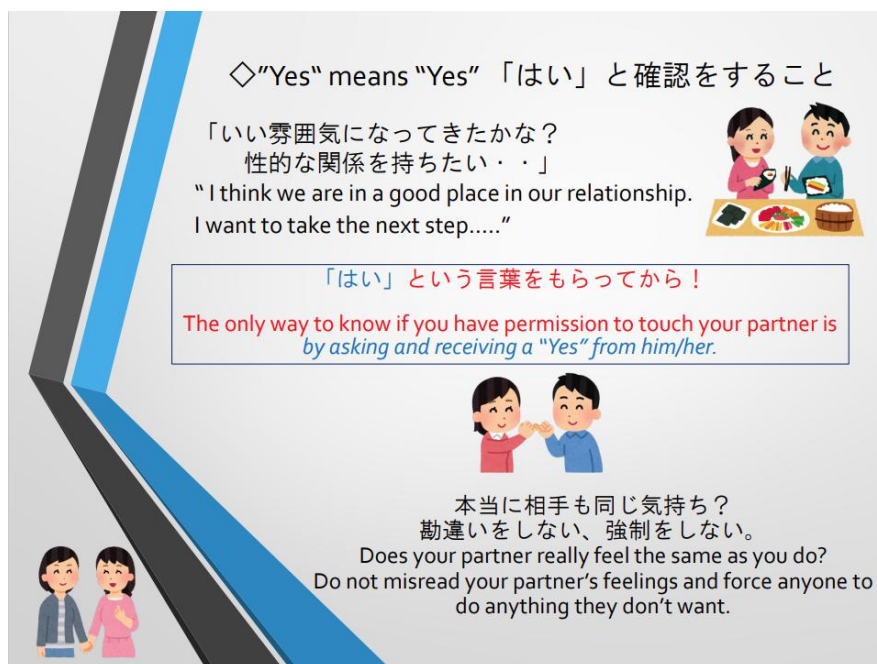


Figure 41: "Yes" means "Yes", a scenario explaining the importance of communicating with a partner (provided by University B).

A Lack of Diversity, Finding the 'Waseda Spirit'

Aoyama-sensei cut a warm and approachable figure, with glasses perched on his nose above a usually smiling mouth. He was not as directly involved with the sexual consent project or handbook team as individuals from the Waseda Gender Research Institute, but he regularly ran an English-language zemi for third- and fourth-year students, some of whom went on to become members of the sexual consent handbook team. This seminar lasted the entire academic year, across three semesters, and usually comprised only 20 students, so Aoyama-sensei got to know each of the students incredibly well. The focus of his zemi was on topics related to diversity and social issues in Japan and abroad, though students could research and give a presentation on any specific area that interested them. Other than this *zemi* (seminar-style class), Aoyama-sensei was focused on student support and was a diversity committee member. Based on the roles he played at the university, I quickly began to see why he was appointed as the new Director of Student Diversity.

With a deep interest in law, especially as it concerned the rights of minority groups, Aoyama-sensei was the first and only faculty member I spoke to who emphasised the role

of class and socioeconomic background at Waseda University. This emerged from comparisons with his work as a professor in Akita and descriptions of how different student bodies were across regions in Japan. He was critical of the local diversity represented at Waseda, explaining to me the breakdown of background as well as the cost of tuition:

So, in Akita, there is more diversity [...] in terms of students coming from Japan. So, in terms of regions, many are from the Tohoku area, including Akita. Whereas if you came to Waseda it's 70% from Tokyo, Chiba, Saitama, and Kanagawa. I would almost say that Waseda is a local... like a Kanto university. We do not have students from across town as much as we should. And then part of the reason also is I think socioeconomic background and the competitive *jūken*. Relatively well-to-do students, a concentration of students who are on the more privileged side of the socioeconomic scale.

Observing this contrast in student demographics spurred Aoyama-sensei to take the students of his *zemi* to Akita and experience local diversity for themselves. Supporting Aoyama-sensei's description, I mentioned my own experience of speaking to friends who attended other Japanese universities or worked various jobs in the Kanto area and how their reaction to my affiliation with Waseda was usually one of impressed awe. They spoke about Waseda University as an elite educational institution, including one with difficult *jūken*, high tuition, and a high concentration of international students.

Aoyama-sensei did not seem surprised to hear this, though he made a thoughtful sound, halfway to a sigh. The reaction of someone hearing a common misconception that they must correct once again.

We weren't supposed to be like that... Waseda at least has that DNA of being more accessible to..." Aoyama-sensei says. "[We were] different from Todai [abbreviation for University of Tokyo] and Keio. So Todai is like this national governing elite, and Keio would be like this financial elite. And Waseda would be like this grassroots kind of leadership. I think that had been our self-identity, but which we need to keep.

This retelling of the Waseda spirit, of *zaiya seishin* (or *yatō seishin*), set the tone for the rest of my interview with Aoyama-sensei. His demeanour became excited, even eager, as we chatted over how *zaiya seishin* still lingered in the actions of Waseda students today.

Among these Waseda students were the founding members of the sexual consent project. When I asked if these small student groups, including their founder, Shikano-san, were bringing back this almost intrinsic and spiritual quality of Waseda, Aoyama-sensei exclaimed: “Oh, they live the Waseda spirit! I think they should represent Waseda. Honestly, I’ll tell them ‘You represent the Waseda spirit’.”

When Aoyama-sensei added that having a social and national impact was also part of Waseda’s grassroots leadership, I asked for his opinion about the methods students were using now, curious about how he viewed this as compared to other faculty members I had spoken to.

“How do they [the methods] compare to grassroots activism from the past do you think? Is it working... to make a social national impact?”

Aoyama-sensei replies:

“You have this class-based ideology still dominating the grassroots movements, I think, and that doesn’t bode well with the current, I think, political and social climate, people do not have this image of classes struggling with each other. And diversity and inclusion itself have become more like a government buzzword also. And I think the students are doing a good job of kind of accommodating to what would work in today’s political and social environment of getting the message across to a wider body of students.”

Like the concerns voiced by Aoyama-sensei about the lack of rural students and students from outside Kanto attending Waseda, Toshitsugu Otake observed similar issues tackled by Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU), which is a private university located in Beppu City, Oita Prefecture. He describes how “a big wave of internationalisation and diversity had been coming due to a declining domestic enrolment resulting from Japan’s declining birthrate and ageing population” (Otake, 2023, 195). But it is an immense challenge to take how ‘diversity and inclusion’ may be a government buzzword and put it into practice in Japanese political, corporate, and educational areas. Otake uses the proportion of women holding leadership positions in all these domains as an example of how: “Diversity has

never been reflected in key spheres of Japanese society. The situation among faculty members and executives at APU is like that of Japanese society as a whole” (ibid).

Even at universities like APU and Waseda, who have made considerable efforts to internationalize and accommodate students and faculty from different countries and regions, those with disabilities and of different genders, are discovering that promoting D and I in practice and in spirit is a much longer, more arduous reality than a simplified buzzword or broad UN guidelines might indicate. The perceived ‘trendiness’ of ‘diversity and inclusion’ or SDGs or LGBTQ+ minority group rights means we should consider how individuals and groups can use term recognition to raise awareness for more specific issues.

In our interview, Aoyama-sensei elaborated on how students these days now work to negotiate with the university and the faculty to try as he phrased it: “to build a broader coalition to achieve their goals” and “in that way, they can have an impact on society by having a broader message [to appeal to the public].” In line with what I had been observing with Chabujo’s digital team and the Waseda sexual consent handbook team, Aoyama-sensei described these more collaborative, negotiation-dependent methods as a contrast from more conflict-driven movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Although this type of social activism can and has been described as more passive and less provocative than in past movements, Aoyama-sensei painted the students’ approach as a good thing, especially in the long term: “Yeah, like student perspective, instead of battling faculty, they would try to bring in faculty to their movement... You know, even with sexual consent, although Student Affairs will not say it’s officially endorsed, they still have their official handbook and all the information they released to students. They always have a message about sexual consent.”

Aoyama-sensei began reaching for both his laptop and for hard copies of the student handbooks, which are released each academic year to the new student cohort. He asked if I had seen the university web forum handbook as well as specific articles discussing the sexual consent handbook on *Waseda Weekly*, Waseda's official online student publication (see Figures 44 and 45). I had not seen the most recent handbook, as visiting researchers and fellows did not receive the physical copies when they arrived at Waseda. However, some of the *Waseda Weekly* pages Aoyama-sensei looked up on the spot were familiar, including discussions of the Chabujo consent handbook in October 2018 and then the Waseda student organised one in 2022.

Aoyama-sensei flipped through various versions of the student handbook to back up his earlier point about there being a continuous message of consent in Waseda's student materials, until he confirmed that a section called '*Daremo higaisha kigaisha naranai tame ni*' (For no one to become a victim or perpetrator) was first added to the 2020 version (Figure 42). The Student Affairs website also included this section, which placed a greater emphasis on preventing sexual harassment and violence on campus than on explaining consent. For consent awareness and education, there was a section of 'references' under which students may click on a download link for the student-produced (but not officially endorsed) consent handbook. Notably, this page has undergone updates since my fieldwork in 2022 and 2023, with more detailed sections on bystander intervention (*daisanshakainyū*), SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights), sexual violence types, sexual consent, and sexually transmitted diseases (*seikansenshō*) (Figure 43).

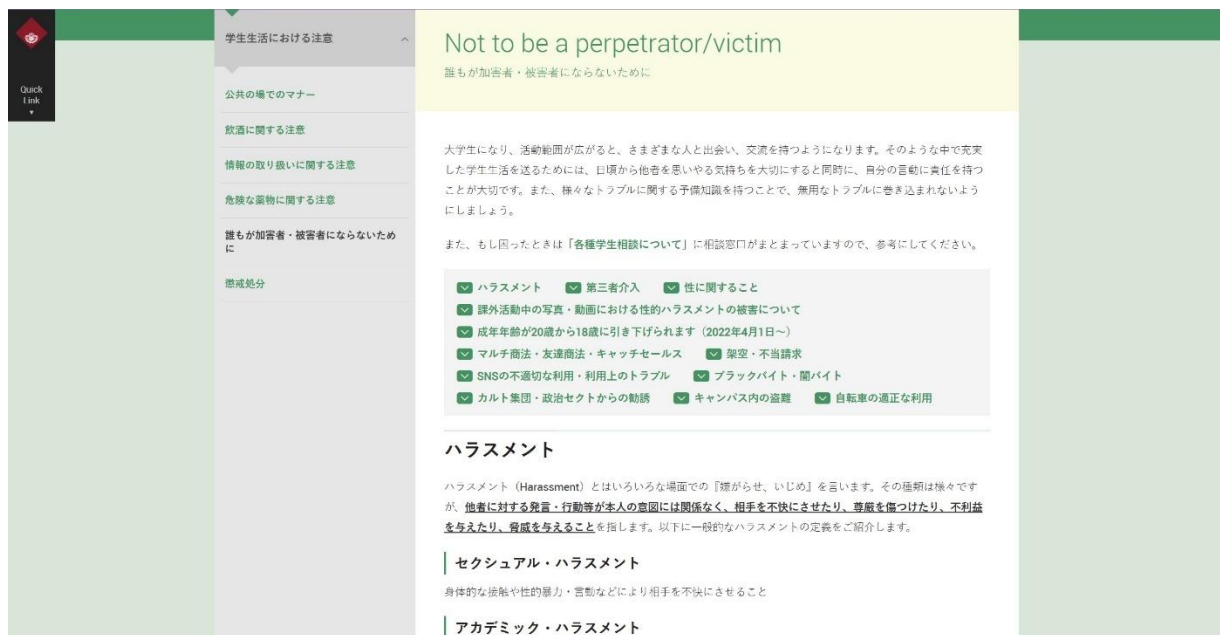


Figure 42: Not to be a perpetrator/victim article on Student Affairs Section webpage.

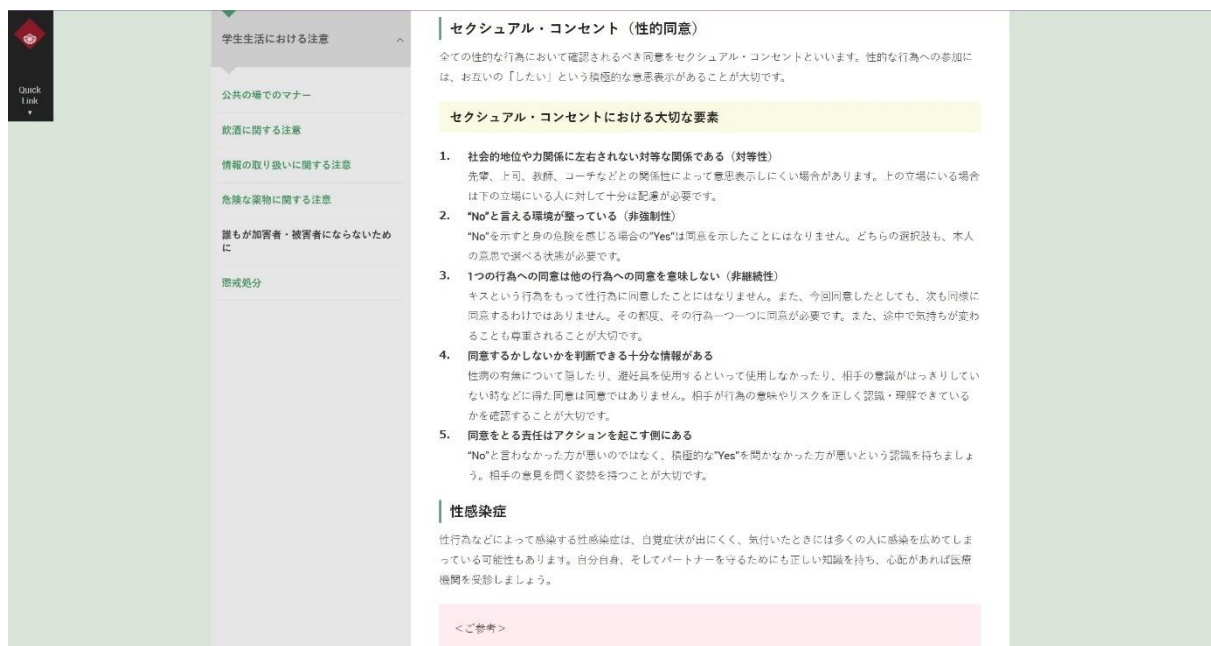


Figure 43: Inclusion of 'Principles of Sexual Consent' on updated webpage as of December 2024.



Figure 44: “Sexual violence that university students should think about now: Sexual consent to respect both yourself and your partner”: Waseda Weekly article discussing sexual violence and Chabujo’s activities. The article details the content of the Chabujo sexual consent handbook.

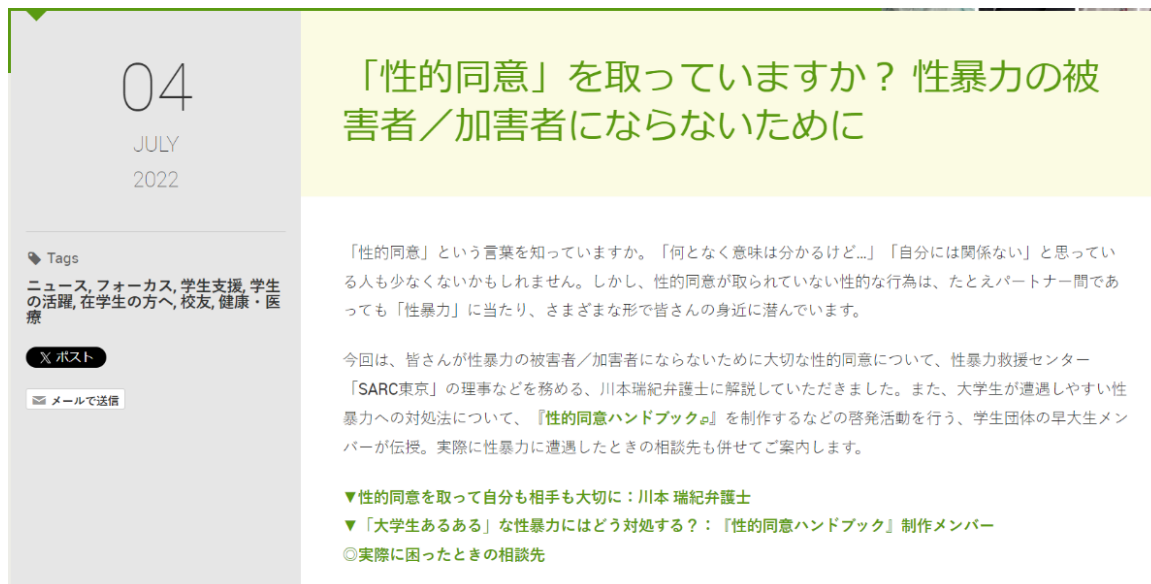


Figure 45: “‘Have you received sexual consent?’ How not to be a victim/perpetrator of sexual violence”: Waseda Weekly article which covers the activities of the Waseda sexual consent handbook team, including interviews with Voice Up Japan Waseda and Shaberu members.

My hesitation in agreeing with Aoyama-sensei that the student group had overarching support for the sexual consent project from university faculty must have shown through. Without much prompting, he further explained the administrative

processes that went into the sexual consent handbook, getting limited visibility. The student affairs department could not promote a single student organisation, as it would display a form of preferential treatment. Aoyama-sensei continued: “Being introduced at the official academic affairs deans’ meeting is itself quite significant. Not many things would make that agenda. So, it’s only once a month and for two hours basically.”

Overall, Aoyama-sensei seemed to believe that the students involved with diversity and inclusion-based projects at Waseda were doing important, even exceptional, work. We focused more specifically on students involved with the sexual consent handbook, but there was some overlap with the founding of the GS Centre and the student proposals, which spurred its official establishment at Waseda in 2015. And the rights of minority groups in Japanese society were both the interest of Aoyama-sensei and of the students who attended his zemi.

As we wrapped up our conversation, Aoyama-sensei extended an invitation to me to speak to his current zemi students about my research on sexual consent projects at Waseda and beyond. He insisted that it would be useful for his students because they were preparing to write dissertations, and due to my research content, which aligned with the themes of the zemi. This was not the first nor would it be the last time that, in a reciprocal exchange of time and knowledge, I agreed to present my topic, or even be interviewed myself, after taking the time to interview an interlocutor. These exchanges offered an invaluable opportunity to see how different groups of students or indeed other academics responded to the discussion of sexual consent campaigns by grassroots groups in Tokyo.

Activist Dialogues with Concepts of *Jōshiki* and *Futsū*

The notions of *jōshiki* (common sense) and *futsū* (ordinary/normal) pervade discussions around gender and sexuality. These are topics with which sexual consent projects are

inevitably intertwined. Where Lunsing (2001) researched common-sense narratives amid a variety of gay and lesbian groups, many in intimate relationships with one another, Ueno (2022) noted the refrain of having a '*futsū na seikatsu*' (normal lifestyle) among LGBTQ+ participants wishing to gain and keep a stable career, even if it meant hiding their non-heteronormative identity.

In the context of social movements and activism, Cassegard remarked how newer modes of demonstration and protest, which adopted majoritarian beliefs and branded themselves as by and for 'ordinary' people, helped the anti-nuclear movement post-2011 gain momentum. It also allowed for some disaffiliation and recovery from past violent protests in the 1960s and 1970s. These notions become concerns when discussed in the context of minority groups and contentious issues, including LGBTQ+ individuals, freeters, and 'returnees' (*kikokushijo*) who lived overseas before returning to live in Japan. An article by Shibuya Maki includes a section on the criticism returnees have made of what is considered '*jōshiki*' among Japanese middle school students (Shibuya, 2000).

Futsū and *jōshiki* are invoked in such discussions as what type of hat—fluffy hats, American baseball hats, hats for Japanese elementary school students and so on—are appropriate for school wear. There is no consensus on what *jōshiki* or *futsū* is, and one student says, "*Hito sorezore futsū ga chigau ja nai* (Everyone has a different normal)" (Shibuya, 2000, 118). The students' conversation continues to other forms of dress which may be acceptable or prohibited by their school and teachers, such as wearing the correct shoes or not dying their hair. A different student commented: "*Jōshiki. Seken no jōshiki. Jibun dewa naku* (Common sense. Society's common sense. Not mine)" (Shibuya, 2000, 118). The returnee students' distinction between their sense of 'normal' or definition of 'common sense' is fascinating and relevant to many social issues being discussed in Japan today.

In a group interview with faculty members affiliated with the Waseda University Gender Research Institute, the fragmentation of higher education institutions like Waseda was referenced by one of the professors most involved in promoting the sexual consent project, Matsui-sensei:

[From my notes]

“But in general, I think the university, I mean, all the universities are very slow in many aspects because we must have the agreement in *kyōjukai* [faculty meeting]. And then it takes very long...those meetings take place every month, or I should say even only once a month, so that if we could not reach an agreement, then next month... and then the university is really huge. So, even though the one faculty agreed on one thing, you must ask the other faculty committees as well. So, it takes longer than other smaller universities.”

Sada-sensei agrees with this assessment, even as the crease between her brow furrows further: “It takes a lot of time to change something, especially in university. But yeah, when I think about the sexual consent handbook, students will be graduating in four years or five years... But our discussion will take, you know, even longer than four years, I think... And then, you know, most of the active students will be graduating in a few years. And they’re not sure if they can, you know, recruit new active members or not. So that’s my concern right now, how we can keep this activity or project in the long run.”

I nod and murmur: “Yeah. Because it’s not mandatory to have this [the handbook].”

“Yeah, it’s not mandatory.”

“Did they put in a request to the university president? But that wasn’t approved... was it?” I ask, already having heard part of the story but not yet sure where faculty collaborators stood on their involvement with the petition.

“I think they sent an official letter to Tanaka Aji-socho. I think the president got a letter, but he didn’t do anything.”

“He didn’t respond?” The nature of the president’s response had been unclear—perhaps intentionally so—from the updates shared on SNS by the handbook team.

“I do not know. But yeah. Yeah, I heard from one student because the socho did not respond to the student. Some of the students went to his classes. You know? You know, after he finished his classes, students talked to him and gave him a letter.”

Matsui-sensei looks curiously towards Sada-sensei: “And no answer?”

“I do not know. Maybe no answer.”

Matsui-sensei thinks for a moment before suggesting: “Or maybe yes, I understand that he needs some time to think because I mean, he’s an official so it takes longer to answer back, but at least he needs to say something.”

“Yeah, I do not know...”

To some extent, the members involved in the sexual consent project were content to carry on their activities in the limited space of a single university campus with a handful of

receptive professors, if a certain threshold of student and faculty involvement was met. Calling the sexual consent project a social movement (*shakai undō*) or a student movement (*gakusei undō*) seems misplaced in a context where the group's focus is so narrow, the human resources so few, and continuity is defined as having enough members and interest to keep projects going. Depending on the organisation, continuous activity does not necessitate the group to keep the same structure, name, or purpose. An example of this would be the many interest groups and communities which were created in the wake of #MeToo/#WeToo in Japan or the rebranding of student branches once affiliated with the larger NPO Voice Up Japan. For example, the ICU branch renamed its student group, including its Instagram account, Map the Better ICU in April 2023.

Even when individuals were willing or even eager to speak about their experiences and gripes with unequal relations between men and women, about normalized harassment, or about scandals which had made the news, this talk did not necessarily translate to action. Even with the Chabujo and the Waseda Sexual Consent Handbook Team, although they had produced tangible evidence of their position and passion in the form of handbooks, seminars, and workshops, bringing that to a larger audience seemed less of a priority. Or, in the case of Chabujo which is more generally focused on gender-based social issues in Japan, once handbooks were distributed, that project waned or was supplanted by new ideas and new discussions. What was meant or intended by 'activity' or 'action' continued to be a grey zone—at least for members at the periphery of these groups, me included.

To conclude, this chapter has presented an amalgamation of multiple casual conversations and more structured interviews with Waseda faculty members and staff from an external university—intended to demonstrate the administrative processes which guide, and stunt grassroots projects proposed by students. Although, all the individuals I spoke to

presumably belonged to the ‘supportive party’ alluded to by Sawada-sensei, their interpretations of the student activities are characterized by their assumptions. The most strongly worded example was Aoyama-sensei’s use of ‘*zaiya seishin*’, which through my later experiences in and out of the field I have parsed as being more of a myth than a reality, more of a hope that students would recall some quality that has been lost.

One aspect that most if not all these conversations have in common is an awareness and grudging acceptance that placing dialogues around sexual consent in an institutional setting slows down such activities. This stymies visibility beyond a set group of collaborators. This, of course, occurs outside of Waseda and outside of higher education institutions, as Machiko Osawa succinctly states: “Changing the law alone will not prevent sexual crimes unless the public, which has tolerated sexual crimes, also changes its awareness. It is important to reveal the true nature of what makes these victims invisible, even when the crimes they suffer are not” (Osawa, 2023, 7).

Waseda faculty’s descriptions and explanations of the many administrative puzzles which must be navigated appropriately indicate that time is not on the side of student activist projects. Even when small groups wish to address the lack of awareness, which makes the victims of sexual violence invisible, there is little that can be done when those projects in themselves lack visibility.

In the second half of our interview, Taito-sensei shared more of her concerns about the faculty side of the sexual consent projects:

But of course, it depends on the teacher. There are so many teachers who think it is very important, but there are also many who think there are more important issues than this one. So, I think there is still a lot of work to be done. There are many teachers here in the Faculty of Arts and Letters who have a variety of ways of thinking. We still have a long way to go. It is not common sense yet. It will take a little more time (*mada jōshiki ni wa naranai, mou sukoshi jikan wa kakkarisou*).

It is not just the large size of Waseda with its many fragmented, self-contained faculties and the committee processes of decision-making that prevent sexual consent education and awareness from being an established part of first-year orientations. It is that there is no sense of urgency or prioritisation on the part of enough teachers. Taito-sensei speaks only of her faculty in the segment above, but many other individuals told me of the resistance they felt from campuses and faculties that were dominated by male professors teaching engineering and computer science modules. If even the more supportive faculties do not consider sexual consent an important enough issue to make it common sense or common knowledge (*jōshiki*), then naturally visibility remains a base goal for all project members to work towards.

However, members, especially student members, seemed to tread lightly when it came to promoting their materials and viewpoints on adjacent gendered social issues, potentially because of the rise of ‘hashtag feminism’, where “the hashtags #SilenceWontProtectYou or #IWontBeSilenced are also often used in online campaigns (Miura, 2021, 525). This is in addition to the names of many of the groups I have mentioned and still others which have been covered by Japanese media outlets and other academics “that convey speaking,” and, of course, ‘voicing up’ (2021, 524). There is a risk to be taken when it comes to being vocal online, one which has been taken up by Japanese scholars examining feminist frameworks. Social scientist Tanaka Toko begins one of her discussion points by explaining: “The increasing online visibility of topics like hashtag feminism has become a phenomenon which impacts the popularity of feminism through magazine and image contents, and it can be mainly understood through two aspects... ‘visibility politics’ and ‘visibility economy’” (Tanaka, 2020, 23).

The popularity of some anti-sexual violence projects, particularly between 2017 and 2019, aligned with the rise of hashtag feminism and the increased role of visibility

politics in the Japanese media sphere, especially in the comments of news websites, Twitter, Instagram, and blog forums. Visibility translates into an activist technique of raising awareness through sharing stories about the experiences of real people's sexual assault, calling out via relatable scenes to the Japanese public, especially the youth, about being pressured to drink by seniors in izakaya or being asked for sexual favours in exchange for a recommendation from a university professor. These are all general scenarios used by the Waseda sexual consent handbook team as well, yet visibility does not seem to be their most pressing goal. Instead, it is the faculty members I spoke with who, although certainly appearing to be resigned or demoralised about the pace of change on university campuses, advocated for the visibility of the sexual consent project as a significant goal. Individual members seem at the very least hopeful and at the very most intent on pushing for the continuity and then expansion of the project. The students were seen as ideals, as the promising youth embodying *zaiya seishin*, who could understand and promote the significance of sexual consent even better than their professors and mentors.

This characterisation is not necessarily a bad thing, nor is it meant as a critique of faculty promotion of the project. The students will likely have this support for as long as they wish to continue their handbook and workshop activities. However, describing student activism in only positive terms, like *zaiya seishin*, diverts attention from very real concerns about the long-term impact and viability of such activist projects. And, most importantly for the discussions within this thesis, this positive reframing and reimagining by faculty appears to be at odds with how the students themselves make sense of their involvement. In chapters four and five, I will switch between the Waseda and Chabujo cases to demonstrate how visibility issues interact with internal group conflicts around goals, methods, and identities.

Chapter Four: ‘Everyone Wants to Do Something Different’: Continuity, Growth and Transformation

This chapter analyses the gap between the intentions of sexual consent projects and their visible results. Descriptions of sexual consent workshops delivered to Waseda students and interviews with members of Waseda, Chabujo and other activist projects are used to suggest that the emotional reasons why individuals choose to become activists and ‘voice up’ are typically a key factor for why these project groups fragment and dissolve within a few years. The diversity of motivations and desires expressed by these groups or project participants, while having the potential to create a more holistic perspective and meaningful knowledge exchange, also leads to conflict, stagnation, and even dissolution. Anecdotes from two Waseda sexual consent workshops more specifically demonstrate the lack of engagement and reactions with materials outside of the primary project creators and collaborators. Ultimately, I argue that these activist projects are for the members producing the Instagram posts, handbook pages, or workshop slides, even more than for the organisation or the target audience.

In the past decade, the number of activist organisations dedicated to gender issues in Japan, whether grassroots, corporate or academic, has increased. There are many small groups with different aims and areas of focus, as well as various understandings of feminism and how it can apply to and, ideally, change Japanese society for the better (Dalton and Norma, 2022a, 6-7). However, the activities and membership of these individual groups are not continuous nor necessarily connected. Through an ethnographic comparison of two groups that were not yet represented in the academic literature on feminist movements and grassroots organisations in Tokyo, I observed three main characteristics related to developing their activities and spreading awareness of, in this case, the issue of sexual consent.

The first was the idea of ‘continuity’ and whether the group was concerned with maintaining continuous activity on a project or campaign. This also tied into individual and organisation-wide expectations for how long the activities would be conducted. Notably, individual and organisational expectations were often not aligned. When expectations, goals, and even value systems diverged, individuals would leave the organisation.

Growth was a second core characteristic of the groups. I asked myself and my interlocutors a variant of the following question: was it important for the group to gain recognition in their chosen region or institution for their activities? In a similar vein, I noted whether there were plans to move beyond their initial intended audience. For example, I observed that the sexual consent handbook team at Waseda may have aimed to distribute handbooks and lead workshops across as many university departments as possible, but there was less of a push for growth in their student membership. Passive, ongoing recruitment through their social media posts was more common and better received. The welcome event focusing on *moyamoyasuru koto*, which I discussed in chapter two, also indicated that expanding consent education activities to the Waseda junior high or other high schools was not on the group’s immediate agenda.

Third and lastly was the characteristic of ‘transformation’, where these groups undergo not just shifts in membership and leadership but also a switch in focus to another issue, like Chabujo’s recent events to discuss intersectionality or group structure, such as the reorganising and rebranding of Voice Up Japan’s former student branches. In more extreme but not altogether unusual occurrences, grassroots gender-issue groups such as the women’s group Benkyō, studied by Laura Dales (2009), will end in dissolution or restructuring under a new name, mission statement, and core group membership. According to Dales’s discussion of the three women’s groups she examined: “Of these

groups, WWW and Women's Projects were active at the time of writing, while Benkyō had dissipated due to members' changing circumstances and geographic locations"(2009, 6). Reorganisation recently occurred in the branches of Voice Up Japan, including the Waseda branch. Not long after I joined the handbook team in early 2023, the VUJ Waseda branch was no longer a collaborator with the sexual consent project.

Feminist Organising: Intentions and Results

In my discussion of 'transformation', I will also consider the idea of a 'quiet transformation' (Kingston 2004, Kanbayashi 2019), which can be characterised as "fitful, gradual, and cumulative, meaning that subtle changes sit uncomfortably next to, and sometimes in the shadow of, prominent continuities"(Kingston, 2004, xvi). Kingston's observations come from comparisons of early 2000s Japan with the Japan of the 1980s, but there is still something that holds in his follow-up statement: "There is a lag between reform initiatives and substantive consequences, *mirroring the gap between intentions and actual results*" (ibid., emphasis added).

A major characteristic of Chabujo's and the Waseda handbook team projects was a disconnect between 'intentions' and 'actual results', similar to what Kingston described in the broader context of Japanese civil society. Notably, reformist strands of feminism from the 1970s have led to the development of local and international networks of activists and "Murase argues that, through the regulation of NPOs, the government is engaging in shaping civil society in Japan, and that this has implications for the possibility of feminist organisations influencing government policy"(Mackie, 2017, 16). I argue that this is related to the difference in expectations among members of these groups, as well as what multiple faculty members at Waseda described as an overall lack of connection and cohesion between feminist organisations.

[From my notes]

I sit in a spacious office in one of the graduate school buildings on the main Waseda campus, with two familiar professors involved in the Waseda sexual consent project sitting across the desk from me: Professor Matsui and Professor Sada. They are the same members who invited me to lunch as well as to the research meetings (*kenkyūkai*) of the Waseda Gender Research Institute.

Matsui-sensei is the more talkative of the two, and the conversation turns to my questions about who is involved in the sexual consent project, how they are connected and the organisation of discussion between ‘newer and older generations.’

“Maybe they do not need to have the agreement or the consent, but I think they should, at least, I mean the older generation, I’m sure they are aware of what the younger generation is doing because they are always willing to know what was going on. But I was wondering, how much do they know about it? ...I mean, at the moment, they’re students, so they should do whatever they want to do...they should be creative, but since they will stop being students in a few years, I wonder what they’re going to do.”

Matsui-sensei’s musings set the rest of us in a seemingly contemplative mood.

“Yeah, right,” I agree, looking to Sada-sensei to see if she has found a moment to express her opinion in the temporary lull left by her more vocal colleague.

“I think we have many feminist organisations in Japan. Some of them belong to academia, like universities and higher education. Some of them are like grassroots organisations. And all we have is our *tsui-femi*, *tsuitā feminism* [Twitter Feminism]. Here, feminism is very popular on Twitter and SNS for younger generations.”

“Maybe they are what is called ‘feminist,’” Matsui-sensei suggests.

Sada-sensei continues her earlier thought: “For feminists in Japan right now. So, I know there are many kinds of feminist organisations, but I do not think they are connected with each other.”

She takes a short breath.

“That’s, I think, one of the problems in the situation, especially in Japan, and each organisation has a different point of view. Which is nice, you know, multiple voices and perspectives. We have to get together. When we want to change something, especially the role of administration. I found it very difficult to connect.”

In this passage, Matsui-sensei mentions the benefit of student activities and movements as being a time where they can be ‘creative’ as well as the notion that inter-generational dialogues may be essential for topics like consent. Students have more flexibility to try out different hobbies and create projects during their undergraduate degree than perhaps they would once they enter the workforce and become a ‘person of society’ (*shakaijin*). Matsui-sensei and other faculty members often brought up the hope that ‘the younger generation’ represented by members of Shaberu and the sexual consent handbook team, would have dialogues with ‘the older generation’ and seemed to include themselves in this latter group.

But the above comment indicates a lack of awareness, or, perhaps, a lack of interest on the side of ‘the older generation’, made up at Waseda of individuals in academic and administrative positions.

Such apathy or ambivalence has parallels to the response of many feminists, including feminist academics, fostering an environment where transphobic and homophobic ‘feminist’ discourses can increase as Akiko Shimizu discusses: “Most feminist SNS accounts, including those of legal experts, journalists, and academics, have been avoiding to even touch on this issue, much less voicing a clear criticism or opposition of those discourses” (2020, 101). We might be able to connect this to Matsui-sensei’s comment about the rise of ‘*tsuitā feminizumu*’ (or Twitter feminism), among Japanese youth. The tendency of younger generations to use SNS to disperse their messages may be leaving older generations, including feminist academics at Waseda University, behind. The measure of continuity and growth rate is also different, especially in an academic environment, where, as Matsui-sensei and Sada-sensei explain, it takes many years for changes to pass through administrative committees. By the time a student proposal or report is fully read, discussed, and approved, the original group of students would likely have graduated, and, in some cases, the group or activity may no longer exist.

In the same group interview, Sada-sensei expressed a similar concern about the rate of change not so much for Japanese society, but for Waseda University.

It takes a lot of time to change something, especially at university. But yeah, when I think about the sexual consent handbook, students will be graduating in four years or five years... But our discussion will take, you know, even longer than four years... [for] this university to introduce this handbook, where the discussion will never end. And then, you know, most of the active students will be graduating in a few years. And they’re not sure if they can recruit active members or not. So that’s my concern right now, how we can keep this activity or project in the long run.

Both Matsui-sensei and Sada-sensei referenced changes to class size in Japanese schools, saying that reducing the number of students in university lectures, for example, might

encourage an environment where students could have discussions about social issues. Their opinion was that a class size of around 15 students would be ideal to conduct a discussion to exchange different ideas and opinions.

Waseda University's size means that classes can sometimes have more than 100 students, especially in lecture-style classes. This makes discussion about potentially divisive topics like politics nearly impossible, and the size of a university may limit the actions of these student groups. As Sawada-sensei first mentioned to me, the different departments of Waseda often operate independently from one another, echoing Sada-sensei's observations that small feminist organisations are also independent entities. The result of separate operating university departments is that it is much harder to push forward proposals such as the sexual consent project team's request to President Tanaka Aji of Waseda for sexual consent workshops.

The Politics of Visibility, Intimacy and Sexual Autonomy

Although many of these feminist organisations tackle campaigns which push for improved legislation around sexual assault, as discussed in previous chapters, and education around topics related to gender, sexuality, and diversity in Japanese society, they are separate from one another. There is some collaboration and communication, as was evident when Chabujo credited resources from other NPOs. But some of these activities nearly exist in a vacuum where, if you are not part of the project yourself or one of the relative few who have benefited from the workshops or handbooks, you might not know the project even exists. Throughout my fieldwork, I found myself explaining my purpose and work while living in Tokyo, and many people expressed genuine surprise that multiple Japanese groups were creating sexual consent projects. If someone had heard of a 'sexual consent handbook' or Voice Up Japan or even Chabujo it was almost always because they were

active in the same spheres of interest as those groups—already interested in gender studies, feminism, women’s rights campaigns, and so on. In a comparatively closed environment such as a university, this ‘activist isolation phenomenon’ is emphasised.

However, while a significant achievement, as students and faculty have outlined the many barriers they had to overcome, having such a narrow focus on promoting sexual consent awareness on Waseda campuses also causes issues for visibility. A lack of visibility feeds into struggles with continuity and growth. Especially when we consider, as Andrea Mubi Brighenti suggests, “visibility appears as a kind of ‘game’, where players try to achieve something jointly but also by pitting one against the other—a game, in other words, with politically high stakes” (2022, 1).

Visibility politics is an issue that many communities in Japan have faced, especially the LGBTQ+ community. Multiple interlocutors identified themselves as LGBTQ+ and were often involved with either LGBTQ+ awareness campaigns or regular community events which happen across metropolitan Tokyo.

Ayato-san, a master’s student in education at Tsukuba University at the time of the interview, agreed that visibility was a concern while also expressing his belief that change in acceptance for minority groups like LGBTQ+ in Japan would come from normalising support at the regional level. His perspective was that altering what was perceived as ‘normal’ (*futsū*) could start from within a university, like Tsukuba or Waseda, and then spread out around the institution. When it came to people being aware of LGBTQ+ concerns or issues, the closed nature of the community, even if emerging out of necessity, created barriers for potential new members.

As Ayato-san explained:

I do not think the politics of visibility could be blended into Japanese politics or Japanese society. But if that community is invisible, then the people [who] come in from the outside cannot find the place to belong to, right? Especially my research field is about the intersection of the interests of international students and also queer students. So, for those who come from different countries, it is really difficult to reach out to this private closed community that is super invisible.

Ayato-san did not limit this observation to international students, commenting that Japanese students could also struggle to locate this community, especially because for many local students, this might be their first time living alone. This was Ayato-san's experience when he first moved to Tokyo for his undergraduate degree after growing up in a rural community on a small Japanese island. In Ayato's example, 'mobility' and 'visibility' interact to isolate or connect individuals and groups.

Mobility and visibility are facets of the persistent concern about continuity for these small student-driven projects. 'Coming out' is often a feature of protests, demonstrations and social movements. Echoing what Ayato-san discussed in our interview, scholars like Nancy Whittier note that "activists connected their identity-disclosure strategies to those of other social movements"(2009, 177). In addition to disclosing identities as either survivors of abuse or as members of a 'private closed community that is super invisible', some activists view "their coming out as giving voices to others who could not"(Whittier, 2009, 177). The Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals surveyed by Koji Ueno, even when offered the option to choose work at 'LGBTQ+ friendly jobs' choose career stability and a 'normal job' as a company employee (*kaishain*). Ueno also noted that many of their research participants "seemed to take non-disclosure for granted because for all their lives so far, they had kept their sexuality to themselves and a small number of very close friends" (2022, 9). Here, as in Lunsing's account of "a *feminisuto* who thought she had a very good relationship with a close friend because they could talk about everything, even about sex," we can observe that having a close relationship with someone is a prerequisite for many Japanese individuals to feel they can disclose their identities (2001,

281). This is the case for sexuality and gender identity as well as for adjacent intimate conversation topics, like sex and relationships.

The activist individuals with whom I spoke contend with the frameworks of *honne* (one's real feelings) and *tatemae* (public behaviour), of *uchi* (inside) and *soto* (outside) when disclosing their identities and asking their peers to think about the boundaries of sexual consent in their relationships. (Hendry, 2019, 58-61). As Martinez argues in her fieldwork of a Japanese diving village, not only is a sense of self socially constructed in many cultures, but “the Japanese sense of self is best described as “a sense of self that is constantly embedded within its relationships, responsibilities, and negotiations with others” (2004, 205-206).

Merry White suggested that in terms of sexuality: “The *honne* in this case is children's active sexual and emotional expression; the *tatemae* in this case is the socially approved heterosexual relationship of marriage”(1994, 188-189).

The discomfort with sharing one's true feelings about intimate topics emerges from socialisation and messaging, which suggests one only does so with close members of their *uchi* group, usually family and long-time friends, with whom it is safe to reply and depend (*amae*) (Jamieson, 2013, 9-10, Jamieson, 2011, 3, Doi, 1973, 15). As it becomes more common for self-disclosure of even intimate topics to occur online, scholars like Jamieson express concern about how relationships “as they are lived” establish and maintain intimacy.

Moreover, while distance relationships can be meaningful intimate relationships, co-presence is a more integral component of some ways in which people generate intimacy than ‘disclosing intimacy’, for example, spending time together, providing care through practical acts and demonstrating affection physically (2013, 9).

Even faculty members supportive of the sexual consent handbook at Waseda University have expressed scepticism about whether the momentum of sexual consent projects can

hold. Alternatively, students may carry this passion and motivation into their future activities. Other gender-issue projects at different Tokyo universities faced success or failure in their requests for official sexual consent workshops, depending largely on university size, campus environment, and faculty support.

According to Toyomi-san, a representative of the ICU branch of Voice Up Japan (VUJ), out of the three university student branches of VUJ that put forward a request for work on sexual harassment and sexual consent on campus, only ICU's president accepted. Both Meiji University and Waseda University denied the request. When I asked for possible reasons why the request was denied, Toyomi-san gave different ones for each university.

In the meeting, the Meiji branch, like they do not accept requests from organisations outside of their university. Even though they have a Meiji branch, the project itself is based on Voice Up Japan, which is outside of the Meiji University. That's why they denied the request.

Toyomi-san then added a comparison of Waseda and the ICU:

And I think for Waseda University, one is because the school itself is too big to hear from each student. Because in ICU it is one of the smallest universities in Japan... So, the teachers and professors and students are really close in my university. But in Waseda and Meiji as well... They're like too big. And the distance... the relationships are really far.

This conversation with Toyomi-san, one of the earliest interviews I conducted, even before I arrived in Japan for in-person fieldwork, included some vital characteristics of the type of university environment required for student movements and youth activism to operate.

As discussed throughout this thesis in conjunction with O'Day and Slater (2018), Cassegard (2022) and Ogawa (2022), student political mobilisation and demonstrations have produced a form of 'collective trauma' among the Japanese public and resulted in universities being wary of student activism.

For instance, shortly after their creation in 1948, the student organisation *Zengakuren* held strong ties to faculty as they both opposed American occupation and held various joint demonstrations on campus. They even managed to help uphold a policy that forbids police

to enter campuses unless strictly invited by university administrators (Falch and Hammond, 2020, 441).

The exceptional cases of consent activism on Tokyo university campuses, rather than their normalisation or acceptance, can be attributed to the lingering effects of this negative activist legacy. However, as Toyomi-san's account corroborates, the first concern of many university offices was to adhere to existing regulations regarding student requests, including whether the request was entirely internal, involving university or student entities, or external, with a collaborative element from another organisation, like VUJ or Chabujo.

Other distinguishing factors included the relative size of the university, the number of departments or schools, and, finally, the 'distance' between students and faculty. The nature of relations between students and their faculty at Japanese universities can be compared with the ideas of an intimate, *affective* practice, which can "sustain a close and special quality of a relationship between people" (Wetherell, 2012b, 4, Jamieson, 2011, 3). In reverse, practices of intimacy, whether the self-disclosure of one's sexuality or the support between students and faculty members, demonstrate that increased distance can break down this closeness and even prevent a relationship from forming altogether.

Without a certain level of closeness, of positive intimacy, in relationships within a group and with other institutional bodies outside of it, even well-intentioned group activities may stagnate. The conditions in which this occurred for Chabujo were notably different from student efforts at Waseda, Meiji, ICU, or Tsukuba. During our recruitment interview, the Chabujo digital team leader, Saya-san, recounted discriminatory behaviour even within Chabujo, an organisation which promotes diversity and equality. For people and in places which welcome one type of minority or promote one variety of social change, inclusion based on the exclusion of people who may be perceived as a 'threat' to the safety of a marginalised community does occur.

Such occurrences and disagreements are wrapped up in discussions and perceptions of feminism in Japan, including whether people are adapting meanings from first-wave feminism or third-wave feminism. Belonging to a certain in-group, such as being a Twitter feminist who is anti-sex work or a butch lesbian who only dates femmes, may also lead to assumptions about the type of feminism one practices. If we connect the divisions among feminists and sexual minorities in Japan back to Brighenti's discussion of visibility as a 'game', relationships of power must be discussed alongside how governments and policies determine who is visible and who is invisible. "The outcome of visibility relations can thus be expressed in terms of power ratios: it instantiates the relation between majorities and minorities of all sorts, not so much in a strict political-electoral sense, but in the Gramscian broader sense of cultural hegemony"(Brighenti, 2022, 2).

In this passage, Brighenti implies again that different participants in the game or politics of visibility are opponents. This requires two outcomes: the winners, or the group with recognised, legitimised visibility, and the losers, who cannot or will not become visible in a legitimate manner. The dominant cultural hegemony adopted by policymakers will often shape the 'intervisibilities' of various actors, as we will observe in discussions of gender backlash and anti-trans rhetorics among Japanese mainstream feminists. The outcome of divisions between activists and among minority groups is, first, a lack of cohesion and community, and, secondly, a flattening of visible social change for all.

Many interlocutors and friends with whom topics of old-school feminism or lesbianism came up often contrasted these distinct ways of thinking about visibility, marginalisation, and inclusion. For example, an old-school lesbian's refusal to include trans women in lesbian nightclubs was a narrative intended to highlight how some forms of feminist thought were now perceived as trans-exclusionary.

If we consider the role of feminism and the idea of what makes a ‘feminist’, there are many conflicting interpretations among Japanese audiences today. The dialogue with and between Sada-sensei and Matsui-sensei was not the only one to recognise the increasing role SNS, especially platforms like Twitter, play in social movements and activism. Social media messaging is vital for the messaging of groups and individuals alike and is the primary reason I, as a researcher and user of SNS applications, became aware of the activities of Voice Up Japan branches, Chabujo, Spring and many other grassroots groups in Japan. Digital engagement and self-making are now commonplace for young people, especially women, seeking employment in times of precarity.

Japanese women frequently use social media to craft ‘DIY careers’ as net idols, bloggers, cell phone novelists, and online traders, which Lukacs (2020) connects to the crafting of new selves in the digital economy. In her research with multiple women who participate in Japan’s digital economy, Lukacs remarks that many interlocutors did not divulge their family backgrounds, so she uses “the category of class with the caveat that creating DIY careers meant crafting new selves, which involved strategically withholding, deemphasising, dramatising, or completely rewriting one’s class background”(2020, 26). Such self-making and ‘feminised affective labour’, as Lukacs terms it, is not unusual in online spaces and communication networks. Castells’ (2014) ‘spaces of autonomy’ is heavily referenced by Falch and Hammond to discuss how networked Internet spaces may lead to reoccupying physical urban spaces, in the case of SEALDs. An online presence was key to the growth of the activist movement from 2015 to 2016, and Falch and Hammond describe:

With thousands of followers, commenters, and contributors participating in the movement on SNS, much of the groundwork and momentum building took place before many had even taken to the streets. Frequent posts throughout these platforms ranged from links to relevant news articles, promotional photos of core members, and highly produced music videos and documentaries (2020, 438).

If we consider the rise of online feminism in Japan, Ayako Kano marked 2011 as the year when “the Internet began to supersede print journalism as the forum for feminist debate”(2016b, 21). Kano writes about the overlap with the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, which demonstrated the power of online communication platforms during such disasters:

Twitter, which had been introduced to Japan a few years earlier, became a critical conduit of information dissemination, discussion, and dissent. Facebook soon followed suit. These joined slightly older platforms for online disputes, including the notorious anonymous bulletin board 2channel [an anonymous Japanese online textboard popular in the 2000s]. Thus, Japan had entered a new era of debate, and this shift in media, from print to Internet, is likely to affect many aspects of this discursive genre (2016b, 21).

Ayato-san was very familiar with Twitter, having used it at different stages of his life. He said this began when he was introduced to the gay community online before moving to Tokyo for his undergraduate degree. While using Twitter, he was exposed to various perspectives on self-identification and feminist theories. I include below some of his insights on the categorisations of feminists he witnessed on Japanese Twitter.

And in Japan, when you hear the word ‘feminism’, it’s considered a negative or aggressive one. *‘You do not want to, like, identify yourself as a ‘feministo’, if you are not like radical feminists, right?’*... I think it’s because of social media, like movements... but people have this negative image of feminism in Japan, in Japanese words. So, this change of meanings or the additive meanings to that word could happen.

Like, I do not like this expression as well. But like *educated feminism*. We use these types of phrases or mindsets, right, like include not only women... some feminists would consider the trans women or the women who were transgender would be men, right?... But I guess like feminism is not only academic terms anymore... right? Everyone knows about it. Everyone knows feminism as a word, then in everyday life, especially on social media like Twitter.

People who do not know about, like the history of feminism, can use words to have these negative, immediate connotations, right? *So, I think I have seen a lot of people who identify themselves as feminists, but the contents of their tweets or retweets are much more like first-wave feminism.* (own emphasis added)

This was neither the first nor the last time conversations with my interlocutors brought up the perceptions of feminism and feminists in Japan. Interlocutors generally referred to these categories in a negative, even dismissive, way, denoting educated feminism as the domain of academics versed in various feminist theories, whereas corporate feminism was

concerned with gender equality in the workplace. Scholar of feminist and queer thought, Takemura Kazuko (2010), writes that it was not until the early 1990s that feminist studies opened up in Japan to include “not only critical examinations of heterosexism but also theoretical and epistemological approaches to the gender-sexuality order” (2010, 16). This followed on the heels of the women’s liberation, or *ūman ribu*, movement from the late 1960s to early 1970s with publications like *Seito* and then the 1980s era of feminist debates spurred by “an economic boom that enabled a flourishing print culture; a critical mass of women in higher education, especially at four-year colleges; and the emergence of female and feminist voices in academia”(Kano, 2016b, 19).

‘Radical feminists’ was a broader category conflated with ‘first wave’ or older forms of feminism. Some of these so-called ‘radical feminists’ were also identified by interlocutors as being anti-trans. Primarily, talking about types of feminists and feminism was used to distinguish between different reactions to materials related to do with sexual consent and bystander intervention or to education around sexual minorities, specifically the concept of SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity), which has become another trending acronym across companies and educational institutions. Other mentions of the role of ‘radical’, ‘educated’ or ‘corporate’ feminism in these primarily online social movements came up during my meetings with Chabujo members. Overall, categorising and sub-categorising feminism appeared to be a strategic way to legitimise or delegitimise certain ways of thinking. This is clear in Ayato-san’s explanation as well, where he sets ‘educated feminism’ as a form of once-academic knowledge which has now been adopted into everyday conversations, of course including SNS platforms like Twitter.

Ayato-san’s identification of this new usage of ‘feminist’ terms as something ‘everyone knows about’ means that the content of posts online may have more in common with first-wave feminism. And, as mentioned before, it also opens the doors to ordinary

Internet users being exposed to the feminist discourse, which stigmatises minority groups like transgender people. However, I will include a deeper analysis of this discourse about transness, gender backlash, and feminist counter-movements in the next chapter.

Chabujo's digital team lead, Saya-san, had informed me early on of the clauses in the pledge to be a member of Chabujo that were strongly anti-discrimination, particularly regarding gender identity and being transgender. She admitted to me that there had been an 'incident' when a member of Chabujo held some transphobic beliefs and made discriminatory comments. When she shared this information in October 2022, it was unclear if these comments were just on other SNS platforms or also in Chabujo Slack workspace channels. Throughout my time with Chabujo, I conversed with members about the struggle with diversity, intersectionality, and the general acceptance and inclusion of transgender perspectives in Chabujo.

A recurring theme was that self-labelling as a 'feminist grassroots organisation' or 'feminist non-profit organisation' did not preclude these groups, and the occasional friend circles arising from within and between them, from internet conflicts about gender identity or sexual orientation. In general, 'self-policing' and 'group monitoring' were often present within Chabujo. Instances of self-policing and group monitoring were likewise visible in Waseda and other university sexual consent projects. This was especially the case when initiatives were launched by larger NPOs like Voice Up Japan, because, as I will discuss in my interview with one of VUJ's founders, registered non-profits were part of a larger network of media attention and established administrative procedures.

At separate points in my fieldwork, I had lengthy discussions with different members about how organisations handled internal incidents. Since Chabujo's activities began in 2015, members have been involved in various projects and campaigns and have

varying degrees of experience and commitment. During certain periods of the organisation's activity, some members took on a greater 'public' role than others. This emerged via a distinction between more 'vulnerable' members who had experienced sexual violence (primarily assault and/or rape) and those who had not (but had been harassed before). However, when it came to the discussion around what to do when a member holds and expresses views which were excluding transgender women from feminist and activist spaces the members did not possess the details of what happened. A decision on the matter was made solely by the Chabujo steering committee. It was followed by a report of the issue and potential solutions presented to all members at a general Chabujo meeting. This all occurred before I joined in October 2022.

This top-down decision-making could be partially responsible for why, other than a handful of members in the steering committee,¹² individual members could not explain the sequence of events leading to the decision. Instead, the events were recounted to them after the committee had already met, discussed, and come up with ideas of how to handle a member who held transphobic beliefs. These ideas were presented to the rest of the members for discussion. This general meeting's purpose was to gather opinions on predetermined courses of action. This was akin to a private intervention with the offending member and a no-tolerance approach to discrimination, nudging the individual to leave. In the end, people believe she quietly 'left' or 'resigned' from the organisation.

Chisato-san commented on my post in the Chabujo Slack '#random-channel' where I explained my research project and requested interviews from any willing and interested members. She expressed curiosity about the project and said I could direct message her

¹² I never learned the exact number of members within the Chabujo steering committee, only confirming the names of two of the co-founders of the organisation and a third veteran member. All these individuals were active in the Slack workspace, posting announcements of upcoming projects and events.

about arranging an interview. In late April, we talked and began to arrange a Zoom meeting. Golden Week was coming up in the first week of May, and Chisato-san also had a business trip, so there were multiple short messages back and forth about scheduling an appropriate date. A previous appointment of mine also conflicted with one of the possible interview dates, so we rescheduled more than once. During these messages, I learned that Chisato-san was living in the UK, so we worked to coordinate our different time zones.

In June 2023, we finally met on Zoom. Chisato-san was in her mid to late twenties, close in age to me at the time of the research. In her Zoom background, which is not blurred like what many people do when having corporate meetings, there were mouldings where the walls met the ceiling and a beaten-up wooden panelled door which reminded me of many a London flat with old piping but new furnishings. As we begin to talk, first in Japanese, then in English, and occasionally switching back to Japanese when there were no fitting words or phrases in English, I learnt she was in London studying for her second master's degree at SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies) University of London. She already had an undergraduate degree from Keio SFC (Shonan-Fujisawa Campus) and a master's from the University of Tokyo. Chisato-san's high level of education characterises her word choice and recounting of experiences both at these two Japanese universities and her volunteering with Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action.

Her experience came through, along with tinges of weariness from remembering her involvement with sexual consent and harassment campaigns as early as 2014 and 2015. Chisato-san was studying in Sydney, Australia, when she was contacted by a mutual friend of one of the Chabujo founders about the sexual consent project beginning at Chabujo. It was between 2016 and 2017, during the height of the #MeToo movement, and she was already participating in a women's organisation at the University of Sydney. Many other Chabujo members at the time were not in Japan, but in other countries like Sweden, the

UK or the USA, so meeting online was the best way for them to organise. As Chisato-san said:

We just started talking about what we want to do. And I was very curious about bystander intervention at the time... and I talked about this with Chabujo members. And... some members who studied in the States shared about bystander intervention and we planned it together. So that's why I created the page about 3D.

Chisato-san dotted her explanation with personal anecdotes, such as her reasons for being interested in bystander intervention involving a friend's drunken actions. She hesitated and admitted, *"I do not know how much I want to share about this topic"*, but, in the end, still provided the example of what her friend did and how it made her feel. I wondered if it was because it made her reason for participation more compelling. But I made notes on my pad of the details she did not want shared beyond the confines of the screen. There was one time in the second half of our conversation when she requested that I not mention her participation in a specific project because, even with a pseudonym, she might be identifiable.

Because Chisato-san was not just part of Chabujo activities, we discussed other groups in Tokyo which were organised over sexual harassment concerns. This included her experience of forming a circle at Keio University at their Shonan-Fujisawa Campus (SFC). The circle was called the 'Keio Gender Collective.'

[From my notes]

Chisato-san informed me of the difficulties which emerged after the collective's creation.

...Some people contacted me, so we had like, some members, like five members. So, we started a Keio Gender Collective... But I didn't have time to organise the new collective, so it didn't work well. Also, some members just wanted to do like women's empowerment, or like [laughter] more like corporate feminist things. So, we didn't... yeah, get along [more laughter].

I comment on some parallels in societies in Oxford, about ones which focus on women's empowerment in the context of women in business but did not explicitly tackle issues like consent: "I'm curious about if you had any specific interactions with people that made you go 'Oh, this isn't for me'."

Chisato-san described the connection between sexual harassment in corporate cases, mentioning both the insufficient consulting system and the complicated processes for victims to make a complaint.

There were also culturally ascribed feelings of embarrassment, shame, and uncertainty, which hindered victims' ability to speak about sexual violence to both friends and employers. Even feelings of closeness and trust with friends and family may not be a sufficient reassurance for individuals to self-disclose either their experiences or their identities, which Jamieson (2011), Whittier(2009), and Ueno (2022) also discusses. Primarily in the context of Western cultures, but in many ways relevant to sexual consent activism in Japan, Brighenti writes about the crucial part shame plays in politics and that "shame implies a mechanism of self-restraint in intervisibility relations"(2022, 4).

Brighenti adds:

...The importance of the ethical theme of 'shame' running throughout Western culture reconfirms that the excesses and deficits of visibility, no less than how such excesses and deficits are appraised, measured, experienced and mobilized, carry a significance that can hardly be underestimated (2022, 5).

In Japan, a victim of sexual assault may be perceived as having deficits, bringing conflict and discomfort to broader society by taking a private matter like sex into the public sphere by voicing up about this transgression of their sexual autonomy and safety. Mizoroki et al observed this through the opposing reactions to the #MeToo movement and the #Furawādemo posts, writing:

The most potent manifestation in our corpus is victim-blaming. When breaking the silence, women are blamed for 'their fault' (psychiatrist Takako Konishi quoted in Asahi) or smeared for 'dragging men down' (sociologist Toshiyuki Tanaka quoted in Mainichi). Women from all walks of life—from a teenage girl to an actor—noted that they faced or saw victim-blaming, including hateful online harassment (2023, 12).

In general, #Furawademo was perceived as a more desirable way of speaking up which embodied more perceived Japanese values of group stability and harmony while also

distracting from the ‘dirty’ (*kitanai*) nature of sexual topics with the ‘clean and beautiful’ (*kirei*) images of flowers. (Mizoroki et al., 2023, 12). It is an uncomfortable subject, as evidenced by the struggles faced by two sexual consent projects and existing literature about gender issues in Japanese society. Shigenori Matsui links prevalent attitudes about discussing sexual violence, consent, and prevention policies to a need to have sexual autonomy in Japan be constitutionally protected. Although it is implicitly understood that individuals should have and enjoy sexual freedom, “the Constitution of Japan has no provisions that explicitly protect sexual autonomy”(Matsui, 2023, 25). Matsui argues that, despite sexual autonomy being a deeply personal matter, it is also a significant part of all citizens’ lives and is crucial to the development of any nation.

The right to sexual autonomy should thus be broad enough to encompass all personal decisions on sexual matters. It should include the right to decide or change one’s sexual or gender identity and the right to decide whether to have sex, with whom, when, where, and how. Additionally, sexual autonomy should mean that anyone can refuse sex, giving rise to a right to not be forced to have it. Sex must be voluntary and consensual. Any forced sex without consent is a violation of this right.

Sexual autonomy, or *jiko kettei-ken*, was stressed by multiple Chabujo and Waseda members. Chisato-san stated that raising awareness about consent is important for workplace situations and beyond.

[From my notes]

“That’s why I thought consent was very important for both contexts. But I couldn’t share this idea with my other friends, like other members of Keio Gender Collective, because they just wanted to focus on the positive side [of feminism or corporate feminism] ... “

She gives an example of negative reactions and misunderstandings from students while giving sexual consent workshops or distributing handbooks.

“So, like, sometimes you have to talk about some sexual assault case, or, like, you know, like, you have to talk about sex sometimes. But you do not have to talk about your personal experience...Some people I think got confused, like, they thought they had to talk about their sexualities or their sexual experiences. And... they felt embarrassed doing this.”

Students questioned why something ‘so embarrassing’ was being brought up, which is a reason Chisato-san believes even other members of the gender collective preferred to focus on topics like ‘corporate feminism.’

“And you know, Keio, I think Waseda as well, we have a *taiikukai-kei* [sporty type] culture... which means that, first, *taiikukai-kei*, it’s divided like ‘man and woman’. And men always wear uniform. And like, it’s very intimidating to talk about sexual consent in front of them because they look very uncomfortable.” Another pause. Then a remark accompanied with laughter. “They should be uncomfortable... Yeah.”

The discomfort experienced by Chisato-san’s newly formed circle and students is ascribed to many factors, varying from confusion that conversations around sex must include sharing personal experiences and sexualities to the general gendered culture of Keio SFC and the campus’s focus on business and technology studies. As Laura Dales described in her work on feminist movements in contemporary Japan, there was a similar reluctance to discuss sexuality and sex: “It is in the silence surrounding sexuality that Women’s Projects was most limited and limiting for these members, and its absence as a topic refers to wider restrictions on the discussion of non-heterosexual sexuality and marks the line of private and public demarcation” (2009, 52).

This exclusion or lack of comfort within a given environment—even one which is considered more ‘open’ than many others can be a form of “regulation of intimate relations and qualities” which, even outside of more dominant conservative ideals, “alienates and ‘others’ the individual from their selves unless there is conformity with those values” (Reynolds 2010: 39).

Chisato-san’s mention of *taiikukai-kei*, which generally denotes someone who is an ‘athletic or sporty type’, belonging to university sports clubs, as a culture which pervades private institutions like Keio and Waseda makes an important distinction. In her anecdote, the ‘men in uniform’ who are part of *taiikukai-kei* culture are very real students in the classes they gave workshops to—ones which were interpreted by the collective as the most visibly uncomfortable with the topics of sexual consent.

The somewhat pointed explanation of *taiikukai-kei* is significant as well because of the typical gendered association with male homosociality and reproduction of hegemonic

masculinity in sports clubs at universities. Though, as more recent studies in the Anglophone world indicate, resilience (*gaman*) building methods in sports club contexts and homosocial relationships are also present in women's sports clubs (Sylvester, 2023). Chisato-san referred to her own experience with *taiikukai-kei* culture as one which acted as a barrier towards understanding. It also reinforced the idea of 'man and woman' as having a definitive boundary, one determined by biology that naturally inhibits communication.

Chisato-san did not say whether one of these *taiikukai-kei* students said anything negative about the content, but they became representative of a broader culture and a gendered divide. To Chisato-san and her fellow club members, this was 'very intimidating'. Chisato-san made her stance clear with her final comment in this passage—'they should be uncomfortable'. This reached the point of even passing a level of judgement by using 'should be', and taking for granted that the knowledge of how to have a conversation around sexual consent is a better course of action than the ones which remain immersed in the forms of more normalised and widespread culture found at universities like Keio and Waseda. According to Chisato-san, even if it is more difficult or intimidating, sexual consent should *be* discussed across all these contexts and cultures. Her experience of not getting along with other circle members because of different approaches to feminist thought and gender issues is one of the more candid narratives I heard while interacting with these groups. However, my conversation with Chisato-san was far from the only one which showed how differences of opinion could easily change the direction of a group campaign—for example: members of Chisato-san's circle formed a new circle after she graduated, or motivate members to take their passions elsewhere, just as Chisato-san herself joined other projects like the creation of the Chisato consent handbook and research for her masters' in London.

The account so far begins to paint a picture of a landscape of gender activism formed by many personal narratives. Much of what has made my discussion and indeed this chapter so dense and even disparate is that, other than a generalised mission to educate around sexual consent and prevent sexual violence, no two opinions are the same. Even when individuals assume that their fellow activist members ascribe to the same beliefs, this is not the case. The assumption of ‘sameness’ can stymie group or individual growth and impede open dialogues.

Kingston places an almost ‘spiritual’ spin on volunteer-dependent activism like that which organisations like Chabujo and student projects like Waseda’s sexual consent handbook depend on:

The potential of volunteerism is substantial and promises to rekindle community spirit and civic mindedness while helping people better shape the society they live in... Realising the potential for a robust civil society will depend on the quality and staying power of citizens’ participation, making clear that the quiet transformation is far from over (2004, 36).

The tones of Kingston’s claim parallel Aoyama-sensei’s explanation and elevation of *zaiya seishin* into a necessary ethos. The students of the sexual consent project at Waseda University were enacting this ‘community spirit’ and type of ‘citizen participation’ which could make for a better society and a better civil future.

According to Kingston, “NPOs armed with legal rights to demand information disclosure can play a key role in enhancing citizen participation in government policymaking and exercising oversight. NPOs are encouraging and sustaining the trend towards greater openness in Japan” (2004, 36). However, as my conversation with the co-founder of Voice Up Japan, Kazuna Yamamoto, reveals, even within NPOs and NGOs that foster citizen participation, voicing up and engaging with current social issues, there are limitations to what they can achieve.

Yamamoto-san engaged with my questions with the ease of someone interviewed many times, but her thoughts on running an ‘activist organisation’ were flavoured by her reservations.

[From my notes]

“We always say, I mean, we’ve seen other activist organisations, and I think all of them last between three or four years. Because I think that’s the difference between you know, what, are we going to become an NGO? Or do we do activism?” This was a theme throughout the brief but dense interview, about whether ‘true’ activism could be effective or long-lasting in a larger organisation.

“And do you think it’s a lot harder to do activism if you become a registered NGO [or NPO] in Japan?” I ask, attempting to distinguish whether bureaucratic procedures are part of the issue in the way university administration shaped how the Waseda sexual consent project came to be.

Yamamoto answers in a firm negative, though not without additional commentary:

“No, but I think it’s more about managing people as an activist, because I think the core of an activist is, you know, you’re sort of fighting it sometimes. I mean, when I started the petition, I was like, I was really, really pissed. And I started this organisation process and people and politics, and I think that kind of destroys the core of activism. Like, you know, if you’re not even able to stick kind of fight and say your opinion, then, but that doesn’t make anyone happy. You know?”

“Do you think there’s a particular way to keep it going? Or was it just like the natural cycle of maybe three to four years, and then something else happens?”

Matsui-sensei, Sada-sensei and other Waseda faculty members appeared to be searching for a method to ensure the sexual consent handbook project, and its associated workshops, would continue. But I was curious whether people who had emerged as activist leaders and semi-public figures would feel the same way.

“I think for me... of course, I will continue doing activism. And I think maybe if it’s not through Voice Up Japan, we will still do it. But I think it’s just an organisation kind of, in that sense, makes it difficult, because organisation is about unity. But activism isn’t really about unity. Sometimes I think, just the core essence, is very different, because activism is being able to Voice Up. But sometimes when you’re an organisation... within the same organisation, you can’t have three people saying completely different things... you sort of are supposed to represent one thing.”

Yamamoto-san’s answers to this were nuanced, but there was a level of acceptance and recognition of the limitations of Voice Up Japan that surprised me. I expected some sadness that, like the activist organisations before it, Voice Up, would fit the current pattern of being extremely active and connected for up to four years and then would disperse.

Instead, Yamamoto was already looking towards future projects and framing the timeline from foundation to dissolution of this NGO as almost natural. This was tied to her beliefs

that the unity demanded of an organisation, even a non-profit, non-governmental one, did not align with ‘the core essence’ of activism.

‘*Sore no hou ga kurai node*’: Politics of a student activist project

People who have been more critical of parts of Chabujo’s internal structure and workflow have tended to be younger, international (either of different nationalities or with overseas education/work experience), or external to the organisation itself. No organisation is perfect, and, although Chabujo is less than a decade old, it has seen enough social action, peaking from 2017 to 2019 after Ito Shiori came forward with her story of sexual assault (and the following legal battle), for the individuals and newer groups it influenced to try to improve on their existing corpus of work. The clearest example of this would be the sexual consent handbook Chabujo’s team at the time published in 2018, a handbook tackling boundaries, cultural ideas of sex and sex education in Japan, sexual health topics, and, of course, consent. This was aimed at university students, a natural choice for many members and collaborators after becoming aware of the many cases of sexual violence and gender-based discrimination at Japanese higher education institutions. But a general handbook is not the end to education about sexual consent in Japan. Students referenced early handbooks like Chabujo’s as when they first realised this was something they could try to create (given a certain amount of support, resources and effort) and then aim to customise new content for their university or institution’s environment.

I have focused on the Waseda student team’s work on this, but there are a growing number of universities in Tokyo and beyond who are writing, publishing, and may have already distributed their own handbooks on campus. The fact that this is no longer a ‘one-off’ or exceptional was surprising and exciting. And the handbooks are a tangible and

material testament to the work being done by young people and organisations around consent awareness and education. The surprise that would register on people's faces and in their comments when I shared this became a constant companion during my fieldwork. It became a common response for me to describe some of the handbook and workshop successes I had learned about in my research enquiries. These achievements were explained with the caveat that the activities were concentrated in separate geographical spaces, and they were closed to widespread dissemination of group activities.

The Waseda sexual consent handbook was inspired in part by already existing handbooks, with the Chabujo and Keio University handbooks being two points of reference. But, even as Shikano-san and the rest of the handbook team worked to adapt and localise contents to a specific Waseda campus context, there was a struggle to move past both a mindset determined by Western gender binaries and a common-sense (*jōshiki*) idea of sexual abuse and gender. When asked about the impression existing handbooks like Chabujo's had made on the Waseda project, Shikano-san mentioned the growing discussion around what makes a victim, including conversations around trans rights and young women as victims of sexual abuse. But she asserted, older women and other genders as victims of sexual abuse was something she was told needed to be recognised as well. This lack of recognition or awareness (or, *ninshiki*) pushed Shikano-san to not only look at other handbooks but consider how to make something that was accessible to typical university students. I include below an English translation of our Japanese-language interview, with Shikano-san's concluding comment transcribed in both languages:

Oh, the Keio University handbook, it's clearly trying not to be binary, right? Maybe it's the picture design or something. So, I thought that we were thinking the same thing. I'm not talking to you directly, but we and Keio. But I felt something. At that time, other universities were also creating their own projects, and at first, people from Speak Up Sophia, people from the Gender Movement at the University of Tokyo, etc., were all connected to Chabudai, so there was a feeling that it was fine to be like the people above us. However, as we gradually became more and more involved in our own activities, we decided that if we were going to create something new, it would not be good if it was the

same thing, so we decided that binary was not the way to go (*bainarii jya dame...nanka wari to tabun onaji michisuji wo tadotta no ka natte...*).

Shikano-san's explanation illustrates the detailed strategising of the Waseda handbook team, as well as the choices made to diverge from previously produced content. Her worry about binaries is connected to the categorisation of victims of sexual violence as well as wishing to 'create something new.' Although Shikano-san did not explicitly mention the history of gender backlash movements, she mentions her work with the Waseda Gender and Sexuality Centre and conversations with Gender Studies professors encouraged her to think beyond various norms. LGBTQ+ and trans rights were still relevant to producing an inclusive sexual consent handbook. These comments emerge in the wake of the women's university Ochanomizu's 2016 decision to accept trans women as students, spurring the increased visibility of trans-exclusionary, or gender-critical, feminism in Japan. The arguments of mainstream feminists, in attempting to assert that feminism was not trying to create genderless persons (*chūsei ningen*), reaffirmed the dominance of masculinity and femininity. This, Hidenobu Yamada writes, meant they "disregarded the fact that transphobia and binary gender norms were a feminist concern, too" (2022, 502).

To return to my induction into Chabujo and the question of 'binaries', most of Chabujo's members are women (identifying and presenting as female), and although this makes them well-suited to address issues of gender inequality in Japan, which concern women, there is less attention paid to other marginalised groups. This also includes individuals who have multiple identities, which may be discriminated against in typical Japanese society, further complicated by the cooperation between moral conservatives of the LDP government and gender-critical feminists (Yamaguchi, 2018, Bullock et al., 2018b, Shimizu, 2020, Yamaguchi, 2022, Kawasaka, 2023). The gendered 'binary' mindset of conservative parties, government policies, and even consent campaigns has been commented upon by members and non-members.

The Chabujo sexual consent handbook content assumes that most victims of sexual violence are women or that, even in community-facing seminars or workshops, members may assume that people already understand feminist concepts or terms borrowed and adapted from other languages, primarily English. The latter feeds into what quickly became clear after I joined Chabujo—although the members are primarily Japanese women and there is not much (obvious) racial, ethnic, or gender diversity, the organisation is filled with individuals educated overseas, including those who now work in other countries.

The overseas experience of the Chabujo team widens the possibilities for accessible resources since members are multilingual at least in reading and writing, even if not in conversation. However, the consequences of this transnational knowledge exchange are strikingly similar to my position as a foreign outsider—some disconnect from the way the general Japanese public thinks, feels, and discusses social issues like gender inequality and sexual violence. So, thinking on my initial experiences with Chabujo, there was a startling mix of ‘oh, they’re talking about the same issues as in the UK or the US’ paired with ‘wait, this approach is a lot more methodical and only certain groups’ problems are being discussed.’ The concepts were exciting and significant, but it was immediately hard to gauge where people were in their understanding of how, for example, gender interacts with race, or whether male victims of harassment were also voices that needed to be heard. Different individuals had varying levels of knowledge and experience about subjects. Some people were coming from a place of everyday personal struggles with microaggressions, and assumptions based on gender while others had an academic background in gender studies. Still others possessed the *zaiya seishin* Aoyama-sensei referred to and which Waseda’s founder wished the institution to embody and had been, or were still involved, with other organisations and movements outside of Chabujo. From the

first team meeting I attended, I began to glean how complex and separate members' motivations were and, even as the organisation's structure changed slightly and member involvement also fluctuated, there was more to learn and reflect upon.

I will say that being a new member of Chabujo was both positive and challenging in many respects. Even with a low commitment in the months I had been involved, the organisation had become a source of community for me as it has for other members, regardless of their current level of activity in meetings or in Slack channels. This will probably become a part of a separate reflection, but not only did I have some casual chats online with members, sometimes one-on-one until other people joined group calls, but I eventually met a couple of members offline. There was one member who became a friend as well as a colleague, and another who briefly became a fellow researcher/collaborator, though we have not yet become friends.

As with Chabujo and other grassroots organisations on and off university campuses in Japan, the Waseda sexual consent handbook team's campaign/project was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The team had become used to meeting, organising, and working online as well as offline. One of the founding members and unofficial leaders of the team, Shikano-san,¹³ explained this to me during the *setsumeikai* we had on Zoom in December 2022, along with the fact that the team usually met two to three times a month during and close to term time. With the expectation that the meetings I was to attend and participate in would be through Zoom or some similar video conferencing platform, I looked forward to the training session, which was planned to be in-person at the student centre (*gakusei*

¹³ Often referred to by a nickname by both fellow students and by faculty members, Shikano-san was by far the most prominent member of the handbook team and was in many ways the name, if not the face, of the entire sexual consent project at Waseda University. Although she is well-known on Waseda's campuses I refer to her by pseudonym because she has not made multiple public media appearances unlike Yamamoto-san.

kaikan) where most circles met for practice and organising activities. It was not clear how much of the coming academic year, from April 2023, was going to be in-person or online events, so it was then disappointing to learn that, due to a sudden snowfall in Tokyo, the Friday session was moved to be online. Regardless, it was more convenient for everyone to join online. There was a double layer of ‘protection’ in joining from the comfort of our homes and from behind our computer screens. This change in format for the training offered me and other new members, of which there was at least one, a less vulnerable way to get to know the sexual consent handbook team.

Because of the digital format, all but the veteran members like Shikano-san and Aoki-san, who explained the presentation slides and related material, were in a listening role as an audience. Instead of the planned training ‘workshop’, it felt more like a lecture. This did not escape the notice of Shikano-san, Aoki-san, and other long-term members, who apologised for this far from interactive training session. This did not mean the material wasn’t interesting, though there was a lot of it, divided into beginner, intermediate, and advanced versions of the sexual consent handbook content adapted for workshops. Workshops were typically in-person and organised by the team with Waseda professors. Handbook team members would ‘take the podium’ and give presentations to classes and seminars. It was more intricate and professional than expected. The Waseda project used LINE group chats instead of the Slack workspace preferred by Chabujo. But there were also layers of files and conversations through a shared Google Drive and a monitored Gmail account. This already sizable archive of documents was perhaps the most overwhelming part of the training and the induction into being a handbook team member.

Where and how were we to get involved exactly? This might have been a common worry for new members besides me (I thought I would be filling gaps in translations and handbook creation) because the veteran members emphasised that anytime we were

uncertain about something, we could freely ask questions in the group LINE chat. The indirect answer to the above question was that we could get involved to whatever degree and whatever way we wanted. There was often more work to be done in term time than there were people to volunteer for it. I did not know how true (and severe) the lack of manpower was until workshops and welcome events for new Waseda students began in April. We were scrambling to get enough volunteers across Shaberu and VUJ Waseda, as well as the general volunteers like me who held no affiliation to either circle. The trend from the training workshop onwards was that there were, this year at least, usually two to three core members who were taking on a large share of the workload. They had volunteered for the tasks of emailing professors or running most workshops but not without some rescheduling of their own lives, it seemed.

Most of the materials shared and workshop content explained during the training session in February 2023 were familiar because they were either directly adapted from the handbook or UN international guidance on sexuality education, including consent. Maybe unsurprisingly, the *'Consent is as simple as tea'* video, originally produced in the UK by the Thames Valley Police, has made its rounds around the globe, including to the classrooms at Waseda, where the team shared either a Japanese dubbed version or one with Japanese language subtitles. It was unclear how much this video resonated with or was understood by the students. Some of them might have heard of or seen the video before, especially if they had lived or studied overseas previously. In the workshops I later assisted with, there was not as strong a reaction as I once heard from students at Banbury Junior College located outside of Oxford, where they excitedly asked if 'we were going to watch the tea consent video again'. When the answer was 'sorry, not this time', there were groans of disappointment and exasperation from said student and their peers.

Back at Waseda University, during the training, we watched this tea video along with two separate active bystander videos as examples of what we shared during workshops—where we played the selected video depended on how much time the professors wished to allot for the workshop. The workshop’s length of time and the material used were consistently an online discussion through the group’s shared Gmail account between consent team members and the professor. The faculty member referenced their class/seminar schedules and considered their students’ existing knowledge before selecting an introduction to sexual consent as opposed to one which covered bystander intervention in more detail and included time for role-played scenarios. When it came to the active bystander videos, although both were in Japanese, one was considered ‘darker’ (*sore no hou ga kurai node*) than the other, and the veteran members explained to us new members, that because of that ‘characteristic’ they no longer showed the video in the workshops.

They did not elaborate on *why* this was, beyond it being ‘dark (*kurai*)’, though the handbook team did collect feedback from workshop participants who could have indicated discomfort with the video. The ‘darker’ video depicted multiple reenacted scenes of people being harassed on trains, escalators, on the streets and more, all clearly set in the backdrop of urban Japan. It was a dark, yet truthful video as it showed the outcome—forms of sexual violence like groping, stalking, and taking photos up women’s skirts while on an escalator, when no one intervened, versus when a bystander did. The interventions shown, like pretending the victim was a friend or colleague to get them away from their assailant, did not mean repercussions for the harasser, but these small efforts stopped the assault and made the victim more comfortable. The message of the video took the stance that practising bystander intervention also equated to making an environment that was safer for everyone.

However, the bystander video used was simpler—a rotating scene of characters in a moving train who intervened in different ways to stop a man in a business suit from groping a woman in similar professional clothes. This was a scene of *chikan* (groping, usually in public spaces) familiar to both handbook team members and any students listening to a workshop given by the team. The message here was that there were many ways to be an active bystander, using the framework of the 5 D's: Direct, Delegate, Delay, Distract, Document (included in the Waseda team's sexual consent handbook). Although this message holds whether it was vividly depicted in the dark, or *kurai*, active bystander video, the exaggerated examples of an elderly lady banging a gong to scare off the perpetrator or a group of hip-hop dancers with a boombox beatboxing the perpetrator away created a forced light-heartedness that, in my opinion, was unrealistic and almost comical. But, since the training proceeded in a determined, lecture format and no one else spoke up, I also remained silent, sensing that this was not something to be criticised. Opinions on this hadn't been requested, and as mentioned above, I received the impression that a decision had already been made based on feedback from students and/or faculty. Perhaps current team members thought differently but had chosen to concede on the point that a lighter video was better for the student audience.

From my meetings with Chabujo, I had learned that the organisation did not regularly hold workshops about consent, bystander intervention, or other gendered social issues which concerned individual members. Therefore, I was eager to hear that the Waseda sexual consent handbook team would continue their workshops from April 2023, following the start of the spring term and the welcome events many circles held for the new cohort of first-year undergraduate students. Online meetings with the team occurred at least twice a month, even more frequently when larger events such as the welcoming of

new students were about to take place. These meetings almost always included a discussion of upcoming events and workshops, including which members to schedule to ‘take the podium’ (*tōdansuru*) at each workshop. Shikano-san and a couple of other, more experienced, members ordinarily emailed Waseda professors enquiring whether they would like the team to give a workshop to any of their classes of first-year students or seminars of second and third-year students.

Positive responses would lead to scheduling various workshops that would occur either at the beginning or the end of the class. In team meetings, available members, like me, gathered online to learn about the schedule and which workshop slots still needed facilitators. Notably, Shikano-san, Kanao-san, Aoki-san, or any other veteran members collaborating with a given professor often volunteered for most of these workshops. There was also an unspoken understanding that team members who had an existing relationship with the professor, the department, or the university course, having taken that class in a previous term, were more likely to ‘take the podium’ and run the workshop.

One of the workshops in late April was to be held in English by the request of the professor, Takai-sensei, who taught an English language foundational course on internationalisation. Selina and I, the only non-Japanese members of the team at the time, were asked if we could lead this workshop since we could speak English fluently. Selina had been a team member since late summer/early autumn 2022 and had helped lead a few earlier English-language workshops, so she offered to run through the presentation slides online together beforehand. We connected on the mobile social networking application LINE after the scheduled discussion to arrange a follow-up meeting between us.

The number of meetings that were considered important to conducting these workshops and welcome events at Waseda was certainly higher than I had expected. This

was especially unexpected because the handbook and workshop materials themselves were not changing significantly at the time I was a member. There were constant minor edits to be made to the text of both the PowerPoint slides and the written scripts, which were a combination of the slide descriptions and additions by past members, some of whom were no longer active on the consent handbook team. However, as a new member about to conduct their first workshop, I was grateful for the opportunity to learn from other members, as well as for the fact that so much preparation before these workshops was the apparent norm.

Other than Shikano-san, I had not been able to speak one-on-one with any other consent handbook team member until the workshop meeting with Selina. We jumped on a Zoom call, and Sabrina-san quickly brought up the most recent version of the English workshop slides for the 30-minute presentation. As mentioned earlier, the workshop length was determined by the professor after the handbook team gave the options of a 10-minute, 30-minute or roughly one-hour workshop. Takai-san had chosen the 30-minute version to be held at the end of her internationalisation class, so this was the version of the PowerPoint presentation Sabrina-san, and I reviewed together. Because it was generally difficult to ask questions unrelated to the logistics of workshops during the regular team meetings, I took this review as a chance to ask Sabrina-san about her individual thoughts and past experiences with the workshops.

I asked how the workshops she had conducted were received by the students; she paused thoughtfully before responding that it depended on the class, and the reactions could be very different. She distinguished between the mixed Japanese and international student classes as opposed to the all-Japanese classes, explaining that a mixed class tended to engage more with the workshop material, and a Japanese student class might be quieter or serious in their reactions. I confirmed when she joined the team herself and how the

team's activities had developed over time. After all, the handbook had only been completed in March 2022, with a revised version made available online and in print in September 2022—workshops only began after the handbook was complete because the handbook content is the basis for the information given in each workshop. I have included slides from one of the introductory presentations given by Shaberu, the circle which was primarily involved in the sexual consent project at Waseda. These include a timeline of when the handbook team was first formed in June 2021, following Shaberu creating a proposal and winning an award in the Waseda150 student competition in March 2021. Voice Up Japan Waseda submitted the request for mandatory consent workshops to Waseda's president, Tanaka Aji, in November 2021, and then the handbook's completion (*kansei*) was noted in March 2022.

Sabrina-san was not a member of the handbook team when most of these steps occurred, but she was able to share with me some of the notable changes in how the workshops were put on and who was involved. She remarked as well that 'last semester' (Autumn 2022) it was a lot more disorganised than the current method of keeping track of confirmed workshop times through the application Timetree. However, Sabrina-san expressed concern about how the team kept getting smaller and needed more members. She had observed that VUJW (Voice Up Japan Waseda) members had stopped participating. The reasons for this did not become more apparent until later in my fieldwork. The detailed background of Voice Up Japan's role, or lack of one, in the most recent iterations of the Waseda sexual consent project were eventually conveyed to me by the founder, Kazuna Yamamoto, after I had returned to the UK in Autumn 2023. I will include the transcribed interview in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

To deal with having more workshops scheduled this semester than in the last, the team members had started emailing a semester in advance and that seemed to help

everyone manage their schedules better. Sabrina-san and I divided the slides in half, determining that I would do the first half focused on introducing sexual consent and defining the six principles that it was made up of and she would do the second half about the ‘pizza workshop’. She also explained that English speakers generally just helped with the English workshops. She had not helped with any of the Japanese ones yet, even though she could communicate in Japanese, and explained that it was only when a workshop was low on Japanese native speakers that non-native speakers tended to help. We could also volunteer at any point to help with the Japanese-language workshops but would not be forced to. This did cause me some concern at the time, because I knew that the team had had other bilingual and non-Japanese members in the past, especially when the handbook was developed and translated into English. Were the non-Japanese members just tokens at this point when the translation work had dwindled and, at least in the current term, so few professors were requesting English workshops?

Within the Waseda sexual consent handbook team and the Chabujo digital team, there were in-group boundaries, categories, and divisions. These categories were based on feminist interpretations, specific issue concerns (beyond the general mission statement of the organisation in question), education, overseas experience, age, race, and gender identity. They echoed in many ways Dales’ (2009) observations of dynamics within other women’s groups in Japan. As Dales outlined from her communications, in Waseda sexual consent handbook team meetings and Chabujo team meetings “divisions within the group shifted on several axes” such as Japanese women who had lived overseas being grouped with foreign women or Japanese-speaking foreign women being grouped with Japanese members (Dales, 2009, 44, Dalton and Norma, 2022c). Although the language ability shift relayed by Dales was less applicable in the organisations I joined because all meetings and most events were conducted in Japanese, being a non-Japanese speaking member, even if a

foreigner, was not an option. The exclusion of non-Japanese speakers was something I only felt, oddly enough, in the oddly emphasised reassurance aimed at foreign members of the Waseda team not to feel pressured to conduct workshops in Japanese, even after proving some level of linguistic and cultural competency through internal group meetings.

Through this process is expressed a differently nuanced categorisation, even exclusion, filtered through the lens of polite consideration. Dales' discussion of shifting axes of division in other feminist women's groups is framed as something positive to neutral: "The flexibility of these categories ensured an escape on cultural grounds from a full-blown them-and-us binary while nonetheless stimulating and complicating the dynamics of the group" (ibid, 44). Although I agree these categories can be flexible and even the Waseda group's case of putting the onus on individual members to sign up to facilitate workshops demonstrated adaptability to shifting student schedules and a reliance on self-responsibility, the distinctions are still made between Japanese and non-Japanese members—a binary that is blurred but visible.

The next section of this chapter will include ethnographic descriptions of the two workshops I helped facilitate—one in English with the other fluent English speaker on the team and the second in Japanese with two Japanese undergraduate student members. Before I go into detail about these experiences and interactions, I must outline that, as a facilitator reading aloud a script and effectively leading parts of each of these two workshops, I was constructing the ethnographic encounters as an active participant. I was not, at any point, in the role of a student audience member attending the class or *zemi* in question, nor an uninvolved observer sitting or standing to the side. My presence as a white foreigner on both podiums could have influenced, if not the structure of the workshops, which were predetermined via scripts and slides used by all group members, the delivery and the resulting reactions of listening students. With this caveat included, I

hope the descriptions that follow accurately frame my presence as a potential influencing factor on what occurred.

‘Yori yoi ningen kankei wo kizuku hōhō’: What is a successful workshop?

On the day of the workshop for Takai-sensei’s class, Sabrina and I met outside Building 33 on Waseda’s Toyama campus, which is home to most of the humanities classes. We had been told to come in at 14.20 and the 30-minute workshop would go until 14.50. But we arrived early to ensure we did not inconvenience the professor. Both of us were used to ‘timely’ meaning five to fifteen minutes before the scheduled appointment, and as the time crept closer to the start, we agreed to move from a bench outside to take the elevator up to the seventh floor. We located the classroom and stood outside, conversing quietly to each other and speculating on what type of class this will be in terms of engagement. That is, until the voice of Takai-sensei explaining assignments to her students began to wind down. Once it was 14.20, we knocked on the door and entered the classroom with Takai-sensei smiling and already thanking us for coming to lead the workshop.

Our gazes swept over the students; a small class of only 19, mixed male and female, clustered in pairs of two or groups of three. A whiteboard and projector screen took up one wall to the left of the classroom door, and a thick-paned window permitted only a faint trickle of natural light in. We asked Takai-sensei to borrow the desktop computer, which sat on the desk in the front corner of the room, where Sabrina then inserted the USB drive which held the PowerPoint presentation. The slides were also uploaded onto the consent handbook team Google Drive to access online, if need be, but having the USB with the necessary files was a standard practice ‘just in case’, because each classroom or lecture hall had a different technical setup. The slides came up without any issue, and we

quickly flicked through the entire selection to ensure that the slide with the ‘*Consent-It’s as Simple as Tea*’ video was working, pulling up the video link on YouTube in a separate browser tab.



Figure 46: 'What's Consent? How to maintain safe and healthy relationships' title slide in English.

Once we indicated that we were all set up, the title slide on the projector screen (Figure 46) and scripts in hand, we informed Takai-sensei. She gave a short introduction explaining that we were part of the group at Waseda, which had produced sexual consent handbooks and gave these workshops regularly. We thanked Takai-sensei for sharing her classroom with us and introduced ourselves before we began the presentation itself. All eyes were on us as Takai-sensei took a seat at one of the front desks and I explained the topic of the presentation, including the trigger warning about mentions of sexual violence and rape (Figure 47).

In both the English and Japanese versions of the workshop, we explicitly explained that, if a student struggled to listen to parts of the workshop content, they could leave the classroom, and it would not affect their grades. We verbally confirmed this with the professor as well. Establishing trigger warnings and ground rules was common in sexual consent materials in the US and the UK as well, but the addition of the statement that ‘it would not affect grades’ did surprise me. This seemed like a concern that students would

have if there were already classroom rules in place that said tardiness or missing lectures was a punishable offence. But these workshops were conducted upon request and were not mandatory. It would then seem strange to take any marks off the grades if a student was disturbed by a description of sexual harassment and needed to leave temporarily.

Introduction & Trigger Warning

Today's Workshop: *sexual violence, rape*

- We won't use figurative language or metaphors when talking about sex
- Don't force yourself to listen
- It's related to EVERYONE

Leaving the classroom is OK (No influence on your grades)

Figure 47: English version introduction slide; no 'ground rule' slide was used in the 30-minute English PPT.

In this English workshop conducted for Takai-sensei's class, however, there was never an indication that any student wished to leave. They listened silently, some appearing attentive while others were bleary-eyed, close to nodding off after the lunch break and an already hour-long class. After introducing the concept of sexual consent as something that 'must be given in all sexual acts', per the English version of the Waseda sexual consent handbook, I switched to the slide containing the by then well-known video, titled '*Consent-It's as Simple as Tea*'. This video was originally made by the Thames Valley Police and posted on YouTube, where it has appeared in many online consent training courses and workshops around the world.

In my review of existing literature and websites discussing consent in Japan, I also viewed the video on the official website of the non-profit sexual health education organisation PILCON. PILCON had embedded a version of the video that was dubbed into Japanese and included Japanese language subtitles (see Figure 48). However, the version

used in the Waseda workshops was neither the original British English video nor the Japanese dubbed version. Instead, it was an American English version with Japanese subtitles, which was an interesting choice given that the Japanese dub exists. Regardless of the version, the content and message remain unchanged, reinforcing the idea that asking for consent applies to all situations and that it is inappropriate to impose anything, be it a cup of tea or otherwise, on someone who does not want it or cannot express their desire for it.

▼性的同意を解説した紅茶と同意の動画

Consent – it's simple as tea (日本語版)



Figure 48: Sexual consent resources from the NPO PILCON website, including a Japanese-dubbed tea video.

Following the video, I presented the six principles of consent that the handbook also emphasised, which included the following: “equal footings, must be fully aware, must be freely given, must be fully informed, must be an ‘enthusiastic yes’, and consent must be reversible and specific.” These lines were all accompanied by short examples of ‘reasons for not saying NO’ and ‘when the consent doesn’t count.’ The former is an attempt to address victim-blaming and shaming culture in Japan by stating that there are distinct

situations where an individual may feel it too unsafe to directly say ‘no.’ These include pressure from university seniors, such as in *senpai/kōhai* relationships, owing money or favours, and a fear that the person may hate them or even spread rumours about them. Unequal power dynamics were also clearly outlined as not allowing for consent, such as with supervisors, employers, coaches, and anyone in a position of authority over you. Although we did mention these in the English workshop, I later helped with a Japanese workshop and noticed that there were more detailed examples of these issues and gentle inclusions of an absence of consent. One of these emphasised that, although it is common for *senpai* and *kōhai* to date one another in *sākuru*, once people enter society, becoming ‘*shakaijin*’, there are often slight power differences, such as one person paying most of the rent when living together and having more economic power (*keizairyoku*). Another memorable example, though not always included due to time constraints, was someone putting *tare* (dipping sauce) all over a shared order of *karaage* (fried chicken dish) at an *izakaya* without checking if other people wanted it.

Workshop: Let's order a "Consent" pizza!



Please make a group with the people around you, and choose what pizza to order!(5min)

- ※NO "Half&Half / Quarter" pizzas
- Please make ONE pizza together.
- ※Think to yourselves something like "Am I hungry?" and choose the pizza to eat NOW!
- ※**NO Majority VOTE!**

Figure 49: English version of 'consent pizza' slide.

Workshop: Let's order a pizza!

Dough 1. ふわふわ/Thick 2. Crispy/Thin	Toppings 1. Tomato 2. Basil 3. Green Pepper 4. Onion 5. Shimeji Mushroom 6. Scallion (ねぎ) 7. Seaweed 8. Mushroom 9. Cheese 10. Shirasu 11. Chicken 12. Pineapple 13. Shrimp 14. Bacon	
Sauce 1. Tomato Sauce 2. BBQ Sauce 3. Basil Sauce 4. Japanese Style Miso Sauce	Size 1. Small 2. Medium 3. Large	

Figure 50: List of toppings and sauces to make a pizza.

After I presented a slide emphasising the importance of an ‘enthusiastic yes’, I passed the lead over to Sabrina, who introduced the activity part of the workshop, the ‘consent pizza’ (see Figures 49 and 50). This activity provided an opportunity for the classroom to break into groups of three or four people to make a pizza together. Fortunately for Sabrina and me, this was a small class, and the desks were close to each other, making it easy for anyone who was not already in a group to shift their seating to discuss what type of pizza they wanted. We provided the students with guidelines on how to make the pizza, including no half and half or quarter toppings, as well as a list of different styles of pizza they could decide upon. These guidelines were also shown on a PowerPoint slide, which they could refer to as needed. We could only allocate about five minutes to the activity and an extra few to asking for their reflections afterwards. The idea behind the consent handbook team, including the ‘consent pizza’ as part of these workshops, was to demonstrate that sex is a collaborative activity based around communication.

Students seemed engaged with each other during their brief discussion about pizza toppings but were relatively hesitant to share their thoughts on the activity. Sabrina calls on different groups to ask what pizza they decided to make as well as the process by which

they decided to, for example, order a large pizza over a small one, or one without onions over one that has them (Figure 51). Ideally, we would have followed these questions with an explanation of why we do the pizza workshop, but we were short on time and needed to move on to briefly mentioning the concept of bystander intervention, sharing the QR code to the workshop feedback form, and then showing the SNS information of both the consent handbook team and Shaberu, including how to contact the groups to become more involved. The handbook team was always recruiting new members in this manner, by sharing their Instagram and email, although it was a rare instance when someone reached out and decided to become a member.



Figure 51: Reflection questions post-consent pizza activity, there were very few responses from students.

This sharing of codes, links and forms marked the end of this English-language sexual consent workshop. We thanked the students and Takai-sensei, retrieved our USB and script and left the classroom before the students filed out to their next afternoon class. It was less of a workshop than a lecture by visiting students, but 30 minutes had passed incredibly fast.

Sabrina appeared relieved that no one had fallen asleep or been disinterested in the information. Takai-sensei had also asked us whether she could order some paper copies of

the handbook herself, and we said she could request copies online or by email. We would either deliver them in person or post them to her address. Sabrina-san and I later communicated this to the group LINE chat, especially to the veteran member in charge of most of the accounting and handbook distribution, Aoki-san. But, in the immediate aftermath of what was a calm, completed workshop, if nothing else, the two of us walked to a nearby park and debriefed, discussing the day as well as more general observations about the sexual consent project and life in Japan. Over an hour went by, talking amiably. So, Sabrina-san and I agreed to meet again for a longer, more formal conversation the following week to discuss her experiences with university environments at both Waseda and Hosei University.

A couple of weeks later, the number of workshops scheduled in Timetree had grown. New workshops required more members of the small handbook team to become available, and I volunteered to lead a workshop with Kanao-san. Kanao-san was a member I had met in person earlier at the circle fair in April, when Shaberu members working on other aspects of the sexual consent project and handbook volunteers took turns sitting at the booth as well as handing out flyers to new students roaming through the throngs of circle representatives on Waseda's main campus. Kanao-san, Shikano-san and I also had an earlier meeting in late April to discuss the level and format of the upcoming Japanese language workshop. There was some confusion about whether we would be teaching beginner or intermediate level materials, since the professor leading the zemi, Matsui-sensei, with whom I was already acquainted through the Gender Research Institute, taught feminist and gender studies in literature and was eager for her students to learn about consent. In the end, we had concluded that the roughly 40-minute workshop would include

the beginner material as well as a more comprehensive overview of bystander intervention, specifically the ‘5 D’s.’

Since the beginning of the workshop would closely resemble the English version I had led with Sabrina earlier, Kanao-san and I agreed that I would present this section. Kanao-san also had more experience in the workshops than I did, having participated in them three or four times before. However, neither of us were true veterans. This was perhaps reason enough for Shikano-san to have the discussion meeting in person a few days before Matsui-sensei’s zemi. Interestingly, most of the meeting among the three of us involved Shikano-san reviewing the intermediate material with us, which included scenarios for students to roleplay among themselves and then to either act out or summarise in front of a class. At times during her rapid explanation, I felt pressured to enthusiastically agree to include this material in the workshop. However, we only had 40 minutes of the allocated zemi time of about two hours.¹⁴ Kanao-san and I only had time to reorganise parts of the outdated script to our liking when Shikano-san finished talking and eventually left us to our own devices.

The day of the workshop, Kanao-san and I messaged each other to meet about an hour beforehand to run through the script together in one of Waseda’s WSpaces, which were areas for students to use to self-study, practice presentations, and have group meetings.

Kanao-san was not the only one present at the booked WSpace; a member of Shaberu who had been available at this time had offered to join us. She explained that she

¹⁴ This class length has since been extended. At some point in the 2023 academic year, the standard time for classes at Waseda University was changed from about 120 minutes to 180 minutes. It is unclear whether this affected the different ‘workshop course offerings’ provided by the sexual consent handbook team, especially because there were already longer 60 minute and 90-minute options for professors to choose from.

would not be taking the podium. Instead, she would help with logistics like handing out any flyers or encouraging the zemi students to ask questions and bringing a microphone to where they were sitting. This turned out to be extremely helpful for Kanao-san and me because when we arrived at the room Matsui-sensei had told us to meet at we realised it was a lecture hall which could easily hold 200 students, perhaps even more. The three of us looked at each other with wide eyes and slackened jaws after we pushed open the oversized doors. It felt impossible to know what to expect.

Although we were aware it would be a large class—around 82 first-year students being taught about English literature and feminism, it was evident none of us predicted it would take place in this spacious lecture hall with hundreds of seats arranged in an arcing amphitheatre-style before a raised wooden stage. The stage was large enough to fit a small orchestra, with a wooden podium rearing up on one side, a microphone and audiovisual equipment arranged on top and tucked discreetly inside its length. We entered the auditorium tentatively, dropping our bags by the left-hand seats in the frontmost row. I think we all assumed from our own experiences that the average first-year student would never dare to take a front row seat in such a large hall. As we began to murmur about whether we should set up the PowerPoint, Matsui-sensei entered and welcomed us with her usual broad smile and excited gesturing. She recognised me as well and we exchanged a few polite words before we resumed setting up. Matsui-sensei said she could log in to her account on the computer first, and we could then pull up our slides from the Google Drive. Unlike Takai-sensei, she also had brought copies of some pages of the consent handbook,

which, once students began to trickle into the cavernous auditorium, we distributed with the help of the Shaberu member.

Ground Rules グラウンドルール

1. Don't talk about personal matters you hear of in any other space 個人的なことを聞いても他の場所で話しちゃダメ
2. Be considerate and please refrain from unequal/hierarchical relations 上下関係を気にさせない配慮を
3. It is okay to not want to talk 話したくないことは話さなくていい
4. Do not judge other people's appearances 見た目
で判断しない
5. Do not laugh at or deny other people's experiences 笑わない、否定しない
6. Careless words are also a form of violence 安易な言葉は暴力

教室を退出してもOK It is OK to leave the classroom
(成績への影響はありません)
(it will have no effect on your grades)

Figure 52: Japanese 'ground rules' slide, emphasis was placed on not sharing individual stories outside the classroom. Translation by the author.

The students gathered, and Matsui-sensei first took to the stage to remind her zemi about the content they would be covering in the class and introduced the consent handbook team and our relevance to the zemi material focused on feminism. The three of us also introduced ourselves before launching into the slides (see Figure 52 for the ground rule slide), reading from our script most of the time. I had confirmed whether it was alright to read the script while presenting the workshop, and apparently, I was not the only one who relied on this to keep the content consistent. The amount of material covered in a workshop, whether it was ten minutes or 40 minutes, was considerable. After I shakily made my way through the first half of the presentation, Kanao-san seemed conscious of the time remaining, speaking relatively fast to attempt to stay within 40 minutes. We did run over by about ten minutes, but Matsui-sensei did not appear ruffled about it. Matsui-sensei's enthusiasm exceeded expectations as she served as a moderator between the handbook's dense material and the students' resounding silence.

For example, one of the differences between the English and Japanese language workshop slides was that the Japanese version had a multiple-choice question which asked: ‘In which of the following do you think sexual consent is established? (*seiteki doui ga seiritsushiteiru to kangaerareru no wa dore?*)’



Figure 53: “In all the provided examples sexual consent was not established,” final slide from quiz sequence during Japanese workshop.

The answer is ‘in all the provided examples, sexual consent was *not* established’ (*subete seiteki doui ga seiritsushiteinai*). Another graphic flashes across the screen at the press of a button, which announces: ‘all sexual words and actions where sexual consent is not given are sexual violence’ (*seiteki doui ga torareteinai seiteki na gendou wa subete seiboryoku desu*) (see Figure 53 above). Students were given several minutes to read the options and decide either on their own or with the classmates seated next to them what the correct answer is. All of us at the podium kept track of timed activities using timers on our mobile phones. Matsui-sensei also took note of the time we announced and when students were reluctant to raise their hands or say which answer they had chosen, she called out for them to participate. This was one of the first times, but not the last, that she encouraged her students to engage with the activities. The pizza workshop activity, which was explained by Kanao-san, became another point where Matsui-sensei’s attentiveness helped drive student participation. Although she was helpful, even lively, in her engagement with the

material, identical attitudes were not adopted by the dozens of students clustered near the front half of the lecture hall.

Although this class was not immediately after the usual lunch break, starting about five minutes after three in the afternoon, there was an air of lethargy in the room, and it was unclear whether it was because of the presentation style itself or general fatigue halfway through a Monday full of lectures. So, despite the timing of the zemi and the size of the class, the atmosphere related to student engagement was startlingly like the class of just 19 students. An important factor in less verbal and obvious participation in the other workshop could have been a lack of comprehension of the English language material. But that would not have been the case with this workshop run entirely in Japanese and by Japanese students (excluding myself), including the Shaberu member who helped moderate the reflections after the consent pizza activity.

それぞれの境界：自分の気持ちを知る

Various boundaries: Knowing your own feelings

同意がなければ、バウンダリー（個人の境界線）の侵害にあたり、性暴力になります！

バウンダリー：自分が安心して健康でいられるために、自分が設定する人との心理的／物理的境界線のこと

あなたが不快に思う言動はなんでしょう？

「自己決定権」 Right to self-determination

いつ・誰と・どのように関わりを持つかは、自分で決められる

When, with who, and how you interact with it is up to you to decide

「バウンダリーの尊重」

Respecting boundaries

お互いの領域を尊重すること

Respecting each other's distance/space

Figure 54: *Sorezore no kyokai: jibun no kimochi wo shiru (Various boundaries: Knowing your own feelings)* Slide introducing boundaries' role in consent, including the concept of *jiko kettei-ken*. Translation by author.

Matsui-sensei appeared disappointed by the lacklustre participation, even as a couple of student groups described the pizzas they would order after the microphone came around, unbidden, since no one raised their hand. Admittedly, Kanao-san and I were more concerned about getting through the promised content, and we moved on to a slide about respecting boundaries, including the significance of the right to self-determination (*jiko*

kettei-ken) (Figure 54). The final section covered bystander intervention (*daisansha kainyū*), which was broken down into delegate, delay, distract, document, and direct and explained the students could protect and aid their friends and colleagues (see Figure 55).

This was accompanied by the more light-hearted video on becoming an active bystander. It was the same video that all sexual consent handbook team members were shown during the training session in February (see Figure 56). The video, much like the consent tea video, served as a visual representation of the principles, or in this case, the methods of being a bystander in an event of sexual harassment or violence. In the clip, the harassment in question was the easily recognisable *chikan*, or groping, incident that often occurs on crowded commuter trains in Tokyo and other large Japanese cities.



Figure 55: *Daisansha kainyū* (bystander intervention) introduction slide; five methods briefly described in the following slides. Translation by author.

After the description and examples of bystander intervention, we wrapped up the workshop with the usual request for any questions from the students, of which there were none, and then shared the reflection form QR code. Matsui-sensei again encouraged her students to provide feedback as well as to read the entirety of the handbook, which she reminded them was available to download for free online. She thanked us again, and we swiftly moved away from the podium and stage as Matsui-sensei brought up the materials for her zemi.

As Kanao-san, the Shaberu member, and I exited the auditorium, bags retrieved and hearts a little lighter, we expressed our relief that the workshop had been completed without any issues. We also remarked how nice Matsui-sensei had been to let us go a little over time. It had been the first workshop we had conducted together, the three of us, Kanao-san's first one in a long time and my first held in Japanese. The nervous excitement dissipated, and the weariness of post-adrenaline-fueled public speaking set in. I tried not to dwell on how intimidating the lack of reactions from the students was. For me and the other two team members present, Matsui-sensei's exuberant support was the primary comfort—the interaction during the workshop that made the effort put in feel worth it. This may have been seen as a disappointment, or even failure, in the delivery or content of the workshop, yet the lack of a reaction was perceived as 'acceptable' or 'good'—a 'success' even.



Figure 56: *Active Bystander ni narou (Let's become an Active Bystander!)* Video by UN Women Asia and the Pacific (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yT9xtrLLPFc>).

No reaction is a good reaction: Protecting the projects we have

Through my brief time with the handbook team, concessions, and compromises for the content of the handbook and workshops appeared to be the norm. The maintenance of the current project was likewise normalised, even to the degree that maintaining and

continuing what content they have appeared to take priority over true dialogue and engagement with the target audience. There were no reactions. Yet that was good and even preferred to the feared alternative—confusion or criticism from their peers.

The lack of evident reactions from university students was likely also a result of what is considered acceptable behaviour in a Japanese classroom environment. Students responded to the urging for engagement from their professor, Matsui-sensei, remaining silent at all other points while listening respectfully to the workshop content. There are parallels with Sato's (2022) observations of online SE workshops for undergraduate students and Kawahara's fieldwork of different high school students' approaches to SE content. Participants of Sato's study cited that "the virtual chat allowed students to use non-verbal cues such as smiles and head nods to validate their own learning", that "they developed a social connection with their facilitator and other students and that student engagement and discussion in the chat system were better than in-person learning" (2022, 5 and 6). At the vocational high school with a more urgent teenage pregnancy problem, Kawahara describes how students respond to teaching strategies on various sexual behaviours. After receiving instructions from their teacher, Mr. Ide, about writing an essay on "what would you do if you (or your girlfriend) got pregnant" the "students—especially male students—did not write at all, but talked with each other" and "after five or six minutes, however, they set to work on the essay seriously and quietly" (Kawahara, 2010, 304). These brief examples demonstrate that bodies in the classroom follow expected patterns of seriousness and quiet diligence, with students consistently following the guidance and social cues provided by their teachers and peers.

The active bystander materials, as with sexual violence incidents and consent discussions, were treated carefully. Maybe a few years in the future the handbook and its associated workshops will have undergone some drastic changes. At this point, the sexual

consent handbook project could go in multiple directions. New material could be added, or a companion handbook created. Alternatively, distribution could be halted, or sections taken out, especially reputation-damaging references to misogyny, discrimination, and harassment at Waseda University.

The three elements of continuity, growth, and transformation naturally meld together in this chapter's fieldwork: combining the content of workshops and various interviews across a period of twelve months. These were complemented by teaching materials, news articles and studies by other scholars. In other feminist organisations in Japan, there are similar concerns about continuity, sometimes conceptualised in terms of 'succession' to a movement. On this topic the activist and founder of *Kibōtane*, Yang Ching-Ja, said in a separate volume: "But, more seriously, I worry about how we can secure successors for our movement... coming to terms with declining energy levels, I've become more focused on how to foster the next generation of 'comfort women' activists" (in Dalton and Norma, 2022, 107).

Regarding the Waseda sexual consent project, Matsui-sensei and Sada-sensei's worries were eerily similar, explaining their thoughts aloud respectively as: "...But since they will stop being students in a few years I wonder what they're going to do," and "So that's my concern right now, how we can keep this activity or project in the long run." Interestingly, these faculty members contrasted the uncertainty of recruitment of new student members with the 'unending' discussions that might occur at committee meetings conducted by university faculty and staff about the very subject of consent education. The discussion would continue even past the point when the energy and resources of current members had dried up.

In the case of ‘growth’, we witness in the ethnographic examples given that becoming a large organisation is rarely the goal, and when a group does balloon in size, as in the case of the roughly 400 members of Voice Up Japan, fractures are more likely to occur. But many of these smaller grassroots groups such as Chabujo and the Waseda handbook team fluctuate between 25 and 40 semi-active to active members. Yet even those numbers displayed on introductory PowerPoint slides or in an internal Slack workspace are deceptive, since only five to eight members on average display a high degree of engagement with project activities, be it workshops or a book project. Some of the statistics were reflected in annual reports, which summarised past and current activities and included the number of workshops or collaborations conducted that year. It is most obvious in published ‘activity reports’ (*katsudo hokokusho*), the most recent being the Waseda consent handbook team’s multiple posts on Instagram in March 2024. These posts described the number of workshops given across Waseda University departments in 2022 and 2023, as well as other times the team ‘took the podium’ at internal university events or external events such as a talk at the Women’s Plaza in Tokyo. In both 2022 and 2023, most workshops were held in the Faculty of Literature and the Faculty of Cultural and Creative Studies, 24 in 2022 and 12 in 2023.

Other slides included information from recent surveys taken of students attending workshops, which demonstrate how their knowledge of sexual consent and bystander intervention has changed. For sexual consent (see Figure 57), respondents went from either ‘knowing somewhat about sexual consent’ or ‘knowing the meaning but not concretely what actions were taken for consent’ to 97% selecting ‘yes’ to show that they now understood the concept. There is no clear indication in these Instagram slides how many students these responses were collected from, and it is worth noting that to describe how they felt after the workshop, the respondents were only given ‘yes’, ‘no’, or ‘cannot say

either way' options to choose from. The bystander intervention comprehension slide (see Figure 58) is constructed the same way, though this time most respondents indicated they 'did not know or hadn't heard of' bystander intervention before the workshop. Again, after the workshop, over 94% said they now understood the concept.

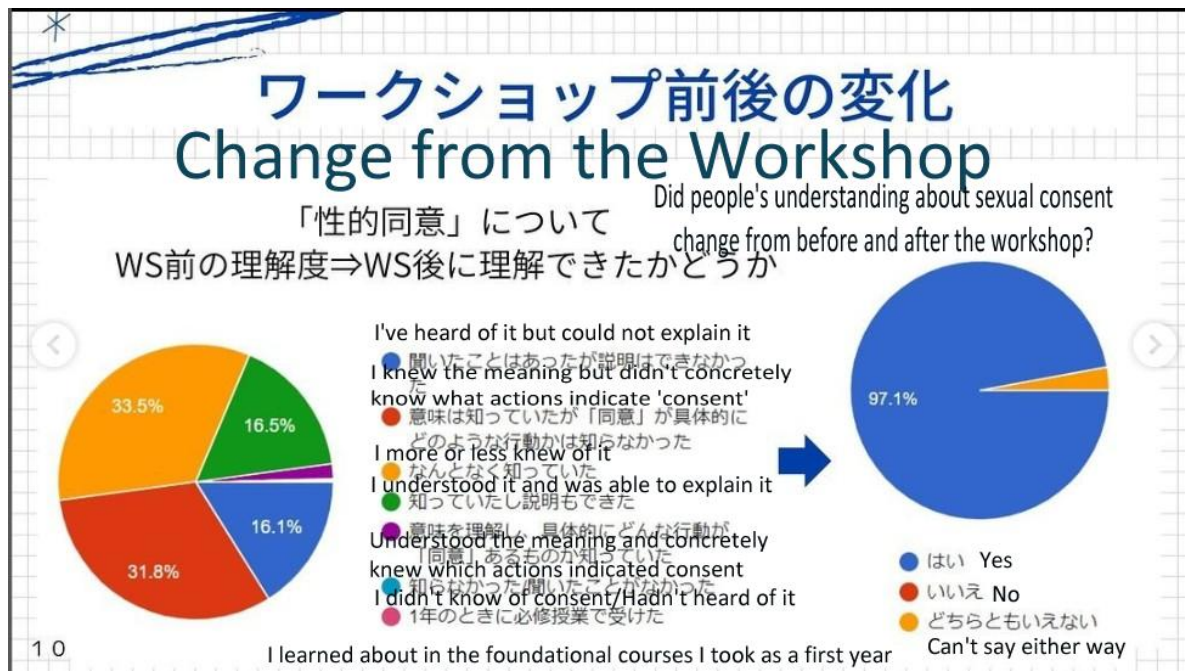


Figure 57: Percentage of respondents who can comprehend 'sexual consent' before and after the workshop (WS). Translation by author.

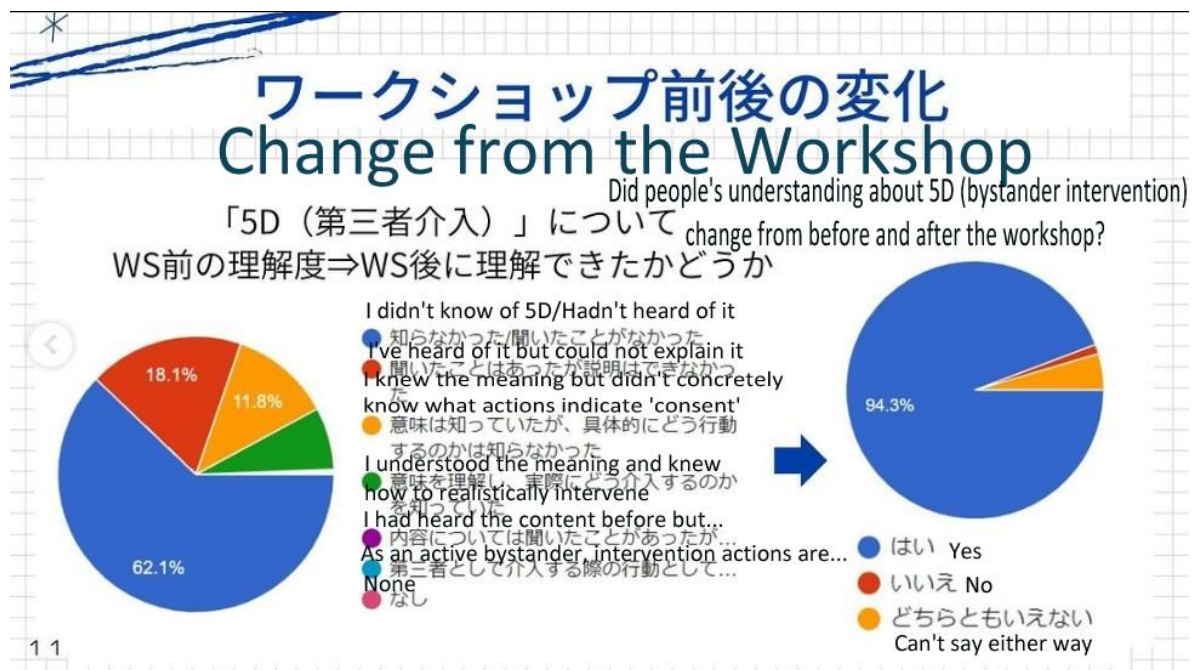


Figure 58: Percentage of respondents who can comprehend 'bystander intervention' before and after the workshop (WS). Translation by author.

At least in my observations and participation with Chabujo and the Waseda group, the ‘gap between intentions and actual results’ in Kingston’s discussion of ‘quiet transformation’ holds. This concept works in tandem with the idea that such small groups working on specific projects with sporadic publicity “gain little attention because it will not solve today’s problems tomorrow and because it is a prolonged process rather than a ‘big bang’”(Kingston, 2004, xvi). Gender-issue groups such as Spring, which push directly for policy change in Penal Code amendments like the inclusion of sexual consent or extension of sentences for perpetrators of sexual violence, are commonly known in the Japanese sphere of women’s rights and empowerment.

Dalton and Norma’s (2022) anthology focused on the contemporary Japanese feminist movement and includes reflections from Spring’s founder, Yamamoto Jun, who was abused by her father for seven years, starting from the age of 13. The anthology’s introduction solidifies the characterisation of contemporary feminist activism in Japan as ‘small, yet persistent’ by choosing the title *‘The Modest but Urgent Voices of*

Contemporary Japanese Feminism'. Various narratives of continuity, growth, and transformation can all characterise ongoing conversations around sexual consent (as well as bystander intervention). However, the actions of Chabujo and Waseda organisations demonstrate that the intentions of many individuals who join these projects overlap in one aspect—the desire to talk about issues of sex, gender, and sexuality.

The question of intention is also a matter of agency which is limited in both the case of Chabujo and the Waseda handbook team. Due in part to the administrative barriers of the Japanese university environment and the strong, distinctive style of leadership of the founding member, Shikano-san, limited control over projects is best demonstrated in my experiences with the Waseda sexual consent handbook team. If we consider Ortner's theory of "agency of (culturally constituted) intentions", we can also compare sexual consent campaigns as projects which are built out of everyday life desires and motivations. As Ortner writes: "People seek to accomplish things within a framework of their terms, their categories of values. This is not a free agency" (2001, 79-80).

In my description of the meetings leading up to the Japanese language workshop given for Matsui-sensei's class, I briefly mentioned how Shikano-san was a strong, even overwhelming presence in the room, presiding over the organisation of the workshop, which she would not even be present for. As it was for most of the meetings Shikano-san attended and inevitably led, her quick and sure manner of speaking influenced these discussions, directing the outcome of any 'group' decisions. Kanao-san and I could scarcely get a word in during any explanation or proposal given by Shikano-san during the meeting before our workshop.

In retrospect, I have begun to disentangle how the structure of relationships within groups like the Waseda team produced "a range of intentionalities" and how the agency

was filtered through what was originally just one person's—Shikano-san's—project (Ortner, 2001, 80). Whereas, if Shikano-san and other veteran members followed the cyclical, ritualistic pattern of graduating and finding work beyond the sphere of Waseda University, the sexual handbook team's activities might have taken on a different character and range of intention, and agency, her continued presence even going into her postgraduate degree maintained the project as her own. In this instance, Ortner's concept of projects and intentions built into an existing defined structure of relations and categories is significant. The agency is not free even within these projects conducted on the fringes of patriarchal power in contemporary Japan, where individual desires and organisational policies determine which desires or intentions can manifest. Without enough backing *within* the group, an individual's desire to talk about intersectionality may not be realised, nor would an effort to change the methods of delivering knowledge about sexual consent. This is the first barrier to having one's voice heard before we even arrive at opposition or inaction from institutional bodies.

I return then to the theme and title of this chapter, 'everyone wants to do something different'. The cultural projects emerging from 'quiet resistance' to systemic sexual violence in Japanese society both begin and end as goals for individuals, yet are complicated once a group or organisation is formed around a generalised goal or mission (Wetherell et al., 2020, 28-30). Such projects may become 'serious games' and "involve the intense play of multiply positioned subjects pursuing cultural goals within a matrix of local inequalities and power differentials" (Ortner, 2006, 144). Ortner's discussion is similar to Brighenti's analysis of the "intervisibility of social actors" in the categorisation of visibility as a game with "politically high stakes" (2022, 1-2). Realising or reformulating an individual goal that could not be expressed within an organisation

because it was too different from the established purpose of the group was a primary reason for individuals to leave and develop projects of their own.

This was clear in the movements of Chabujo members, who expressed greater flexibility when it came to switching teams and projects internal and external to the organisation. For Waseda student members of the sexual consent project, there were fewer options within the university to switch to. Shaberu, the only remaining circle tackling sexual violence on campus after reorganising the Voice Up Japan branch, was also intertwined with the handbooks and workshops. Waning interest in, and motivations for volunteering for activities within this group because of the limitations for expressing their individual goals was, I argue, a primary reason members went dormant or left altogether.

Any handbooks, workshops, teams, or collaborations with similar grassroots groups which formed from motivated individuals gathering under one ‘goal’ may be evidence of an expectation, even need, to justify why they are organising, through visible and material actions. Awareness about consent’s meanings or the ‘feminist knowledge transfer’ continues to happen across Japanese society (Dalton and Norma, 2022b, 114). There are multiple spaces in Japan—often revolving around art, literature, politics, and current events—which may not be producing handbooks or leading workshops but are still talking about boundaries regarding *jiko kettei-ken* and protecting one another.

The sporadic development of these projects, groups, and individuals does not correspond to a sweeping change in local attitudes about consent being required in sexually intimate situations or human relationships in general. Groups and projects continue to form, fragment and disperse, despite disinterest in member growth or changes to the medium of knowledge dispersal. First and foremost, I argue that these activist projects are for the sake of the members producing the Instagram posts, handbook pages,

or workshop slides. Project members have found a place to express themselves and air their concerns. Any greater ‘result’, perhaps recorded in a survey or activity report, is an added benefit and a justification for these individuals and groups to continue to exist, no matter the form they adopt. In the next and final chapter, I will share an example of internal conflict and tension within Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action, to launch into a discussion about how individuals use sexual consent education and activism to frame their sense of self and value systems and find a new *uchi* group, or *nakama*.

Chapter Five: ‘We Had Our Nakama’: Translating Feelings to Bonds

Using examples from my time with Chabujo, the Waseda sexual consent handbook team, and encounters with interlocutors in other contested spaces in Tokyo, I argue that, in attempts to find *nakama* through gendered projects, individuals and groups cultivate bonds based on exclusion as much as inclusion. In a similar vein, feelings of isolation or alienation from mainstream Japanese society because of one’s worldview on sex, gender identity, or sexuality, add complex tensions to, hypothetically, like-minded groups. Practices like Chabujo’s *sheakai* and the frequent discussion meetings over Waseda consent workshops, typically reaffirm an existing narrative based on an official vision and mission statement captured in statements on websites and signed pledges. Dialogues are circular, cycling through familiar emotions focused on frustration, indignation, resignation and exhaustion. Space for disagreement is absent within these new *jōshiki* narratives, wherein reluctance or questioning of the group may be read as outright dissent. And, in extreme cases, a dissenting individual may be ousted from the group or community.

Consequently, the title phrase in this chapter ‘*We had our nakama*’ possesses a dual meaning. From the point of view of an internal member gazing outward, it may stand for belonging and an understanding of self and motivation gained from friends. Alternatively, the phrase can be interpreted as an act of ‘othering’, of positioning oneself, and people perceived as like oneself, as the privileged, the educated, who operate in a space apart from, for example, the average misogyny on a private university campus.

We had our *nakama*. The affirmation and comfort read within these words then begs the question: is this the most significant outcome behind the sexual consent projects? If we find ourselves and our people in projects, is there motivation to move beyond the

confines of the group? These answers can be slowly teased out through the following discussions.

Dealing with Transphobia and Affective Responses

We arrived early at Yoyogi Park in central Tokyo on a sunny May afternoon, the dregs of blooming cherry blossoms clinging to spindly branches and blanketing the grass. It was much too late in the season for flower viewings, *ohanami*, which returned in 2023 after the restrictions on large social gatherings throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. But we were not there to attempt to admire the final downtrodden petals. Instead, we were doing double duty—claiming a spot for a picnic and farewell party for a friend who was departing Japan and having an outdoor interview. Our arms were full of drinks and snacks from a local Seven *konbini* (convenience store) across from the main Yoyogi Park entrance, meant to be enjoyed when the others joined us in roughly an hour.

Jay-san is in their thirties, originally from the Philippines, and identifies as a nonbinary, genderfluid and trans person. I had several associations with Jay-san at this point—first, they are a fellow Chabujo member who is part of the digital team, second, a friend with whom I have spent time at a variety of events, often in Shinjuku Ni-Chome, Tokyo’s infamous ‘gay neighbourhood’, and now, as an interview participant. They have short black hair arranged in a carefree manner, which matches their dark eyeliner. A fashionable mix of loose and tight clothes enrobed their slight build. The outfit ended in combat boots, and I noted multiple accessories on their person. Jay-san’s short stature and rounded face made them appear exceptionally youthful, but I knew they were my senior in more ways than one, including in how long they had been involved in Chabujo’s community organising activities.

We set down a blue tarp, putting down the plastic vinyl bags of *konbini* items and our backpacks. I pulled out the tools of the fieldworker's trade: hard copies of a participant information sheet and consent form, as well as a small recorder. We had to press firmly on the edges of the paper as Jay-san signed their name, the occasional breeze passing through the trees attempting to capture the document.

Although I had my usual list of interview questions with me, by now filled with annotations, translations, and strike-through marks as well as circled or starred passages, it quickly felt useless once I pressed the red recording button and Jay-san began talking. After their self-introduction, I asked broad questions to get started.

[From my notes]

"Can you tell me about the organisations you volunteer for?"

"Yeah. Everything?"

"Yep."

Jay-san took a sip of one of the beverages they had bought, and I automatically say they are 'free to drink' while we talk. They assure me it is not so much 'drinking but hydrating', referencing the heat of the afternoon.

"Anyway. So, the very first one I joined, like, as an adult, beyond, like, after college, and after grad school, was one called Chabujo. Here in Japan, but I'm going to describe it. It is a grassroots feminist organisation. By grassroots, I do not, I'm not professionally well-versed in what grassroots means. Because when I think of grassroots, at least, especially as a Filipino, I think of farmers. I think of fish and fisherfolk. But also, I suppose, in this sense, it is by like AFAB, from people who have--sorry, I do not want to say just AFAB. But as far as I know, it's dominated by cis women."

Within the first few minutes of this conversation, Jay-san had described themselves and their perceptions of the 'makeup' or even 'identity' of Chabujo in a way that emphasizes its gendered elements. Chabujo is not just a feminist organisation, but one which is 'dominated by cis women.' Jay-san switched the descriptor part way through in their word choice of 'AFAB' (assigned female at birth) to 'cis women' without indicating why. This deliberate and careful use of terms, which can be read as inclusive, marks their speaking style, and, to some degree, the emotional connections or tensions which exist within

Chabujo. However, the descriptions of a specific incident within Chabujo and experiences with community organising around any combination of issues related to sex, gender and sexuality demonstrate that the choice of certain terms leads to assumptions, judgements, and exclusion as much as being inclusive or intersectional.

As Chisato-san discussed her experiences with both Chabujo and the Keio Gender Collective in the previous chapter, Jay-san drew comparisons across different organisations they had volunteered with. Their involvement in rights organisations spanned both their home country of the Philippines, and Japan. Jay-san indicated interest in a variety of social and political issues, including queer rights, feminism, neurodivergent recognition, and disability rights. These defined interests reemerged throughout the conversation, which snowballed into June describing their volunteer life story with very little urging or contribution from me. I was reminded that Jay-san had recently given talks at café venues about topics like anti-capitalism and minority rights. I was then in the role of an audience member who occasionally gets to ask clarifying questions to the panellist. But an uneasy assumption is made during this interview, similar to the ones made at small special-interest seminars—that I, or the average attendee, think and feel in the same way as Jay-san, the speaker, does about these issues. There is no attempt to convince me to take their side or other Chabujo members' sides in this scenario. Why would there be? I am a colleague, a companion, and a comrade-in-arms opposed to any expression of hate against minority groups. I am complicit. We all were. Regardless of how much we knew, there was one point we were to agree on: transphobic behaviour by a member was inexcusable.

The one in the wrong is the member who breaks from the shared—assumed—narrative: that Chabujo, as an organisation standing for support, diversity and 'raising voices' across gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, nationality, disability and so on... could not permit a case of prejudice to go unaddressed.

In their attempt to break from common sense (*jōshiki*) narratives about issues such as the gendered division of labour or same-sex marriage recognition, groups like Chabujo and broader communities engaged in activism in Tokyo have developed new narratives (Schieder, 2020, Lunsing, 2001). These narratives demonstrate little to no tolerance for signs of inappropriate behaviour towards any group or individual who is perceived as marginalised or disenfranchised.

Lunsing's informants often used *jōshiki* to explain what they had to deal with when relating to people who were not familiar with lifestyles and ideas other than the normal (2001, 5). Their effort to dissect and move 'beyond common sense' in their book tackles similar ideas and thinking that frames common sense as 'natural and normal.' Lunsing uses the poignant example of lesbian women having children together through artificial insemination using 'natural and normal' in their arguments, thereby "adhering to the common-sense idea that such a thing exists and *thereby failed to achieve something that might have become a discussion* instead of a fight in which one party says 'yes' and the other 'no'" (ibid, 4, emphasis added).

Jay-san brings up the incident with a Chabujo member displaying transphobia in the middle of a description of the structure of Chabujo and how there were limitations to the 'snowflake model' of organisation. But their knowledge about the incident came on the heels of our relating how Chabujo members were scattered across the globe.

[From my notes]

Jay-san starts with an anecdote. "And there's one in New York that I met. When I went to New York. Like we have never met each other, but 'Hey, Chabujo, by the way' ... but like she had her mom send me stuff so that I can pass it to her."

"That's so great."

"Because I was like, 'Hey, I'm happy to bring some for you.'"

"I love that."

These conversations provided much-needed insight into an ‘incident’ multiple Chabujo members had mentioned, but which was not a topic of meetings and sharing sessions with the digital team. Additionally, Jay-san’s comments about the Chabujo members they had met in New York indicate that, because of a shared identity and sense of belonging as part of Chabujo, there was an almost automatic trust established. It was enough for a favour to be offered and carried out between Jay-san, this member, and the member’s mother in the act of passing off belongings, even after a first meeting.

Ordinarily, one might not transfer goods internationally with a stranger, only trusting a friend or family member, perhaps a work colleague at a stretch. But this anecdote was far from being the only anecdote or encounter where ‘being’ or ‘becoming’ Chabujo fast-tracked individuals to friends. This was the case for my relationships with Chabujo members, Jay-san being the first example; they had heard of my lack of Christmas Eve plans—dinner and a movie by myself—and asked if I wanted to go to a couple of bars with them. With Jay-san, the friendship was made more natural by the fact that we were not only part of the Chabujo community, but both identified as queer. Being foreigners living in Japan who could speak both English and Japanese added a third dimension to our relationship.

I experienced a similar exchange of favours as Jay-san had described when a member of the digital team whom I did not know well sent me a direct message on our Slack workspace. Like Chisato-san, Manami-san had seen my post on a random channel and was interested in my research topic. More specifically, she was thinking of applying overseas for a graduate degree in anthropology or the social sciences. She asked if I would be willing to give her advice and talk about my experiences. Although I had only been a member of Chabujo for a matter of months, I found myself adopting an almost identical

attitude of trust and reliance as Jay-san had with the member she came across during a trip to New York. I said, ‘Of course, when and where do you want to meet to talk?’

The swiftness with which other members and I trusted one another surprised me. However, as in the accounts of individuals like Jay-san, Chisato, and later, Manami-san, my body and mind drew comfort and reassurance from this network of like-minded people. Even without a promise of an equivalent exchange of help or favours—Manami-san was scheduled as an interviewee, but our session was later cancelled due to work and illness—an ‘affective response’ (White 2022) was inevitable. Subconsciously, this might have been a recognition that we had, more concretely, all signed the same volunteer pledge upon joining Chabujo, or, more abstractly, that we had all banded together to discuss gender issues, intersectionality, and ways to spread knowledge about various sensitive topics. A few online meetings and plenty of messages in Slack channels proved sufficient for these affective responses to emerge when encountering fellow members in person, and “the response is nonetheless instant and intimate” as through different nuances they “reverberate and ripple out into a slippery social space” (White 2022:140). This ‘slippery social space’ in the context of Chabujo members was more aligned with the idea of private, intimate topics becoming public.

Discussing personal encounters with gendered or sexual harassment even in the confines of a Zoom call of six other Chabujo members, mainly cis women, as Jay-san observed, is already a more public, if protected, setting to share concerns and vent complaints. Finding such an in-between space is perhaps at odds with what is contained in Koji Ueno’s discussion of Japanese ‘private matter’ discourse, wherein his LGBTQ+ research participants, mainly young men, typically chose not to disclose their sexuality to their workplace in favour of finding a more stable career (Ueno, 2022, 14). Sexuality and identity were personal and private, not to be shared openly with coworkers, especially if

there was a risk it would impact possibilities for promotion and images of respectability. Chabujo's practices, which encourage the sharing of personal experiences, including about sexuality, later induce affective responses when interacting with other members of Chabujo—enough to believe in and trust that they will do 'the right thing.'

Misinformation, Miscommunication and Misrepresentation

In observing and experiencing the 'trust-building' that occurs within the group, it becomes clearer and more real that the public space to share the intimate or private is then transcribed safely onto events organised by Chabujo. As Reynolds discusses while pulling from Plummer's (2001, 2003) work on 'intimate citizenship', "the private is not a passive category" and "the discursive construction of the private realm restricts and constrains intimacy" (2010, 35). He suggests that intimate citizenship is a concept that "liberates the intimate from its private shackles, it transforms public discourse" (Reynolds, 2010, 35). However, if the affective response, or even narrative, of trust and reliance on members, which Chabujo transmits through dialogues, is moved onto more publicly available events—advertised through their Instagram posts and stories, this is not a revolution. This is not a movement. It is a contribution or transformation of public discourse on a small, even minuscule scale. But this may not negate Chabujo's efforts, or the work of other small grassroots organisations working on gender in Japan, which do practice a form of intimate citizenship by normalising dialogue around gendered social issues and, undoubtedly, the feelings attached.

[From my notes]

"Anyway. So, the steering committee was doing some stuff, including having to deal with one member who was displaying transphobia... And I didn't know the details... I think [veteran Chabujo member] was the one to send the message in the general channel, 'Hey, this is what happened. We addressed it this way. It had been going on for around half a year, blah, blah, blah...'"

I asked Jay-san for clarification on how they heard about it, as well as when it happened.

“Last year, last year or two years ago, my sense of time is fucked up... So, this person [member making transphobic comments], I have been in a meeting with them. Like a Christmas online meeting, just getting to know each other... And I was in the same breakout room with her. So, we have like, I have had direct interactions with this person. You know what I saw when I came through it when I went to her Instagram profile?

“What?”

“#IStandWithJKRowling. Like ‘call me a TERF all you want I am proud to be a TERF’ blah blah blah... All of that shit.”

“Wow...”

“...This is the extent of what Chabujo goes through. And that they have asked that member... I do not recall if they have asked that member to leave Chabujo or if she left her account. I think it might have been the latter.”

Chisato-san was also aware of the transphobia or lack of awareness about trans issues even within Chabujo. She also did not name the member who made these comments, though she knew who they were. But she noted:

...I didn’t know much about it. And I feel like committee members like decided without asking other [Chabujo] members what we think about it. So, I’m not sure what happened. But the person [...] was a member of my team. Oh, and I was working with her... but I didn’t follow her Instagram or any other social media. So, I didn’t know what she said. So, I can’t tell. But I just feel like you... We also have a different way to approach the issue.

In a separate passage, Chisato-san explains:

Because I think she also didn’t know [...] didn’t have like, knowledge about trans people. And, it’s easy to be influenced by like, anti-trans arguments on Twitter... I will not say like, yeah, like it’s important to have, like, our attitude towards trans hope. Then we’ll, I think, we could do something better.

Chisato-san identifies the transphobic behaviour of the now-former Chabujo member as a byproduct of a lack of knowledge and as someone subjected to, implicitly acknowledged by all Chabujo members, *misinformation*. But according to Chihiro, we do not have a responsibility to educate people, and ‘that’s how Chabujo should be... we should learn together.’ Her mention of anti-trans debates on Twitter, and, presumably, on other types of social media, echoes what I have seen posted online by different grassroots groups in Japan as well as what multiple interlocutors observe in ‘Twitter feminism’ (Kawasaki,

2023, Yamada, 2022, Shimizu, 2020, Yamaguchi, 2018). Some of this rhetoric does lead online audiences to sources that promote feminist thinking, which excludes trans women from cis women's spaces (often referred to in English-language online spaces as TERFs, or trans-exclusionary radical feminists).¹⁵ Rather than a condemnation of the former Chabujo member, Chisato-san acknowledges that it is 'easy to be influenced' by these online arguments. Chisato-san did not necessarily depict the transphobic behaviour as an anomaly. Her retelling of what little she knew of the incident emphasised the lack of sufficient knowledge mentioned above, placing the entirety of Chabujo under the umbrella of people who did not understand trans issues.

In addition, she did not know how the decision regarding this member was made and shared concern that the solution was 'top-down.'

[From my notes]

I attempt to confirm: "So usually for Chabujo, you feel it is more bottom-up?"

"Yeah. So, we think consent is important—the most important thing. We have to ask members what they think to make a decision. That's how we have been doing it, but this case was a bit of an exception."

"That does make me wonder why this case was the exception?"

"I think also we, like didn't have a good trust relationship between committee members and other members. Because we think it's... I do not say it's their fault or our fault. It's just miscommunication."

Both accounts above refer to the same process of conflict resolution and organisation. This involved messaging the general Chabujo Slack channels and having a general meeting later to explain the incident and how it was handled by the steering committee. Jay-san and

¹⁵ Trans-exclusionary radical feminism, or TERFism, is a popularised term for what is also called gender-critical feminism. Gender critical feminism is an ideology and movement which considers sex to be biological and immutable. Gender, on the other hand, is crafted through social, behavioural, and environmental factors, which proponents of gender-critical ideology consider inherently oppressive. TERF is an acronym which some categorise as a slur, which functions as a call-out and identifier of who may be critical of policies and theories which are inclusive of trans people in spaces such as public toilets and in feminist organisations.

Chisato-san are ‘other members’ or ‘regular members’ involved in different teams, and both noted that they did not know the details of what happened, even though they had worked directly with the person responsible. Yet, these two individuals had opposite reactions to the way it was handled. Chisato-san believed that other members not being asked for their opinion before a decision was made was a sign of Chabujo acting outside of their usual methods of bottom-up organisation. Her account cites it as an ‘exception’, perhaps because she still thinks Chabujo will operate as a bottom-up grassroots group. The lack of a ‘good trust relationship between committee members and other members’ is phrased as a state which was already present before the incident. For Chisato-san, this absence of a relationship built on trust did not assign blame to the committee or any individual members but was instead an example of miscommunication. This resistance by her and June in assigning blame or fault may have come from a desire to distinguish themselves from those who do victim blame and shame or otherwise tend to flood internet forums and Twitter threads with negative comments (often called ‘bashing’).



Figure 59: ‘Feminizumu wa toransu to tomo ni’ (Feminism together with trans) Ashita shōjō-tai, or Tomorrow Girls Troop, has collaborated with Chabujo before (in the Believe campaign) but has a clear supportive stance for transgender rights.

Around the mid to late 1990s when queer theory began to be discussed by feminist academics in Japan, “efforts by public school teachers motivated by feminist beliefs to reform education so that children would feel free from normative restrictions on gender expression—termed ‘gender-free’ (*jendā furī*)—sparked a conservative backlash” (Bullock et al., 2018a, 7, Yamaguchi, 2018, Mackie, 2017). The term ‘gender-free’, from its first usage in 1995, has also undergone multiple interpretations and been a source for debate, coming to mean “eliminating gender” although “this was not the intention of most of those people who used the term ‘gender-free’; most intended it to mean ‘free from gender bias’—that is, eliminating gender stereotypes”(Kano, 2016a, 144). The 1999 Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society, or Basic Law, followed by the Basic Plan for a Gender Equal Society (*danjo kyōdō sankaku*), which Kano translates as “male-female joint planning”

rather than “gender-equal society”, was described by Hotta Midori as “the product of compromise among three interest groups: conservative politicians who were happy with the status quo, business leaders who were willing to hire women if it was profitable, and feminists who sought to eliminate the sexual division of labour”(Kano, 2016a, 171, Kano, 2018).

Anthropologist Ayako Kano discusses the evolution of ‘gender-free’ as a concept engaged in Japanese backlash debates:

The concept of “gender-free” in its most inclusive moments gestured not only beyond binary definitions of femininity and masculinity but also to the fundamental instability of categories such as sex, gender, and sexuality. In doing so, “gender-free” had the potential to reach out to transgender and transsexual individuals as well as to gays and lesbians... The introduction and spread of the concept and practices associated with the term “gender-free” coincided with the growing visibility of sexual minorities in the Japanese public sphere (2016a, 165).

Notably, multiple scholars like Kawasaki (2023) and Shimizu (2020) discuss the rise of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Japanese Twitter spaces, including from feminist accounts, as evidence of a ‘failure’ of feminists in Japan to build a coalition with LGBTQ+ people against ultra-conservatives in the LDP (Liberal Democratic Party). Kawasaki states that “Japanese feminists failed to strategically build a countermovement against the backlash movements in the 2000s” and that these feminists “presupposed the public’s ignorance about gender issues and did not try to understand the backlash movements and their strategy”(2023, 189).

Kawasaki’s critique is fascinating as it identifies the lack of emphasis placed on ‘sexuality’ (including in this sense sexual orientation and sex education). This aligns with Shimizu’s suggestion that when mainstream feminism and women’s groups deny the claims of backlashers that ‘feminists questioned sexual difference’ and biological essentialism, they “effectively failed gender and sexual minorities”(2020, 92). Rather than join separate groups and projects together or even open lines of communication between,

for example, women's rights activists and trans activists, boundaries were further defined. Chisato-san's comment above about how 'it's easy to be influenced by like anti-trans argument [s] on Twitter' indicates a hyper-awareness by members of, in this case, grassroots instead of mainstream feminist groups, about the power within the language used by anti-trans feminist accounts on Japanese Twitter.

Shimizu discusses the growing debates within an example of 'imported feminism' which provoked strong feelings of hostility for cis women attempting to gain further recognition for women's issues in Japan:

The second problem is that once thus introduced, such problematic rhetoric proved to be a powerful tool to attract followers: anger, frustration and fear, when suddenly let out after being repressed so much for so long, could easily be led to find its way out in a misguided attack and hostility towards an easy target (2020, 100).

The target was trans people, especially trans women, who were and are often viewed as transgressing into women-only spaces and conversations (Kawasaka, 2023, Uno, 2020, Mameta, 2020). Although the idea of trans-women as a 'hostile threat' among Japanese mainstream feminists fighting for such issues as changes in the family registry system (*koseki*), which would allow women to keep their family names after marriage, is at least in part influenced by overseas rhetoric. This influence is primarily from Anglo-European countries like the United Kingdom, where debates around trans issues have been, and continue to be, intense and divisive.

Ochanomizu University's decision to accept trans girls as applicants in 2018 spurred the recent rise of trans-exclusionary, or gender-critical, feminism in Japan, but as outlined above, it was the late 1990s and 2000s when the gender backlash by moral conservatives dominated gender discourses. At that time, the "legal recognition of transsexual people was legislated under the name of *seidōitsuseishōgai* (gender identity disorder, GID)" This medicalisation led to "the 2003 Act on Special Cases in Handling

Gender in People with Gender Identity Disorder (hereafter called GID Act), which allowed people diagnosed with GID to change their legal gender in the family register (*koseki*)”(Yamada, 2022, 501-502). Increased representation of transgender identities in many countries, including Japan, also deploys “a politics of visibility aimed at making gender variant subjects intelligible to different systems of valuation” (Nirta, 2022, 163).

Although the option to change legal gender in the *koseki* was a significant moment for trans politics and visibility, Yamada argues that the GID Act divided the trans community because: “It incorporated some transsexuals—those who could meet the legal standards required for GID—into the group of respectable citizens while delegitimising trans people and queers who were deemed to disrupt the patriarchal order”(2022, 503).

Discussion of divided communities and movements’ goals diverging from one another has been a vital backdrop of this thesis. Here, we emphasise how Japanese mainstream feminist interests not only have diverged from those of sexual minority groups but also how within the LGBTQ+ community or trans community, there are in-groups (*uchi*) and out-groups (*soto*)(Hendry, 2019). Many of the boundaries between communities are constructed by patriarchal structures of the nation-state, family, and the gender roles considered normal and acceptable within them. But as many academics argue, a desire for freedom in addition to “manufactured emotions such as anger, anxiety and disgust over feminists and LGBTQ people” is also to blame, impacting the public perceptions and the private bonds of trust and reliance (Kawasaka, 2023, 197, White, 2022, Wetherell et al., 2020).

Thurlow’s study of gender-critical lesbians is also relevant to this discourse, as we observe the tensions between Chabujo members. She discusses how lesbians who align themselves with gender-critical feminism often do so out of a desire to “re-politicise and

re-energise” the term ‘lesbian’ and form relationships with a lesbian community or ‘sisterhood,’ which had weakened in recent years. As opposed to the ‘anger’ of gender-critical women in general, Thurlow identifies the emotional pull for lesbians as coming from a sense of loss of a lesbian scene which “creates grief and hurt” and then the wish to form attachments even if it is “at the expense of a more marginalised group”(Thurlow, 2024, 7-8, Ahmed, 2014).

Caterina Nirta makes an important point about representation and visibility:

On the one side, this form of simplification can make social interactions easier through the creation of recognised visual protocols of representation; on the other side, however, it can expose people, especially those who live a condition of intersectional vulnerability (i.e. sex workers), to speculation, judgement and various forms of violence (Nirta, 2022, 163).

An anecdote from the field, which illustrates this speculation, judgement and fracturing for feminists, activists, and members of the LGBTQ+ community in Tokyo, will be discussed in the next segment discussing rumours and bashing.

But first, this situation of imported feminism and transphobic discourse spreading through gender discourse in Japan begs an important question. Why are these backlash movements, whether by politicians of the LDP or by feminists who are set against misogynistic traditions but set their sights on trans women, louder and seemingly more effective than the messaging of groups like Chabujo or project teams such as Waseda University’s sexual consent handbook group?

‘Uwasa, Uso, and Bashing’: Protecting Projects Through Localisation

To discuss how activist projects are protected by the two grassroots groups in my study, I suggest two main ‘framing’ issues, which intersect to some degree with Kawasaka, Shimizu, and Tanaka Toko’s (2020) papers. The first is the idea of ‘failure’ referring to the inability of Japanese feminists to mobilise a countermovement against first the anti-gender

backlash movements of the 2000s and 2010s, and now the rise of transphobic online feminism in the 2020s. From my ethnographic research with both Chabujo and the Waseda team, even though there is certainly an awareness of the barriers and challenges to disseminating knowledge of their projects around sexual consent, internal members often frame their activities as ‘successful.’

Another framing issue was accompanied by an overriding sensation that student activism was beneficial if a product was created or an event conducted. When I helped facilitate consent workshops at Waseda University, simply conducting the workshop, even when students expressed minimal engagement and reactions to the content, might be constituted as a ‘success.’ For these small grassroots groups, the simple existence of the activity, with its yes, well-intended missions to promote education and raise awareness about how sexual consent is a missing piece of the puzzle to ending sexual violence, could be considered a ‘success.’ This is a paradoxical conclusion to not just the arguments of various scholars and debates between activists online, but to the relative silence meeting the group’s messages.

Kawasaka adds to the concept of feminist ‘failure’ in Japan: “[They] failed to cope with new media such as the internet and popular culture, which the backlash movements used effectively to spread their messages. Japanese feminists were slow to correct misinformation and spread their ideas” (2023: 190).

Failing to cope with online and social media leads to the second framing issue, that ‘backlash’ or ‘bashing’ is an almost inevitable result of voicing up and making public one’s position about feminist issues, be it sexual consent education or sexual minority rights. Yet, bashing is also something best avoided by not engaging in beds of tension across the internet. It was common for bashing to be brought up during my conversations with group

members, usually as an aside about criticism against the #MeToo movement or the project of a university student group. Members used the words ‘rumour’ (*uwasa*) or ‘lie’ (*uso*) to express disapproval and even delegitimise these negative discourses. It was not a surprise that they used this language to decry what they saw as attacks against victims of sexual harassment or women in general.

What was surprising was how members appeared to actively avoid becoming targets of this ‘bashing’ by ‘localising’ their discourse and not making statements which could read as ‘passionate’ or ‘opinionated.’ An instance of this was most clear in my interview with Shikano-san, the founder and leader of the sexual consent handbook team at Waseda.

Shikano-san had been talking about media coverage of these student projects across not just Waseda, but Sophia, Keio, ICU and Meiji University. She explained in our Japanese-language interview that the more interviews and articles written about the activities, the more people external to the universities seemed to ‘bash’ them, even as they were conducted seriously and in earnest.

This is the first time I had heard bashing talked about at length. So, I leaned in and asked:

[From my notes]

“Ah, bashing, about bashing... exactly who is doing this bashing?”

Shikano-san responds: “That is according to the internet, ah, yeah, online on Twitter that kind of thing is said, something like a rumour, but not only a rumour (*uwasa*) ... That is something that, probably during the MeToo Movement, there was a lot of bashing done... And, towards victims, um, that was not the truth, it was telling lies. There were a lot of people who believed [those lies]. On Twitter, a lot of bashing happened.”

“I see. I see. And the Waseda sexual consent handbook, did you have an experience with bashing?”

“Well, we are not active on SNS. Shaberu also has a Twitter account, but we do not have many followers, and we do not actively make comments, that’s kind of like us (*amari sekkyokuteki ni hasshinshitenai shi*) ... If anything since we’re recruiting new members, I

feel it would be fine if I forgot about it and it came up when I searched for it, so I haven't sent out any opinions or anything. I'm nervous because I haven't been communicating much."

Shikano-san continued to describe how, by not posting much or actively making comments or opinions online, the handbook project's activities are not picked up by the media. The members are not interviewed much, nor are many articles written about their activities, so they do not have the opportunity to draw attention to society (*sugoi takusan shakai ni chuumoku wo atsumeru mitai na kikai ga amari nai node*). And, ultimately, because they are not known by media journalists, they do not experience bashing (*shiraretenai you na bashingu wa saretenakute*).

In this interview are signs that Shikano-san and, to an extent, other members of Waseda's handbook team and the affiliated circle, Shaberu, both ignored and actively chose not to engage with a wider audience on SNS like Instagram or Twitter. Bashing is an occurrence that is framed as being almost exclusive to online spaces, and by almost solely using SNS to recruit new members, there was little risk of experiencing criticism from the kind of more vocal individuals and groups made during #MeToo/#WeToo/#WithYou. Even in this small snippet of a larger conversation, I sensed a tension, a palpable worry from Shikano-san, that the choice not to grow their online presence was an issue for their communication. She admitted that she was 'nervous' (*dokidokishiterun desu kedo*).

However, she then explained that the goal of the project and team was to 'localise' and 'pinpoint' their social activities to Waseda University students. This is, at least somewhat, the justification given for not actively posting or sharing opinions online. But there was an undercurrent of fear and uncertainty for oneself and for one's fellow group members. What would happen if they had made bold or critical statements on their SNS accounts? Would this be riskier because of their affiliation to a prestigious, and often still

conservative, private university like Waseda? This was likely not a decision made lightly, but it has broader implications and connections to why feminist movements are neither inclusive nor intersectional in Japan, and why transphobic rhetoric continues to dominate online discussions.

Neither Chabujo nor Waseda students' work on sexual consent turned their gaze towards broader feminist discourses. Although they did not manage active SNS accounts, they followed a similar pattern of a lack of voicing criticism towards antagonistic comments towards sexual minorities that Shimizu notes in the accounts of feminist legal experts, journalists, and academics. Shimizu describes the avoidance and silence towards rhetoric around queer rights as such: "At best, they just are not interested at all in trans issues: they do not care because it has nothing to do with them. At worst, they agree with, or at least feel sympathetic to, the trans antagonistic discourses" (2020: 101).

In general, Shimizu (2020), Kawasaki (2023), Tanaka (2020), and Takahashi (2016), who write on the hatred directed towards feminism and feminists in Japan—again, often focused online—outline an alarmingly common pattern in current debates. The visibility of information is stacked in favour of only one side, that of mainstream Japanese feminists who align themselves with transnational rhetoric which pushes women's rights at the expense of people who do not fit certain worldviews of 'femininity' and 'womanhood' (Fujitaka, 2021, Shimizu, 2014). In their efforts to defend women's spaces and bodies, Japanese feminists even place themselves with moral conservatives and the LDP government, strategically manoeuvring their campaigns with those who hold most of the power. These voices are the loudest on Japanese Twitter, spreading out onto other social media platforms and onto blogs where essays quickly defend against any accusations of homophobia or transphobia. But I agree with assessments by Shimizu and Kawasaki that feminist activists and academics who may disagree with such opinions are too quiet.

External vs Internal Pressures to Consent Activism

This is evidenced in my ethnographic research, where groups are so inwardly focused on their projects and their members, their ‘nakama’ in some cases, that no impact is made on the discourses which are directly against and relevant to their mission statements. In the same interview with Shikano-san, I noticed that descriptions of the sexual consent project’s activities were often described in terms of what was ‘within the school/university’ (*gakunai*) or ‘outside the school/university’ (*gakugai*). Such was the case when sharing that the group members did not experience bashing from “people outside of the university” (*gakugai no ningen ni basshingu mitai na koto wa zenzen nakute*). As mentioned earlier, this was attributed to an inward focus, this time on negotiating with their university side. This, Shikano-san shared, was a difficult process because it was the first time, there was a type of external pressure put on the university, which Shikano-san called “a kind of external pressure activism” (*nanka gaiatsu no akutibizumu*).

It seems that this idea of external pressure was due to the sexual consent workshop proposal put forth by the Waseda student team, being one of multiple Voice Up Japan student branch circles, and because of the fear and anxiety around bashing. But, regardless, the narrow focus of these groups, even when faced with internal incidents of transphobia or homophobia, contributes to the growing conservatism of Japanese feminism. As other scholars suggest, too much caution and a slow response to hostility against minority groups strengthen hateful discourse. Understandably, concern about bashing after witnessing the effects on different individuals and communities limits digital and physical engagement with activist collaborators. However, a lack of engagement is also an issue because it hinders any countermovement by grassroots feminists who wish to push a more inclusive rhetoric.

However, I will now focus on emphasising the feelings between and among group members, which contribute to potentially damaging forms of closed-room discourse. This includes examples from the infamous ‘gay district’ in Tokyo, Shinjuku Ni-Chome, where the policing of queer identities continues to occur. I will describe a vignette from my fieldwork where I gathered with several friends from the Tokyo queer community for a meal and ended up discussing recent issues about exclusionary practices within LGBTQ+ spaces.

My friend and I had been sitting in a Taiwanese café and restaurant, drinking draft beer or tea and chatting for at least 20 minutes. The food menus sat mostly ignored between us. Drinks had only been ordered to placate the servers and convince the restaurant to let us be seated, even with half our group still absent. The other two people finally arrive—my Taiwanese friend’s Japanese Italian girlfriend and a Japanese friend of hers—all women, all queer. The conversation turned to self-introductions and deciding on the food to order amid the thick aromatic scents of frying vegetable pancakes and steaming meats in sauce drifting from the unseen kitchen. The sounds of passersby murmuring among themselves faded into the background as we tossed around topics of conversation about jobs, interests, and generational differences.

To start with, I did not know my friend’s girlfriend, beyond what she had shared with me earlier, or her friend, but it was no concern as we easily began to connect on stories of Tokyo’s queer space, specifically comparing spaces in Shinjuku Ni-Chome and outside of it. My friend’s girlfriend leads a life as a corporate career woman and as a talented DJ. She knows all the ins and outs of Ni-Chome well, and to our curious questions, verging on nosy, she shared shreds of drama about a rather infamous lesbian bar known as ‘Goldfinger.’ The drama was related to the categories and labels for queer women in Tokyo, who are expected to fit within a particular image of ‘butch’ or ‘femme.’

If we existed in between, in gender expression or gender identity, for example, we all tended to fall through the cracks in a somewhat spectacular fashion.

Sharing gossip and drama within a relatively tight-knit network like the LGBTQ+ community in Japan is integral for building a mutual understanding, if not a longer-lasting relationship. The DJ's dispensing of knowledge on a story about how a trans woman was denied access to Goldfinger unless she could show the staff that her gender identity was 'female' on her *koseki-sho*, the family register document demonstrating kinship ties discussed at other points in this thesis, was a particularly shocking incident. This conversation exemplifies the tensions related to nation-building, maintaining patriarchal structures, and affirming gender roles. The transgender woman who attempted to enter Goldfinger had her place in formal Japanese society questioned because she did not 'pass' sufficiently as an expected version of a woman. 'Passing' as a cisgender woman in designated female-only spaces like some lesbian bars in Ni-Chome is often a privilege made attainable by access to resources, including the medical procedures which were required to allow a Japanese GID-diagnosed individual to have their *koseki* updated. (Yamada, 2022). As Yamada discusses, a medicalisation of acceptable transness creates a divide in the trans community with barriers to access as well as disagreements in how trans identity is created and perceived. Another point made by S.P.F. Dale is about how GID discourse affected the framing of sexualities as well as transgender identities in Japan. She adds:

Although GID gives individuals the possibility to 'change' gender, it does so by enforcing a strictly male/female gender dichotomy" and an "individual must conform to the social expectations of that gender physically (by undergoing surgery), mentally (by 'feeling' like a 'man' or 'woman'), and most important, visibly (to be judged 'male' or 'female' by the doctor) (Dale, 2019, 167).

The above excludes many trans and gender non-conforming individuals who cannot or do not wish to undergo such an arduous process. And, evidently, among queer groups trans-

inclusive policies are not a given nor common-sense for all. For queer and lesbian women, cis-gender women's emotions of fear, uncertainty, and anger have been stoked in the service of moral conservative and transmisogynistic discourses.(Thurlow, 2022, Thurlow, 2024).

Shimizu writes regarding transphobic feminist discourses ported to Japanese feminist accounts:

They appealed to the women's fear of sexual harassment and violence and their anger and resentment towards the misogynous society; they moulded it into the kind of hateful anger that women are not usually allowed to express, and re-directed it towards trans women (2020, 101).

The unfolding outcome of fearmongering, which extends into LGBTQ+ neighbourhoods which should be safe spaces for people of all sexualities and gender identities, is as

Kawasaka summarises:

Due to the lack of an equality act that bans discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in Japan, gender-critical feminist discourses can directly threaten the dignity and social lives of transgender people as seen in the rise of anti-transgender discourses against the trans-inclusive policies of a women's university [such as Ochanomizu University] (2023, 196).

Sharing gossip and drama for often marginalised groups like 'sexual minorities', as they are often referred to in Japan, is integral for building a mutual understanding, if not a longer-lasting relationship. My friend's girlfriend's dispensing of knowledge, specifically a story about how a trans woman was denied access unless she could show staff that her legal sex had been changed to 'female' was especially shocking to hear about. In our small group at the Taiwanese restaurant, disbelief, outrage, and nods of knowing resignation dominated the reactions, even as we were aware this was one of the more 'extreme' cases of discrimination among LGBTQ+ communities in and around Ni-Chome. Even before learning this piece of gossip, another friend had warned me that Goldfinger had placed a sign in their front window stating only cis women were permitted inside, with the reasoning being the bar was intended as a 'safe space for women.' After the earlier story

was shared, we discussed how the lesbian owner of Goldfinger was well known as an ‘old-school feminist’ and, to some of my companions, this translated to her lack of tolerance for any women who did not meet her specifications, or expectations, for womanhood.

Complaints and reports of this behaviour on Japanese Twitter forced the owner into a metaphorical corner and she apologised. But, to all of us seated together at that restaurant, we were united under a dismal concern that the public apology would not change the enforcement of her policy.

This anecdote serves as an example of emotional ‘gossiping’ and sharing which characterises many online and in-person gatherings I have had with feminists, activists, and LGBTQ+ individuals in Tokyo. Almost every conversation is punctuated with a retelling of something objectionable that someone else related to the greater community—activist queer or otherwise. Often, these narratives were transparently introduced as what they were: rumours, gossip, hearsay etc.

The gossip around transgressions within feminist, activist, and queer communities strengthens emotional bonds, or affective practices, between members. The passing on and even embellishing of certain ‘incidents’ or ‘scandals’ provided members something concrete to talk about and express opinions on, solidifying the feelings of the *uchi* group built on intersecting identities. By incidents focusing mainly on slights against fellow feminists, like the bashing of student branches talking about sexual consent, or against transgender people, like the Goldfinger and Chabujo examples, affective responses were built upon negative feelings towards those perceived as unsupportive, hateful and potential threats to the group. To reach even further, affective responses were expected to have two qualities: to be strong and to be condemning. I suggest this because such conversations were between insiders, fellow members or affiliates of an organisation (or identity) which was supposed to be inclusive, *not* exclusionary. The incident itself had already been judged

as inappropriate and unacceptable in these settings. Attempting to defend the actions of the owner of Goldfinger, even just the mild phrasing of ‘being from a different generation’, might label one as a potential transphobe. Or, at the very least, an unreliable ally.

What is under negotiation in these sharing or gossiping sessions is expressions of approval, legitimacy, and uncertainty over how an incident was handled, including estimations of who, or what social norm, was in the wrong. For example, whether the owner should have promised to change the bar’s entry policy permanently or whether Chabujo’s steering committee should have involved all members in the dialogue about a singular transphobic member. Undoubtedly, within this tight-knit group, there is pressure to agree with the new common-sense narrative or social script.

Sexual scripts such as cultural scenarios (such as heterosexual marriage), interpersonal scripting (as in relationships with other persons) and intrapsychic scripting (like individual desires and fantasies) are also relevant to these discussions of GID discourses, transgender identities and non-normative gender presentations. (Dale, 2019, 166-167). The affective push and pull of gossip follow similar patterns, which insider members are expected to know how to navigate while perhaps still exercising agency and freedom in their internal interpretations. (Wetherell, 2012a). This landscape is further complicated such as when Ken Plummer discusses the emergence of a “multiplicity of public spheres” including gay and lesbian public spheres. Gay and lesbian public spheres, while having aspects which are visible and leak into wider, mainstream culture, also retain subaltern, subversive strands. Aspects of private, insider life which are protected, these “queer strands... seek to keep (at least some) gay cultures on the borders, challenging dominant cultural forms and assumptions”(Plummer, 2001, 244-245). In the anecdotes and ethnographic descriptions shared within this thesis, gender norms visibly interact with the definitions of public and private, relations of power and linkages to precarity.

As Butler argues:

Gender norms have everything to do with how and in what way we can appear in public space; how and in what way the public and private are distinguished, and how that distinction is instrumentalised in the service of sexual politics; who will be criminalised based on public appearance; who will fail to be protected by the law or, more specifically, the police, on the street, or the job, or in the home (Butler, 2009, ii).

It is these norms and the values associated with them, like conformity, harmony and stability, that further reinforce the bonds among individuals who identify with different ideals—notably change, autonomy and courage (Mizoroki et al., 2023).

Groups such as Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action use online SNS platforms effectively—and affectively, ‘microdose knowledge’ about a given social issue, such as women’s representation in politics, beauty standards, and the meaning of trending acronyms like SOGI or SOGIE¹⁶ (Takashino and Keeni, 2023). In a separate fieldwork about participant engagements with Anzac Day in Aotearoa New Zealand, Wetherell et al observed that social media offered “more accessible spaces for dissenting voices around Anzac” (2020, 20). Tokyo’s constantly shifting landscape of gender activism is visible online as much or more than offline. A particularly compelling observation from Wetherell’s case which can be witnessed in Japanese feminist activism as well, is as follows: “Social networking services, such as Twitter, provide a platform for a range of soundbite-sized affective-discursive reflections free from many of the constraints and filters of the mass media” (Wetherell et al., 2020, 20).

Chabujo has more freedom to decide what to post and how to organise their events by managing their own SNS, much as how the Waseda sexual consent handbook team

¹⁶ SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity) or SOGIE (sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression) are terms used alongside or in place of LGBTQ+ to promote diversity and inclusion, especially in organisational environments. In my fieldwork, the acronym was spreading rapidly across higher education, grassroots, and corporate organisations. This included the introduction of SOGI/SOGIE on pamphlets at the Gender and Sexuality Centre at Waseda, research seminars hosted by the Waseda Gender Research Institute, which invited a speaker from the LGBT Law Association (LGBT 法連合会), an organisation which is pushing for an LGBTQ+ Anti-Discrimination Law in Japan.

gained more control and independence over their written content by disseminating their materials ‘unofficially’ instead of approved through university committees.

Tanaka Toko also observed the role of online spaces in spreading different interpretations of feminism, including issues of gender roles and violence against women, which leads to an increase in visibility (2020, 16). She goes on to reference “visibility politics” and how the concept captures a broader problem where “the very attempts of media companies to cover ‘feminist’ issues can be seen by people external to them as nothing more than a performance, an exploitation and appropriation of ‘feminist’ ideals by mainstream media through palatable campaigns” (ibid, 27). Visibility therein is a complicated and nuanced concern for grassroots organisations and activist groups. Apart, from the appropriation of media of often more mainstream—and more conservative—feminist thought, online space similarly gives rise to more criticism, as broader news coverage about feminist and gender issues focused groups gain more readers and listeners. Grassroots groups may have much to lose if a negative incident, like the transphobic SNS comments of the member of Chabujo, were to be made into public knowledge. Keeping such conflicts internal or only sharing them within a less-watched SNS platform therefore becomes a strategic decision which protects the group as well as the individual. Of course, this can have far-reaching consequences for building a coalition between interest groups and for establishing a countermovement.

However, the Chabujo members I spoke with about this incident were more concerned with internal methods of resolution and information sharing. They did not mention possible consequences if someone spoke about it outside of the group, specifically online. Similarly, no one told me the name of the transphobic member, even after confirming they knew and worked with her. I did not press the issue and there was a high possibility I had never interacted with them since they were not on the digital team I

belonged to. But it is telling that, even while expressing their disapproval and dismay at the actions of a fellow Chabujo member, her name was not shared. The lack of online media announcements and confidentiality during interviews with the researcher may be evidence of “protecting projects, or indeed the right to have projects”, as Ortner discusses (2001, 81). It involves trust in the decision-making capabilities and value systems of fellow members. In this specific case, the skills of the veteran members who keep the grassroots group running, or, regarding decisions to take up social media engagement, of the founding member of the Waseda sexual consent project, Shikano-san.

Chabujo’s, or rather, comprised of veteran members, Chabujo’s steering committee’s dealings with a transphobic member were not only understood by less-involved members. They were praised.

Jay-san concludes their recounting of the incident: “I think they handled it with so much grace given like, the first time, whatever.”

It took roughly six months for the steering committee to message the rest of the organisation about the member’s comments, but Jay-san, who had also attended one or two general meetings which covered such issues in more detail, attributed this to the difficulty of any ‘accountability process’ as well as the ‘continued dialogue’ the steering committee had with the member who transgressed. This could be attributed to the different personal preferences of individual members, since, despite the periods of ‘radio silence’ where there is no activity in Chabujo, Jay-san does not seem bothered by this. They, and other members, recognise that even outside the incident with the transphobic member, there is a level of ‘business’ in the external lives of all members.

Our conversation in Yoyogi Park continues with Jay-san commenting:

[From my notes]

“But I think I also trust it’s not that Chabujo is completely not doing anything. I’m sure a lot of it is having, is happening within the steering committee, and also within the context of the steering committee, people have their own lives... So, I’m just, I’m fine. I’m happy to just chill here and maybe, like, propose a thing to do now and then.”

I make a sound of agreement, of understanding about the business of people’s everyday lives and add: “Yeah, sometimes I wonder, if, like, should I propose an idea...?”

“Yeah! Right!” Jay-san leans forward slightly, suddenly more animated. “Right. And like I share random stuff in the hashtag random chat. Yeah.”

“Yeah, I like to see your little frog sharing posts...” I laugh, referencing an image of a frog-shaped backpack they had bought and shared an image of in the channel. June smiles. She has been smiling and laughing in between expressions of concentration as she attempts to recall events and people’s reactions.

“Anyway, because I love Chabujo,” they exhale, before switching topics to speak more about queer rights organisations.

Unlike my more critical discussion with Chisato-san, the meeting with Jay-san is characterised by their affection towards Chabujo which suits their desires and aims to be part of an activist organisation. For them, a suitable ‘match’ for a volunteer organisation requires the organisation to hold similar values as they do but their approach isn’t necessarily high-energy or high commitment. As Jay-san mentions above: “I’m happy to just chill here...” Early in our interview, June explains that Chabujo’s structured meetings, when they do occur, are the “most organised... in like a good way, it can be overwhelming for someone who is neurodivergent” and they use the strategy of assigning a ‘timekeeper’ for each meeting as an example. This example is also an indicator to Jay-san that Chabujo is ‘respectful of people’s time.’

Jay-san’s response towards Chabujo, regarding times of tension and of everyday practice, appears bound up in affective practice as elaborated by scholars like Margaret Wetherell— “varying in scale, from repetitions and habits emerging in personal relationships... to group and institutional rituals” (Wetherell et al., 2020, 15). As outlined earlier, the scale in Chabujo’s case, and the student sexual consent project at Waseda

University, is small. General membership never surpasses 40 members and of those, only six to twelve people seem active at a given time. However, the scale and size of these projects and their outcomes do not overtly determine whether members will translate their feelings into deeper, longer-lasting bonds.

Burn Out for Activists: A Normalised Phenomenon?

The process of organising members for these projects is dotted with moments and periods of emotional tension, especially uncertainty. For Chabujo, members discussed the juxtaposition of stretches of ‘radio silence’ where committee members were, presumably, organising future activities, as supposed by Jay-san, with times of intense mobilisation—which was experienced by individuals like Chisato-san. Periods of mobilisation involved core members of projects such as the Chabujo sexual consent handbook which attributes the creation of the handbook to nine individuals. These activities result in physical, tangible materials and demand time and attention that often leads to symptoms of burn-out.

Chisato-san has been a member of Chabujo for five years and was a contributor to the sexual consent handbook, including during what she determined was perhaps Chabujo’s busiest year in 2018. She adds that she thinks 2018 was the busiest because it was when many students started their groups at their respective universities, specifically naming Speak Up Sophia, Believe Soka, Shaberu, Tottoko Gender Movement, and Keio [Gender Collective]. Because Chisato-san had been present during the workshop production and promotion, I asked for more details about her experiences—and any feelings attached to it. Our interview was conducted primarily in English, but Chisato-san occasionally switched to Japanese when discussing difficult topics and remembering past events. I have preserved these Japanese utterances to communicate this natural switching between languages and their affective dimension.

[From my notes]

As we chat over Zoom, I occasionally refer to my pre-written interview questions and themes and ask: "...What had been one of your most, positive or rewarding moments with Chabujo in five years?"

She pauses, thinking after having admitted moments ago that it was difficult to know where to start in summarising her time so far with the grassroots organisation.

"...At first, I tried to, like, *nan darou*, consider about my positionality in like activist space, like very carefully. And I think like when I created the handbook, I didn't experience rape or sexual violence like... I have experienced sexual harassment. But like, compared to other members, like, it was easier for me to show my face in public and talk about what we want to share, like consent on the web."

"Mm-hmm."

"Yeah. I didn't think about the positive change [referring to the impact on her own life] that much." We both chuckle lightly at that, retrospectively finding it amusing and slightly unbelievable that, now, the benefits to herself were not obvious or even visible.

"Yeah. Yeah. It's kind of like in the moment, right? It's so, so tiring, and so much hard work and stressful that you do not think about it. So, it takes time to process."

Chisato-san responds emphatically: "Yeah *sou hontō ni*. I didn't think about it. Like... *hontō ni*... I have to do many things. I had to contact with professors, students, journalists... And I went to many places and talked about sexual consent. And changed *meishi*¹⁷."

"Oh, yeah. So many *meishi*."

"Yeah. So many *meishi*. And I couldn't remember whom I met. I was so busy. Because I think I was the only member who could like, **talk** about our project in public."

This time, Chisato-san emphasises the word 'talk', delineating the verbal from the written.

And, to some extent, the private from the public. It recalls the words of Paul Reynolds that "privacy and the private are hegemonic in demarcating a boundary between what is held as intimate and what is regarded as part of common associations and relationships" (2010, 36). According to Reynolds, this demonstrates why intimate citizenship is significant in opening the possibility "to rearticulate intimacy beyond the private but it stands against this hegemonic edifice" (2010, 37). The hegemonic edifice in these cases of gender and

¹⁷ The exchanging of *meishi* (business cards), is a common custom across Japan, especially in corporate settings. However, having your *meishi*, knowing how to present it and how to accept others' *meishi* is a skillset and practice that applies across other careers and disciplines, be it academic conferences, with journalists and reporters (as was Chisato-san's experience), and in artistic fields (like at markets and conventions). Chisato-san's mention of exchanging 'so many *meishi*'—and not remembering who she met, lends further weight to the role she took on as a Chabujo representative when the handbook project was gaining public attention.

feminist activism by Chisato-san and others punishes public accounts of sexual violence put forth by Japanese women.

Chisato-san's comments acknowledge that, if some of the other Chabujo handbook team had gone public with the consent discussion they might have faced backlash or that their safety may have been jeopardised. Even without Chisato-san explicitly saying so, there was an understanding transmitted between us and between other members about who was suited for different roles within the organisation. Chisato-san's positionality, according to her, offered a position of 'uniqueness' and an opportunity to think of how to 'use my power'.

[From my notes]

"...Were you interviewed by *Kyodo*? *Asahi*... *Mainichi*?"

After Chisato-san mentioned that she was the one making public appearances on behalf of Chabujo, I was struck by the fact that I was first introduced to the organisation via a *Kyodo* news article. I also begin naming other long-established Japanese news outlets.

"Yeah, yeah. So many! And *NHK*..."

"...I think I saw your name in some articles."

"Yeah, I think it was...un."

"Yeah. Then you ended up playing a very important role, like being a public face for Chabujo."

Chisato-san alternately laughs, takes deep exhalations, and nods.

"It was so tiring. And I like didn't want to do... continue to do it. But I thought like that like it was necessary."

My Zoom call with Chisato-san stretched on for about two hours, exceptionally long for an interview that is usually meant to be 45 minutes to an hour—longer only when speaking with more than one person at a time, like the group interview with Sada-sensei and Matsui-sensei.

Chisato-san's recollection of the difficulties of not only creating the handbook but also of taking care of many public interviews and business interactions was laden with a release of emotion that felt tangible even through the glowing computer screen. She

slipped back into Japanese when emphasising a spoken sentiment and her voice rose in a near exclamation. Nothing in her demeanour when even sharing the more negative aspects of her time with Keio Gender Collective, with Chabujo, and then at the University of Tokyo, suggested regret. Instead, it reminded me of water being let out of a dam, an emotional tide, or circulation, that—Chisato-san shared with me near the end of our call—she hadn't expressed in some time.

The challenges and changes that emerged from volunteering with Chabujo were also embedded in the format of the organisation, especially the reality that most of the activities occurred online, even before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The level of activity and number of members varied by the Chabujo teams and each Chabujo member I spoke to, including Chisato-san, spoke from their experience with specific teams.

At this point, I must clarify with Chisato-san how many teams are in Chabujo because only a certain number of team channels are visible to me. If you are not a part of a specific team, then you are not granted access. This was not directly explained to me before or after joining Chabujo, but I was familiar with the Slack application. In my past work with a Japanese non-profit, it was common policy not to clog up people's workspaces with channels and direct messages which did not concern their primary tasks.

So first we have like two big teams, one is *seiteki yakuwari buntan* team, gender law team, and our team, like, *seiteki doui* team. And then, inside the *seiteki doui* team, we have so many things, right? Like a digital team. And, I do not know, like the leadership team. And I'm part of the book project team. Because I wanted to use my knowledge to create a book about consent for high school students. So now we are working on it.

I hadn't heard of an ongoing book project and expressed my surprise—and delight, that materials are being produced for younger students rather than just university-age students. Chisato-san was taken aback for a slightly different reason—that I did not know about the project's existence, letting out a muffled 'oh no...' as if it was some failing on herself or her team that not every Chabujo member was aware. I assured her that it was probably not

the case, that I might have missed the news at the most recent general meeting or that I was not in the correct Slack channels. This was speculation on my part. I do not know how widespread knowledge of the project was beyond the specific team working on it. However, Chisato-san moved on to describe, in a mixture of English and Japanese, how the project was proceeding.

Yeah...And like, my team is... Like, we're not working well. So, like many people, many members left, so now we only have four left... and now, it's the end of the project right now. So, we must finalise our content also. The kind of illustrations and so on... were a little bit tough.

She goes on to explain the difficulties they have had with the current publishing company including that they were not able to choose the illustrator for the book. And, unfortunately, the artist did not know much about gender and sexuality so many of the contents had to be changed or redone.

Chisato-san and I commiserated on the difficulty of both communication and retention of members in settings like Chabujo's, as I shared that people were leaving the digital team currently because of other life obligations.

I think that's like a negative side of Chabujo. Because we, we can't like physically meet. So, some people just feel tired of doing this. Continue to do this. So yeah. But I call activists like, care is also peer care, maybe is important... But it's difficult now.

The idea of peer care among activists, of caring for one another as well as for a greater project or cause, was also mentioned in the Chabujo sharing session I joined in December 2022. It was expressed in terms of a 'care load' that women and other marginalised groups experience in everyday life. The members who attended the session identified with one person's mention of the 'care load', or emotional labour, which becomes even more taxing when you are trying unsuccessfully to have diminished voices heard and all one can think about is 'bad things.' This was compared to the concept of *iyashi*, a Japanese term which denotes something healing or comforting, even therapeutic. For example, visiting animal cafes may be a form of *iyashi*, or, similarly, watching one's favourite drama at home with a

steaming cup of tea. Chisato-san's comment on the importance of peer care is a common refrain in Chabujo. Care for yourself and others are, as Chisato-san comes to her conclusion, a significant aspect of the group's—and her own, practice. This, I argue throughout, is an inherently *affective* practice. And one, which, if we use Plummer and Reynolds' discussions alongside, shows how grassroots groups in Japan negotiate *intimate citizenship*.

Chisato-san tells me her previous exhaustive activities with Chabujo were 'necessary'; the many *meishi* she exchanged and interviews she attended. I ask what made her continue despite being so tired or 'burnt out' (*moetsukita*).

Oh... actually, I took a break for six months... So, I entered Tokyo uni, and I was like, so surprised. Like to see like, oh, like very misogynistic guys. I was, like, surprised. And I was so like, sad. And a bit depressed about the environment. So, I need my nakama.

Chisato-san continues, describing how she joined the Tottoko Gender Movement, which was founded by another Chabujo member. Her involvement with workshops in both Tottoko and later Chabujo resumed. The activity with these groups is not continuous or consistent, but the spaces and people are there when Chisato-san and others need them.

...I joined Chabujo again and asked all the handbook members to create the new workshop with me to kanji kanaa [that kind of feeling] so I think so, my answer is like, yeah, because of Todai. Like, the very misogynistic environment made me feel like, oh, I have to do this again.

Far from the last topic the two of us discussed, but one of the final examples of emotional—and perhaps physical, 'burnout', that can occur with gender activists in Japan, was both the need for a break from group activities or community organising and then a pull to return to activist spaces. This is not unlike the emphasis on a place of belonging, of *iibasho*, which was often invoked by individuals voicing up as well as among minority groups in Tokyo. Chisato-san's mention of '*nakama*'—companion, colleague, friend, is also significant when discussing bonds of mutual respect and understanding, which, in her case, outweighed the challenges she faced while being involved in Chabujo activities,

specifically interacting with mainstream media. Being in an ‘activist space’ where she could talk about sexual consent and gender issues more freely was, and still is, a motivator for her involvement in not just Chabujo, but Keio Gender Collective, Tottoko Gender Movement and her future endeavours to continue promoting gender equality and education around topics like sex workers’ rights.

She mentions various fellow members who helped her, and other young activists feel more confident in themselves, her voice growing contemplative:

And even though it was difficult to talk about, like, sexual issues in public at the time, but we had our peers, *nakama*, like activist friends, so that also, that was also like a positive change or impact on my life.

Chisato-san’s use of *nakama* also designates a process of self-identification as an activist and a feminist. This is often a continuous process, involving both the individual’s identity and the group’s, akin to Martinez’s discussion of roles in the diving village, Kuzaki. She writes:

There is no end product, only a continuous process of becoming in which people attempt to orchestrate a variety of social roles... into a coherent whole, into a person who fills all the necessary roles well. Above the personal, there exists group identity—the person as part of a diving *nakama*; belonging to an age-grade, to the village, to Kansai, to Japan (2004, 206).

While maintaining these groups, emotional and/or physical burn-out may cause previously active members to go ‘dormant’ or resign. On the other hand, reorganising a larger group such as Voice Up Japan, may lead to smaller branches and their members being left without guidelines on how to continue their activities. For the sexual consent handbook team, the once joint contributions of the circles Shaberu and Voice Up Japan Waseda decreased to the independent work of Shaberu—an organisation solely affiliated with and responsible for anti-sexual violence campaigning at Waseda. I received hints of these changes to the group organisation through comments during our bimonthly meetings as well as from longer conversations with individual members.



Figure 60: Welcome event announcement for Tottoko Gender Movement, posted 6th April 2024. The event's focus was on 'how to be an ally' and depicts different LGBTQ+ flags in the shape of cupcakes.

Many meetings with the sexual consent handbook team at Waseda were dedicated to planning for the welcome events and explanation sessions for new students starting university in April. The frequency of our hour-to-two-hour-long online discussions increased to weekly meetings. It was during one of those meetings in late March that I learned that the consent handbook team might have issues recruiting members directly because they did not have their own dedicated SNS accounts.

The members in attendance included Shikano-san, Kawai-san, Kanao-san, and me, and the meeting began with us asking questions about how we would advertise the welcome events in addition to recruiting potential new members from incoming first years. We agreed that announcements on Instagram and Twitter would be the most useful, although the possibility of a LINE chat made specifically for the welcome events was raised. However, the handbook team would have to collaborate with Shaberu or VUJ Waseda to use their existing Instagram accounts.

We eventually decided that it would be best for the handbook team to have their own SNS account. Kawai-san volunteered to make these and be the person in charge

(*tantō*) for these accounts. It was simpler to have one person manage the Instagram and Twitter posts rather than have multiple members coordinate. Previously, multiple members managing the social media presence may have been standard when all handbook team activities were shared through the Shaberu or VUJ Waseda accounts, but it seems that level of collaboration was more necessary when the handbook itself was still being crafted.

Now that the handbook had been written, edited, published, and was available for distribution, it was becoming more evident that the team I was a part of was the ‘workshop team’ and that the other circle members had moved on to separate projects which aimed to address broader gender issues at Waseda campuses. Shikano-san provided us with additional context as to why it was a good idea to switch to having our team SNS accounts. It was news to the rest of us to hear that, due to the lack of manpower on the VUJ Waseda side, they were ending their involvement in the handbook project (*hitode no tame, chīmu toshite wa kanyo wo chūshi*). Individuals from this student branch might still choose to participate, but we could no longer use the VUJ Waseda SNS. This was followed up with a message from Shikano-san which made it into the meeting notes at that time: “We must be careful when disseminating information and editing the documents for the joint circle meeting. Newcomers will not be involved with the handbook team.”

This specific meeting also included a discussion of how we could structure and schedule a ‘training workshop’ for potential new members or just interested students, but it was the discussion around the SNS accounts which piqued my curiosity. I had followed both VUJ Waseda and Shaberu's Instagram accounts for nearly a year before I joined the handbook team, when both accounts periodically shared updates about the handbook’s creation and distribution. My earlier email communications with the VUJ Waseda team had included mention of the group being reorganised, but I was not aware that the number of students participating was so low it resulted in them removing themselves from future

activities like workshops. And all this activity was a byproduct of the finished sexual consent handbook. Such a change in who was involved with the project also meant we had some work to do before the joint explanation session with Shaberu and before we put on any new workshops—the simple but meaning-laden task of removing VUJ Waseda’s name from all PowerPoint slides and prewritten scripts saved in the shared team Google Drive folders. Sabrina-san and I made sure this removal was carried out for the English language slides and documents as well.

After conducting an English-language sexual consent workshop together and having a lengthy discussion in the nearby Toyama Park, Sabrina-san and I agreed to meet again so she could share her experiences both at Hosei University and Waseda University. As an international student from Austria, finishing up her master’s studies, Sabrina-san, like me, experienced the sexual consent projects by these groups as an outsider—albeit one that had been able to get at least one foot through the door. Even with a decent grasp of the Japanese language and how academic environments at Tokyo universities worked, Sabrina-san had also faced struggles joining the gender issues-focused circles at Waseda.



Figure 61: Voice Up Japan announcement about a change in the organisation, posted on 1st April 2023.

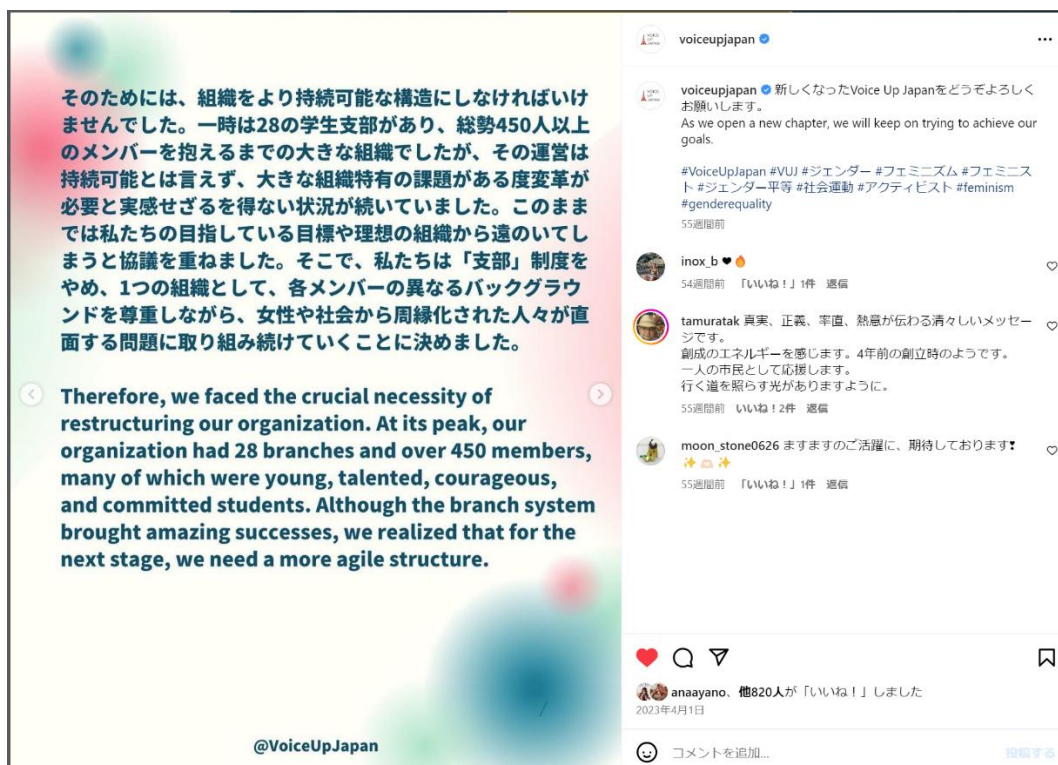


Figure 62: A statement acknowledging that there is a need for restructuring due to the size and diversity within VUJ.

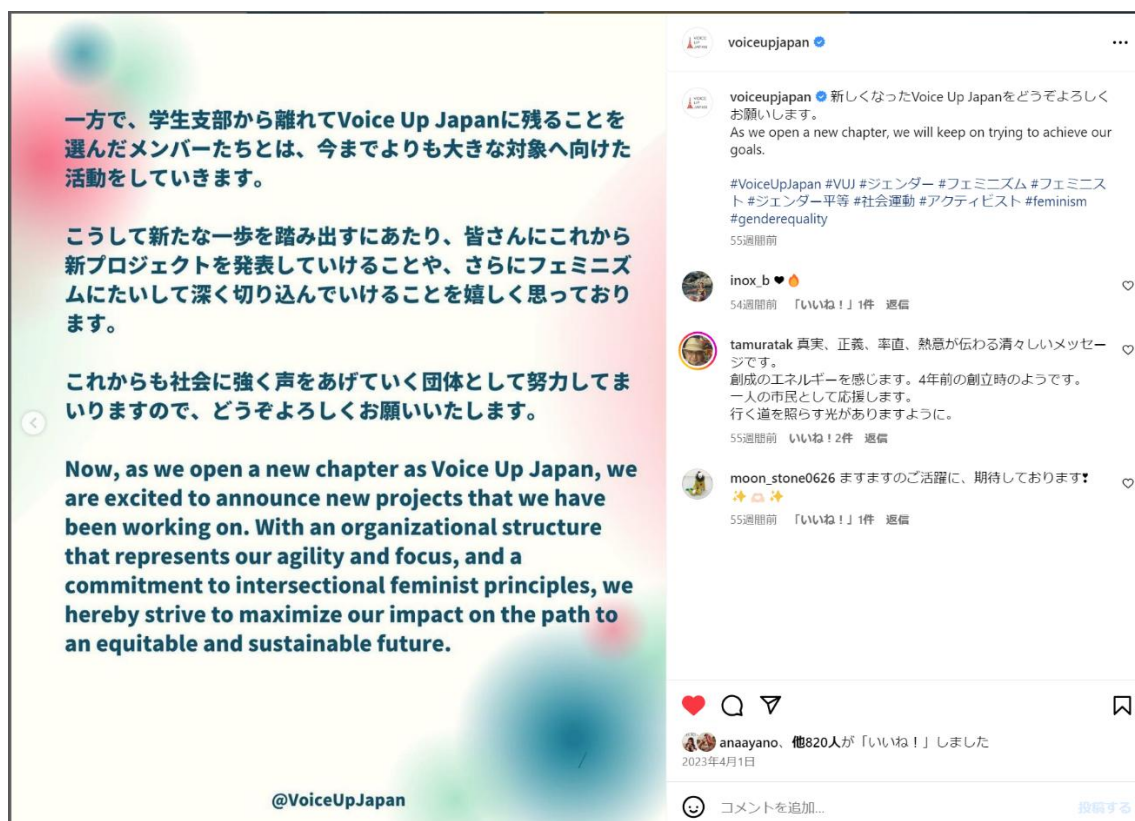


Figure 63: The final page of the announcement emphasises new projects and feminist principles.

The last time Sabrina-san and I spoke in person, she had told me that she had interviewed to join the Voice Up Japan Waseda branch as a new member but had never heard back from them about the status of her application.

[From my notes]

She laughs as she admits that only a few days after that conversation of ours, they finally responded: “I got an email from one of the members apologising that because like of everything happening right now, [they] didn’t ever get to, like, contact me back or like, I do not know... talk to me afterwards. And that they’re basically yeah, well changing the whole branch now and reorganising...”

I nod and murmur agreement. This is what I had pieced together too. Not directly, but through signs such as VUJ Waseda’s withdrawal from the sexual consent handbook team and other student branches’ change of name and affiliation on Instagram.

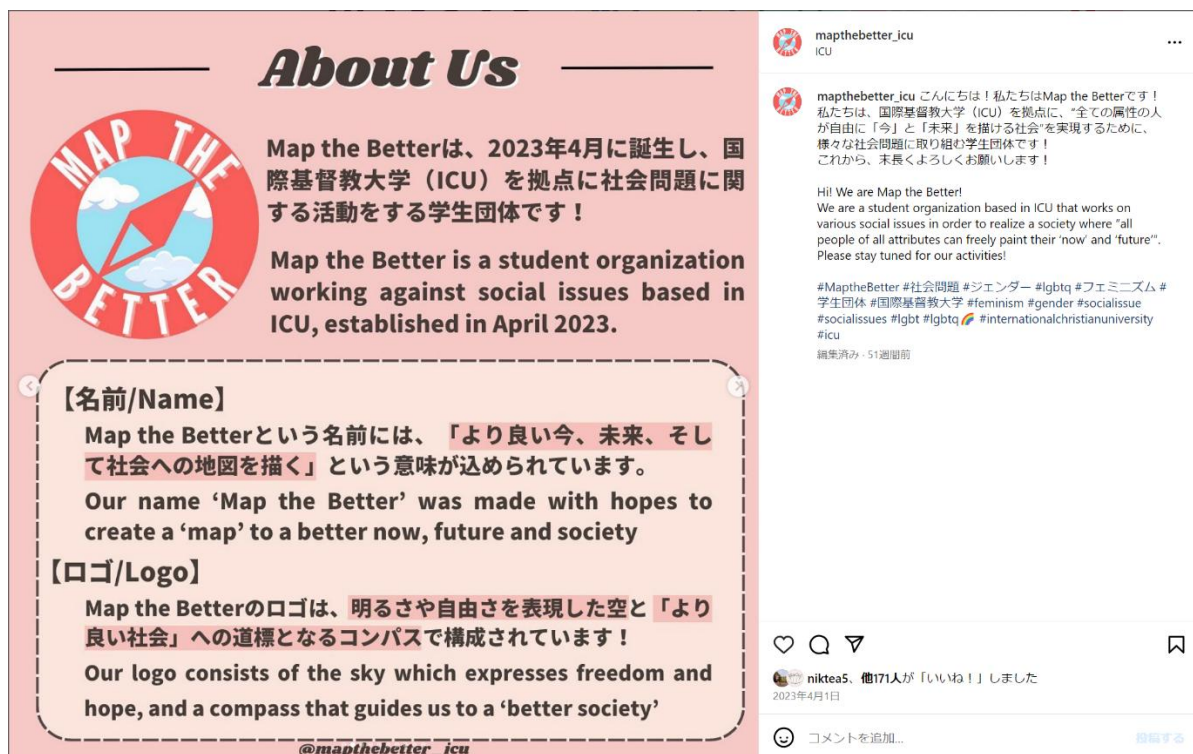
“Yeah, I do not know if... I do not know the background. I just know that like, I think one of the big members of Voice Up Japan, not the Waseda branch, but like the whole... Yeah. Was kind of, I do not know, hating towards LGBTQIA+ members. I’m not sure if that’s true. But I heard something like that...”

Sabrina-san’s addition of ‘I do not know’ highlights that this is a rumour rather than a confirmed fact—at least between the two of us. It was a rumour that, after we briefly get sidetracked about how Sabrina-san was added to the LINE group chat of the soon-to-be-rebranded VUJ Waseda, she heard while at the recent Tokyo Pride Parade 2023, aptly themed ‘Press on till Japan changes’ (kawaru made tsuzukeru).

“That’s interesting, though, about the, like, a member up top saying something hateful, or whatever it is,” I bring us back to our earlier speculation about why the group is reorganising,

“I’m not sure,” Sabrina-san replies. “Like another friend of mine, that’s not related to Waseda, we went to Pride together. And I told her, ‘It’s crazy that not even Voice Up Japan is posting anything about Pride. ...And I was like, why?’ And then she told me, she heard that there was like a scandal about like a person, kind of, I do not know, sort of demonstrating against it... I’m not sure if I misunderstood her because she told me in Japanese, and it was quite loud... Because if they’re now trying to distance themselves, there must be reasoning behind that.”

Although Sabrina-san and her friend may be repeating hearsay or gossip, and were aware that it may be such, it is telling of how inconsistent and vague the position of Voice Up Japan as an organisation has become. There had been no official statement at this time in late April 2023, just a post about reorganisation being a reason for less SNS activity and the online movement of the International Christian University branch to launch their independent campaign.



About Us

Map the Betterは、2023年4月に誕生し、国際基督教大学（ICU）を拠点に社会問題に関する活動をする学生団体です！

Map the Better is a student organization working against social issues based in ICU, established in April 2023.

【名前/Name】
Map the Betterという名前には、「より良い今、未来、そして社会への地図を描く」という意味が込められています。
Our name ‘Map the Better’ was made with hopes to create a ‘map’ to a better now, future and society

【ロゴ/Logo】
Map the Betterのロゴは、明るさや自由さを表現した空と「より良い社会」への道標となるコンパスで構成されています！
Our logo consists of the sky which expresses freedom and hope, and a compass that guides us to a ‘better society’

@mapthebetter_icu

mapthebetter_icu
ICU

mapthebetter_icu こんにちは！私たちはMap the Betterです！
私たちは、国際基督教大学（ICU）を拠点に、「全ての属性の人が自由に「今」と「未来」を描ける社会」を実現するために、様々な社会問題に取り組む学生団体です！
これから、末長くよろしくお願いいたします！

Hi! We are Map the Better!
We are a student organization based in ICU that works on various social issues in order to realize a society where "all people of all attributes can freely paint their 'now' and 'future'".
Please stay tuned for our activities!

#MaptheBetter #社会問題 #ジェンダー #lgbtq #フェミニズム #学生団体 #国際基督教大学 #feminism #gender #socialissue #socialissues #lgbt #lgbtq #internationalchristianuniversity #icu

編集済み · 51週間前

♡ 💬 📌

niktea5、他171人が「いいね！」しました
2023年4月1日

😊 コメントを追加... 投稿する

Figure 64: Map the Better ICU About Us, posted 1st April 2023.



Figure 65: Event by Map the Better ICU reframes activism as something significant to multiple facets of society, including business, academics, and journalism. Posted 14th August 2023 to 27th August 2023.

We joke that, without an official statement from the people involved, Twitter or Reddit could tell us more. The joking is tinged with disappointment from us both as we admit that most of the individual members of the organisation were ‘doing great work’ and we ‘hope it will continue in some form.’

The State of Gender Activism in Urban Japan

Months later, I had the opportunity to interview Kazuna Yamamoto,¹⁸ one of the founders of Voice Up Japan, who had further insights into the reorganisation and rebranding of the group. We met briefly online after I emailed explaining my research project and the recommendation of a colleague to reach out to Yamamoto-san via a specific email address.

¹⁸ As a public figure, well known for her activist work in Japan and her talks overseas, Kazuna Yamamoto’s name has not been changed. As with other interlocutors, written consent was obtained to use a real name rather than a pseudonym or similar form of anonymization as well as to include both direct and indirect quotations. Any requests to not include material from interviews have also been respected.

As we begin talking about Voice Up Japan's activism as well as the state of activist protests and demonstrations in Japan in general, I angle towards the issue that has been bothering me since I first saw those Instagram posts and since I heard that rumour from Sabrina-san.

[From my notes]

"Some of the students, like the university branches, decided to kind of make their kind of separate but related group... Was that an independent idea of the university branches? Or was it kind of through consultation with the head organisation?"

Yamamoto-san tells me it was a lot of things but that in short:

"...The backstory was, I think there were a few student branches that started making statements that were just not aligned with our core values. We started thinking, and then we had long discussions about what activism is... And we weren't, we weren't getting anywhere... But also, we realised activism is about being able to sort of speak your opinion freely. But it makes it so difficult as an organisation because we have different people who have different opinions, just as they are 100% entitled to."

She explains that the organisation announced to discontinue its' activities, specifically to end official student branches. Student members were given multiple options: they could keep using the name Voice Up Japan while being an independent organisation, or they could completely change their name, rebranding as well as doing their own thing. Yamamoto-san phrased this decision as one stemming from the loss of an activist identity for Voice Up Japan as a whole—something she personally really wished to return to.

"So, we said, we're not going to have branches anymore. We're just going to be Voice Up Japan, but then we're going to focus on activism because everyone wants to do something different. So, people want more education, which is important. I think it's really, really important. But there are so many other organisations doing education, and very few people actually doing activism on the streets, you know, to politicians. And it was the core of Voice Up that we were an activist organisation."

As Yamamoto-san discussed the difficulties of organising many diverse individuals within Voice Up Japan, my thoughts returned to other recounted experiences of gender activism in Japan. I considered Chisato-san's story of making public appearances on behalf of Chabujo as well as Shikano-san's comments about how media attention makes a project more visible but also opens possibilities for 'bashing.'

I nod along to Yamamoto's description, before broaching the topic of online criticism: "Is it also because you've mentioned that so many people want interviews and collaboration? Is that part of the difficulty with dealing with people? Is it some of going into the public media presence, or, in your experience, as far as challenges and barriers to your messages...?"

“In a sense, definitely, there’s a big kind of backlash whenever you talk in public, like we’ve had, so many burnouts within the organisation, I’m not gonna lie. I’ve been burnt out for a year, I’ve been burnt out to the core, where I couldn’t even leave the bed because it’s just really hard.”

“And also, because you hear so many stories, especially because Voice [Up Japan] focuses a lot on sexual violence, which is something other organisations try to avoid because it is very sensitive. And then hearing these stories and it gets to you.”

It’s no accident that multiple people I spoke with one-on-one, including Kazuna Yamamoto—a recognisable public face of contemporary Japanese youth activism—admitted to, in differing ways, the occurrence of backlash, or bashing, and the reality of burnout. Perhaps importantly, during meetings, welcome events, and workshops, burnout and bashing were not mentioned. Very few perceived negative feelings were referenced, unless fear or uncertainty is framed as a motivating emotion for projects and campaigns. But the truth emerging from these conversations was as Yamamoto loosely put it, that the backlash coming from ‘whenever you talk in public’ was a direct cause for ‘burnout’, Yamamoto specifically called it ‘activist burnout’ when referencing a specific case of a VUJ member leading a project on sexual harassment at the time job interviews are ordinarily held needing to take a year off of schooling because of the toll it took on her.

The result of a relatively small number of passionate individuals taking on sensitive and uncomfortable topics like sexual violence and sexual consent is that those few members can be targets of online bashing and backlash. And then, when burnout inevitably occurs, the membership or activity level of the organisation will decrease. We can witness in the case of Voice Up Japan and Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action a pattern of intense campaigning, overlapping with media interest in Shiori Ito’s legal case and the #MeToo Movement, followed by scandals at Keio University between the years of 2017 and 2019. Such flurries of interviews and talks covered by various Japanese and occasionally international reporters usually ended in a tangible byproduct such as handbooks. However, after the successful publication and distribution of their materials to a focused audience—

such as women's community centres and student circles, we can observe a dramatic downward trend of activities. My membership with Chabujo and the changes which occurred with the VUJ Waseda branch while I helped with sexual consent workshops demonstrated that this trend was internal to the organisations as well as represented externally via social media posting. Outside of the veteran, founding members or an establishing steering committee, ordinary members were not part of discussions on organisation-wide structuring and handling of specific incidents.

The example of Voice Up Japan's reorganisation, Waseda's branch disaffiliation from the sexual consent handbook project, and other university circles' choice to rebrand themselves, demonstrates that even groups with the developed project aim and a greater membership—according to their Instagram post-Voice Up Japan had over 450 members and even VUJ Waseda used to have more members than Shaberu, may not be able to weather disagreements or conflicts. Even the perception or rumour of a scandal, which was never openly confirmed by Voice Up Japan's public accounts, and never came up in my interview with Kazuna Yamamoto, can be enough for branch teams and individuals to remove themselves.

Considering this chapter's theme of making feelings into bonds, and potentially finding one's *nakama* through gender activism, the Voice Up Japan situation was a catalyst for members to assess their affective responses in the context of values related to supporting a broader community—including LGBTQ+ individuals. Alternatively, members perhaps moved on simply because graduation was on the horizon, professional work was increasing, and it was... time to go. Changes in these grassroots organisations also change the lives of the individuals involved, pushing or pulling them based on new structures or recent incidents. But it can also be cyclical, like Chihiro's on-again-off-again involvement with Chabujo, which seems spurred by the discomfort and alienation she feels from

misogynistic environments like Tōdai as well as a pull from the sense of belonging, of *iibasho*, with her *nakama* found through Chabujo and similar organisations.

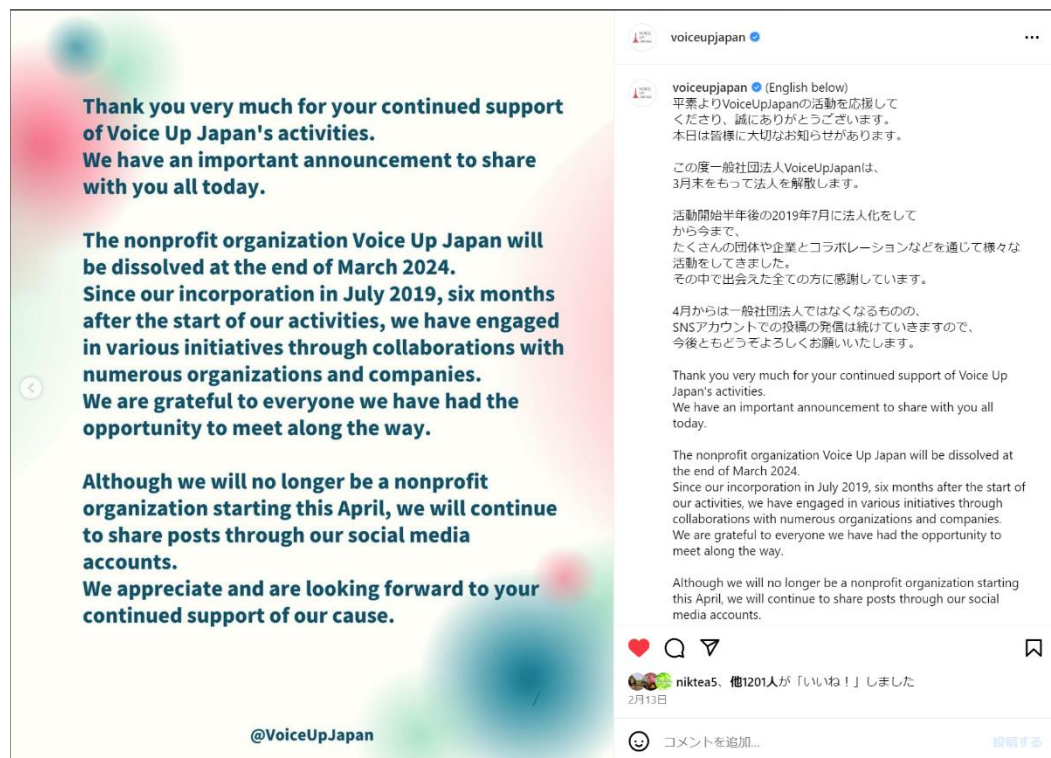


Figure 66: The official announcement of Voice Up Japan's dissolution (*hōjin wo kaisanshimasu*), posted on 13th February 2024.

The Waseda project's case is different in the sense that it is tied up in university bureaucracy and practicalities—Shaberu only accepts undergraduate student members for their anti-sexual violence campaigns, and the handbook has an unofficial status due in part to the university's guidelines not to demonstrate preference to certain student group activities. The cyclical change for Waseda circles and teams, beyond this sexual consent focus, is tied to the ritual pulls and pushes of a student's academic journey. April brings in new students who may become new members or at the very least be the target first-year audience of many of the consent workshops. Becoming a third- or fourth-year student usually pulls students' attention away from their circles, including any activist campaigns, while graduation pushes the veteran members onwards to post-university life paths.

Affective practice and response play a role in recruitment and continued activity, to be sure, but bonds between members are more surface level.

Outside of VUJ Waseda, none of the handbook team members raised further questions about the ‘why’ of their withdrawal beyond the stated comment of a ‘lack of manpower’. It was an inconvenience dealt which required editing slides and requesting the remaining members to take on more workshop slots. The feelings inlaid in the topic of sexual consent and the concerns members had in disseminating the information in an easily understandable format, were more difficult to sense than those of Chabujo’s members. They came out during occasional discussions in meetings, during the welcome event, and in palpable relief between facilitators after a completed workshop, which was discussed in more detail in the previous chapter.

Individual members I spoke to during these activities or in more structured interviews, generally agreed that the work being done was both necessary and good. Students were less likely than their supportive faculty members to frame the sexual consent handbook and the resulting workshops as a sign of their *zaiya seishin* (activist or grassroots spirit) or a testament to generational changes in attitudes towards consent. This applied to attitudes towards gendered power in general. Narratives of generational change and comparisons of ‘then’ and ‘now’ were more relevant to older, more experienced female faculty than 20-something university students. It was also no coincidence that most of the students and faculty involved in the project identified as women, who are much more likely to be sexually harassed or assaulted than their male counterparts. Consent became a platform by which other issues, primarily pervasive and normalised sexual violence on university campuses, could be addressed.

Although sexual consent, or *seiteki doui*, is not a concept nor a project familiar across Waseda's multiple campuses, four of which are based in central Tokyo, it is worth acknowledging the efforts put in by these individual students. But I emphasise that, rather than enacting change or spreading educational messages far and wide, the change which has occurred since the inception of this specific sexual consent handbook is an internal one—a change in self and perspective. Members align themselves with the missions and visions of these projects, often while expressing some discontent, worry or uncertainty with their everyday environments. Shaberu's mission statement reads simply:

Providing opportunities to talk about sex, acquire knowledge and become aware of it (*sei ni tsuite hanasu, chishiki wo tsukeru, kizukukikkake wo teikyo*).

Meanwhile, Chabujo's mission statement is more general and outlines:

People who think 'I want to change the current society', will connect their values through dialogue, together we will raise our voices and take action to resolve the power imbalance (*ima no shakai wo kaetai, to omou hitotachi ga, taiwa wo tooshite kachikan de tsunagari, tomo ni kore wo agekoudosuru koto de, pawaa no fukinko wo kaishoushiteimasu*).

What these statements have in common is that they encourage specific mindsets and behaviours in the individuals who join. They create a space for discussion which *does* set a precedent for communicating about sensitive topics. It is then up to these individuals if they take what they have learned, discussed, and even taught in the form of seminars and workshops, into other aspects of their everyday life.

The people who likely have experienced the most change during this sexual consent education campaign are the ones who have written, researched, organised, and discussed the issues laid out within the handbook pages. For some group members, this personal development was grounded in finding a place to relax without worry (*anshinsuru*). For others, it meant finding like-minded peers and friends (*nakama*). And others still may not have found a place or people so much as a goal that was worth writing or speaking into a reality. Whether it will be a reality for people in Japan beyond the

members of these grassroots organisations is still yet to be seen. Especially when the fear of bashing and the emotional exhaustion, which characterises burnout truncate and diminish powerful dialogues before they can even go online.

Conclusion: The Creation and Dissolution of Consent Activism in Tokyo

By the end of this thesis, it was tempting to frame the arguments around grassroots sexual consent projects in terms of either ‘success’ or ‘failure.’ Tackling these issues was complicated by how frequently scholars such as Kawasaka (2023), Kingston (2004), and Donohue(2020) have discussed feminist movements and #MeToo in Japan, by which strategies ended in ‘failure.’ Looking at the history of feminist discourse and movements against gender backlash over the past few decades, it is true that, in many ways, Japanese feminists did fail to organise at the grassroots level and sufficiently engage with online spaces and popular media (Kawasaka, 2023, 189-190). The visible consequences of a lack of counter-movements in the 2000s are evident in the strength with which transmisogyny has taken hold of the Japanese Twittersphere. Many mainstream feminists are afraid of LDP policies disadvantaging cis women, such as debates against married couples having separate surnames, and they wield anti-trans and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric to protect their rights. The disinterested public echoes their fears and uncertainties, a concern of several of my interlocutors regarding their self-identification as members of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community. A recurring theme in my research has been the importance of online spaces and communication via social media platforms so these digital discourses cannot be disregarded.

Much of my fieldwork was conducted online, due to the pure convenience of it, even more so than the lingering restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic present in Japan. The work of the social movement organisation SEALDs in 2015 was heavily reliant on delivering updates on political developments to members via the mobile messaging app LINE, as well as live-streamed music events intended to engage with the ‘everyday life’ of youth, pushing to not just ‘normalise’ activism but make it ‘cool’ (Falch and Hammond,

2020, 440 and 443, O'Day et al., 2018, 187 and 190). When it comes to the expression of the #MeToo movement in Japan, the consensus appears to be that it made much less of an impact than desired. Lile Otaki Donohue theorised the factors which contributed towards the failure of #MeToo in Japan.

Donohue writes:

The #MeToo movement relied on two things: individuals sharing sensitive personal information and a significant number of people willing to believe them. Japan's conservative social atmosphere—in other words, a lack of people willing to believe victims—discouraged (and continues to discourage) women coming forward (2020, 76).

Donohue connects this to Neil Stammers' work on expressive and instrumental dimensions, the expressive application to women organising at the grassroots level to change perceptions around sexual violence and abuse. The instrumental can be applied to the social, political and legal change which occurs due to a shift in norms and values. This argument elaborates that:

...The expressive dimension requires women to come forward and society to believe them: Japanese society values conformity, making it difficult for women to speak out from the beginning, and when they did come forward despite the difficulties, they introduced sanctions that ensured women would be too intimidated to follow suit (Donohue, 2020, 77).

A common point of comparison between Japanese feminist movements and the #MeToo movement was social movements in South Korea, which achieved greater success in raising public awareness and political consciousness. The 'mirroring strategy' of South Korean feminists uses verbal invectives "to raise public consciousness among women online about the way men see and talk about them" which contrasts with the pattern of silencing that Japanese feminists still struggle with (Dalton and Norma, 2022b, 115).

Dalton and Norma further describe:

Social pressure generated by high-profile men publicly attacking survivors and other women speaking out is seen by Japanese feminists as having produced a downwardly spiralling situation in which the declining numbers of women speaking out make attacks on those who do more likely (2022b, 115).

Much of the resistance to gender activism, especially efforts perceived as uprooting or reforming traditional family structures and roles divided by the male and female, masculine and feminine, is tied to a concern that the group, the family, the community, the nation, will dissolve. Movements to make visible and empower individual voices are therefore identified as a threat to the existing social order, to harmony, to conformity, and familiarity.

As Hasunuma and Shin write in their analysis of #MeToo/#WeToo/#WithYou in both countries: “Japanese and Korean culture is still very patriarchal and perpetuates ideas that it is the woman’s responsibility or fault and that she should endure harassment rather than upset group dynamics or bring attention to the harassment or violence”(2019, 107).

Similarly, Asahina and Mizoroki et al’s studies demonstrate how ambivalent attitudes of individuals towards politics and potential social change emerge from a sense that inequality cannot be addressed. Japanese young adults especially have a “remarkably low sense of political efficacy” and “when individuals lack belief in their capacity to address injustices, their senses of inequality are repressed within the self, which consequently reinforce the status quo”(Asahina, 2021, 723). Downplayed expectations and downward comparison with those less fortunate than themselves mean few individuals in Japan feel demonstrations or protests are a worthwhile use of their time. This does not mean people disagree with campaigns against sexual violence, but participants in Mizoroki et al’s study said “they were afraid of, and thought other people were fearful of, retaliation and isolation, given their perception of Japanese values and the risk of hateful cyberbullying” (2023, 14). The ‘perceived Japanese values’ discussed were harmonious stability, conformity/group emphasis, hierarchy, homogeneity, and endurance. Harmony and stability were achieved through silencing those who spoke up to protect companies and society as well as personal security or professional stability(Mizoroki et al., 2023, 9-

11). Existing structures are reaffirmed through normalising values considered inherently Japanese, as common sense and natural. Especially considering how women are expected to uphold values of peaceful harmony, patience and softness in their words and actions, ‘gender’ does indeed as Fruhstuck put it, “function as a system of classification of persons into gendered positions and as a category that legitimises existing hierarchies between these positions as ‘natural’” (Fruhstuck, 2005, 174, Hendry, 2019, 61-63, Mackie, 2017, 11).

While in the field, I was nearly always surrounded by passionate individuals who—even when they felt othered or ostracised, underappreciated or ignored while conducting these activities, persistently placed hope in the ability of these small groups to enact change. It was infectious, this desire for the handbooks, the workshops, the talk events and the internal group meetings, to have a greater meaning. I found myself believing that, just by attending a two-hour-long meeting discussing action points or by promoting upcoming events on Instagram, I too was creating some positive net worth when it came to transferring or dispersing knowledge about sexual consent, bystander intervention, and sexual diversity. I was participating in the ‘feminist knowledge transfer’ discussed by Japanese feminists in Dalton and Norma’s 2022 anthology.

This emotional pull towards the organisations and individual members I volunteered with did not immediately disappear once I left the field in the Summer of 2023. However, the desire or need to see the positive aspects of these projects and groups above all else has since faded. It has taken many re-readings of my initial field notes and interview transcripts, as well as drafts of these thesis chapters, to realise how reluctant I was to criticise the projects I became wrapped up in. I am grateful for both the periods of close, intimate interaction with sexual consent education activities in and around Tokyo and the reflection away from these campaigns.

We began with the current scene of conversations around consent in Japan, specifically urban Tokyo, because of recent revisions to sexual assault laws in the Japanese penal code in 2023. The BBC expose of Johnny Kitagawa and his talent agency Johnny and Associates that same year also contributed to media interest in the Penal Code revisions. Discussion of sexual consent has grown because of its connections to pervasive sexual violence abuse and gender inequality throughout Japanese society. Multiple non-profits, non-governmental organisations, and community and student groups have identified a lack of consent understanding as being core to addressing sexual violence, including intimate partner violence and dating violence. Borrowing from the Waseda circle Shaberu's metaphor, consent discussions may then be the 'shovel' used to 'dig up' the roots of sexual violence, contributing to sexual harassment and assault becoming both socially unacceptable and a more easily punishable criminal offence.

Chapter one linked the formation of groups which 'voice up' about sexual violence and sexual consent with 'acts of resistance' which are expressed in usually quiet, persistent, and everyday affective practices. The chapter examined how grassroots and non-profit organisations 'voicing up' and 'speaking out' were created, starting with Voice Up Japan and moving to Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action and the Waseda University consent project. Examples from participant observation of the Chabujo and the Waseda teams were discussed alongside existing literature on social movements, higher education, and gender issues in Japanese society. This chapter likewise examined tensions between separate rights organisations, like the anti-sex work statements made by #FurawaDemo on Twitter and individual sex workers' counterdemonstrations. Fragmentation among demonstration groups and organisations is examined in the following chapters, often due to clashing feminist interpretations and disagreements over which issues the group should focus on.

In chapter two, the recruitment and organising strategies of Chabujo and the Waseda project team were analysed through the lens of emotional language and practices. A “collision of affective practices” was experienced by group members when past practices of keeping quiet or silent about intimate topics clashed with a desire and opportunity to share experiences in a perceived safe space (Wetherell et al., 2020, 30, White, 2022, 126-127, White, 2017, 178, Wetherell, 2012a, 148-150). These practices could be transmitted to and among other members, establishing a new norm of sharing emotions or, more commonly, normalising a set of values that align with typical perceived Japanese values. The negotiation of emotions among organisations working on sexual consent is a nuanced one, with individuals occasionally feeling unheard, unseen and dissatisfied with the approaches adopted by the larger group (Dales, 2009, 53). Such dissatisfaction or misalignment of goals experienced by group members is one reason individuals resign from project activities, a phenomenon discussed in greater detail in chapters four and five.

Chapter three shifts focus from the internal proceedings of project members to the interpretations of external collaborators, such as administrative staff and faculty at Waseda University. The chapter outlines the perspectives of faculty who claim that the student projects are ‘successful’ as they are, with students possessing the *zaiya seishin* (activist spirit) and positionality to raise awareness about sexual consent. Phrases like *gakusei no chikara* (students’ power) and *Waseda no hokori* (pride of Waseda) were used by interlocutors to praise the considerable effort put in by project members while also subtly moving responsibility away from professors and mentors. It may be true that students have access to a knowledge base and networks online through social media platforms that past generations are less comfortable interacting with. However, the narratives of multiple interlocutors and research on diversity and inclusion and university structures indicate that

even as some faculty support increased visibility of student projects the existing organisation of Japanese universities remains a considerable barrier to student activism (Falch and Hammond, 2020, 441-442, Hendry, 2019, 119-120, Lee-Cunin, 2004, 141-142).

Chapter four included the most in-depth ethnographic sections by relaying how sexual consent workshops were delivered in Japanese and English at Waseda University. The fieldwork examples demonstrated how individuals' desires to pursue something different are often emotional, which can lead to the stagnation or dissolution of project teams and grassroots organisations. This contrasts with certain feminist organisations and women's groups that are aligned and unified around a single social issue. These feminist organisations may also be led by experts in law, policy, and governance as it pertains to sexual abuse and/or education. For activists who are students or young professionals, participation in sexual consent projects is driven by a desire to find like-minded individuals and a safe environment that allows their voices to be heard. However, as Kazuna Yamamoto noted with the university branch system of Voice Up Japan, this situation can result in separate branches making statements that do not align with the goals of the main organisation. From an organisational standpoint, this confuses messaging and may even harm their reputation, hindering opportunities for future collaborations and fundraising activities. The social interactions here are still to some extent modelled after family relations used in companies, "both for the hierarchical links and for the way the individual is expected to put the wider uchi group before personal life" (Hendry, 2019, 210, Matsuura, 1981, 314). External recruitment and involvement with other organisations appear to be a viable option on the surface, but especially for the Waseda team, this is something to discuss with due diligence.

The sensitive nature of topics like sexuality education and consent, which may be considered 'dirty' (*kitanai*) or 'taboo', further confounds attempts for groups to continue

projects or grow because online campaigns are often met with ‘bashing’ and backlash (Tan and Liu, 2022, 6-7, Hashimoto et al., 2017, 387, Fu, 2011, 908-909). For these groups, there are both internal (the task of ‘managing’ and creating cohesion between disparate activist voices) and external pressures (social values which see voicing up about sexual consent and violence as a threat to harmonious stability). These cause projects to grow silent and stagnate, eventually dissolving. According to multiple interlocutors, the best-case scenario is that individuals can take what they have learned from former group members to create a new project to tackle various gender issues.

Chapter five contrasted the previous chapter by using an instance of conflict rather than a lack of reaction as the core ethnographic example. The conflict in question was the behind-the-scenes negotiations Chabujo’s steering committee had with a member who was making transphobic comments on Instagram by way of claiming ‘I stand with JK Rowling.’ Multiple Chabujo members and other individuals online identified her as a TERF (trans-exclusionary radical feminist). This chapter argues that by searching for and selecting members who have similar value systems (referred to as *kachikan*), grassroots organisations developing sexual consent projects, foster a new *uchi* group and new *jōshiki* narratives which exclude individuals who have divergent interpretations of feminist thought and gender issues. Such judgment and exclusion are primarily situated within the debates about trans rights, as gender-critical feminism adapted from countries such as the United Kingdom has become a transnational discourse, making its way to online spaces in Japan. Interviews with several members of Chabujo and the Waseda team have been analysed in depth to demonstrate the roles visibility politics, boundaries between public and private, and trust in personal relationships have in determining whether there is a match in values (Brighenti, 2022, Tanaka, 2020, 23-24, Whittier, 2009). Expanding from the mentions of bashing and backlash in the previous chapter, this fifth and final chapter

outlines the connections between the responses to the Basic Law for Gender Equal Society (or ‘Basic Law’) passed in 1999, to ongoing backlash in the 2000s by “moral/religious conservative organisations capable of considerable grassroots mobilisation” and attacks on feminism by “the emerging online right-wingers” who scholars suggest were spurred by feelings of frustration due to the current economic recession (Shimizu, 2020, 91). I agree with the cited scholars that the tensions between different interpretations of feminism which emerged due to the “gender-free” and anti-gender discourses in Japan that formed a schism between feminist communities and those of sexual and gender minority groups are present and disadvantageous for sexual consent education campaigns (Kawasaka, 2023, 184, Yamada, 2022, 502-503, Bullock et al., 2018a, 7-8, Yamaguchi, 2018, 70-71).

To conclude, this research of sexual consent activism conducted by two grassroots organisations in Tokyo demonstrates how Japanese educational institutions are resistant to social change, especially related to gender issues. Additionally, university students remain ambivalent about activist projects. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party and organisations like the Unification Church and Sekai Nippo have frequently exerted their influence to block activist efforts to usher in more flexible, diverse, and inclusive gender policies (Yamaguchi, 2022, Shimizu, 2020). This is in part attached to the preservation of the *ie-seido* and *koseki*, which enshrine patriarchal and cis-heteronormative structures into the Japanese Constitution.

This cultural conservatism is significant not just for studies of sexual consent, sexual violence, and gender inequality in Japan, but for anthropological work on activism, community organising, and social movement development. My participant observation of grassroots organisations in Tokyo illustrates that (ordinarily privileged) individuals with access to transnational feminist networks engage with value systems and online spaces in

such a way that challenges some of our assumptions about how groups work in Japanese society.

Part of the answer to this puzzle of why these groups challenge assumptions about group activities in Japan is the perceived ‘foreign’ nature of sexual consent as a concept and the ‘foreign’ identities of project members. Interlocutors struggled to relate to their audiences because of being viewed as ‘not Japanese enough’, either due to their identity as *kikokushijo* or, in some cases, because of their explanations in terms of Western feminist theories. Localisation of these topics was also a frequently stated concern because much of the discourse around sexual consent education and bystander intervention has been adapted from overseas, ordinarily English language, materials. Efforts were made by project members to use native Japanese language terms and include culturally specific examples of intimate relationships, yet workshop attendees vocalised their discomfort or confusion with why they were being taught about consent. They often thought they needed to share their intimate experiences rather than talk about sexual consent more generally. Sexual consent activism goes against social expectations for Japanese women. There is still a strong pressure for women to express idealised forms of femininity. Activists are constructing new ideas of what it means to be a woman, which go against conservative ideas of femininity as well as what makes for a ‘normal’ lifestyle (*futsū na seikatsu*)(Ueno, 2022, 9 and 14, Cook, 2013, 34) In the eyes of a majority conservative society, they have failed to achieve the ideal self.

Conservative reactions to sexual consent workshops and seminars were similar to public comments on news sites about Ito Shiori’s legal case. Comments regarding her sexual assault often depicted Ito “as a troublemaker whose act of exposing sexual violence disturbs people’s peaceful lives” (Tan and Liu, 2022, 7). Victim-blaming and shame-inducing behaviour online was part of the push to assign self-responsibility (*jiko sekinin*)

onto women and criticise them if they became a bother (*meiwaku*) to others (White, 2022, 89-90, Alexy, 2019b, 4). I suggest that narratives of *jiko sekinin* contrast with a sense of self-autonomy and right to self-determination (*jiko kettei-ken*) being popularised by feminist activists and journalists, like Ito Shiori. Rather than encouraging individuals to take responsibility or blame for their behaviour and the behaviour of others, as Japanese women often are forced to do with men's sexual words and actions, *jiko kettei-ken* encourages individuals to assert their boundaries and protect their bodily autonomy. This concept of *jiko kettei-ken* used by sexual consent projects was depicted by conservatives as a foreign concept.

Ito's education in New York and her ability to speak with foreign media companies in English could also be perceived as an indicator of her 'foreign-ness.' When Ito held her press conference at the journalist (*kisha*) club for judiciary reporters at the courthouse, she described in her autobiography how her comments were often construed as "overly political" and people speculated she was "a plant for the Democratic Party [the opposition]" (2021, 195). An example, she writes: "Out of respect for my family, I had not revealed my last name at the press conference, and this decision was also scrutinised, with people speculating that I was a Zainichi Korean¹⁹" (Ito, 2021, 198).

Other than being too foreign, activists must also contend with the negative memories of past social movements and youth activism, such as the anti-Anpo protests and university student groups like Zengakuren. As Cassegard argues, the violent actions of this protest cycle resulted in a form of 'collective trauma' for Japanese society (2022). Asahina, through in-depth interviews with Japanese youth, discusses a widespread cultural narrative

¹⁹ 'Zainichi' is directly translated to 'residing in Japan', but most commonly refers to ethnic Koreans who have lived in Japan for a long time, often for generations. The term implies temporary residence and the use of this categorisation to discount Ito-san's account of sexual assault is reflective of the intense discrimination many Zainichi Koreans still face due to their ethnic identity.

of apathy and apolitical attitudes which discourage people from seeking political change to tackle inequality(2021). Activists, especially feminist and LGBTQ+ activists, therefore, receive very little support in their protests and demonstrations. They are isolated from the Japanese mainstream, further making their projects a potentially draining psychological and emotional commitment. Contrary to my expectations going into the field, interlocutors who were members of sexual consent projects were less motivated by a need to be in a particular group than by personal goals. Sexual consent projects became individual projects which help achieve a sense of identity, purpose, and fulfilment for those involved. This is significant because, for these members, participation in projects symbolises ‘success’ in finding themselves, even if conservative elements of Japanese society continue to protect ‘traditional values.’

Japanese feminist activists, especially those engaging in conversations of sexual violence and sexual consent, are consistently writing and rewriting new common-sense narratives to ensure projects meet their personal, emotional requirements (Schieder, 2020, 627, Crehan, 2016, 46-47, Lunsing, 2001, 5-7). As mentioned by individuals like Chisato-san and Kazuna Yamamoto-san, the emotional involvement of members combined with online ‘bashing’ from opposing parties often leads to burnout. Sometimes individuals who were once very active in feminist grassroots organisations in Japan leave the country altogether, choosing to live overseas in the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden or another country. This does not mean former members have ‘given up’ engagement in activist spaces, but rather than tackle issues of consent and inequality within an unreceptive environment, they have relocated to one where it is more culturally acceptable to ‘voice up’ or ‘speak out.’

Identifying consent activism with the ‘foreign’, trauma from past activist protests producing an apprehensive audience, and intense emotional investment from the isolated

participants of consent projects, are all significant variables which intersect to create a phenomenon of groups which dissolve not long after they have been created. Small gender issues groups and their insular projects deserve further investigation, especially if we examine them alongside the transnational networks Japanese feminist activists cultivate with advocates of gender equality worldwide. The relationship between the United Kingdom and Japan is of particular interest because of the way gender-critical feminism and transgender debates in Japan have been influenced by recent discourse in the UK.

Regardless of the focus of a specific feminist organisation, conversations around rights and recognition of sexual minorities are shaping the development of Japanese grassroots groups who increasingly revisit what it means to create an equal society where everyone can live more comfortably. I hope this research can be the beginning of a larger comparative study on community organising, grassroots initiatives and gendered projects between Japan and other countries. With Japanese activists bringing their experiences to multiple spaces, at home and overseas, it is also far too early to admit defeat for sexual consent projects.

Glossary

Ashita Shojō-tai (Tomorrow Girls' Troop): Established in 2015, an art group working towards gender equality across East Asia, also collaborates with NPOs like Chabujo, Spring, and Shiawase Namida. See separate entries for these organisations.

Believe Campaign: Collaborative project between Chabujo, Spring, Ashita Shojō-tai and Shiawase Namida raising awareness about a petition to revise the Penal Code's section on sexual crimes to include nonconsensual sexual intercourse.

Bukatsudō: Extracurricular club activities are common throughout the Japanese education system. It is often expected for students in junior high and high school to participate. Extracurriculars take on a different character in Japanese higher education. See *sākuru*.

Chabujo: *Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action, or Action by Ladies Flipping Tables.* A feminist non-profit grassroots organisation formed to address social issues stemming from gender inequality. One of their most well-known projects is their sexual consent handbook for university students, which is the focus of this research. They operate under community organising principles adapted from the USA. See *Community Organising Japan*.

Community Organising Japan: An organisation dedicated to community-building actions and initiatives, they coach other grassroots organisations (including Chabujo). The Japanese non-profit was founded by Kamata Kanoko, who learned about community organising principles while studying overseas in the USA at Harvard Kennedy School. Kamata and Community Organising Japan's letter went on to help Yamamoto Jun found the NPO Spring. See *Spring NPO*.

D and I (or DEI): Diversity and Inclusion or Diversity, Equality and Inclusion. A trending term and issue, many workplaces and educational institutions in Japan have established initiatives and formed departments to account for diversity and inclusion, in gender identity, race, ethnicity, class and sexual orientation.

Fuan: A Japanese term denoting feelings of anxiety or uneasiness.

Fukai: A Japanese term describing a sense of displeasure or discomfort.

Futsū: Normal or ordinary; a word commonly used by interlocutors and in other academic studies to indicate a socially accepted path in life. Adopting an 'ordinary lifestyle' (*futsu na seikatsu*) is typically framed as the desirable outcome and cultural 'ideal.'

Fufu bessei: Term meaning married couples with different surnames, part of a larger debate to recognise couples with separate surnames within the family registry system. See *koseki/koseki-sho*.

Gakureki shakai: Degreeocracy, a society where status and success are determined by the education one receives. A term used to describe the importance placed on attending prestigious higher education institutions in Japan.

Gaman: Patience, endurance or resilience, invoked as a desirable characteristic for an individual, especially in working well within a group or team context. Also, a quality valued within *seishin kyōiku* discourse and *bukatsudo*. See both terms.

Hensachi (index): Standardised rank score, a ranking system for Japanese senior high schools and universities which indicates the probability of a student getting into a particular course or educational institution.

Ie-seido: The patriarchal family system established in Japan during the Meiji period. It was created to cultivate a sense of Japanese-ness, contrasting with other peoples and cultures. Encourages continuity within a single household under a ‘head’ member. No longer a legal system in the current Civil Code but has informed the structure of relationships within the *koseki*. See *koseki*.

Ippan shadan hōjin: General incorporated association (or ISH), a type of nonprofit organisation (NPO) in Japan. Although they can engage in some profit-generating business, these organisations cannot share profits with shareholders and investors, and members should not receive profit from their business.

Inochi no anzen kyoiku: Life safety education; an adapted set of sexuality education teaching and learning materials available on the Ministry of Education’s (aka as Monbusho) official website.

Ishiki: Social consciousness, a term commonly used when discussing gender issues and sexual consent, because of a need to increase social consciousness. See *ninshiki*.

Iyashi: Care and healing, usually emotional, psychological or spiritual. Often used to refer to mental health and practices of care, including sex work.

Jiko kettei-ken/seiteki jiko kettei-ken: Japanese terms meaning, respectively, right to self-determination and right to sexual self-determination. Used in consent handbooks and workshops to discuss sexual autonomy in and out of relationships.

Jiko sekinin: Self-responsibility, a neoliberal discourse which was popularised in the Japanese national consciousness by then Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro. Intended to assign Japanese citizens responsibility over their lives, careers, and futures.

Jōshiki: Common sense, as in knowledge or perspective. Used similarly to *atarimae*, designating an attitude which is commonly accepted as fact or as ‘normal’. See *futsū*.

Koseki/koseki-sho: The family registry system, established as part of the patriarchal family household system in Japan (*ie-seido*). It recognises relationships between and among family members, but does not recognise same-sex partnerships, partners with separate surnames and transgender or gender non-conforming individuals who have not undergone medical surgeries.

Kikokushijo/kikokusei/kikokusha: Returnee children or returnee students, Japanese nationals who lived overseas returning to the country. Usually leads to discussions about identity and belonging, as well as struggles with transitioning back into Japanese culture.

Kyōkaisen: Japanese term meaning ‘boundaries’, used in sexual consent materials produced by grassroots groups as the native word alongside the katakana term *baundarī*.

Moyamoya (suru): Japanese onomatopoeic word denoting feelings of fuzziness, uncertainty, worry or concern. Used in recruitment and marketing materials by sexual consent projects.

Nakama: A term denoting a peer or a colleague. Other definitions include ‘comrades’ and ‘like-minded companions.’ This paper primarily uses ‘like-minded companion’ in the context of activists working and dialoging with one another.

Ninshiki: Awareness or recognition, used in conjunction with ‘ishiki’ in sexual consent and gender equality campaigns. See *ishiki*.

PILCON: An NPO which advocates for comprehensive sexuality education, by conducting lectures, creating spaces for learning about sexual health and rights, developing resources and holding events to raise awareness.

Sākuru: A club or society, directly translated as ‘circle’, which offers communities and extracurricular activities to university students. Usually organised around a hobby or special interest like music or gardening, students register *sākuru* with their university and run activities themselves, although a faculty member usually serves as an advisor and may help manage administrative tasks and budgets.

SDG: Sustainable Development Goals, a global call to end poverty, protect policy and ensure that everyone enjoys peace and prosperity. Established by the United Nations in 2015 and promoted by the governments of multiple countries, including Japan.

Seikyōiku: Sex/sexuality education; education which focuses on reproductive health, including contraceptive use. Comprehensive sexuality education (or CSE) also teaches about gender and sexual diversity, raising awareness about the social and cultural components of sex, gender and sexuality, not just the biological or physiological.

Seiteki doui: Japanese term meaning sexual consent, considered more local than the katakana version ‘*sekusharu consento*’ and is also used in legal documents and policy discussions of what makes for nonconsensual sexual behaviour.

Seiteki goui: Sexual acts; a common term in Japanese legal documents and educational materials when referring to inappropriate or criminal sexual behaviour.

Seishin: Spirit, often designates psychological or emotional behaviour. See *seishin kyōiku* and *gaman*.

Seishin kyōiku: Education of the spirit, popularised in the Meiji period and encourages resilience, patience, and discipline in activities like sports and traditional arts.

Shaberu: Circle based at Waseda University with the goal of ‘digging up the roots of sexual violence on campus’. Major contributor to the development of the Waseda sexual consent handbook and ongoing consent workshops.

Shiawase Namida: An NPO (specifically a category called *tokutei hieiri katsudo hojin*) dedicated to creating a society where no one experiences sexual violence. They provide

multiple resources for victims of sexual violence, including peer support groups and a matching system for individualised support for sexual violence victims. Established in January 2009, became a registered non-profit in July 2011.

Spring (NPO): General incorporated association (*ippan shadan hojin*) which focuses on creating a society which is kinder to sexual violence victims, specifically, they advocate for revisions on sexual crimes in the Japanese Penal Code. Spring was established as an NPO on July 7th, 2017.

SRHR: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. Often considered an essential part of sexuality education and is discussed by Japanese educators in the context of teaching and learning.

SOGI: SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity) or SOGIE (sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression) are terms used alongside or in place of LGBTQ+ to promote diversity and inclusion, especially in organisational environments.

Taiikukai-kei: Athletic or sporty-type, typically associated with sports clubs and extracurriculars at Japanese junior high and high schools. See *bukatsudō*.

VUJ: Voice Up Japan, a feminist non-profit organisation (*ippan shadan hojin*) dedicated to creating a more equal society regardless of gender, sexuality, race, nationality or religion. Organised around a head office (*honbu*) with multiple student-led university branches. It was founded in 2019 and officially dissolved as a registered NPO in 2023.

Zaiya seishin: Grassroots or activist spirit, also used to describe the opposition political party (or parties). A founding principle of Waseda University, occasionally evoked by older faculty members to describe student activism and/or political engagement.

Appendix

Figure 1: Research Interlocutors 2021-2023 (all pseudonyms except those with *)

<i>Interlocuter Name</i>	Pronouns/Gender Identity (if shared)	Organisation	Project	Position
<i>Chisato-san</i>	She/Her	Chabujo	Handbook; SNS; book project	Digital team and book project team
<i>Aoyama-sensei</i>	He/Him	Waseda Diversity Office	Consent project	Administrator and seminar professor
<i>Sawada-sensei</i>	He/Him	Faculty of Law, formerly Waseda Diversity Office	Various Dandl projects, on committees about the consent project	Seminar professor and administrator
<i>Sekiya-sensei</i>	He/Him	Formerly Waseda Diversity Office, Faculty of Law	General work with diversity projects	Former head of diversity office, seminar professor
<i>Akemi-san</i>	She/Her	Gender and Sexuality Center	General work with centre; counselling services	Senmon shokuin (specialist staff)
<i>Yagihashi-san</i>	He/Him	Gender and Sexuality Center	General admin work with the centre	General staff (part-time); formerly worked with international exchange programmes
<i>Inoue-san</i>	She/Her	University B Administration	Workshops on consent; LGBTQ+ resources	Student Relations Administrator
<i>Jay-san</i>	They/Them, genderfluid	Chabujo	Change Leaders programme; digital team SNS	Digital team; sharing session organiser
<i>Sabrina-san</i>	She/Her	Waseda Sexual Consent Handbook Team	Consent handbook and workshops	Volunteer student member

<i>Shikano-san</i>	She/Her	Waseda Sexual Consent Handbook Team	Consent handbook and workshops	Founding member, doctoral student
<i>Aoki-san</i>	He/Him	Waseda Sexual Consent Handbook Team	Consent handbook and workshops	Graduated member, accounting responsibilities
<i>Kanao-san</i>	She/Her	Waseda Sexual Consent Handbook Team	Consent handbook and workshops	Handbook team member, undergraduate student
<i>Teru-san</i>	She/Her	Waseda Sexual Consent Handbook Team	Consent handbook and workshops	Handbook team member, undergraduate student
<i>Kawai-san</i>	She/Her	Waseda Sexual Consent Handbook Team	Consent handbook and workshops	Handbook team member, undergraduate student
<i>Saya-san</i>	She/Her	Chabujo	SNS and blog posts	Recruitment lead and digital team lead
<i>Marami-san</i>	She/Her	Chabujo	SNS and blog posts	Digital team member
<i>Haruna-san</i>	She/Her	Chabujo	SNS and blog posts	Digital team member
<i>Yui-san</i>	She/Her	Chabujo	SNS and blog posts	Digital team member
<i>Murayama-sensei</i>	She/Her	Waseda Gender Research Institute/Waseda University	Sexual consent project	Head of faculty collaborators on the project
<i>Taito-sensei</i>	She/Her	Waseda Gender Research Institute/Waseda University	Sexual consent project	The second lead of faculty collaboration
<i>Ayato-san</i>	He/They	Tsukuba University	LGBTQ+ student circle projects	Master's student, circle project member
<i>Toyomi-san</i>	He/Him	ICU/Voice Up Japan	ICU branch HIV/AIDs project	Branch representative; project lead

<i>Matsui-sensei</i>	She/Her	Waseda Gender Research Institute/Waseda University	Sexual consent project	Faculty of Letters, research institute member
<i>Sada-sensei</i>	She/Her	Waseda Gender Research Institute/Waseda University	Sexual consent project	Faculty of Letters, research institute member
<i>Imai-sensei</i>	She/Her	Waseda Gender Research Institute/Waseda University	Sexual consent project	Faculty of Letters, research institute member
<i>Kanato-san</i>	She/Her	Formerly Keio University	Fashion and magazine projects	Currently working in fashion branding
<i>Kazuna Yamamoto-san*</i>	She/Her	Formerly Voice Up Japan	Various VUJ projects and collaborations	Co-founder of Voice Up Japan
<i>Sachiko Osawa-san*</i>	She/Her	Chabujo	Various Chabujo projects and collaborations	Co-founder of Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action
<i>Kanoko Kamata-san*</i>	She/Her	Chabujo/Community Organising Japan	Multiple organisational projects	Co-founder of Community Organising Japan

Figure 2: Organisational chart of Waseda Sexual Consent Project, created by the author

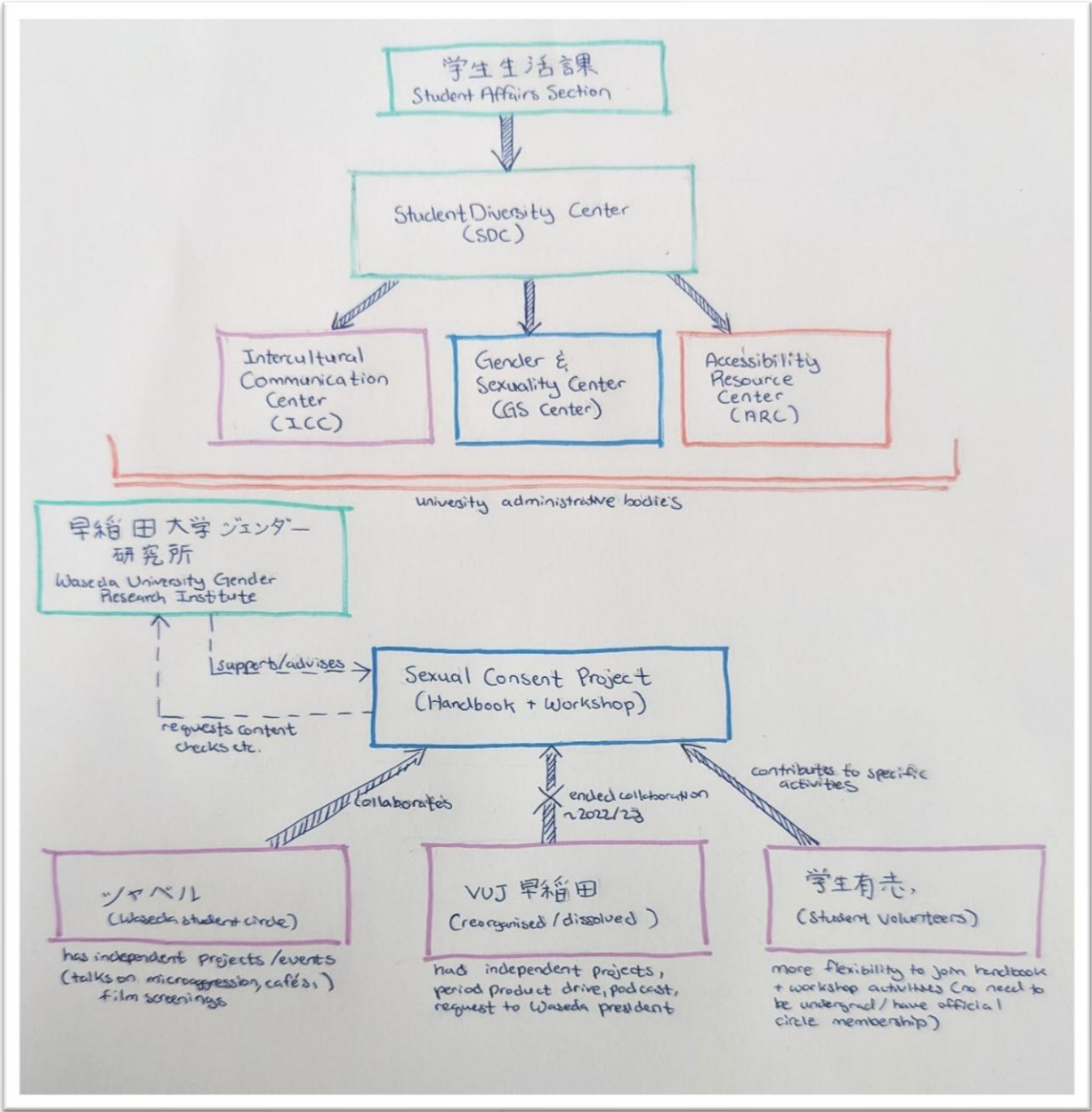
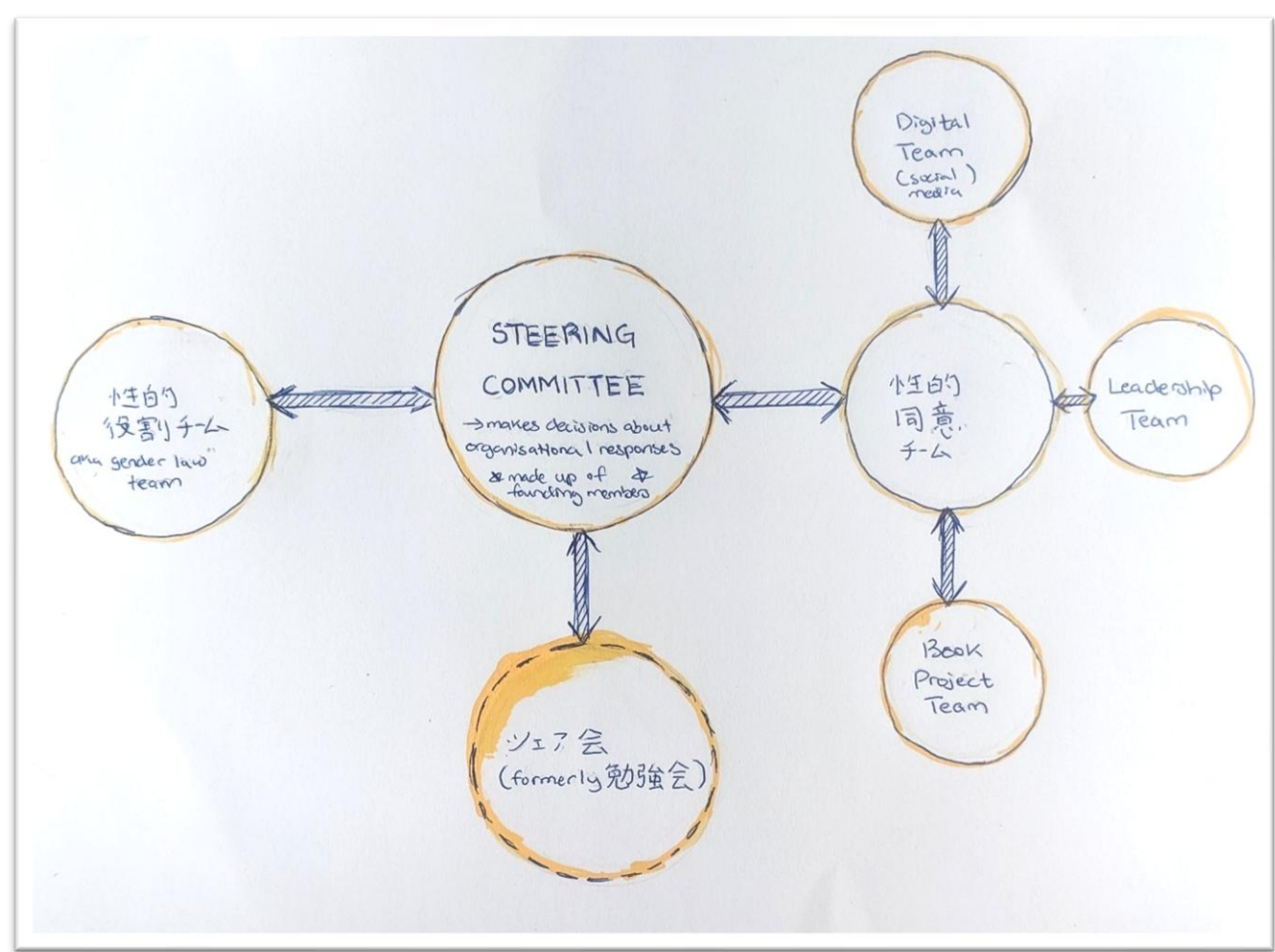


Figure 3: Organisational chart of Chabujo, created by the author



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