

Japanese International Students' Attitudes Toward Acquaintance Rape

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1

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Sociocultural factors have been implicated in the prevalence of rape in both non-industrialized (Sanday, 1981) and Western industrialized cultures (Koss, Heise, & Russo, 1994). Western researchers have identified a nomological network of these sociocultural influences, which includes attitudes toward rape and rape victims, and attitudes toward women and women's gender roles. In Western cultures, negative attitudes toward women are often accompanied by negative attitudes toward rape victims and high tolerance for rape and other forms of sexual aggression (Koss, Heise, & Russo, 1994). However, this nomological network has not been tested in non-Western cultures.

Hall, Windover, and Maramba (1998) have cautioned that the construct of rape itself may not have the same definition in Asian cultures as it does in the United States and other Western cultures. For example, they suggested that in Japanese culture, sexual aggression may be defined as rape only if physical force is used. There has been no systematic cross-cultural research exploring whether date and acquaintance rape would even be considered rape in other cultures.

In addition to construct equivalence issues, Hall and Barongan (1997) suggested that other cultural factors may influence both perception and behavior. Protective factors that exist in Asian cultures, such as loss of face (loss of social integrity), may help to explain why levels of sexual aggression among these populations appear to be lower than in the United States, where such factors do not exist. Examining cultural factors may provide insight into developing preventive measures against acquaintance rape and appropriate orientations for Japanese international students, and perhaps for other Asian students as well. The current study examined whether loss of face might be related to acquaintance rape attitudes.

Focus of the Current Study

In this study, associations between Japanese relevant sociocultural factors and perceptions of acquaintance rape in a written scenario were examined. Attitudes toward rape victims, attitudes toward women, and loss of face were correlated with perceptions of both victim and perpetrator blame in an acquaintance rape scenario. However, loss of face is a context-dependent construct (Ho, 1976) such that it will define behavior depending on the values of a given reference group. For this reason it was investigated in relation to the perpetrator's reference group.

Hypotheses

Specific hypotheses reflected the Western nomological network. Attitudes toward women were expected to be negatively correlated with tolerance for rape and positively associated with supportive attitudes toward rape victims. Japanese men, compared to Japanese women, would have more tolerant attitudes toward rape and would have less supportive attitudes toward rape victims.

It was hypothesized that perpetrator's reference group would interact with participants' loss of face in predicting blame of the victim or the perpetrator in the scenario. If participants' loss of face was strong, the perpetrator's reference group would affect measures of blame. A reference group endorsing sexual aggression would be related to higher victim blame and lower perpetrator blame, while a reference group inhibiting sexual aggression would be related to lower victim blame and higher perpetrator blame. If loss of face was weak, the perpetrator's reference group would not affect perceptions of acquaintance rape in the scenario.

Method

Participants

Participants were 72 Japanese students (27 males and 45 females) recruited from linguistics classes and Japanese student associations at four-year universities primarily in the Midwest. Eighty-three percent of the participants were attending Midwestern universities. Of the 168 surveys distributed, 78 were returned for a return rate of 46.4%. Six of these were either incomplete or were completed by non-Japanese students, and were not included in the analyses. The students ranged in age from 18 – 38 years of age ($M = 22.58$, $SD = 3.15$ for females; $M = 22.78$, $SD = 3.92$ for males). Approximately 24% of the entire sample reported that they were dating someone at the time of data collection.

Instruments

Survey packets included the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973); the Loss of Face Scale (LOF; Zane, 1991); an acquaintance rape scenario with two versions manipulating the perpetrator's reference group (endorsing or inhibiting sexual aggression); scenario questions (Victim Blame Scale); the scenario questions from the perspective of perpetrator's reference group [Perpetrator Blame (P); Victim Blame (P)]; the Attitudes Toward Rape Victims Scale (ARVS; Ward, 1988); and demographic questions (see Table 1). The entire survey packet was in English, and wording of items in the scales was simplified based on difficulties experienced by pilot participants. Internal consistencies of the various scales were acceptable for this sample, ranging from .73 to .84 (see Table 2)

The Attitudes toward Women Scale (AWS; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973) is a measure of sexism based on attitudes toward women and women's role in society. The 15-item version of the scale (Swim & Cohen, 1997), which is composed of statements describing attitudes toward women's roles in society, was used in this study, although two items were dropped based on the pilot sample. Items were scored using a 4-point response format ranging

from 0 to 3 (0 = Disagree Strongly; 1 = Disagree Mildly; 2 = Agree Mildly; 3 = Agree Strongly). Higher scores indicated more positive attitudes toward women, and lower scores reflected more negative attitudes.

The Loss of Face measure (Zane, 1991) is a 21-item scale that assesses the importance of loss of face. Items represent statements that describe situations or behaviors involving face (e.g., “I am more affected when someone criticizes me in public than when someone criticizes me in private”; or “I downplay my abilities and achievements so that others do not have unrealistically high expectations of me”). Items are on a 7-point response format (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Moderately Disagree; 3 = Mildly Disagree; 4 = Neither Agree [n]or Disagree; 5 = Mildly Agree; 6 = Moderately Agree; 7 = Strongly Agree), with higher scores corresponding to greater sensitivity to loss of face.

A scenario was constructed based on an actual incident, that described an acquaintance rape with a male perpetrator and a female victim. The scenario was shortened considerably to accommodate reading ability, as indicated by the time it took for the pilot sample to complete the entire survey. Both individuals were identified as Asian international students attending a Midwestern university in the United States, and Japanese names were used (Hiro and Mariko).

Two versions of the scenario were used, with the perpetrator’s reference group manipulated to reflect endorsement of sexual aggression (Endorsement) and inhibition of sexual aggression (Inhibition). In the Endorsement version of the scenario, the perpetrator was not closely connected with his Japanese in-group, and was more connected with an in-group of young men who endorsed sexually aggressive behaviors. In the Inhibition version, the perpetrator was closely tied to his Japanese in-group, which disapproved of sexually aggressive behaviors.

Ten statements were derived from two studies measuring perceptions of date rape (Bridges, 1991; McLendon, Foley, Hall, Sloan, Wesley, & Perry, 1994) Bridges (1991). Four statements assessed the assignment of blame or responsibility of the victim (e.g. Mariko failed to control the situation). Five statements measured assignment of blame or responsibility of the perpetrator (e.g., Hiro did not understand what Mariko's behavior meant). One statement measured the extent to which the incident could be called rape.

Participants were asked to respond to statements about the acquaintance rape scenario, using a 7-point Likert-type response format (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Moderately Disagree; 3 = Mildly Disagree; 4 = Neither Agree [n]or Disagree; 5 = Mildly Agree; 6 = Moderately Agree; 7 = Strongly Agree), based on their perceptions of the incident described in the scenario. Participants were then asked to respond to the same statements based on the perpetrator's (Hiro's) reference group. Those participants receiving the scenario which describes Hiro's reference group as endorsing sexual aggression were expected to rate the items in a manner that reflected tolerance of sexual aggression. Higher scores indicate greater assignment of blame and responsibility, and agreement that the incident constituted rape. Lower scores reflected less assignment of blame and responsibility, and that the incident was not considered to be rape.

An analysis of the statements related directly to the scenario was also performed. The questions were based on previous studies (Bridges, 1991; McLendon et al., 1994), but no psychometric analyses have been reported for them. A factor analysis found that the 10 items did not constitute a unidimensional measure. Five items loaded on the first factor, accounting for 28.58% of the variance. This factor was labeled "Victim Blame." Internal consistency of these 5 items for this sample was .73. A factor analysis of the 10 items from the perspective of the

perpetrator's reference group also resulted in two factors, Victim Blame ($\alpha = .81$) and Perpetrator Blame ($\alpha = .84$).

Procedure

Four versions of the survey were distributed to participants. In addition to the manipulation of the reference group (endorsement/inhibition of sexual aggression), the order of the two criterion measures were also varied. The scenario and accompanying questions appeared before or after the ARVS, and the order of all other components of the survey remained consistent.

Graduate assistants teaching linguistics course at a Midwestern university and Japanese student associations at various American universities were contacted to recruit volunteers. Surveys were distributed from September 1999 through March 2000. The survey packets were distributed in the linguistics classes by the graduate assistants. Students completed the surveys at home, and returned them to the graduate assistants. Surveys were either distributed to a representative of Japanese student associations, or were mailed directly to volunteers with self-addressed stamped return envelopes.

Results

Preliminary T-tests comparing means of women's and men's scores and significant inter-scale correlations (see Table 2) supported the expected relationships between constructs in the nomological network. Women had more positive attitudes toward women (AWS; $t(70) = 3.29$, $p < .01$) and rape victims (ARVS; $t(70) = -2.63$, $p < .05$) than did men. Positive attitudes toward women was correlated with attitudes toward rape victims ($r = -.38$, $p < .01$) and the victim in the scenario ($r = -.24$, $p < .05$); higher scores for the ARVS and the Victim Blame scales indicated more negative attitudes. Labeling the scenario incident as rape was correlated with attitudes

toward women ($r = .25, p < .05$), attitudes toward rape victims ($r = -.28, p < .05$), and victim blame ($r = -.25, p < .05$).

In the hierarchical multiple regression analyses (see Table 3), attitudes toward women was a significant predictor of attitudes toward rape victims ($\beta = -.29, t = -.253, p < .05$). The loss-of-face by reference-group interaction significantly predicted perpetrator blame as perceived by perpetrator's reference group ($\beta = 1.89, t = 2.06, p < .05$; see Table 3). The calculation of the simple slope of loss of face on perpetrator blame indicated that if loss of face was important and the reference group disapproved of sexual aggression, the reference group was interpreted by participants as assigning greater blame to perpetrator. If the reference group approved of sexual aggression, the reference group was interpreted by participants as assigning less blame to perpetrator. Participants' responses therefore reflected the interaction of their own loss of face scores and the reference group's approval or disapproval of the perpetrator's behavior.

Discussion

Inter-correlations among the constructs supported the nomological network found in Western samples. Attitudes toward women was positively correlated with attitudes toward rape victims. Participants who were more likely to have positive attitudes toward women and rape victims were more likely to define the incident in the scenario as rape. These participants were also more likely to blame the perpetrator.

Gender differences in participants' attitudes toward women, rape victims, and rape were more or less consistent with the existing literature using Western populations. Japanese women in this sample tended to have more positive attitudes toward women and toward rape victims than their male counterparts. They were also more likely to define the incident in the scenario as rape, although this difference was slight for this sample.

Results suggest that participants' own levels of the importance of loss of face interacted with the reference groups to predict interpretations of the perpetrator's behavior. For those with higher loss of face concerns, endorsement of sexual aggression by the reference group was related to less blame of the perpetrator. Inhibition of sexual aggression by the reference group was related to more blame assigned to the perpetrator.

However, participants' own attitudes toward the perpetrator's actions were not as consistent as their interpretation of the attitudes of the perpetrator's reference group. It may be that the participants were not homogeneous in their choice of reference group (e.g. Japanese as a reference group or gender as a reference group). In addition, the norms of their respective reference groups may not have been as clear-cut as were the norms implied in the scenario.

Loss of face was not a predictor of participants' own victim-blaming attitudes, nor was it a predictor of the perpetrator's reference group's victim-blaming attitudes. It may be that the although scenario described clearly the reference group's attitudes toward sexual aggression, it did not provide any indication of the reference group's victim-blaming attitudes. In addition, the incident in the scenario did describe the use of physical restraint. However, it should be noted that an anecdotal comment made by a female participant indicated that the incident might not be considered rape in Japan.

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, there were several limitations that should be considered. The sample was a very specific sample of English-speaking, Japanese international students living in the United States. Although their experiences might be similar to that of other Far East Asian international students living in the United States, they may not be representative at all of university students in Japan. The scenario was deliberately constructed to reflect the participants' status as international students so that it would be more relevant to their situation.

As such, it may be that the participants' responses reflected the relaxed environment in terms of social rules and norms they would normally be experiencing if they were in Japan.

The fact that the survey was administered in English also raises the issue of construct validity as well as comprehension. Translation is always problematic when administering a survey to a non-English speaking population. However, when a survey is administered in English, there is always the uncertainty that participants will not understand the meaning of items as intended. Some participants may have "guessed" at the meanings of some of the words, and the grammatical construction of sentences in English differs from that of Japanese. Furthermore, items in the Loss of Face scale used a two-part sentence that may have created confusion for the participants. Loss of Face items described a behavior and an explanation for the behavior. One of the participants noted that he recognized and performed the behaviors described, but for different reasons than the ones listed. Therefore, he "disagreed" with the entire statement.

Construct validity in terms of the definition of rape has already previously been discussed as varying by culture. Gender roles in Japan have been changing, but it is uncertain how prevalent these changes are, and it may be that items on the Attitudes Toward Women Scale may not have the same value or meaning as it would to an American woman. Some items may have been viewed positively by Japanese women that might be viewed negatively by American women, although previous use of this scale with Japanese samples suggests that this more likely did not happen.

Finally, Japanese language is not as direct and concrete as is English. Although some modifications to items attempted to address this issue, ambiguity with regard to interpretation still exists. If an item is written as a statement that can be generalized to all situations, as they

often are in Western surveys, the statement may be rejected by a Japanese participant because it does not apply to all situations. However, if an item is modified to match Japanese language rules, there is less certainty as to whether the participant agreed with the ambiguity of the statement or actual intent of the statement itself. There may have been a higher endorsement of the rape question (“The incident could be called rape”) because it was worded according to Japanese language rules, as opposed to a typical Western wording (“The incident was rape”), which may be rejected based on its concreteness.

Further research might focus on developing rape-prevention interventions that emphasize the salience of aggression-inhibiting reference groups for Japanese and other Asian students who are high in loss of face. Orientations might emphasize clear messages of disapproval regarding date and acquaintance rape to counteract possible endorsement messages by American students. Future research might also investigate loss of face as it relates to interpersonal behaviors so that appropriate interventions might be developed for Asian international students.

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Table 1Study Measures

| Name of Variable | Definition | Alpha | Reference |
|--|---|-------|----------------------------------|
| 1. AWS; Attitudes Toward Women Scale | Measures sexism based on attitudes toward women & women's roles | .74 | Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973 |
| 2. ARVS; Attitudes Toward Rape Victims Scale | Measures attitudes toward rape victims | .75 | Ward, 1988 |
| 3. LOF; Loss of Face Scale | Measures importance of loss of face | .84 | Zane, 1991 |
| 4. Perpetrator's Reference Group in Scenario | ESA = Endorses sexual aggression ISA = Inhibits sexual aggression | n/a | Created by author |
| 5. Victim Blame (Participants) | Measures participants' victim-blame attitudes | .73 | Created by author |
| 6. Perpetrator Blame (Perpetrator's Reference Group) | Measures perpetrator-blame attitudes based on perpetrator's reference group | .84 | Created by author |
| 7. Victim Blame (Perpetrator's Reference Group) | Measures victim-blame attitudes based on perpetrator's reference group | .81 | Created by author |

Table 2**Inter-Scale Correlations with Means and Standard Deviations**

| Scale | Female | | Male | | Inter-Scale Correlations | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|--------|-------|--|
| | <u>M</u> | <u>SD</u> | <u>M</u> | <u>SD</u> | a | b | c | d | e | f | g | |
| a. AWS | 2.09 | .42 | 1.76 | .40 | (.74) | | | | | | | |
| b. LOF | 4.31 | .76 | 4.08 | .76 | .13 | (.84) | | | | | | |
| c. ARVS | 1.37 | .43 | 1.64 | .40 | -.38** | -.28* | (.75) | | | | | |
| d. Victim Blame | 3.09 | 1.22 | 3.49 | 1.27 | -.24* | .01 | .46** | (.73) | | | | |
| e. Rape? | 5.98 | 1.34 | 5.41 | 1.72 | .25* | -.03 | -.28* | -.25* | (--) | | | |
| f. Perp. Blame (P) | 4.31 | 1.56 | 4.26 | 1.66 | .05 | .02 | .01 | -.05 | .25* | (.84) | | |
| g. Victim Blame (P) | 4.06 | 1.52 | 3.84 | 1.46 | -.08 | .17 | .12 | .32** | -.06 | -.44** | (.81) | |

Note. Reliabilities are in the diagonal.

AWS = Attitudes Toward Women Scale; higher scores indicate more positive attitudes toward women (scale ranges from 0-3).

LOF = Loss of Face Scale; higher scores indicate more importance attached to loss of face (scale ranges from 1-7).

ARVS = Attitudes Toward Rape Victims Scale; higher scores indicate more negative attitudes toward rape victims (scale ranges from 0-4).

Victim Blame scale: Higher scores indicate more victim-blaming attitudes (scale ranges from 1-7).

Rape? = Question asking if scenario incident was rape; higher scores indicate greater agreement that the incident was rape (scale ranges from 1-7).

Perp. Blame (P) = Perpetrator Blame (Perpetrator's perspective); higher scores indicate more perpetrator-blaming attitudes (scale ranges from 1-7).

Victim Blame (P) = Victim Blame (Perpetrator's perspective); higher scores indicate more victim-blaming attitudes (scale ranges from 1-7).

* $p < .05$ (2-tailed); ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed).

Table 3

Hierarchical Regression Predicting Perpetrator Blame (P) and Victim Blame (P)

| Variable entered on step | R^2 | ΔR^2 | β | sr^2 | Adjusted R^2 |
|---|-------|--------------|---------|--------|----------------|
| <u>Perpetrator Blame (P)</u> | | | | | |
| 1 Gender | .00 | .00 | -.01 | .00 | -.01 |
| 2. Attitude Variables | .00 | .00 | | | -.04 |
| AWS | | | .05 | .00 | |
| LOF | | | .02 | .00 | |
| 3. Reference Group (Endorse or inhibit) | .05 | .04 | .21 | .04 | -.01 |
| 4. Interaction of LOF x Reference Group | .10 | .06* | 1.89* | .06* | .04 |
| <u>Victim Blame (P)</u> | | | | | |
| 1 Gender | .01 | .01 | -.07 | .01 | -.01 |
| 2. Attitude Variables | .03 | .03 | | | -.01 |
| AWS | | | .05 | .00 | |
| LOF | | | .16 | .02 | |
| 3. Reference Group (Endorse or inhibit) | .03 | .00 | -.01 | .00 | -.02 |
| 4. Interaction of LOF x Reference Group | .05 | .02 | -.96 | .01 | .02 |

Note. (P) = Perpetrator's perspective or reference group.

* $p < .05$