TURUN YLIOPISTO

Gendered Representations of Post-colonial Okinawa in Japanese Mainstream Media

A Thematic Analysis of the TV Drama *Fence* (2023)

Riho Shimabukuro

Master's Thesis

Master's Degree Programme in Gender Studies

Department of Gender Studies

School of History, Culture and Arts Studies

Faculty of Humanities

University of Turku

July 2024

The originality of this thesis has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin Originality Check service.

Master’s Thesis

Master’s Degree Programme in Gender Studies, Department of Gender Studies:
Riho Shimabukuro
Gendered Representations of Post-colonial Okinawa in Japanese Mainstream Media
A Thematic Analysis of the TV Drama *Fence* (2023)
85 pages, 3 appendices

This thesis examines the Japanese TV drama *Fence* (2023), conducting a thematic analysis, specifically on its representation of the post-colonial reality in Okinawa that is influenced by the two imperial powers, Japan and the United States. The focus is on how the drama represents Okinawan women and sexual violence towards local women by U.S. military personnel. Despite there being more than 50 years since Okinawa’s reversion in 1972, such incidents still occur frequently. On June 25th, 2024, two major local news stations RBC and OTV reported that a 25-year-old U.S. military serviceman was charged with kidnapping and raping an Okinawan girl who was a minor in December 2023. Following the first report, it emerged that there were at least five cases of sexual assault by U.S. military personnel from December 2023 to June 2024, none of which was reported to Okinawa Prefecture. Activists have increasingly focused on human rights issues since the 1995 assault of a 12-year-old girl by three servicemen. From 1972 to 2023, 6,235 cases of military-involved crimes have been reported. 586 cases were heinous crimes including sexual assault. By unpacking the complicated intersectional power relations depicted through the handling of sexual violence and highlighting the role of cultural, historical, and social factors in shaping the portrayal of local women, this research provides a critical lens on how post-colonial influences persist in contemporary media and offers insights into the broader implications for challenging or reinforcing existing stereotypes and narratives in mainstream media.

Key words: Okinawa, Okinawan women, Japan, media, representation, gender, colonialism, post-colonial studies, post-colonial feminism, women’s studies, U.S. military base, rape, sexual violence, imperialism, power, island.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I wish to convey my sincere appreciation to my dear friend Shanker Bhattarai. From the moment I arrived in Finland, he was a pillar of strength and a constant source of comfort. His assistance with everyday tasks helped me navigate the challenges of living in a new country. More importantly, his emotional support during times of stress and homesickness made all the difference. I cannot thank him enough for his kindness, generosity, consideration, and lovely nature. I am forever grateful for our friendship and all the moments we shared. This journey would not have been the same without him. I express my sincere thanks to the professors at Okinawa Christian University, including Professor Chihiro Komine; Professor Christopher Valvona; Doctor Daniel Broudy; Professor David Ulvog; Doctor Kazuka Nakazato; Professor Makoto Arakaki; Doctor Marina Higa; Professor Peter Wodarz; Professor Senko Shiroma; Professor Simon Robinson; Doctor Tomoko Arakaki; Doctor Youngsoo Kim. I am grateful for their expertise on post-colonial Okinawan studies and their kind guidance. Their encouragement and check-ins have meant the world to me, and I am truly grateful for their dedication to my academic and personal development. I thank my friends in Okinawa and abroad for their emotional support throughout my research. I express my gratitude to my academic supervisor, Professor Anu Koivunen, in the Department of Gender Studies at the University of Turku for her supportive and insightful guidance. Additionally, I thank my research colleagues in the programme for their feedback during research seminars. I would like to extend my appreciation to the Bank of The Ryukyus International Foundation for their monetary and professional support throughout my studies. Without their help, this degree would not have been possible. My gratitude also goes to two of my high school teachers, Ms. Tamiko Toma and Ms. Ada Nakama, who have also mentored me. They not only taught me English but also provided life advice that helped me overcome uncertainty about my capabilities and career choices. Finally, I would like to thank my parents and all members of my Shimabukuro and Ishikawa families for supporting my decision to pursue a master's degree in Finland. My special appreciation goes to my grandfather, whose memory remains etched in my heart and mind. Throughout my years of study, he served as a constant source of encouragement, reminding me of my passions and abilities even in moments of self-doubt. To the many others who supported me throughout my studies, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to you all; your invaluable contributions made this achievement possible.

Table of contents

Acknowledgements *3*

1 Introduction *5*

1.1 The beginning of this research **5**

1.2 Research aims and research questions **7**

2 Literature Review *9*

2.1 History of Okinawa as "double colony" of Japan and the U.S. **9**

2.2 Framing gender and sexuality in post-colonial Okinawa **11**

2.3 Media representation of sexual violence **19**

3 Theoretical background *24*

3.1 Post-colonial feminism **24**

3.2 Stuart Hall's notion of representation **28**

4 Methodology *32*

4.1 Data collection **32**

4.2 Analytical method: thematic analysis **33**

5 Analysis *36*

5.1 The colonial history and post-colonial present of Okinawa: power dynamics between Japan, the U.S., and Okinawa **37**

5.1.1 Okinawaness: the contrast between authentic Okinawan identity and media portrayal 40

5.1.2 The "sacrificial stone" of Okinawa: marginalization in the past and present 44

5.1.3 Colonial legacies: how imperial authorities divided Okinawan society 46

5.2 Representation of Okinawan women: sexuality, sexual violence, and minority **51**

5.2.1 Representation of minority women: *haafu*, mixed-race, and *amejo* 52

5.2.2 Portraying Okinawan women as strong, independent women 56

5.2.3 Representation of sexual violence 59

6 Discussion *68*

7 Conclusion *69*

7.1 Limitations **70**

7.2 Future directions **71**

References *73*

Appendices *88*

Appendix 1 List of terms **88**

Appendix 2 Description of main characters in *Fence* (2023) **91**

Appendix 3 Viewers' Comments on the television series *Fence* (2023) **93**

1 Introduction

1.1 The beginning of this research

This research focuses on analyzing how the post-colonial reality and plight of women of Okinawa, influenced by Japanese and American imperialism, are portrayed in Japanese media, with a specific emphasis on the serial TV drama *Fence* (Nogi & Matsumoto, 2023). My interest in this research was sparked by my experience working in the tourism industry prior to starting this master's program added to my undergraduate experiences in post-colonial studies and Okinawan Women's Studies.

In a previous job, I routinely interacted with Japanese tourists, as well as U.S. military personnel stationed throughout Okinawa. A young serviceman once showed me his SOFA[1] ID card to prove he was a member of the U.S. military stationed in Japan and asked, "Do you have a military discount?" As I was employed by a private Japanese company located far from any U.S. military base, the company had no such discounts to offer. Despite this, he seemed serious and genuine in asking for any possibilities for a reduced rate. His expectation of military discounts, evidently common in the continental United States, applying in Okinawa might have suggested that he viewed the Japanese island as some kind of extension of the U.S., even though he was clearly outside the perimeter of any U.S. military installation. A similar incident of mistaken expectations arose when a Japanese tourist, during our casual conversation about local food culture, remarked, "That [style of cooking] is the same as in Japan, isn't it?" That question implies that Japanese people regard Okinawa as a geographic space quite distinct from the rest of mainland Japan. Upon observing me use English to communicate with foreign tourists, another Japanese tourist commented, "I guess Okinawans are fluent in English after all." A group of men, who mentioned they visited Okinawa to "hang out with the local girls," described Okinawan women as "de-Japanized"[2] and, thus, sufficiently sexy.

---

[1] Status of Forces Agreement

[2] The adjective *nihonjin banare shita* (de-Japanized) literally means "apart from the Japanese in appearance or personality" (Japanese Dictionary, n.d.), which is used primarily to praise Japanese people who are "as excellent as" Western or white people (González, 2007). For example, it can be used to refer to the extraordinary physique of a model or the physical abilities of an athlete. Although often used in a positive manner, use of the phrase is problematic because of its uncritical connotations of white supremacy and its potential exclusion of minority Japanese citizens. In this context, the phrase sexually objectifies (hooks, 1992; Lorde, 1984) Okinawan women who are a minority in Japanese society.

All of these interactions suggest that both from within Japan and from outside through an American lens Okinawa is presumed to be, foremost, categorically different from the rest of Japan or even fully Americanized. Why should such perceptions exist and persist for so long? For many mainland Japanese people, including first-time visitors to Okinawa, their knowledge of the island appears to be largely shaped by cinema, TV dramas, and other popular media. This realization piqued my interest in how the post-colonial reality of Okinawa, a complex society influenced by both Japanese and American imperialism, is represented in Japanese media.

Popular culture as reflected in these media tends to portray Okinawa through a highly romanticized (though inaccurate) lens, emphasizing its lush landscapes and creating the false appearance of Okinawa as some exotic subtropical "comfort island" (Tanaka, Bergstrom, & Shmyglo, 2003, p. 422). However, these portrayals often overlook deeper socio-political issues facing the island, such as the ongoing presence of U.S. military bases, environmental degradation, pollution, water contamination, and rank socio-economic disparities (Ma & Fujiki, 2021; Tanaka, et al., 2003; Ueunten, 2015).

Since I started studying the intersection of feminism, post-colonial women's studies, and Okinawan studies during my undergraduate years, I became increasingly intrigued by the representation and narratives surrounding Okinawan women in Japanese media. My interest in these areas deepened when I encountered feminist works that introduced more nuanced perspectives across gender, power, and cultural identity in post-colonial contexts (Anzaldúa, 1990; Chow, 1991; Collins, 1998; Lorde, 1984; Minh-ha, 1989; Mohanty, 1984; 1991; 2003; Spivak, 1988; hooks, 1984). In exploring these themes, I also found Stuart Hall's account of "representation in media" to be a compelling theoretical framework for my project. Particularly relevant is Hall's interest in the constructionist view of meaning whereby social semiotics can help reveal deeper insights about the mental processes involved in conceptualizing and constructing meaning (Hall, 2013, p. 2).

By studying gendered depictions of Okinawan women in the Japanese TV drama *Fence* (2023), I aim to identify and analyze how the drama challenges or reinforces stereotypes of the island and its women. This scholarly effort is motivated by a desire to add to the ongoing dialogue within feminist and post-colonial studies, offering new insights into the representation of minority women and their roles in shaping cultural and social discourses.

1.2 Research aims and research questions

The aim of this research is to explore the ways in which Japanese media represents Okinawan colonial history and its present. Specifically, by analyzing representation in the Japanese serial TV drama *Fence* (2023), the focus of the analysis is its depiction and expression of: 1) Okinawan colonial history and its post-colonial present, and 2) Okinawan gender dynamics, female sexuality, and sexual violence as framed by dominant storytellers in the media.

Regarding the first point, I will examine the island's struggles and the power dynamics between Japan and the U.S., which still persist. Regarding the second point, I will provide a context framing gender and sexuality in Okinawa and explore sexual violence perpetrated by U.S. military personnel against local women.

My research questions are as follows:

1. To what extent does *Fence* challenge or reinforce stereotypical representations of Okinawa's post-colonial reality?

2. How does *Fence* represent Okinawan women and power relations, and how does it handle themes of female sexuality and sexual violence?

Although it has been studied through a variety of academic lenses including media representation (Fujiki, 2013; Ma & Fujiki, 2021; Motomura, 2009; Shigematsu, 2015) as well as gendered and militarized violence (Angst, 1997, 2001, 2009; Akibayashi, 2002; Akibayashi & Takazato, 2009; Feifer, 2000; Ginoza, 2019; MacLachlan, 2012; Takazato & Kutsuzawa, 1999), there remains a gap in scholarly research critically examining its post-colonial reality in the context of Japanese media representations. Existing studies have predominantly focused on historical analyses or geopolitical discussions of the U.S. military presence which overlook nuanced ways in which Okinawan reality is constructed and negotiated through media representations.

Therefore, this research attempts to fill that gap by offering a critical analysis of how Okinawa's post-colonial social reality is portrayed and contested in Japanese media

narratives. By exploring the ways in which media representations shape perceptions of Okinawa's post-colonial reality, my study aims to focus on the complexities of Okinawan reality in the context of Japanese imperialism and American military influence. Through this analysis, I hope to offer insights into the broader dynamics of post-colonialism, cultural representation, and identity politics in contemporary Japan.

2 Literature Review

This chapter will discuss media representation in the Okinawan context, which is positioned as a "feminized other" (Ginoza, 2019, p. 56), first by briefly introducing the history of Okinawa in relation to the two imperial powers, Japan and the United States, under whose influence it falls. This chapter will further examine how gender and sexuality are framed within the Okinawan context, focusing on local narratives that have emerged in response to external influences. Described in various literatures as "a virtual colony of the United States" (Akibayashi & Takazato, 2009, p. 250), "military base islands" (Forgash, 2009, p. 222), or "the keystone of the Pacific" (Motomura, 2009, p. 7; Takazato, 2000, p. 42), Okinawa from these descriptions reveals the kind of deep-seated problems that the U.S. military presence and imperialism have inflicted on the island, and thus this history of oppression cannot be ignored. By contextualizing Okinawa within these frameworks, this chapter provides a foundational understanding of the historical, cultural, and social influences that shape media representations of Okinawa. In order to examine the portrayal of Okinawa in the media, particularly when focusing on gender and sexuality, it is essential to recognize the complex power relations between the enduring legacy of the U.S. military occupation and the restoration of sovereignty to Japan. This chapter will explore the multifaceted nature of Okinawan gendered and sexualized identity and the ways in which its portrayal in media reflects broader geopolitical narratives. This contextual background is crucial to a comprehensive analysis of how Okinawan women are portrayed in the media and the extent to which these portrayals challenge or reinforce existing Japanese societal stereotypes and narratives about Okinawan women. This section then goes on to describe how sexual violence in Okinawa is studied and conceptualized within a militarized context.

2.1 History of Okinawa as "double colony" of Japan and the U.S.

Scholarly accounts of post-colonial Okinawa tend to stress the history of colonial power and imperialism forced upon Okinawa by both Japan and the United States, both of which have been influential subjects in studies of the geographic region as well as subsequent social and economic development under the direction of these two global powers. The language often used in scholarly accounts of this phenomenon includes terms such as "double colony" (Tokuyama, 2013, p. 193), "under the double domination of Japan and the United States" (Akibayashi & Takazato, 2009, p. 253), and "an American colony located on Japanese soil" (Johnson, 1999, p. 109, as cited in Vogt, 2012, p. 20).

ard Falk sees Okinawans today as living in a colony in a post-colonial world, noting that the "tragic fate that has befallen Okinawa and its people results from being ... a forgotten remnant of the colonial past .... " (Falk, 2016, para. 5, lines 5-13). "In this respect," he argues, Okinawa "bears a kinship with such other forgotten peoples as those living in Kashmir, Chechnya, Xinjiang, [...] among others" (Falk, 2016, para. 5, lines 15-17). Following World War II, the U.S. military governed Okinawa from 1945 until its reversion to Japanese rule in 1972, but fifty-two years after this twenty-seven-year period of U.S. military rule, people in Okinawa have still faced problems with air, soil, and water pollution, crime, and domestic and military accidents, all of which call daily attention to the long-lasting impact of Okinawa's colonial history.

Okinawa Prefecture, one of Japan's 47 prefectures, features 160 smaller islands surrounding the main island of Okinawa (OCVB, 2024). The prefecture used to be known as the Ryukyu Kingdom, established in 1492 and independent until it was invaded by the Satsuma clan of mainland Japan in 1609 and, then, forcibly placed under its control. Until 1879, when Japan's new Meiji government abolished the domain system and incorporated the Ryukyus into the prefectures of Japan, the Ryukyu Kingdom prospered by trading with neighboring countries, mainly China and Korea. During the Pacific War, the island and the people of Okinawa served as the only site of active combat in the East-Asian theater of the Japanese Imperial domain (Inoue, 2007; Okinawa Prefectural Government Washington D.C. Office, n.d.).

During the Battle of Okinawa, 200,000 Okinawans, roughly a quarter of the island's population, perished, and violence against women in the wake of the war was constant (Akibayashi, 2002; AOCHR, 2022; Takazato, 2000; Sturdevant, 1995). Okinawans who were displaced by the battle were not able to return to their land until after the U.S. military had established a number of garrisons for its new bases of operation (Inoue, 2007; Takazato, 2000). While Okinawa was under U.S. military governance, the island became directly involved in both the Korean and Vietnam wars. In 1972, when Okinawa reverted to Japanese sovereignty from administrative control by the U.S. military, the Vietnam War was still ongoing. Okinawa has continually been conceptualized as a kind of launchpad to conflicts in regions beyond East Asia. The islands of Okinawa were officially returned to Japan on May 15, 1972, but the "reversion in harmony with the mainland" (popularized with the slogan "*hondo nami no fukki*") (Vogt, 2022) that people hoped for was not achieved by the reversion movement, leading to the current state of militarization.

As of October 2022, there are 800 U.S. military bases outside of the United States, 119 of which are in Japan. Germany hosts the same number of U.S. military bases as Japan, but with approximately 47,000 U.S. military personnel in Germany, compared to 61,000 in Japan, making Japan the largest U.S. military base host country in the world (Nishiyama, 2022). In short, Japan is the site of the largest U.S. command abroad: United States Forces Japan (USFJ). Just over 70% of all U.S. military forces stationed in Japan are garrisoned in Okinawa. This, in the view of Masaaki Gabe, is another reason why Okinawa is the ideal location to maintain troops with a local population of approximately 1.3 million people: the "size of the U.S. military operations and the number of Americans (fifty-five thousand including families and dependents) ... is big enough to build bases and secure a labor force, to make the American presence comfortable" (Gabe, 2004, p. 197). This situation continues despite the fact that Okinawa has a land surface area of only 1,200 square kilometers, which represents only 0.6 percent of Japan's total land mass: U.S. military bases on the island of Okinawa occupy 187 square kilometers or roughly 15.6% of the Okinawan island (Inoue, 2007; Nishiyama, 2022; Okinawa Prefectural Government Washington D.C. Office, n.d.; Carter, 2014).

2.2 Framing gender and sexuality in post-colonial Okinawa

Related to the previous section, this section further examines the dynamics of gender and colonial power in Okinawa from the perspectives of the representation of gender and nation, the links between the military and sexual violence. In this chapter, I will examine how Okinawa is positioned as a "feminized other" (Ginoza, 2019, p. 56) and how this relates to the representation of women, which will help readers to understand how sexual violence is legitimized in colonial and military contexts and how violence against Okinawan women is conventionalized. I examine the representation of women in terms of socioeconomic conditions as well as their status and identity, and discuss the dynamics of gender and power through the roles of Okinawan women and the diversity and complexity of women's experiences. I also question how economic and social conditions are related to post-colonial Okinawan women's experiences in terms of sex and sexuality.

According to feminist studies, the island and the sea are represented as static and feminine concepts (Connell, 2003; Gaard, 1993). In the context of Okinawan patriarchal society, the Japanese nation is fatherly and masculine, while the Okinawan nation is daughterly and

feminine (Angst, 2001, 2009; Ginoza, 2019). In addition to this patriarchal positioning, Okinawa has always been positioned as the "feminine other" (Ginoza, 2019, p. 56) in Japan's recovery of nationhood as an empire. Ginoza (2022) cites ecofeminists' studies of the islands of the Asia Pacific region to critique common misconceptions and prejudices about the islands and their people. Similarly, in terms of the representation of Okinawan women, Shimabuku (2010) argues that they should be represented as subjects of negotiation for survival, not merely as symbols (Shimabuku, 2010). She argues that minority women, such as Okinawans with American roots, are often exploited through representations of oppression, and emphasizes that Okinawan women have the strength to overcome oppression rather than passively waiting to be "discovered" by the journalist's pen. Similar to Shimabuku's focus, Angst (2009) raises a more complex issue regarding the role of women in Okinawa, noting that women who are deemed to have "failed" the tests of chastity and motherhood are often socially excluded. By "failed," she means women involved in the sex industry, women married to U.S. soldiers, and elite feminist women. Angst (2009), Ginoza (2022), and Shimabuku's (2010) works illustrate that Okinawan women are oppressed not only by external hegemonic pressures from Japan and the United States military but also by internal gender-based expectations and patriarchal prejudices.

The framing of gender and sexuality in Okinawa is a multifaceted issue, influenced by the interplay between legacies of Japanese imperialism and American military occupation, current post-colonial realities, and cultural norms of the local patriarchal society. Gender roles and identities of Okinawans are continually shaped by these forces, reflecting both resistance to, and acceptance of, changing social, cultural, and economic structures. This complex and dynamic social landscape provides a unique lens through which to understand broader debates about gender, sexuality, and power in a post-colonial context.

In the area of Okinawan Studies, women have been generally defined as special beings possessing "spiritual powers," which, as a traditional belief, has sometimes been used as "an alibi to make discrimination against women invisible" (Narisada, 2010, p. 29). Similarly, Arne Røkkum, who studies the Yaeyama Islands, part of the Ryukyu Archipelago, mentions traditional perceptions of gender and sexuality in Okinawa. Røkkum (2006) attempts to avoid constructing fixed female/male stereotypes because Okinawans themselves do not recognize them (Røkkum, 2006, p. 159). According to Røkkum (2006), whose research focuses on natural and religious rituals and symbols, Ryukyu is characterized by parallelism and duality,

and female symbols can also be male symbols. Ancient “female power” (primarily religious and spiritual practices) was intertwined in a dual authority system with “male power” (primarily diplomatic and academic activities) through the shamanistic chief system and the king (Røkkum, 2006).

In addition to this traditional perception, Gaini & Nielsen (2020) argue that Okinawan women have been directly or indirectly associated with military bases as sites of work, love, sex, and oppression during a kind of postwar cultural and sexual awakening (Gaini & Nielsen, 2020). At the same time, even while women’s political movements have opposed the bases in Okinawa and warned of the deep-seated misogyny held by the military, many young women have turned to them to find fresh alternatives to local cultural norms and conservative gender values. In sensing that their island remains under a kind of occupation, young Okinawan women appear to be looking for clues to escape the cultural isolation and oppression of Okinawan society through the (sometimes explicit, sometimes unspoken) influence of the U.S. military presence (Gaini & Nielsen, 2020). By examining the implications of the militarization of Okinawa for young islanders’ perspectives on sexuality and family, the authors attempt to better understand the relationship between space, place, and gender identity. They emphasize the profound impact that the presence of large military bases occupying significant areas of the relatively small island has on Okinawa’s youth culture and gender values; American youth culture breaks down the Japan-Okinawa dichotomy in local discourses on sexuality and gender relations, and forces the youth of Okinawa to reinterpret their positions (Gaini & Nielsen, 2020).

In addition to this cultural influence of the U.S. military bases in Okinawa, scholars underscore the relationship between military aggression and sexual abuse of local women is closely tied to the economic disparity between the U.S. and Japan and the exploitation of women’s labor in base-related industries (Angst, 2001; Takazato, 2000). In postwar Okinawa, for local women, marrying an American soldier was one way to escape a life of poverty, and so many women sought to establish connections with American men (sometimes through prostitution and related social avenues) with the dream of making a more stable life in the United States. Those local women who married and departed the island for their husband’s home in the U.S. were called “*Honey-san*” (Arakaki, 2013, p. 43). Translated as “Miss Honey,” this label was applied by other women who “glanced at them sideways with a mix of envy and scorn” (p. 44).

Regarding this gaze with “scorn” (Arakaki, 2013, p. 44), Angst (2001) argues that many people in Okinawa stigmatize young working-class women, who are influenced by the military culture and often hang out ins and clubs near bases, including sometimes serving as sex workers associated with the military and tourism industries, and who occupy the bottom rung of the island’s social hierarchy. Ginoza (2007, 2012) takes the argument made by Angst (2001) further by discussing militarism (Teaiwa, 1999) in the area of Chatan town, which is well-known for its small commercial enclave aptly called “American Village,” a stylized recreation of American fashion, streetscapes, and architecture. Her concern is that Okinawan women who imagine a sexualized and commodified U.S. military may end up being abused. The women discussed in these literatures (Angst, 2001; Gaini & Nielsen, 2020; Ginoza, 2007) find their own society oppressive, and are thus seeking to establish a place for themselves in a foreign culture that they perceive to be more liberated and thus where they believe they will be better accepted (Gaini & Nielsen, 2020). According to Angst (2001), there is a lack of sensitivity in Okinawan society to the fact that there is little work available to young uneducated women other than bar and sex work. Women working in the sex trade have historically been relegated to the lowest social rungs, and now, older women from Okinawa or the Philippines working in Okinawa are often forgotten and stigmatized (Angst, 2001).

Gaini & Nielsen (2020) emphasize that the dual colonial rule by Japan and the U.S., backed by militarism and contemporary practices of neoliberalism, has had an important impact on the traditional gender roles and family values long held by Okinawan people. The observable shift of male Okinawan identity reflects a process of reacting not just to local women, but also to the masculinity of other men such as the Japanese or Americans (Arakaki, 2013; Gaini & Nielsen, 2020; Yamazato, 2012). Arakaki (2013) similarly refers to American cultural influences and Okinawan masculinity. The label *amejo* (See Appendix 1-1) that Okinawan people continue to use to refer to women who date U.S. military men is “extremely derogatory” (p. 44) especially when used by Okinawan men (Arakaki, 2013). It represents “their ongoing battle for domination and their inherent sense of possession of ‘their’ women” (p. 44). Examining Japan’s defeat and demilitarization after World War II, Yamazato (2012) specifically states that Okinawan men were coming to question their own masculinity under the hegemony of American forms of masculinity, which may well have led to feelings of “inferiority” (Yonamine in Arakaki, 2013, p. 35) or suspicions “that American guys [were there to] steal their women” (Yohnaha in Arakaki, 2013, p. 39).

Some young Okinawan women accuse Okinawan men (especially representatives of the older generation) of having a rather patriarchal and conservative mindset, and of being stubborn and reluctant to lead a more "gender equal" family life (Gaini & Nielsen, 2020). However, according to the authors, Okinawan men who are blamed by Okinawan women have also faced discrimination in Japan. The authors argue that men's gender identities in contemporary Okinawa reflect the changing social, cultural, and economic structures of Okinawa: unemployment is higher, wages lower, industrial jobs fewer, divorce more frequent, and the poor and homeless population larger than in other parts of Japan (Gaini & Nielsen, 2020).

Cho (2015) introduces a comment of an Okinawan man who is the second generation in Osaka. When they are in the mainland, Okinawan men can face uncomfortable prejudices, discrimination, and even contempt from Japanese men. Okinawan males are stigmatized as being uneducated, primitive peasants (Gaini & Nielsen, 2020). This was particularly evident in the 1903 Human Pavilion (*jinruikan jiken*), one of the many attractions of the World Exposition hosted in Osaka. As part of a larger exhibit Ryukyuan people, a newly conquered (Okinawa was formally annexed by Japan in 1869) culture that inhabits a region closer to Taiwan than to Tokyo, were put on display along with the peoples of other cultures integrated into the Japanese Imperial plan (Broudy & Ikehara, 2022; Ginoza, 2015; Ikeda, 2014; Ziomek, 2014). This conception of Ryukyu extended into the late 20th century, when people in mainland Japan still imagined Okinawa to be a barbaric, uncivilized place of filth where the men were always drinking (Cho, 2015). This perception led many mainland bars (*izakayas*) and restaurants to post signs on their doors stating "Ryukyuans Not Allowed" (Tanji, 2003, p, 127). A second-generation Okinawan who grew up in Osaka responded that he hated Okinawa because of his father's drinking, and that "anti-Okinawa" (p. 164) became a slogan he lived by throughout his life (Nakamura 1984, as cited in Cho, 2015).

One of the most serious problems facing the Okinawans, and a frequent focus of their protests, has been violence by military personnel. Sexual violence in particular has a long history on this militarized island[3] (Takazato, 2000). Misogynistic perceptions, especially in

---

[3] The earliest incident that led to widespread political unrest was in 1955, while Okinawa was under U.S. military rule: a six-year-old Okinawan girl named Yumiko Nagayama was kidnapped, raped, and murdered; this incident, remembered as the Yumiko-chan Incident, triggered the first large-scale protest against U.S. military policy, known as *shimagurumi-toso* (island-wide struggle), in 1956 (Yamazaki, 2002).

the military, have long been a source of violence against women on the island, because the stress and aggression related to war that the U.S. military personnel bear tends to be directed at women (Akibayashi, 2010).

When discussing issues around gender and the military in Okinawa, it is the 1995 rape of a young girl by three U.S. soldiers[4] that inevitably dominates the discussion, and this incident has been studied extensively (see Akibayashi, 2002, 2022; Angst, 2001; Feifer, 2000; Devaney, 2018; Mikanagi, 2004; Sturdevant, 1995; Yamashiro, 2008). However, beyond these well known cases it may be difficult to ever know the full extent of sexual violence by U.S. military-affiliated individuals in Okinawa. In patriarchal Okinawan society, sexual assault victims are stigmatized and their shame silences them (Akibayashi, 2010). Notably, victims who were assaulted and murdered, such as Ms. Yumiko Nagayama and Ms. Rina Shimabukuro, are reported and remembered by name, whereas the names of those who survive their victimization, such as the victim of the 1995 assault, are not publicized (Angst, 2001). Therefore, only a small percentage of the victims are reported and publicly appear in statistics, while the actual number of victims may be much higher[5].

The sexual assault of an elementary school girl by three U.S servicemen in September 1995 and her subsequent victimization in the media caused widespread outrage and precipitated a nationwide campaign for justice for the girl, which involved feminist groups, political activists, prefectural assembly members, the general public, and the governor of the prefecture. Coincidentally, the rape occurred on the very first day of the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing. Okinawan women activists who were attending the conference returned home upon hearing the news and began an immediate campaign for justice. A group of women led by Suzuyo Takazato, co-chair of OWAAMV[6], promptly spoke up against the systematic and structural violence of the U.S. military against

---

[4] On September 4, 1995, a 12-year-old girl was abducted, assaulted, and raped by three U.S. servicemen in Kin Village, Okinawa Prefecture. The girl was walking home from a stationery store wearing an elementary school uniform and carrying a student bag when she was grabbed by one of the assailants and pushed into their rental car. They beat her, taped her mouth and eyes shut, bound her hands and feet, and raped her, though she later managed to run away. The three assailants were identified as Marine Pvt. 1st Class Kendrick Ledet, 20, of Waycross, Georgia, Pfc. Rodrico Harp, 21, of Griffin, Georgia, and medic Marcus Gill, 22, of Woodville, Texas (Eldridge, 2020).

[5] For example, according to Mitchell (2021), between 2017 and 2019 the Navy investigated at least eight sex crimes, but such incidents are not reported.

[6] Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence

Okinawan women, deploying the slogan "Enough is enough" in a workshop titled "The Structural Violence of the Military and Women in Okinawa" at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Akibayashi, 2022). Their action at the conference led to global awareness of the ongoing issues of violence that Okinawan women have faced.

While the U.S. military and the Japanese government insist that the U.S. military bases in Okinawa are necessary to maintain regional stability, the majority of Okinawans have repeatedly expressed outrage at the disproportionate burden placed on the prefecture by military personnel in terms of crime, noise, water pollution, and aircraft accidents[7].

Since the 1995 rape incident, much research on the relation of military-involved sexual violence and political movement. For example, Yamashiro (2008) examined the political movement that developed the following year as a result of Okinawans' angry reaction to this rape. Yamashiro examined how women's participation in the movement against the U.S. military base in Okinawa affected both themselves and the larger movement.

In her book *Night in the American village: Women in the shadow of the U.S. military bases in Okinawa* (2019), Akemi Johnson argues that in Okinawa, when U.S. military-related assaults and murders and assaults are committed, the victims' personal characteristics are sometimes used as fuel for political campaigns. Her book (2019) consisted of 11 chapters, each titled after a woman, and Chapter 1 begins with the 2016 rape and murder of a 20-year-old woman by a former Marine who worked as a private contractor on a U.S. military base. Kenneth Franklin Gadson[8] brutally murdered Rina Shimabukuro, an Okinawan 20-year-old office worker, after he failed to rape her (Burke & Sumida, 2016, May 21; Ryukyu Shimpo, 2016, May 20). After this incident was reported, many people expressed their anger, and protests broke out in various parts of the island (Mikanagi, 2004; Sturdevant, 1995). Johnson describes the impact of the victim's image on the anti-base movement, citing a murder case: a few

[7] On October 21, 1995, 85,000 residents gathered in *Okinawa kenmin soukekki shuukai* [Okinawa prefecture residents' mass rally] (Tanji, 2012). In recent years, anti-U.S. military base politicians have won several gubernatorial elections, including former Okinawa Governor Takeshi Onaga (from his appointment in 2014 until his death in 2018) and current Governor Denny Tamaki in 2018 and when he was re-elected in 2022 (Mainichi Japan, 2018; Rich, 2018; The Asahi Shimbun, 2022). In a 2019 referendum, 72% of those voters voted against development of the Henoko base to replace Marine Corps Air Station Futenma (Kyodo News, 2019).

[8] Depending on the source, his last name also appears as Shinzato, as he goes by his wife's name.

months before the 1995 rape, an American soldier beat his girlfriend to death with a hammer. However, this was not widely covered by anti-base activists or the local media, as it was "not a good symbol" for them because the victim was a woman who was from outside of Okinawa Prefecture and was dating a U.S. soldier (Johnson, 2019).

As these researchers underscore, the 1995 case was important because it pointed to a crisis of sovereignty for Okinawa, which has jurisdiction over crimes committed by U.S. personnel, as well as the historical context of colonial and post-colonial oppression by Japan and the United States, highlighting the need to re-examine policies that have allowed U.S. military bases to remain on the island (Angst, 2001; Johnson, 2019).

Some important key political identities of Okinawan women as historical victims during and after the war that are politically significant are "Himeyuri,"[9] (Angst, 1997, p. 100), "sacrificed schoolgirl/daughter" (Angst, 2001, p. 243; Angst, 2009, p. 118), "prostituted daughter" (Angst, 2001, p. 249), and "daughter sold by Japan into prostitution" (Angst, 2001, p. 251). These labels are representations of minority women excluded by the Okinawan elite such as politicians and feminists from the "roster of victimized daughters" (Angst 2009, p. 136).

Angst (2001) draws attention to discussion surrounding the patriarchal designation of Okinawa as a daughter in the national family of Japan. She acknowledges that it is problematic for feminists in particular to cooperate with such terminology because it reinforces patriarchal ideas around the nation-state, leading to a tacit acceptance of the nationalist trope of the state as family, but concludes that it is necessary as a strategy in the fight for women's rights. She continues in her discourse to intentionally describe Okinawa's position as a daughter, as she acknowledges the parallels between the feminists who decry the rape of the girl, a physical violation of her body, human rights, and dignity, and the political

---

[9] Himeyuri was the name of a unit of nurses mobilized by the Japanese military for military purposes during the Battle of Okinawa before the end of World War II. On March 23, 1945, a total of 222 students and 18 teachers from the Okinawa Women's Normal School and the First Prefectural Girls' High School were sent to medical units at the Haebaru Army Hospital. At the time, the U.S. regarded the Battle of Okinawa as an important operation to secure Okinawa, while the Japanese military sought a "war of attrition,"attempting to prolong the fighting even one more day in order to delay the U.S. attack on the mainland. Despite the fact that there was no legal basis for mobilizing young students for military purposes, the Japanese Army implemented this program. Under this order, the Japanese military enhanced the training of nurses at girls' high schools in Okinawa in order to mobilize Okinawan people to participate in the war. When the U.S. forces landed on Okinawa, the Japanese military organized the female students into nursing units and dispatched them to the battlefield (Himeyuri Alumnae Association, 1989).

activists who decry the rape of Okinawa, a political violation of the Okinawan island. She states that the 1995 rape highlights the importance of addressing the colonial history and postwar occupation of Okinawa, as well as the symbolic capacity of the Okinawan girl as a sacrificed schoolgirl/daughter.

Rape incidents in Okinawa are a powerful symbol of Japanese history and Okinawa's struggle against Japanese and U.S. hegemony, while at the same time they are also a symbol of postwar Okinawan victimhood, as in the case of Himeyuri, and of the U.S. military as an active actor in the violence. As such, rape has been absorbed and redefined into existing representations of Okinawan victimhood (Angst, 2001). In addition to the brutality of the 1995 rape, its political impact was significant because the victim was a young girl, the epitome of the image of innocence envisioned by the Japanese (Angst, 2001; Johnson, 2019). However, the focus on the imperialist relationship of U.S. military control over Okinawa, rather than the nature of the sexual crime, downplayed the human rights aspect of the violation of women's bodies and the case disappeared from the political movement. As these designations such as a "Himeyuri"(Angst, 1997, p. 100), "sacrificed schoolgirl/daughter" (Angst, 2001, p. 243; Angst, 2009, p. 118) indicate, identity politics in Okinawa is a complex and multifaceted issue influenced by rape and the asymmetrical power structure of the United States.

2.3 Media representation of sexual violence

Our shared understanding of contemporary life is still largely shaped by television broadcasting of world events. Television broadcasts connect people who have never met and will never meet, creating a cohort of simultaneous viewers (Magestro, 2015).This section examines how media storytelling influences public perceptions of these heinous acts and explores strategies to promote more responsible representation in communities. It also examines the important role media representation plays in shaping these perceptions and identifies key themes, gaps, controversies, and biases in the existing literature.

Much feminist research has already been done on the representation of sexual violence in mainstream media, particularly television and fiction (Cuklanz, 2000, 2019; Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006; Horeck, 2003; Magestro, 2015; Projansky, 2001; Reidpath, 2017; Sielke, 2002). The corporate form of mass media, by virtue of its perceived and often unquestioned

authority, also influences public attitudes toward sexual assault victims, perpetrators, and societal responses (Royal, 2019). In particular, the images, narratives, and framing presented by mainstream media play an important role in shaping people's attitudes toward sexual assault (Royal, 2019). Such (mis)representations serve to construct a culture of victim-blaming grounded in misinformation. In representations of rape, for example, they can perpetuate harmful cultural myths, such as the false association of women's clothing with sexual availability (Projansky, 2001). This association underscores the pervasive influence of the media in perpetuating traditional notions of rape in shaping public perceptions of sexual violence. The traditional concept of rape is the false opinion that the victim invites or enjoys sexual assault or that the accuser is a liar (Cuklanz, 2019).

Algan (2020) examines the representation of victims in the media. According to the author, the media often portrays victims of sexual violence as violent and vulnerable, reinforcing harmful stereotypes that place blame on the victim (Algan, 2020). These portrayals exacerbate the pain and shame experienced by survivors and perpetuate social misunderstandings. In addition, corporate media tends to misrepresent perpetrators as "misguided" (Royal, 2019, p. 156) and less guilty, downplaying the seriousness of their actions and their impact on victims. Despite the severe and long-lasting impact of sexual assault on victims, this narrative shift by the media unfairly exonerates perpetrators and undermines the reality of sexual assault.

Both Barton (2017) and Barer (2013) address the role of the media in misrepresenting sexual assault and facilitating victim blaming. Both Barton's study of New Zealand newspapers and Barer's analysis of media and police reports in Edmonton show that sexual violence emphasizes the need for a cultural shift to end it. Layman (2020), Fountain (2008), and Blair (2021) further contribute to this discourse by analyzing changes in media coverage of sexual assault over time and the ongoing problem of victim-blaming. The trend in their analysis shows how the media contribute to the practice of victim-blaming.

Cuklanz (2000) examines television fiction from 1976 to 1991 and finds that sexual violence is a prominent theme in most of the works dealing with violence. These detective dramas are oriented predominantly toward a male audience. Additionally, these works contrast problematic forms of masculinity and ideal masculinity, represented by the righteous police officers, all while failing entirely to consider the experiences of the women victims themselves (Cuklanz, 2000, 2019). Furthermore, Cuklanz (2019) proposes a "basic rape

narrative" (p. 313), which describes violent, stranger sexual assaults, passive victims, and righteous detectives.

Horeck (2003) addresses this ambiguity by proposing the notion of public rape. It means "representations of rape that serve as cultural fantasies of power and domination, gender and sexuality, and class and ethnicity" (Horeck, 2003, p. 3). She, further, understands fantasy as "the opposite of reality; the fantastic, the untrue ('she made it up','she really wanted it')" (Horeck, 2003, p. 4).

Furthermore, Projansky (2001) discusses how rape in masculine contexts, such as the military, is acknowledged in feminist anti-rape logic, while highlighting how rape narratives in films and television programs distort feminism. These narratives sometimes empower feminism through the depiction of rape experiences and sometimes blame feminism for the occurrence of rape, creating a complex interplay between media representations and feminist discourse. In addition to these representations, some media portrayals focus on the violent nature of rape, separating it from consensual sex and emphasizing its brutality (Projansky, 2001). This approach attempts to demarcate a clear line between violence and consensual sexual encounters and thereby emphasize the seriousness of rape. These studies take a feminist perspective objecting to the silencing of women's experiences and advocating for more accurate and supportive media representation.

The first part of this section discussed how representations of sexual violence in media and fiction exercise social influence, but especially in Japan, where the social influence of television is enormous (NHK, 2015; NCF, 2019), the television medium appears to be omnipresent in both private and public spaces.

Mikanagi (2004), like Projansky (2001), discusses the connection between sexual violence, the military, and masculinity. She argues that sexual violence against local women by U.S. military personnel is not a personal problem, but one rooted in a gendered power hierarchy and socially sanctioned masculinity based on violence against women. This perspective shifts the focus from individual incidents to systemic problems and highlights the social structures that perpetuate sexual violence. Mikanagi (2004) further emphasizes the relevance of rape incidents by soldiers stationed overseas to inter-state issues. She asserts "rapes conducted by American soldiers of local women would not have occurred if the Japanese government had

not hosted U.S. military bases in Okinawa in the first place" (Mikanagi, 2004, p. 91). This statement emphasizes the geopolitical dimension of sexual violence and links local incidents to broader international policies and power dynamics.

As for media representations of sexual violence in Okinawa, literatures focus on the involvement of the U.S. military. The main ideas and points highlighted include narratives constructed in news coverage, stereotypes and stigmatization faced by Okinawan women who date U.S. military servicemen, depiction of sexual violence in fictional works, ethics of narrating traumatic histories, and documentation of sexual violence cases by Okinawan feminist groups.

Since Okinawa has been characterized variously in the literature as a gendered and sexualized object of post-colonial Okinawans' lives and social landscapes (Ginoza, 2016); as "a daughter sold to the U.S. by Japan" (Takazato in Tanji 2006, p. 159); as an "orphan of conquest" (Mears, 1956, as cited in Tanji & Broudy, 2017, p. 24); as a "double colony" (Tokuyama, 2013); as "a colony in a post-colonial world" (Falk 2016) where local people have long been sensitive to "the gazes along the fenceline" (Carter, 2013, p. 10), the prevailing impressions suggest that the region remains fixed in memory as an object to be handled by distant powers exercising authority to decide the fate of the island and its people.

Japanese media representation reinforces the stereotype of timeless southern paradises inhabited by natives whose primitiveness is presented as an immutable and pure essence (Chu, 2015). By fetishizing ethnic and cultural others as the origin of difference, the Japanese media simultaneously enacted processes of incorporation and expulsion (Chu, 2015). It plays in the imagination as a destination to be enjoyed by tourists seeking to satisfy their curiosities about the subtropical paradise (Iyer, 2015). Such are the concepts that shape the perceptions that many visitors have of the region, and these powerful images produce a mistaken idea about Okinawa's position in the broader socio-political landscape. Okinawa's position in post-WWII history as a site of ongoing American military-industrial development helps explain how the 1995 rape of an Okinawan school girl was presented in the media (see, for example, Eldridge, 2020).

Motomura (2009) analyzes The New York Times and The Washington Post articles written about rape incidents by U.S. military personnel toward Okinawan women. The author reveals

that the media speaks of the rape cases as an aberration within the U.S. military and as a diplomatic issue between the nations of Japan and the U.S. rather than a crime (Motomura, 2009). Motomura stresses that their articles downplay the experiences of the rape victims while simultaneously humanizing and portraying the American perpetrators as victims (Motomura, 2009).

Reidpath (2017) focuses on the depiction of rape committed by U.S. soldiers in fictional works by[10] Ōshiro Tatsuhiro, Matayoshi Eiki, and Medoruma Shun. The analysis explores how these narratives engage with and influence the discourse around sexual violence and resistance in Okinawa. It argues that while raising awareness, the works tend to neglect giving voice to female victims in favor of male-dominated perspectives.

Textor (2022) delves into Medoruma Shun's novel "In the Woods of Memory," which examines the ethics of narrating traumatic histories. The novel particularly emphasizes the circulation of narratives relating to the rape of a girl during the Battle of Okinawa and raises questions about reconstructing the voices that are missing from the historical record.

These literatures illustrate different aspects of the media representation of sexual violence in Okinawa. They collectively reveal the narratives constructed in news coverage, the stereotypes faced by Okinawan women, the portrayal of sexual violence in fictional works, the ethics of narrating traumatic histories, and the documentation of sexual violence cases by feminist groups. These works provide valuable insights into the ways in which sexual violence in Okinawa is depicted, understood, and challenged in various contexts.

[10] In Japanese, the surname comes first, and the first name follows. In my paper, I have generally followed the English notation of first name-last name, but here I follow the Japanese notation due to this source's author adopting the Japanese way.

3 Theoretical background

3.1 Post-colonial feminism

Post-colonial feminist literature examines how women are represented in colonial and post-colonial literature and challenges assumptions about women in that society. Prior to the 1990s, American and European academia neglected Asian, Black, and Hispanic works, leading to the development of post-colonial feminist literature around the 1990s (Anzaldúa, 1990; Chow, 1991; Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1991; Mohanty, 2003; Minh-ha, 1989).

Although some Western feminists feared the emerging post-colonial debate would fragment the feminist movement, and some scholars called for the concept of sisterhood, a global solidarity of women, most non-white feminists in the West agreed with the post-colonial arguments (hooks, 1984; Lorde, 1984; Spivak, 1988). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, for example, contemplates the Eurocentric self and the non-Eurocentric unnamed other. Gayatri's term "subaltern" refers to those who are inhibited both by the patriarchal power structure of the colony and by its suzerainty. She queries whether they can speak in the first place; because what they say is neither understood nor supported, she states that anything that cannot engage in cultural imperialism or can only engage in it to a limited extent, is a subaltern (Spivak, 1988).

Another African American, Audre Lorde, in *Sister outsider* (1984), argues that the denial of diversity only furthers the oppression that existed originally. White women disregard their own privilege of whiteness and define women based on their own experiences, so that women of color become strangers whose experiences and traditions are too different to understand (Lorde, 1984). bell hooks and other black feminists expand on Lorde's argument, arguing that Western feminists not only disrespect racial privilege, but actively promote racism (Crenshaw, 1991; hooks, 1984).

Chandra T. Mohanty (1991) proposes the concept of the "imagined community" in post-colonial feminism. She emphasizes the abstract meaning of this concept, suggesting potential alliances, cooperation across divisive boundaries and opportunities for a deep commitment to "sisterhood" (Mohanty, 1991). Mohanty's notion of "imagined community" is a key concept in post-colonial feminist struggles to distance us from traditional notions, suggesting that the foundations of alliances are political in nature.

These critics reject the assumption that white, middle-class women should be the norm. Furthermore, they also reject previous feminist approaches that assumed women shared a common identity based on shared experiences of oppression. They suggest that women's interests varied according to race, class, and social position, and that it is important to acknowledge such differences. These post-colonial discussions (Crenshaw, 1991; hooks, 1984; Mohanty, 1991; Spivak, 1988) have contributed to making post-colonial women's writing visible and understandable in the West.

Post-colonial feminists have pointed to the continued stereotyping and marginalizing of Third World women by Western feminists and others, ironically partly by Western feminist women who claim to be challenging oppression. Western feminism's oppression of Third World women has been referred to as Triple Colonization or Triple Oppression. Post-colonial feminism says that Third World women are colonized first by colonial rule, second by patriarchy, and third by Western feminists (Mohanty, 1984).

Okinawan women have also been neglected by Japanese feminists, in addition to colonialism and patriarchal degrees (Shigematsu, 2017). For example, there is a term to describe the ideal Japanese woman: *ryōsai kenbo*. The literal translation of this term is "good wife—wise mother" (Ochiai, 2005, 2014, as cited in Tsuruoka, 2023). However, behind the image of *ryōsai kenbo* there are Okinawan women and other women who are minorities in terms of ethnicity, sexuality, and who have been othered (Spivak, 1988; Shigematsu, 2017). In this regard, Shigematsu (2017) quotes a comment by her interviewee, an Okinawan feminist activist A-san, who criticizes Japanese feminism for ignoring diversity in this way.

> [Many Japanese] feminists have not acknowledged their privilege and their country's historical oppression of Okinawans. They are sensitive about it and struggle to confront it. A conversation about the fact that Japan is a heterogeneous nation which colonized other nations needs to continue among transnational Japanese feminists so that they can be better allies to non-Japanese as power, class structures, and even violence exist within the category of "Japanese women" (Shigematsu, 2017, p. 8).

What post-colonial feminists are challenging is not only an ideology that devalues the status of women, but also the prevailing assumption that white middle-class Western women are the

norm. This norm is the stereotype that defines post-colonial women as subservient. Such ideologies and stereotypes, they point out, have left post-colonial women in many ways still subject to the pressures of neocolonialism, even as imperialism has declined.

Colonial countries, including Ryukyu/Okinawa, have been subjected to imperial conquests that have stripped them of their languages, cultures, and identities, and even subjected them to cruel experiences such as slavery and genocide. For this reason, post-colonial feminists have argued for reviewing history based on the specific experiences of formerly colonized post-colonial women and the many strategies they have adopted in order to survive.

Patriarchy has historically been closely linked to colonialism, but the end of empire did not mean the end of oppression of women in the former colonies. Indeed, much post-colonial theory was constructed by men (Bhabha, 1994; Césaire & Kelley, 2000; Fanon, 2001; Said, 1979). Even the term "post-colonial" is debated, because it implies that all countries that have experienced colonialism are in the same situation, and that they have an indissoluble relationship with their colonial history.

Similarly, some theorists argue that the term "post-colonial women" oversimplifies oppression and prevents a reading beyond the obvious questions of "good" and "evil." While some suggest that post-colonial theories that challenge imperial oppression have contributed to the stereotyping of women and their oppression, post-colonial feminism has never operated as an entity separate from post-colonialism (Young, 2003). Post-colonial feminism has made radical contributions to literary studies by integrating many disciplines, challenging Western white-centeredness, and restoring multiple subjectivities to literary history.

In many East Asian countries, including Okinawa, feminism is more multivariate than a single discipline called feminism. There are feminist frameworks in fields such as the social sciences and humanities, on topics as diverse as history, post-colonial studies, activism, and women's health. The idea has even been raised that feminism in East Asia is often seen as an import from the West, leading to debates about cultural authenticity and the need for localization. This can be seen in Karim's (2022) exploration of different forms and expressions of feminist activism in different East Asian countries. She notes that while some advocate a more globalized approach to feminism, others advocate a more localized understanding that takes into account cultural and historical contexts.

Post-colonial theory challenges this by showing that Western academia tends to treat Third World women as "others" and denies their agency. In other words, it questions assumptions about what is "core (normative)" and what is "peripheral (other)" (see, for example, Spivak, 1988). Post-colonial feminism also challenges the association of traditional Western white feminism with political liberation movements. It may also categorize Third World women broadly in the exploration of post-colonial women's histories and struggles against colonialism, discrimination against indigenous peoples, and sexual violence against indigenous women.

Feminist scholars have criticized the way in which protests against violence towards women, including rape, have been grouped together as a kind of anti-U.S. military base peace movement, or as a kind of political movement calling for a revision of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, thus neglecting women's human rights (Angst, 2001, 2009). On the other hand, scholars who have been involved in supporting victims of sexual violence in Okinawa for many years argue that militarism and sexual violence are inextricably linked, and that demilitarization is the way to protect Okinawan women from military violence (Akibayashi, 2020, 2022; Takazato, 2000).

In Okinawa, the bias against women, including victims of sexual violence, for dating U.S. soldiers (Hashimoto, 2023; Johnson, 2019) and for having children with violent partners (Uema, 2017) has also been problematic. These biased views are only one example of the Japanese-centric feminism criticized by Shigematsu (2017).

In conclusion, post-colonial feminism developed as a response to the challenges that ethnic and post-colonial studies posed to Western white feminism. One of its most important points is that "women" do not constitute a coherent group based solely on gender. Women's status and roles vary through a complex interplay of intersectional (Crenshaw, 1991) factors such as ethnicity and class. Post-colonial feminists continue to call for an inclusive and beneficial feminism, based on values shared by women around the world, to be mainstreamed in order to better understand their goals and struggles.

3.2 Stuart Hall's notion of representation

According to Stuart Hall, representation is "the production of meaning through language" (Hall, 2013, p. 3). He further states that linking concepts and language enables us to refer to the real world and the imagined world. In this master's project, the real world is the actual society in which Okinawan people live, and the imaginary world is the "fictional objects, people, and events" (p. 3). Hall refers to; that is to say, the island of Okinawa and its people as represented in the drama *Fence* (2023).

Hall's theoretical contributions on representation, language, and culture provide a powerful framework for analyzing media portrayals of minority communities, especially in the context of the Japanese television drama *Fence* and its portrayal of Okinawa. Hall (2013) argues that representation involves the creation of meaning through language "complex process" (p. 3), and language is to be understood in a broad sense that includes not only written and spoken language, but also "concepts" (p. 3) that are intangible such as images, symbols, and practices. This process not only reflects reality, but also constructs it, suggesting that the way Okinawa is represented in *Fence* actively constructs a certain reality for the audience (Hall, 2013).

This master's project examines how or to what extent the "reality" constructed and represented in the drama does or does not reflect the actual post-colonial reality of Okinawa, as Hall argues that representation "is not about a 'true' reflection or imitation of reality" (Hall, 2013, p. 43). Specifically, when studying the representation of Okinawa viewed as a minority in the Japanese media which wields the authority of the majority, Hall's theory is significantly useful: first, in the sense that "fictional objects, people, and events" suggest that even those which do not exist can be represented through narrative and discourse; and second, in his critical examination of how minority groups are portrayed in media and culture, questioning who has the power to represent whom and how these representations influence societal perceptions and relations. The concept of "representation," according to Hall (2013), extends beyond mere depiction to include the ways in which cultural and social meanings are created, disseminated, and interpreted. Hall's emphasis on the roles of language and culture in constructing meaning underscores the importance of critically analyzing the portrayals of minorities to understand the underlying power dynamics and the potential for reinforcing or challenging stereotypes and biases.

Hall's view of representation also suggests that meanings do not spontaneously emerge absent of human agency, but are created through the interplay between cultural codes and accepted social conventions. This perspective is useful in examining how *Fence* utilizes narrative techniques, character development, and visual storytelling to construct its representation of Okinawa. According to Hall, "the relationship between concepts and language is therefore fixed not by nature but by the codes of culture and language which construct a correspondence between them" (Hall, 2013, p. 17). This insight allows for a critical analysis of how Okinawa is represented in the drama, questioning whether the representation reinforces stereotypical images, or challenges them by presenting a more nuanced and complex picture of Okinawan life and history.

Moreover, Hall's theory focuses on the power dynamics inherent in the process of representation, especially when it involves the portrayal of minority communities by dominant media forces. He argues that the act of representation is imbued with power, as it involves the selection, organization, and mediation of social reality through a specific lens (Hall, 2013). This theoretical lens is crucial for exploring how *Fence* navigates the historical and contemporary complexities of Okinawa, including its post-colonial status and the presence of U.S. military bases. By applying Hall's framework, I aim to critically assess how the drama contributes to or contests the dominant narratives about Okinawa, offering insights into the ways media representations can influence perceptions of identity, history, and geopolitical realities.

Specifically, Hall (1991) also has this to say about the representation of minority ethnic groups.

> They had to locate themselves somewhere but they wanted to address problems which could no longer be contained within a narrow version of ethnicity. They did not want to go back and defend something which was ancient, which had stood still, which had refused the opening to new things. They wanted to speak right across those boundaries, and across those frontiers (Hall, 1991, p. 38).

Hall's view of representation of marginalized groups, particularly in the context of discussing the portrayal of minority groups or "the other" in media and culture, has relevance to this

research, because it highlights a desire among certain groups or individuals to transcend traditional, narrow confines of ethnic identity and representation. It reflects a movement towards a more inclusive, dynamic understanding of identity that acknowledges change, diversity, and the complexity of cultural and social experiences.

In the context of the representation of Okinawa in the Japanese TV drama *Fence* (2023), this quote by Hall supports my argument about the importance of portraying Okinawan identity in a manner that does not confine it in the way that scholars have pointed out is static, based on outdated stereotypes or romanticized notions of cultural purity (Ginoza, 2022; Tanaka et al., 2003). Instead, there's a push for representations that are open to the nuances of Okinawan identity, acknowledging its historical depth, contemporary challenges in its post-colonial reality, and the fluid nature of culture. This approach aligns with Hall's advocacy for speaking "across boundaries, and across those 'frontiers'" (Hall, 1991, p. 38), suggesting the importance of crossing cultural and social divides to present a more comprehensive and authentic portrayal of minority groups.

This perspective is particularly relevant when considering Okinawa's unique historical and socio-political context, including its experiences of colonialism, postwar occupation, and its contemporary status within Japan and in the relation to the imperial power by both Japan and the United States. By applying Hall's insights, I argue for a representation of Okinawa in *Fence* (2023) that engages with these complexities, offering narratives that reflect the island's rich history and its ongoing negotiation of identity and autonomy.

Such an approach would not only challenge simplistic or monolithic portrayals but also contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Okinawa and its history, gender dynamics and representation of women, both within Japan and beyond. Thus, Hall's observation illuminates the broader implications of representing minority groups in media, advocating for an inclusive approach that acknowledges the evolving nature of cultural and ethnic identities. This perspective encourages creators and scholars alike to consider how representations can either perpetuate narrow, static views or, alternatively, contribute to a richer, more dynamic understanding of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.

To conclude, Hall's work on representation, language, and culture offers a valuable theoretical foundation for analyzing the representation of Okinawa in *Fence* (2023). It enables

a critical examination of how cultural and linguistic practices shape the portrayal of this community, the implications of such portrayals for the construction of social reality, and the power relations at play in the process of representation.

4 Methodology

4.1 Data collection

The serial TV drama *Fence* (2023) is a new original drama by Akiko Nogi, a Japanese female screenwriter who has produced many socially-conscious entertainment works. The drama consists of five episodes (about 55 minutes each). It depicts the current situation in Okinawa, which recently marked the 50th year since its reversion to Japan in 1972. It also depicts the cultural, social, and political complexities of the power structure between Japan and the U.S., as well as violence against Okinawan women by U.S. military personnel. It thus provides an excellent opportunity to investigate from a cultural and media studies perspective how Japanese media handle these issues.

The main characters are two women, a magazine writer from Tokyo, Kie Komatsu (played by Mayu Matsuoka) and Sakura Omine (Ariana Miyamoto), who is half-black and half-Japanese. Kie befriends Sakura, who was born and raised in Okinawa. The two become friends and pursue the truth behind a sexual assault case. For the first time in Japanese drama history, a female character of a different skin color is the main character in a drama series. The show also features over 50 Okinawan natives among its cast.

The drama depicts Okinawan people overcoming various metaphorical fences such as gender, race, generational differences, geographical separation between Okinawa and mainland Japan, and national boundaries between Japan and the United States. Over the course of the story, Kie flies to Okinawa to interview Sakura, an Okinawan woman who claims to have been the victim of sexual assault by a U.S. soldier; Kie finds Sakura's statement suspicious, and she decides she wants to find out more of the background to the incident. Kie visits Koza, Okinawa City, a U.S. military base town. She poses as a tourist when she visits Sakura's Cafe & Bar Moai to find out more about her. There she learns that Sakura's grandmother, Yoshi Omine, is an Okinawa War (WWII) survivor and an anti-military activist and that Sakura's father is a black U.S. serviceman who Sakura has never met.

Meanwhile, Kie meets with Okinawa Prefectural Police Officer Isa, a former customer of hers from when she worked at a cabaret club in Tokyo, and he tells her about the harsh reality of U.S. military criminal investigations: cases involving servicemen are rarely thoroughly investigated because the U.S. military has jurisdiction over crimes involving military

personnel (AOCHR, 2022; Mikanagi, 2004). It is at this point that Kie starts to become aware of the complicated legal situation around sovereignty and the military in Okinawa.

4.2 Analytical method: thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative analysis method in psychology and one of the most useful qualitative analysis methods in various fields as it "offers an accessible and theoretically-flexible approach to analyzing qualitative data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 2). It is often used in cultural studies and media studies research because of its usefulness in identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) in data (Deacon, Pickering, Golding, & Murdock, 2021). In this thesis, I use thematic analysis as a tool to examine how the Okinawan islands and women are portrayed in the Japanese media, specifically identifying analytical themes such as stereotypes, cultural identity, and gender roles, and how historical and sociopolitical contexts relate to these media portrayals. Braun and Clarke (2006) acknowledge thematic analysis as "a foundational method for qualitative analysis," offering core skills applicable to various other qualitative analytical methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 4). The authors also stress the importance of establishing a theoretical position in thematic analysis that is clear and transparent in order to conduct a valid analysis.

Thematic analysis is useful in understanding how historical and sociopolitical contexts relate to media depictions of Okinawa. This methodological approach also contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how societal attitudes toward women in Okinawa have changed. Thematic analysis allows researchers to collect texts from a variety of media, become familiar with their content, identify key characteristics, establish themes, review these themes to ensure that they accurately represent the data collected, and then define and name these themes to inform our research questions. This inductive approach is "theoretically-flexible" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 2) and allows for the emergence of unexpected insights. Thematic analysis is not bound by existing theoretical frameworks and can be used in different theoretical frameworks to conduct analyses within them. Thematic analysis is also useful as a method for examining how participants' "events, realities, meanings, and experiences" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 9) are the result of different discourses operating in society. Since thematic analysis "works both to reflect reality, and to unpick or unravel the surface of 'reality'"

(Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 9), I can apply it to my research examining media representation and how that representation reflects reality.

How I apply thematic analysis in this thesis:

Braun and Clarke (2006) propose the 6 phases in order to adopt thematic analysis for researchers.

Phase 1: familiarizing yourself with your data

Phase 2: generating initial codes

Phase 3: searching for themes

Phase 4: reviewing themes

Phase 5: defining and naming themes

Phase 6: producing the report

In my research, following phase 1 to 5 will be useful and relevant. By repeatedly watching episodes of the drama and taking notes of important scenes and dialogue, I familarized myself with the data. I generated initial codes for representations of women, depictions of sexual violence, U.S. military influence, and power relations between the two imperial powers, Japan and the United States. I organized the initial code and identified key themes, and of those codes, the ones that seemed irrelevant to the research question were discarded. The step of reviewing themes is important to ensure that the themes identified are consistent throughout the data. It involves reevaluating the themes and making any necessary corrections. Finally, I carefully defined and named themes. Phase 6 is not used in this paper. This is because in this paper’s writing process, reporting and interpreting the results of the analysis are done in other sections (the Discussion section and the Conclusion section) and therefore it does not need to

be treated as an independent step. In this way thematic analysis effectively reflects the detailed analytical results obtained through phases 1 through 5.

The drama's dialogues and explanations of Okinawa's unique vocabulary and quotations in this paper are the author's translation of the original (Japanese) into English, proofread by native speakers and verified by a professional translator.

5 Analysis

According to Stuart Hall, representation refers to "the production of meaning through language" (Hall, 2013, p. 3). At first glance, the idea may seem somewhat banal because language production is sometimes a matter of subconscious activity, but this form of production is a process that is important to unpack. Hall suggests that the interconnection between concepts and language facilitates the referencing of both tangible realities and conceptual constructs. Hall's perspective on the production of meaning is key to understanding how the meaning of Okinawa in the minds of famous media producers outside the culture is, in fact, reflected in the production of powerful myths about the local culture.

In this paper, the focus of my analysis will be the representation of 1) Okinawa, its history and post-colonial present, and existing power dynamics between Japan, the U.S., and Okinawa; and 2) female sexuality and violence against women. I will conduct a thematic analysis of *Fence* (2023) to determine the extent to which the popular drama mythologizes remote geographic spaces and people, and thus acts as a tool of objectification. After all, objectification is elemental to the process of representation. The outcome of this analysis should alert readers to the power of myth in media and its relation to representing places and people in post-colonial contexts such as Okinawa. Such analysis is useful because it draws attention to the role of the media in shaping social debates and perceptions, and because it identifies drama as a form of entertainment that can pretend to educate. If Okinawa (as the minority character) and Japanese media (as the authoritative majority character) represent the present power dynamic, Hall's theory provides a useful framework within which to analyze "fictional objects, people, and events" that are represented through media narratives and public discourse.

The serial TV drama *Fence* (2023) focuses on sexual violence committed against local women by U.S. military service members, and explores Okinawa's contemporary post-colonial society, its history and particularly the fierce fighting the island saw during World War II, its postwar period of American rule, and its contemporary relationship with mainland Japan. These historical backdrops deeply influence the characters' identity formation and the development of the story. How well the drama depicts these historical facts, however, is a question of accuracy and depth of portrayal. Whether the drama diverges from actual

historical facts about Okinawan society and whether the drama challenges or reinforces existing stereotypes towards Okinawan people to be considered.

5.1 The colonial history and post-colonial present of Okinawa: power dynamics between Japan, the U.S., and Okinawa

As I have mentioned in previous sections, contemporary Okinawan society is heavily influenced by complex power relations between mainland Japan and the United States. The impact of the ongoing presence of U.S. military bases on Okinawan communities is particularly evident not only in terms of culture and identity, but also in terms of its sheer material presence, (the bases occupy 15 percent of the land mass of Okinawa (Mitchell, 2021)), and the impact the military presence has on power relations between the genders.

In the drama *Fence* (2023), when Kie first arrives at Sakura's cafe in the first episode, she sees an A-sign board on the wall of the cafe. The board has the letter "A" written in large red letters and "Welcome Military Personnel" above it. On the four corners of the board are the symbols of the U.S. military: army, airforce, marine, and court. In 1953, during the U.S. military occupation of Okinawa, the U.S. military introduced the "A sign" system for bars, restaurants, and brothels that they frequented (Yoshida, 2001). The letter "A" comes from the word "Approved" and indicates that the establishment has passed a rigorous sanitary inspection by the U.S. military (Sturdevant, 1995). This inspection was not just for sanitation, but to assure that the establishment met standards suitable for U.S. military personnel. Today, relics from this era remain in Okinawa City, and some establishments display the A signs that were in use at the time (Forgash, 2009; Ginoza, 2016; Okinawa City, n.d.; Sturdevant, 1995).

Figure 1: Photo of A sign at George Restaurant in Naha city taken by Kazumi Serizawa. Even after the evaluation system ceased to exist, it is still displayed as a cherished memorial (Ohsawa, Ono, Serizawa, & Takase, 2014).

Since the A sign was for hygiene reasons to serve military personnel and their families (Yoshida, 2001), it was set up so that U.S. military personnel could eat and entertain themselves safely, rather than to protect women working in the sex industry. Thus, this represents not only the power relationship between the U.S. military and Okinawa, but also between U.S. men and local women (Shimabuku, 2010).

In the drama, the power dynamic between the U.S. and Okinawa can also be understood by examining the way U.S. service members regard Okinawan women. For example, in Episode 2, Officer Isa describes the ways in which U.S. servicemen survey Okinawa as a landscape to be tamed along with its women.

> Seventy percent of the U.S. military in Okinawa are Marines, and most of them are recruits in their late teens and early twenties. Okinawa is their first overseas trip. These kids, who are big only in body, treat it as a vacation. They have fun with Okinawan bikini girls and then just go back home. There is always trouble between

> men and women. At their orientation the military just tells them not to do anything stupid, and that's it" (Episode 2, 38:55).

Isa's description of the Marines in Okinawa is consistent with Angst's view, who describes the Marines stationed in Okinawa as "unwelcome guests on this island" (Angst, 2001, p. 244) who view Okinawa through the limited lens created by the U.S. military officials. This comment from Isa not only illustrates how U.S. servicemen view Okinawa and how Okinawans view U.S. servicemen, but also reveals how the Okinawan authorities (the police) do not take the issue of sexual violence seriously: simply as "trouble between men and women."

Another example of how the U.S. military personnel view Okinawa appears indirectly in Episode 3, when Kie and Sakura, as part of their investigation, go to the nail salon where Jay's girlfriend Miyu tells Kie and Sakura: "When Jay first came to Okinawa, he was really surprised, he was like 'Oh wow, it's so beautiful and safe here, I'm jealous! It's like heaven!'" (Episode 3, 23:24). To this, Kie sarcastically responds, "So it's a heaven where you can eat women, he means? And teenage girls" (Episode 3). This line shows Kie's frustration at the lack of accountability for crimes committed by U.S. soldiers and highlights the unequal power dynamics represented in the drama, where local voices are silenced and justice is not served due to the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that prevents U.S. military from being prosecuted by the Okinawan police (AOCHR, 2022; Mikanagi, 2004). The power dynamic between American servicemen and local Okinawan women is also evident in the way Jay, a U.S. soldier, views Okinawa as a "heaven" where they can indulge their desires however they like. This perception is troubling because it reduces Okinawan women to objects of desire for foreign soldiers. The word "safe" in Jay's comment is in contrast to the experience of Okinawan women who have lived under the risk of sexual violence for many years; safety is something only those with privilege can enjoy.

In the same episode, Jay's girlfriend, Miyu, and her co-worker talk about the benefits of dating, marrying, and having children with American servicemen (Episode 3, 20:01).

> Coworker: Miyu is getting married soon to her military boyfriend, I'm going to miss her.

Miyu: Don't worry, I'll be in Okinawa for about 3 years after we get married, it'll be a while before we have to PCS[11].

Kie: What about the family registry?

Miyu: The paperwork is really complicated, it's such a hassle.

Coworker: If she gets married, she can give birth to her baby in the hospital on base, and easily get U.S. citizenship. I envy you for being able to do that for free.

This interaction highlights the privileges – having children with American citizenship, and the chance to live abroad – enjoyed by women who marry American servicemen, and also reflects how other Okinawan women are often envious of this privilege. This reveals the existing power of the U.S. military and American citizenship, which is consistent with Gaini's discussion of the strong impact of military bases on the cultural identity of Okinawan youth (Gaini and Nielsen, 2020; Gaini, 2021). In his interview, an Okinawan college student reported that Okinawan women who date Americans are "cool" (Ayaka, a participant in Gaini, 2021), and that they are looked upon with envy. In contrast, when Kie asks Sakura "You weren't born on base?" Sakura, who has never met her father, replies with bitterness: "Nope. So no U.S. citizenship…"

5.1.1 Okinawaness: the contrast between authentic Okinawan identity and media portrayal

With its visually stunning natural environment and rich culture, Okinawa has proved attractive to Japanese media companies, which have regarded the region as an ideal place to produce films and TV dramas. Many such works have been criticized for not representing Okinawaness[12] at all, for glorifying Okinawan culture, or for downplaying or ignoring Okinawa's post-colonial history and the presence of the U.S. military (Ma & Fujiki, 2021;

[11] Permanent Change of Station (Military OneSource, 2023) is a noun, but it has also been common as a verb such as "We are PCSing."
[12] Different authors use slightly different notations such as Okinawaness, Okinawanness, and Okinawan-ness; however, they are used interchangeably in terms of meaning and usage. In this paper, when citing a particular reference, I will follow that author; otherwise, I will consistently adopt Okinawaness, following Vogt (2018) as it is easy to understand considering that this term was coined relatively recently by adding the suffix "-ness" (which is a translation from the Japanese *rashisa*) to the noun "Okinawa."

Tanaka, et al., 2003; Ueunten, 2015). For example, Ueunten (2015) calls out *Churasan* (Okada, 2001), NHK's popular TV drama series that sparked the Okinawa boom of the early 2000s, by identifying it as "typical of shows about minorities produced by the majority" (Ueunten, 2015, line 20).

Contemporary Okinawan society is heavily influenced by the complex power relations between mainland Japan, the United States, and Okinawa itself. This paper also examines how the drama depicts these three relationships, particularly the impact of the presence of the U.S. military bases on local society, and whether the portrayal of the power structure is realistic or promotes certain stereotypes and misconceptions. This topic has the potential to provide deep insights into Okinawa's autonomy and identity, as well as into its place in international relations. Okinawa, thus placed in a power relationship between two countries, has a complex identity or Okinawaness. Both within and outside of Okinawa, Okinawaness has been studied by numerous scholars (Figal, 2012; Gaini, 2021; Ginoza, 2011; Gottlieb, 2008; Tanaka, et al., 2003; Vogt, 2018), who have examined how Okinawaness is defined, how it is related to the U.S. military bases, and how it is represented in the media.

Okinawaness is "the unique islandness" (Gaini, 2021) or a distinct cultural identity involving traditions, language, or food (Vogt, 2018). As Gottlieb (2008) stresses, Okinawaness cannot simply be described as an island that has served as a "former kingdom, a province, a tourism destination, and an American military outpost" (p. 28).

According to Tanaka et al. (2003), when symbols and media representations of Okinawa shape people's perceptions in this way, and when they are surrounded by things associated with Okinawan culture, the inhabitants of the island start to change and identify themselves as Okinawans. The authors call this process "self-Orientalism" (p. 427), observing that the media is deeply involved in this process, and arguing that it leads to forgetting the process itself, so that Okinawans begin to talk about themselves and their identity using essentialist language (Tanaka et al., 2003), for example by referring to themselves as laid-back.

The media's promotion of a certain image of Okinawaness, based on symbols of origin and tradition, can lead to a mediated and inauthentic representation of Okinawa and its people (Tanaka et al., 2003). For example, Figal (2012) examined materials distributed at tourist information centers in mainland Japan and noted how they actively embrace the U.S. military

bases as part of Okinawa's identity and as part of Okinawaness as a tourist attraction. Tanaka et al. (2003) then discuss how during the growth of interest in Okinawa, such as "the paradise in the southern sea" (p. 427) and the "Okinawa boom" (p. 422), Japanese media produced a series of movies, dramas, and variety shows about Okinawa, of which *Fence* (2023) must be considered one, in order to effectively weigh its contribution to the discourse.

Such language that contributes to the Okinawa boom that the Japanese media creators use include "tropical paradise" (Abram, 2018; Wilson, 2021; JTB Communication Design, 2023) or "Japan's Hawaii" (Tada, 2015; Parks, 2019) and envy (glorify) the island as a resort island, while turning a blind eye to Okinawa's disadvantageous political position and the harm (for example sexual violence) this causes. These kinds of terms indicate that Japanese people perceive Okinawa as a distant other, detached from Japan, due to their idealization of Okinawa and their envious gaze, often likening it to Hawaii. By framing Okinawa in these terms, it is not merely attractive phrases in the context of the tourism industry, but it also suggests that the Japanese media exoticize Okinawa and that it is consumed by the Japanese public as a place of leisure and escape. Such representations are also emphasized as Okinawaness in the media, contributing to the reproduction of stereotypes.

Stereotypical characteristics of Okinawaness, which are often emphasized and represented in the Japanese media, include laziness, their laid-back approach to life, and their close and easy personal relationships. In this drama, all episodes are titled with concepts and images unique to Okinawa, and various scenes showcase the island's culture and customs, many of which emphasize Okinawans' relaxed character. For instance, in Episode 1, Kie, who has just met Sakura, asks about what *moai* means in Cafe Moai, the business that Sakura runs. As Sakura explains that a *moai* is a monthly meeting where friends pool money to help each other out (See Appendix 1-7), Kie asks about potential problems when friends exchange money, to which Sakura responds with a nonchalant "*nankuru naisaa*" (everything will be fine) (See Appendix 1-8). Similarly, when Kie's boss tells her to go to Okinawa for a story, he asks, "How about taking your time doing a relaxing story on a southern island with a view of the cobalt blue ocean?" These lines represent the image of Okinawa as a healing island with a laid-back atmosphere, reflecting the relaxed character of Okinawans. This idea that "Okinawans are essentially laid-back and lazy" and thus "lack effort" often appears in Japanese literature, cited as elements that contribute to Okinawa's struggles relating to poverty. In his 2020 book, *Okinawa kara Hinkon ga Nakunaranai Hontou no Riyuu* [The Real

Reason Poverty Won't Ever Be Eliminated from Okinawa], Higuchi cites Okinawans' relaxed ethnicity, low self-esteem, and the island's smallness as reasons for low wages in Okinawa, but the book has been criticized by Okinawan scholars for its lack of academic foundation and for downplaying colonial history and the influence of U.S. military bases (see, for example, Asato & Shiga, 2022).

On the other hand, this episode does also show a more authentic view of everyday life in Okinawa, where people cannot just "relax with a view of the cobalt blue ocean." The sight and sound of the Osprey military transport aircraft features frequently throughout the drama, but Kie's shocked reaction is limited to the first time, after which she quickly accepts it as part of her daily life. This depiction highlights the process of Kie getting used to seeing and hearing aircraft flying over the cities, a daily occurrence in many regions of Okinawa. In a later scene Kie steps out of her apartment and sees an Osprey flying low over residential housing as it takes off into the clear blue sunny sky above the city she's staying in. The contrast between these two aspects of the image – the heavy metallic Osprey and the blue sky – vividly illustrate the difference between the glorified image of Okinawa that Japanese people expect and the harsh everyday reality in which local people live. Kie's shocked reaction to the sound of the Osprey highlights that ordinary, everyday life in Okinawa is surprising or even shocking to someone from Tokyo.

Another way the drama represents the perceived cultural characteristics of Okinawa is the depiction of the closeness between people who support each other to tackle difficulties such as violence and poverty. The culture of mutual help and coexistence is a stereotype that is emphasized by the Japanese media to justify placing Okinawa at a political disadvantage (Ma & Fujiki, 2021; Tanaka, et al., 2003). For example, when Kie was in Sakura's cafe, two children of elementary school age came in, received a free ticket[13] on the wall, and placed a food order with Sakura, saying "Sakura-*neenee*, taco rice[14], please."

---

[13] This is a system called Mirai Ticket or Smile Ticket, a program that was started in recent years in restaurants in Okinawa in an effort to combat child poverty. Diners voluntarily purchase tickets and post them on the wall, and elementary and junior high school students can use them to have a meal for free.

[14] Taco rice is a bowl of white rice topped with ground beef, vegetables such as lettuce and tomatoes, and cheese with some ketchup or hot sauce. It was invented locally due to the influence of the U.S. military bases. In the immediate postwar period, adopting American culture, including food culture, meant modernization for many Okinawan consumers (Ames, 2016). Such imported food which still is popular includes, Spam (canned pork luncheon meat), Eggo mayonnaise, and a variety of canned food such as tuna called "Sea Chicken", stew, corned beef hash, and soup (Ames, 2016).

Similarly, in Episode 3, when Kie sees a friendly nurse at the hospital, she remarks, “Here (in Okinawa), most people seem to know each other.” (22:54), emphasizing the smallness of Okinawa and its intimate relationships. With the use of the term “*neenee*,” meaning big sister (See Appendix 1-9), the scene reflects the mainland Japanese perception of the easy-going nature and convivial human relationships in Okinawa.

5.1.2 The “sacrificial stone” of Okinawa: marginalization in the past and present

In addition to the previously mentioned issue of local communities being polarized by colonizers, Okinawa has always been positioned as a distant ‘other,’ separated from mainland Japan, even though it was forced to identify with Japan during the colonization process. This drama depicts the history of Okinawa, which has been marginalized as a *suteishi*, which translates as “sacrificial stone” (Medoruma, 2012), “a stone strategically abandoned” (PSAJ, 2016), or “sacrifice stone in the strategy game of Go” (CIA, 2012, p. 14). For example, in Episode 1, an Okinawan man says, “Of course, Okinawa is *suteishi*” (24:40), ironically expressing his disappointment and resignation, indicating that this is something he cannot change. The word has been used “as a key term that directly captures the essence of the Battle of Okinawa” (Medoruma, 2012), as the term comes from *suteishi sakusen*, which refers to the Japanese military’s war strategy that sacrificed Okinawa to save the mainland (Aukema, 2019). Additionally, the term represents the relationship between Japan and Okinawa after the war, where Japan regained its independence through the San Francisco Peace Treaty, but left Okinawa under the control of the U.S. military and obligated it to shoulder the burden of hosting U.S. bases, even after Japan regained administrative authority over Okinawa (Medoruma, 2012). The Japanese imperial government took advantage of Okinawa as a *suteishi* to buy time to prepare for a decisive battle on the Japanese mainland and to protect the nation of Japan and its identity (PSAJ, 2016). The torture imposed on Okinawa by this *suteishi sakusen* gave rise to a movement to reject war and, in particular, to reject the militarization of Okinawa, a movement that has been passed down to the Okinawans born after the war (PSAJ, 2016). In Episode 5 there is a scene in which Sakura’s grandmother testifies as a war survivor:

> The soldiers ordered the women to look for food for them …. The soldiers were also abandoned by the nation. They sent neither weapons nor food for the fight. Okinawa

> was the *suteishi* , sacrificed to defend the mainland. … It is said that one in four Okinawans died in the war, but the true number is unknown. …. From Japan's perspective, Okinawa is a remote island. … There is … the threat of China, they say. So, in the name of protecting Japan, it turns its back on Okinawa. The suffering of the Okinawan people will be ignored over and over (Episode 5, 0:38).

"From Japan's perspective, Okinawa is a remote island" shows that Okinawa is seen as a topic to be avoided, a distant place, someone else's business.

As discussed in 2.4, the Japanese media sometimes portray Okinawa in a glorified light, presenting it as a laid-back, healing island with a heavenly image, unlike Japan.This alienation of Okinawa from Japan may lead to the tabooing of discussion of political issues in Okinawa, and even inhibit discussion of Okinawa itself. Particularly, people from outside Okinawa will often avoid expressing their opinions on issues relating to Okinawa in order to better fit in with Okinawan society; in Episode 4 (29:26), Kie asks her boss, Azuma (from Tokyo),"Azuma-san, are you for the base or against it?" He responds with a flustered "Don't you dare say such a thing in this island!"

Similarly, in Episode 2, a Japanese man shares his way of surviving in Okinawan society: "As a *shuumatsu shima naichaa*[15] (weekend island mainlander), there are three strategies that help them to fit into Okinawan society: never talk about the base issue; never talk about politics; and always smile and drink what they offer." This reflects the notion that politics related to U.S. military base issues, including issues of sexual violence by military personnel, are considered Okinawan issues and thus taboo; Japanese people should keep their distance (Episode 2).

[15] *Shuumatsu shima naichaa* can be translated as weekend-island-outsider, which refers to Japanese people who have a villa in Okinawa to stay there for a vacation. It can widely mean those who moved there from outside of Okinawa.

The episode also discusses how Okinawa becomes taboo even for Okinawans when they move to the mainland. Kie was raised by her mother to completely avoid anything Okinawan (Episode 2, 48:48):

> My father was an Asian-American soldier. ….My mother was abandoned by him. We were a single-mother family so people took advantage of us…. the neighborhood association president came to our house and raped my mother, which I witnessed. After she left Okinawa, she would turn off the TV as soon as Okinawa was featured on it. She also threw away the *shiisaa* (See Appendix 1-13) she had. We couldn't even eat taco rice.

5.1.3 Colonial legacies: how imperial authorities divided Okinawan society

The logo of the drama's title features a silhouette of the main island of Okinawa centered in the title text "FENCE," both of which are superimposed on an image of the chain-link fence that demarcates American military spaces from Okinawan ones.

Figure 2: Image of the logo and actors of the drama *Fence* (2023) posted on X by Wowow Original Drama (2024).

The effect of this image may suggest to viewers the existence of various kinds of barriers: the tangible signified by the physical fences that surround the U.S. military installations that divide the land and local communities; as well as metaphorical barriers, the conceptual divides that reinforce psychological, social, and ethnographic differences between occupiers and occupied. Polarization, division, or separation emerges as a pivotal theme in the broader societal and historical context of Okinawa, which this drama handles by representing the complex contexts or situations that defy simple categorization into binary distinctions. Within this complex socio-political landscape shaped by Japanese and American imperialism, colonial authorities have persistently enforced divisions between the Japanese and Okinawans, as well as among the Okinawan people themselves.

Under both Japanese and American imperialism, colonial authorities have persistently enforced divisions between the Japanese and Okinawans, as well as among the Okinawan people themselves. This separation manifests in several notable forms:

- The dichotomy between those advocating for and those opposing the construction of the new military base at Henoko;
- Divisions along voter lines between those who are in favor of the current Japanese government (and thus of the U.S. military presence in Okinawa) and those who oppose both of these; and
- Distinctions between local elites permitted access to military installations and those excluded from such privileges.

Since Okinawa's reversion to Japanese sovereignty (from U.S. military administration) in 1972, the region has been characterized by stark polarization regarding the establishment of new military installations. The ongoing debate surrounding construction of the new base in Nago City's Henoko district, which ignited on April 25, 2017 when construction on it started, has remained a focal point of contention. More broadly, the construction of military bases consistently emerges as a salient topic of concern for the Okinawan electorate during electoral cycles, and is often a defining characteristic of candidates' campaigns. In the 2017 referendum on construction of the U.S. military base in Henoko, 72% of voters voted against it (Kyodo News, 2019). However the Japanese government has ignored this vote and continued to move forward with construction (Midford, 2019).

Another example of polarization is in Episode 1 (29:20) where a Japanese man who runs a diving shop in Henoko says, “Young people in Okinawa are not interested in politics, base issues, or elections. It is *shima naichaa* (immigrants from outside Okinawa) like us who are passionately active.” This comment reflects not only a supercilious assessment of the political ambitions of Okinawan youth, but also a perception that Okinawans are separate from the rest of the Japanese population, and then further separates young Okinawan women (Sakura in this scene) from middle-aged Japanese men.

In Episode 3 (4:10), Runa’s brother, who works on a U.S. military base, expresses concern about his sister working in Sakura’s store, because Sakura’s grandmother is an anti-base activist. He says, “If they think I’m one of the activists and think I’m against the base too, I might get fired.” Similarly, in Episode 5, when Sakura asks Sawada, who works for a construction company doing business with the U.S. military bases, to take her to Henoko on his boat, he refuses, saying that he can’t go there because he would feel “awkward” (8:03) if he sees any of his co-workers there.

In Episode 4 (20:01), an employee of the Okinawa Defense Bureau, the government agency spearheading construction of the base, sarcastically introduces himself by saying, “We are low-level employees of the Ministry of Defense,” at which his friends make fun of him, saying, “He’s an enemy of the Okinawan people!” to which he replies, “Hey, we’re working **for** Okinawa.”

In the same episode, the drama includes actual footage of the construction site, showing young Okinawan security men in uniforms, sunglasses, and masks confronting elderly Okinawans who call out “Go Home” and campaign against the project (20:59). Similarly, in Episode 2 (46:50), the security guards are represented as a “fence” standing in front of the protesters. These scenes illustrate the existing “fence” between local people who are involved with military bases and those who oppose the military presence. Additionally, the employee’s comment (quoted above) that he contributes to Okinawa by doing his job illustrates the complexity of post-colonial society in Okinawa where residents cannot simply be categorized as“for or against” or “friend or foe.”

Similarly, Episode 5 (5:30) has a complex example. The following is a conversation between Sakura, who has a black American father, and her grandmother, a war survivor and activist campaigning against the construction of the U.S. military base at Henoko.

> Sakura: Grandma, I thought you hated my father because of your memories of the Okinawa War.
>
> Grandmother: I am not that naive. There were good Americans during the war. I am afraid of war because it destroys human beings. Bases equal war. Because of the bases, we will be attacked and there will be war.
>
> Sakura: But, there is war all over the world. Japan only has the Self-Defense Forces. I think we need the U.S. to help us to protect Japan. Grandma, what would you think if I told you that I think we **should** build a U.S. military base in Henoko?
>
> Grandmother: What happened all of a sudden? Did someone say something to you?
>
> Sakura: No. I've been thinking about it. I don't want war either. I want to protect Okinawa. I don't want the Henoko sea to be reclaimed, but I don't know what to do about it.
>
> Grandmother: … I want to leave you a peaceful Okinawa. But, if you thought hard about it and came up with that answer, I respect your opinion even though I disagree. Our disagreement doesn't change how I feel about you. Don't be silly.

This exchange shows that there is a fence and a difference in perception between a young person (Sakura) born after the war and her elderly war survivor (her grandmother). This exchange also illustrates that the young generation are often more conflicted on these issues and lack the moral certainty of their elders, because they can access so much information.

The following exchange took place in Episode 4 when Kie interviewed an official of the Okinawa Defense Bureau. It illustrates this polarization and the "fence" between those who work on base and those who are outside it protesting.

Official: The young people from the Defense Bureau are sent to Henoko and are there from 5:00 in the morning. The old people yell in their faces all day. This close (*placing his hand in front of his face*). The activists are very serious, saying, 'You're *Uchinaanchu*, do you really want to help build a base in the Henoko sea?' Our young men are told not to raise an eyebrow, so they just keep their *mabui* (soul) (See Appendix 1-6) out of their hearts, and stand there while the old people shout at them. But those Okinawan boys don't want to destroy the ocean either. It's always Okinawans who have to do this stuff – it's Okinawans who end up having to apologize to the victims when the military guys crash their cars.

Kie: The victims are Okinawans, the people who apologize are Okinawans, and the people blamed by the activists are Okinawans.

Staff: Sometimes they bring in people from outside; the riot police from Japan who came to Henoko were really horrible. They're racist towards the Okinawan protesters. I once talked to an American soldier who said he found it hard to see them dragging those old protestors away.

Kie: There was talk of relocating the base outside of the prefecture, but what happened to that?

Official: [The Japanese government] is like a fraudster, forcing us to choose between Futenma and Henoko, as if these are the only options available.

As a result of the colonial authorities acting to divide them and pit them against each other, Okinawans have been driven to resignation and despair. Many depictions in this drama show them giving up, as well as showing resistance to protests calling for an end to the construction at Henoko, and protests against the Japanese government's reluctance to negotiate revisions to the Status of Forces Agreement. For example, in Episode 1, while driving a taxi down a road with bases on both sides, the taxi driver comments: "Even though it's been fifty years…[since Okinawa was returned to Japan]" (Episode 1, 6:15). This line depicts a native Okinawan who is disappointed and upset about the post-colonial situation that has not improved for fifty years – the driver looks about 50 years old, which implies that he has grown up with bases all around him.

5.2 Representation of Okinawan women: sexuality, sexual violence, and minority

Media representations of Okinawa and Okinawan women often reflect the power imbalance between the U.S. military presence and the local community. This analysis will focus on how drama *Fence* (2023) handles the issue Okinawan women face and the degree to which the writers and producers are sensitive to and encourage critical discussion of real-world social problems. An important theme addressed in *Fence* (2023) is the issue of sexual violence faced by the female character, in addition to post-colonial Okinawan history as well as contemporary life. The drama represents the kind of sexual violence faced by local women at the hands of U.S. service members, as well as the violence against women fostered by the local men who are part of the larger patriarchal society.

In addition to the presence of a foreign military, because Okinawa is a patriarchal society where family honor and social status are highly valued (Akibayashi, 2020; Angst, 2001), sexual assault may be interpreted as a violation against the honor of the whole family rather than against the individual female victim. This notion is represented in *Fence* in the interaction between the victimized high school student Runa and her brother, who appears to be more concerned with his family's reaction than with her victimization. Also, in the discussion of whether or not Runa reports sexual assault to the police, Sakura is concerned about the possibility of Runa's family being attacked (lines quoted in 5.2.3). By reinforcing these traditional cultural narratives of gender roles and of honor and shame, the drama risks fostering representations of a social climate in which victims of sexual assault are reluctant to come forward for fear of shaming their families or themselves. Such representations may also affect the types of stories subsequently told about victims, which may focus on the consequences of the assault for their families and social status rather than on their trauma and recovery.

The setting of the two protagonists in this drama provides a unique context for investigating the themes of sexual violence in Okinawa and the Status of Forces Agreement between the United States and Japan. Kie was born to an Okinawan woman and a male Asian American soldier, who spent part of her childhood in Okinawa but most of her life in Tokyo; Sakura was born to an Okinawan woman and a black male American soldier and was raised by her

maternal grandmother. Both protagonists do not know their fathers (see Appendix 2 for details on the characters). Kie's mother was a young woman, at the time, referred to as *amejo*.

In the first section, I discuss the representation of minority women with these complex identities. Next, I analyze how Okinawan women, including the minority women discussed in the first section, are represented in the drama. Finally, I analyze Okinawan femininity as depicted in the dramas and the issues of sexual violence faced by local women.

5.2.1 Representation of minority women: *haafu*, mixed-race, and *amejo*

Carter (2014) examines how "the more common, commodified, and mediatized Japanese imagery of the *haafu*" systematizes mixed-race Okinawans as temporally and spatially obscure. She argues that mixed-race Okinawans find belonging by rooting themselves vigilantly in their locality, through language, through U.S. and/or Okinawa citizenship identity, and through diasporic meanings of Okinawan belonging. Mixed-race children in Okinawa, especially those for whom one parent is black, face social and economic difficulties due to relatives who have memories of the war, legacies of racism, and the difficulty of negotiating the very close family relationships characteristic of Okinawa when their race adds additional layers of complexity to those relationships (Carter, 2014).

Fence (2023) explores issues of complex identities, ethnic tensions, and gender-based violence by featuring two *haafu*, or mixed-race women, one the daughter of an Okinawan woman and a black American serviceman, and the other a Japanese-presenting woman from the mainland. Below I analyze the implications of this setting from the perspectives of race and ethnicity studies, as well as gender studies.

In the opening scene of Episode 1, Sakura appears to be in a police interview and says,"I was raped, and I am *haafu*, so what? [Do you think I'm fabricating this story?]" She continues, "Does it [my status as mixed heritage] matter?" (0:35).

In Episode 1 (39:01), the drama treats concepts of exclusion from the cultural center, isolation, alienation, and stereotyping when Kie asks Sakura if she has a *moai* (See Appendix 1-7). Sakura's reply is illustrative of stereotyping: "[No], I wouldn't do one in a *haafu* [mixed-race people, see Appendix 1-7] group, and I don't see my hometown friends any more ...." This response is consistent with Carter's (2014) examination of individuals categorized as *haafu* who tend to be isolated in the local community.

When Kie met Sakura for the first time in the cafe Sakura runs (Episode 1, 9:50), Kie said to Sakura "Can I see the owner of this cafe, Sakura Omine?" in English. Since Kie had never met Sakura, the subject of the interview, and only knew her full name, Sakura Omine (with her Japanese first name and Okinawan surname), she did not assume the woman in front of her, with black physical features, to be Sakura. In the same episode, a stranger at the market sees Sakura and asks, "Where are you from?" When Sakura replies that she is from Okinawa, the woman says, "Really? You are not American?" (Episode 1, 31:06), another example of Sakura's experience as being treated differently due to her skin color.

In addition to these microaggressions, Sakura has experienced discrimination in more direct terms from local senior men and anonymous people online. In Episode 2 (37:53), when Sakura joins a protest demanding revision of the SOFA, an older male activist says to her: "That's crazy! How can somebody like you protest against the base! This is happening because you guys won't leave Okinawa!"

In Episode 1, Sakura suggests that *haafu* friends and others join her in this demonstration calling for security amendments. The following is their conversation.

> Sakura: Maybe we should join in as *Uchinaanchu* too!
>
> Friend 1: (*pointing at Friend 2*) But he works at the U.S. military base, so he can't participate in the protest movement.
>
> Friend 2: To oppose the base is to deny our birth and existence!

> Sakura: It doesn't matter if you are against it or for it, but if helicopter parts fell on a daycare center, it would be dangerous. If they had hit the children, they could have died. Is it that wrong to demand that we change the way our dangerous bases are operated?

Sakura's response "Is it that wrong to demand that we change the way our dangerous bases are operated?" underscores that the issue is not so simple. The scene represents the complicated identity, positionality, and sometimes internally conflicted feelings that individuals seen as *haafu* have in their emotional attachment to their hometown in Okinawa, even as they self-identify as *Uchinaanchu*. Given the "join the peace movement = deny their existence" complexity, the scene also illustrates this internal conflict as if they can (or should) occupy only one of two positions (or identities), which also relates to the false dichotomy of being "for or against" or "friend or foe" as discussed in 5.1.3.

In Episodes 2 and 3, the editor-in-chief revises the interview notes, submitted by Kie, into more appealing language and stories, which are then published in online articles. For example, the editor alters the description by changing "sexual violence" to "rape," a more radical and shocking term in Japanese, and descriptions of the absurdity and inequality of the Status of Forces Agreement were rewritten to include more emotive language about protest groups. The article also mentioned Sakura's grandmother's involvement in the anti-U.S. military base movement and included a photo of Sakura's grandmother in the article with her face almost recognizable under the headline "Okinawa Rape Allegation: False Testimony by Base Protester?" The article also referred to the victim as "the granddaughter of a base protester," and included a photo of a store Sakura owned. These characterizations led to online attacks on Sakura's cafe, with posts such as "This woman is not even Japanese" (Episode 3, 49:56) and more radically racist and misogynistic posts.

In addition to being *haafu*, Sakura's identity and perceptions about being black are visible in several scenes. In Episode 3, Miyu's decision to give birth alone without her fiancé, a U.S. serviceman, has her concerned that her child will be bullied in school in the future. Sakura responds, "Don't worry, if you are half-white, you will be cheered on (33:13). In a lengthy

exchange that begins at 33:40 in Episode 4, Kie asks Sakura to agree with her, “We are the same mix, so our position is complicated, isn’t it?” Sakura responds, “You don’t understand ... You do look Japanese, but I can’t be seen that way. We are not the same. I’m not the same as you.” These scenes underscore not only the sort of discrimination and prejudice experienced by both Kie and Sakura, but also the differences in experiences between the two, who are of mixed ethnicity and nationality.

Kie describes her birth and identity in Episode 2.

> I’m *Uchinanchu*, born in Okinawa, I’m *naichaa*, I have some American and Asian blood, I’m Komatsu, I’m Kie, Kii, Bauko, and I’m a woman. The only thing I can’t change is that I’m a woman, I am a woman after all (50:50) (See Appendix 2).

This line reveals Kie’s complex position as Okinawan, Japanese, and *haafu*: Kie has little memory or knowledge of Okinawa. She grew up in Tokyo among the so-called elite of society and works in the field of journalism. Because of her privileged background, audience members may be divided as to whether they see her as Japanese or Okinawan. Due to the context that her mother is an Okinawan woman, and that this character spent part of her childhood in Okinawa and identifies as *Uchinaanchu*, most of the analysis presented in this study assumes she is an Okinwan woman.

Sakura is often portrayed as struggling with discrimination and conflict due to her being black or Okinawan, rather than her being a woman. In contrast, Kie emphasizes her femininity by saying, “I am a woman after all,” and presuming that her own and Sakura’s experiences would be the same because of their mixed race, representing Kie’s privileged attributes. Similarly, in Episode 2, Kie states “As a woman, I’m no stranger to that issue of sexual violence of local women by U.S. soldiers” (14:50).

In conclusion, I found that the drama reasonably represents complex issues of identity, ethnic tension, and gender-based violence through two women. Sakura's line, "I was raped. I'm half-Japanese, so what? What does that matter?" clearly demonstrates how issues of race and ethnicity are connected directly to lived experience. The microaggressions and discriminatory remarks she experiences also underscore the harsh realities faced by women in Okinawa whose backgrounds cross cultural, linguistic, and ethnic boundaries. The dialogue between Kie and Sakura calls attention to the stark differences in the experiences of two people who are both *haafu* but who come from different ethnic backgrounds. While Kie's distinctly Japanese outward appearance places her in a position of some degree of privilege, Sakura's Japanese identity does not favor her. In addition, the distortion of coverage of Okinawa by the Japanese media further undermines the position of local victims and exacerbates the problem of gender-based violence.

5.2.2 Portraying Okinawan women as strong, independent women

The representation of indigenous women in post-colonial societies involves complex debates about cultural identity, power dynamics, and gender roles. When the producer is not indigenous, the portrayal of indigenous women as strong and resilient is a representation with multiple layers of influence. In this section, I explore the implications of this representation through discussions of the reconstruction of cultural authority, the reversal of stereotypes, and gender roles within indigenous communities. One of these multilayered influences is the reconstruction of cultural authority and the promotion of stereotypes. While the portrayal of indigenous women as strong and resilient may often seek to reconstruct cultural authority and authenticity when the producer is part of an indigenous community, the drama *Fence* (2023) is a work of Japanese media depicting Okinawa. As Said (1978) points out, the portrayal of indigenous communities from a Western-centric perspective is often based on misunderstanding and prejudice.

Opinions on Okinawan women's independence differ: Keyso (2000) views Okinawan women as independent, hardworking, and stronger than Japanese women. On the other hand, Higa states that Okinawan women "may voice their opinion, but many end up obeying their husbands in the end" (Higa in Keyso, 2000, p. 123). Okinawan women have commented that they feel their strength and independence are emphasized in media representations of

Okinawan women (Keyso, 2000), but are often not practiced in actual life. The Okinawan women in this drama—Runa, a victim of sexual violence; Sakura, one of the main characters; and her grandmother Yoshi—are portrayed as strong, resilient, and independent women (See Appendix 2).

In Episode 1 (50:53), Runa blames herself for having been sexually assaulted, but Sakura tells her, "It wasn't your fault Runa, it was the perpetrator's fault." In the scene, Sakura describes the sisterhood of Okinawan women, and we see Runa recover thanks to such emotional support.

Sakura feels guilty about her father being a black serviceman and never having met him, but gradually accepts this alienation. Her hair, which she used to straighten every morning, is now more manageable. She has gradually come to appreciate her own hairstyle and ethnicity in a more general sense. This scene represents the process of Sakura becoming emotionally strong and confident about her identity. However, at the same time, the portrayal of women of Okinawa which was burdened by the negative legacies of colonization and war may lead the audience to the mistaken assumption that Okinawan women will be able to overcome the barriers they face.

Similar depictions can be found elsewhere; Sakura is portrayed as a woman with a strong core who can clearly state her opinion when it needs to be stated. For example, in the scene I discussed in 5.2.1 (Episode 2, 37:53), Sakura clearly refutes her friends who say that opposing the U.S. military base means denying the existence of mixed-race children, saying that seeking the safety of Okinawan citizens is different from denying their existence. She also clearly responds when Kie gave her unsolicited advice about they way how Sakura should handle racist encounters. She is also portrayed as a strong woman who is able to defend herself and not flinch when mistaken for an American in the marketplace or discriminated against by elderly activists at a Japan-U.S. security demonstration.

Sakura's grandmother Yoshi, a survivor of the Battle of Okinawa, is described as a strong, independent woman who has lived according to her own beliefs. She is actively involved in the anti-base movement and does not hide her anger at the Japanese government or the U.S. military for continuing to ignore Okinawan voices. She has appeared in the media, including

TV interviews, and when Sakura asked her, “Do you hate my father because he is black?,” her response portrays her as a strong, sensible, and dependable Okinawan woman.

Kie is portrayed as a strong woman (see Appendix 2) who is not intimidated by older men or men in stronger positions than her. For example, in Episode 1, when she finds herself in trouble at an interview site and is in physical danger, she punches and kicks the other man (3:35). Similarly, when her boss is unreasonable about a pay raise, she presses him, saying, “You promised to give me a raise before,” and reminds her boss that he should, indeed, give her a raise next time, saying, “That’s a promise” (4:45). In another scene, Kie, despite her lack of fluency in English, goes out into the nightlife district where American soldiers congregate, and she conducts an interview by herself (Episode 1, 21:30). These portrayals illustrate that Kie is not only physically, but also as a mentally strong woman who is not afraid to point out what she thinks is right; in a conversation with Officer Isa in Episode 2 about their past sexual relationship, she cannot stand his immature thoughts and perspectives about birth control and reproduction and retorts in a strong tone. More details and quotes from this scene are discussed in the next chapter on sexuality.

In conclusion to this chapter, while there are positive aspects to the portrayal of indigenous women by non-indigenous media producers as strong, resilient, and undaunted by difficulties, there are several problematic aspects. To some extent, depictions such as those listed in this chapter may highlight the contributions and presence of Okinawan women, who are often underestimated by society, and may contribute to viewers’ awareness of their strength and resilience.

One of the most notable issues is the reinforcement of stereotypes related to my first research question. The blanket portrayal of Okinawan women as “strong and resilient” risks overlooking their diverse experiences and complex realities (for example, *haafu* and *amejo*) and simplifying them, as evidenced by Kie’s line, “I am a woman after all.” The four female characters, Runa, Kie, Sakura, Yoshi are portrayed as strong and independent, but their internal struggles and the details of their daily lives are only briefly explored. Thus, by emphasizing only the image of Okinawan women’s strength, the drama contributes to the misconception that they deserve to endure difficult situations and must always be strong.

5.2.3 Representation of sexual violence

An important theme addressed in *Fence* (2023) is the issue of female sexuality and violence faced by female characters. This may reflect complex real-world issues such as gender-based violence and discrimination in Okinawa, as well as the impact of the U.S. military bases there. This analysis will focus on how dramas handle these issues, and the degree to which they are sensitive to real-world social complexities and encourage discussion by highlighting the issues.

To begin with, I will discuss one particular scene regarding female sexuality. In Episode 2, Kie and Officer Isa have a conversation recalling their past sexual relationship.

> Kie: [Not only Americans, but] you too, all you think about is having sex. The night in Roppongi, remember? You were reluctant to use contraception.
>
> Officer Isa: I used it in the end, right?
>
> Kie: You only used it after I seriously asked. Because of your reluctant attitude toward contraception, I was bothered all the time and didn't enjoy it at all. You enjoyed yourself, were satisfied, and left immediately. I looked at the view and thought, "I came here to have sex with you, not to be fucked" (Episode 2, 38:50).

This past experience of Kie explains her reaction in the scene where they reunited after a few years, Isa comments, "That was fun back then," alluding to the sexual relationship he'd had with Kie, to which she responds ambiguously, neither agreeing nor refuting. It should be noted here that this scene shows that for him, who was reluctant to use contraception, this sexual act is something he can easily remember as "fun," but for her it is a negative memory that leaves her feeling uneasy and bewildered and insulted. Kie's perspective on freedom and choice in relation to sex was shaped by this past experience, which left Kie feeling unsettled and unable to fully enjoy the encounter. As a result, Kie now believes that the ability to choose not to engage in sex is a form of freedom for women, in contrast to the notion that men become more liberated the more sex they have. This representation successfully illustrates the view of gender and sex that Kie discussed earlier in the episode, where she says,

"Men get more freedom as they have sex with women. Women's freedom is to choose not to have sex" (the very beginning of Episode 2).

Furthermore, this scene illustrates the huge gap in perceptions between Okinawan men and women regarding reproductive rights and contraception. When spurned by Kie, Officer Isa responds with the words *nuchi duu takara*, meaning "life is a treasure," and "I'd have taken responsibility if you'd have been pregnant" (meaning marry Kie and take care of her and the baby) (Episode 2,41:45).

> Kie: So why is the premise that I am pregnant and will give birth like I have no choice? Why do I have to make the "treasure!" That explains why Okinawa has the highest birth rate!
>
> Officer Isa: If you are accidentally pregnant, you give birth and I take care with responsibility. Isn't that what you are talking about?
>
> Kie: That's not what I'm talking about. At all. You Okinawan men make fun of *amejo* because you don't want Americans to take Okinawan women who were supposed to be yours. [Okinawan men] leave [the responsibility of] birth control to the women.

This conversation typifies the general attitudes that Okinawan men tend to have toward contraception and reproductive responsibility, as well as their perspectives on women's right to self-determination. Officer Isa does not seem to think too deeply about their importance. His observation that "life is a treasure" comes off as a vacuous and disingenuous local saying. It is a response that lies completely out of the context in which it is normally used and shows that Isa views an unplanned pregnancy positively or optimistically and, thus, has no concept of Kie's right to make decisions about her own body. By asking for contraception, Kie is asserting her right to make decisions and seeking respect for her own sexuality. Her line "I came here to have sex with you, not to be fucked" demonstrates that she values her own sexuality and independent decision-making regarding sexual acts. For her, contraception is an important part of that decision-making, but Officer Isa's statement shows that he prioritizes his own thoughts and feelings, justifying his position with the words "life is a treasure." His statement that "I intend to take responsibility properly after the baby is born" indicates that he assumes he will take responsibility later if pregnancy occurs, highlighting the gap between

him and Kie. She places importance on avoiding the risk of pregnancy itself and seeks preventive measures at the time of the act, rather than relying on later responsibility.

Kie’s last line about comparison with American men is consistent with Yamazato’s view of how American men and Okinawan men view Okinawan women. Examining Japan’s defeat and demilitarization in World War II, Yamazato (2012) argues that Okinawan men are questioning their own masculinity under the hegemony of American masculinity. Yamazato also describes Okinawan men who are aligned with “more masculine” (p. 63) American men as feeling feminized and inferior in their masculine identity because they are unable to adequately perform their gender roles (Yamazato, 2012).

Kie’s line above mentions *amejo*, and the image of *amejo* is also related to the representation of victims of sexual violence, which I will discuss next. The drama dichotomizes female rape victims, depicting one set of females as exotic and hypersexualized women, known colloquially (and usually derogatorily) as *amejo*, who immerse themselves in the American culture that exists around the base presence in Okinawa, while portraying members of the other category as high school students signified by images of more traditional, docile, and submissive “schoolgirls,” signs explored by Angst (2001). Although the two images are in contrast, they are both a result of the exaggerations inherent in Okinawaness (Vogt, 2018): Okinawan women are often stereotyped as being either exotic and sexy, or else quiet and soft-spoken. These sexualized depictions of Okinawan women may help minimize the perceived severity of sexual assault cases by nudging audience members to view these cases within the context of the victims’ mythologized inherent sexual prowess or potential desires; that is to say, by questioning their actions and choices. On the other hand, depictions that connote modesty and circumspection can lead to a lack of nuanced representations of sexual assault victims by idealizing, or over-emphasizing, their purity and victimhood.

In *Fence* (2023), complex interpersonal dynamics play out at the visual and narrative level in media representations of victims of sexual violence. One of the victims in the drama is Runa, a high school student, who goes out with a group of older women to a city with an American military base, but the women she was with drank alcohol, became inebriated, and departed early. When she is alone, Runa is targeted, trapped, and raped. In the scene that day, Runa is dressed in an alluring and sexually provocative tight red top and a short black skirt. In the same scene, when Runa attempts to escape, the camera focuses on her large earrings and the

colors (red and black). Since the portrayal of women in the media is built around the male perspective (Mulvey, 1975), the framing of Runa suggests that her attire on the day of her sexual victimization was intended to attract the "male gaze."

On the other hand, in all scenes other than the rape scene (such as scenes depicting her post-traumic stress and treatment), she is depicted as quiet, modest, and vulnerable, without makeup and wearing plain shorts and a t-shirt, a stark contrast to that evening.

This duality effectively represents sexual victimization to the viewer in a "straightforward" manner. This diametrically opposed representation of a vivacious, sexually attractive woman and a sober, docile woman shapes social perceptions of sexual violence and influences how viewers perceive actual victims. This sort of oversimplication leads to a lack of empathy and understanding for victims of sexual violence and increases barriers for actual victims to share their experiences (Patil & Purkayastha, 2015).

These depictions not only reflect social stereotypes about sexual violence, but also reinforce the "victim blaming" narrative that seeks the root cause of sexual violence in the victim's behavior and underestimates the responsibility of the perpetrator. This further reinforces the perception that victims of sexual violence conform to an "ideal victim" image (Patil & Purkayastha, 2015, p. 600), and that the experience is not justified otherwise (Iconis, 2008; Patil & Purkayastha, 2015). Victims of sexual violence are expected to perform appropriate feminity (Butler, 1990). This performance reflects and reproduces social gender power relations. In doing so, media representations reinforce social silence about sexual violence and contribute to victims' hesitancy to share their experiences (Barer, 2013; Barton, 2017; Cuklanz, 2019; Patil & Purkayastha, 2015; Royal, 2019).

A major factor that is represented in the drama *Fence* (2023), which makes victims hesitant to share their experiences, is victim blaming and the stigma associated with sexual victimization. The drama depicts victims of sexual violence blamed or suspected by relatives or those in authority, and how they (the victims themselves) are hurt by it and blame themselves for their own abuse. This appears in Runa's comment from episode 3 below.

> Runa: The police say it's your fault. That's what my friend was told. She was raped by a senior, but it was her fault for going to the house, and they asked her if she resisted. I

> can't resist. I couldn't move even if I wanted to resist. Wouldn't that be a crime? Why wasn't my grandfather caught? (Episode 3,1:09)

Also, in Episode 2, in the investigation by NCIS, the investigator asks questions to the victim she perceives to be too explicit and detailed. The female investigator asks for details about the condition of the room, and the color and feel of the floor. "When the assailants put you in the car, was the ground dirt, grass, or concrete? What do you remember about the room?"

Sakura explains what had happened during the day of the rape incident. She says that the perpetrator was an American serviceman, and he told her in English not to look back after he raped her. When Sakura shares what happened in the incident (what the perpetuator said), the investigator seemed suspicious: "What were you doing [at the scene], alone?" (Episode 1, 17:48). The NCIS investigator also brought up the fact that she was using an interpreter and asked her if she was sure she understood what the perpetrator said, even though she did not understand English, implying that they doubted her testimony.

In the scene where Kie and Officer Isa are discussing the incident, there is a line in which he seems to suspect tampering of evidence, because Sakura came to the police three days after she was sexually assaulted and because she disposed of the clothes she came in (19:38). Similarly in Episode 2, Officer Isa chastises Kie for trying to meet up with a man she met online (Kie was trying to lure out the man who had raped Runa). He tells Kie, "I can't believe you would go to a place like that, dressed like that, full of Americans who are just thinking about sex" (39:35).

Other important themes addressed in the drama are the stigmatization of victimhood itself as well as the resulting mental illnesses from sexual assault. In Episode 2 (18:52), the NCIS representative driving Sakura to an office on a U.S. military base says "Let's go in the back entrance. That way you will be less conspicuous." The suggestion reflects general attitudes toward victims of sexual violence in Okinawa, reinforcing the perception that being victimized is in some way so shameful that victims should sneak around to avoid being seen. Similarly, in Episode 4, Kie recommends her mother, who had been raped in the past, see a psychiatrist. She angrily hangs up the phone saying, "Are you saying I'm insane?" (Episode 4, 12:35). As an insult, the word "insane" [*atama ga okashii*] shows that Kie's mother believes that her victimization and mental illness is something she should be ashamed of and

somehow she has to accept it as something normal. Kie has to believe that she is okay and she does not need help.

This stigma and the perception that sexual assault victimization should be concealed derives from the characteristics of Okinawa, which Carter (2014) points out is the close family and relative relationships, as well as the small size of the Okinawan island and the closeness of human relationships emphasized in the drama as Okinawaness discussed in 5.1.1.

In Episode 2, Kie tells Sakura that Runa to report the rape to the authorities, but Sakura resists because she understands why Runa is not willing to do so. In Episode 4, concerning Runa, Sakura says,

> What happens when a high school girl says she was raped by an American soldier? It's a big deal. Opposition to the base would rise and it could turn into a prefectural convention. Then there would be people who would suspect that she was raped. Like you. Even if you are anonymous, it's a small island, so they will find out. What about your family? What's she like? What did she wear? How many nights out? You didn't go to high school. Well, that makes sense. I've seen girls like that a lot (Episode 2, 7:20).

Both Sakura and Runa are worried that people, including the police, might even blame Runa's family for not raising her well. They are also worried that she will easily be identified if and when the story gets into the media. In the Okinawan context, incidents of sexual violence at the hands of U.S. soldiers are politically powerful stories, and women's movements, such as those against sexual violence, can end up being co-opted by discussions of what is often claimed to be more important, such as the security and status agreements between Japan and the U.S. (Angst, 2001; Johnson, 2019). As Sakura states, "If this incident becomes public and the movement against the U.S. military base gains momentum, Runa may well be identified" (Episode 2, 7:20).

Similarly, in Episodes 2 and 4, local health care providers offer their views on sexual assault by acquaintances, emphasizing that only a small percentage of female victims come to the hospital or report to the police. In many cases, "she does not want it known that the

perpetrator is a family member" (Episode 4, 3:59), so "she does not want to make a case and cries herself to sleep" (Episode 2, 6:49).

The representation of trauma and the process of healing is another important theme in the drama. The drama depicts a victim of sexual violence wounded by her victimization and is suspected of bringing about her own assault and blamed by her family, the police, and others, but who recovers through the help of friends and others around her. She struggles to recover by visiting support facilities and other places on her own. For example, in Episode 2, Sakura emphasizes that Runa's victimhood is not her fault (Episode 2, 3:40). Similarly, Sakura shows her sympathy for Runa "It's not your fault. You were not and are not wrong. The rapist is bad. I will be a *yukusaa* (See Appendix 1-17) for you" (50:53). The scene illustrates their sense of sisterhood and the first process of healing from the wound. In Episode 3, Runa seeks treatment and receives anonymous phone counseling in an attempt to heal (Episode 3, 35:10).

Similarly, Episode 4 depicts the process of Kie being aware of and seeking to heal from her own trauma. In the scene, Kie goes to a mental health clinic for a consultation. Below is a quote of the exchange with Kie and Dr. Shiroma engaged in dialogues that seek resolution and healing when Kie realized that she is suffering from negative memories of her past experiences:

> Kie: There is a woman I worked with at a cabaret named Emiri, and she is a bit of a dimwit. She would let stupid guys get to her. I thought she was very stupid. I thought, "If you're going to do it, you should choose the right guy, and you should do it with a guy who respects you." So, I had sex with any guy who seemed safe. But then, I fell into the same trap as Emiri. I was worn out. I wondered what the difference was between Emiri and me. I used to let such things go without thinking too deeply about them, but recently I was annoyed when someone said to me, "You don't value yourself" or "You look like a desperate person," and I thought to myself, "I don't know." Let's say there is an elementary school girl who witnesses her mother being raped, what would happen to her? Would just watching that have a psychological effect on the girl as an adult? (Episode 4, 45:15)
>
> Dr. Shiroma: I think there would be. Watching another person violated can cause brain damage. Especially for children, their mothers are inseparable from them. It is not

surprising that they may take the violence that their mothers have suffered as their own.

Kie: Brain damage? Not the mind?

Dr. Shiroma: The heart is in the brain. In Okinawa, we call it “dropped *mabui*”.

Kie: What should I do if I drop the *mabui*?

Dr. Shiroma: If you drop it, just pick it up.

[*gets CT scan*]

After going to the mental health clinic, Kie calls her mother again (Episode 4,49:52). Kie recommends on the phone that her mother, despite refusing the suggestion earlier, also seek mental health treatment, but her mother calmly listens to her daughter:

Kie: Mom, when I was a kid, I thought you hated me. But now I understand why you kept me away. Because I was the only one who knew about [your rape]. I was the only one who saw it. You can’t be you anymore.

[*Mother moves to hang up the phone*]

Kie: Please don’t hang up the phone. Back then, when I was a child, you were cold to me, I didn’t understand what you meant, I hated you, and that feeling has not gone away. But I’ve already surpassed the age of you back then. I am old now. Because I am old enough now, there is something I can say to you that I couldn’t say back when I was younger. It was not your fault. Mom, what was done to you was not your fault. You and I both “dropped the *mabui*” at that time. It took me a very long time, but let’s get help from the psychiatrist and pick up our dropped souls together.

(*Okinawan music*) *We search for light in the darkness, we share each other’s pain*.

What is striking is that she relays the details of the assault to Dr. Shiroma in the third person, as if it were someone else's trauma. As way of gaining mental distance from the personal trauma, she discusses her own experiences as a kind of witness to her mother's rape scene.

In analyzing the representations of female sexuality and sexual victimization in the drama, I found important themes that deserve special mention. First, the portrayal of women's sexuality symbolizes local men's attitudes toward contraception and reproductive responsibility, as well as their immature conception of women's right to self-determination. This reflects the cultural background of the patriarchal society of Okinawa, as pointed out by feminist scholary accounts such as Akibayashi (2022) and Takazato (2000), and highlights a social structure in which men are not responsible for birth control and women have little right to self-determination. In addition, the portrayal of female victims of rape is dichotomous in its depiction of female victims. On the one hand, there are women who are portrayed as "*amejo*," dating and marrying American servicemen. On the other, there are female victims symbolized as a "schoolgirl" who are traditional and docile.

Furthermore, *Fence* (2023) depicts victim blaming and the stigma of mental illness and victimhood of sexual violence. Due to the closeness of kinship in the small Okinawan community, victims become hesitant to share their experiences. Victim blaming is portrayed in a way that makes victims feel responsible for their own actions, as they are blamed for going to unsafe places and dressing provocatively. The stigma attached to sexual victimization is also severe, with a strong perception that the victim should hide their victimization, as evident in doctors' insights introduced in the drama, which show that few victims report to the police or visit hospitals. Alongside this, due to the nature of Okinawa's close relationships with relatives, there is a strong sense of not wanting people around them to know about it, highlighting the difficulty for victims to speak out. Not only negative aspects such as stigma and victim blaming, but the drama also depicts the process of recovery and healing, showing victims recognizing their trauma and taking steps to overcome and recover. Thus, the representation of female sexuality and sexual victimization in the drama was found to reflect real-life social issues to some extent, while reinforcing stereotypes.

6 Discussion

As discussed in the introduction and literature review, Okinawa has had a complex history intertwined with two colonial powers. These power structures have had a significant impact on the way local women are viewed and objectified, as well as their gender roles and identities. It is important to note it is often problematic that representation of the Okinawan islands and its history has been criticized particularly for downplaying or ignoring the colonial history and the presence of U.S. military bases, and either not reflecting or over-emphasizing Okinawaness.

How does the depiction of sexual violence in the drama *Fence* (2023) set on the Okinawa island illustrate the dynamics of power relations, particularly within the context of a culture still shaped by the influence of its post-colonial military presence? In what ways does the drama portray local women, and how do cultural, historical, and social factors shape these representations? Furthermore, how do these depictions challenge or reinforce existing stereotypes and narratives within mainstream media? In order to explore these questions further, this paper examined the islands and women of Okinawa and how the drama represented sexual violence against local women by the U.S. military in that drama.

The literature review and thematic analysis led to several findings. Previous productions dealing with Okinawa have been numerous and *Fence* (2023) featured some of the same aspects. The stereotype of Okinawa as an island where people are relaxed and stress-free, relationships are close and easy-going, and time passes slowly are also prominently emphasized in this drama. Unlike the other aforementioned works, this drama depicts Okinawa as a harmless healing island or “heaven,” but it also depicts a reality portraying Okinawa as far away from Japan, alien, and a place where it is taboo to talk about the island’s politics and people. Not only is Okinawa cut off from Japan, othered, and taboo, but it is also painted as a place where local people are constantly divided and fighting each other due to the effects of colonization. Thus, the island, while sometimes glorified as a tropical paradise, is a place where the people, who are sometimes tabooed as alien and sometimes cut off from and persecuted by Japan, express feelings of resignation, despair, and abandonment yet are accustomed to and reluctantly accept their misfortunes. In this respect, *Fence* (2023) may be regarded as a fiction more closely reflecting reality than other productions.

7 Conclusion

Occasionally, our own assumptions and political biases can influence how we observe, perceive, and draw conclusions about our research subjects. In the early stages of my analysis, I realized that I had judged whether the representations in the drama *Fence* (2023) were "accurate" or "authentic" based on my own experience being born and growing up in Okinawa and my study of post-colonial and feminist literature.

In the reviews of the drama written in Japanese (see Appendix 3), many of them were written by Japanese viewers who "knew nothing about Okinawa" (Appendix 3-5, 6, and 7) and were shocked to learn about the political difficulties and sexual violence against women in Okinawa, or praised the "in-depth" (Appendix 3-7) content, compared to previous productions targeting Okinawa. On the other hand, equally common were the opposite reactions that seemed to come from the political right, such as the drama being anti-American (Appendix 3-1 and 2) and the drama being biased, anti-Japan, or leftist propaganda (Appendix 3-3 and 4).

While these two extremes of positive and negative reactions were noticeable, there seemed to be no comments criticizing the representation and reality of Okinawan women or post-colonial Okinawa in this drama series. Through thematic analysis of the series, I realized that the story is far more complex than the enthusiastic response would suggest. As in several previous works dealing with Okinawa, the typical image of the Okinawan people represented by the drama *Fence* (2023) as relaxed and stress-free, with intimate and easygoing relationships and an island where time flows slowly is prominent.

The first half of the analysis began by focusing on (mis)representation of Okinawaness, and found that this drama portrays Okinawa as a harmless healing island or "heaven," reproducing stereotypes about Okinawan people. The drama also portrays Okinawa geographically as "mattering" to Japan in terms of diplomacy, but also represents the reality of its exclusion as a *suteishi* far away from mainland Japan. Furthermore, the drama depicts the reality that in addition to Okinawa's remoteness and alienation from Japan, it is taboo to talk about the island's politics and people.

In Okinawa, the people have been constantly divided by the process of colonization and are forced to confront and establish their social and political positionality, while at the same time being forced to hide it. Thus, while Okinawa is glorified in the Japanese media as a tropical paradise, it continues to be tabooed as an alien entity, cut off from Japan, and excluded from the rest of the world. The Okinawans depicted in this drama are accustomed to difficult circumstances and reluctantly accept their situation, despite feeling resigned, hopeless, and abandoned.

The second half of the analysis focused on the representation of Okinawan women's sexuality and sexual violence, which contains several important themes. First, the portrayal of female sexuality in the drama symbolically depicted men's attitudes toward reproductive rights and responsibilities, as well as their ideas about women's autonomy and decision-making rights. This reflected the cultural background in the patriarchal society and Okinawa.

In addition, Okinawan rape victims in the drama were represented by dichotomous images such as *amejo* or schoolgirls. Furthermore, as well as victim blaming and the stigma of victimhood, the tight relationships in the small Okinawan community are portrayed as factors that make victims hesitant to share their experiences. Furthermore, in Okinawa, which is characterized by close relationships with relatives, there is a strong sense of not wanting to be known by others, underscoring the difficulty for victims to speak out. Finally, the drama also depicts the process of recovery and healing, showing victims recognizing their trauma and taking steps toward overcoming and recovering. As discussed above, I found that the representation of female sexuality and sexual victimization in the drama *Fence* (2023) reflects real-life social issues to some extent, but also it reinforces existing stereotypes.

7.1 Limitations

Before ending this paper, I would like to mention some limitations of the study and what remains to be explored in future research. First, as a master's student in Finland, this drama was not easy to access because it was a Japanese-language work published in Japan and available only through an online streaming service. There were other media works that I wanted to examine in this paper, but these movies and books were only available in local movie theaters or libraries in Okinawa, Japan, making access to them problematic. Another

limitation relates to the fact that the work was in Japanese. Thus, the dialogue and other details had to be translated, which could result in the loss of fine linguistic nuances. In addition, the lack of access to drama reviews and other sources meant that this paper could not fully examine how this work was received and interpreted by Okinawan and Japanese audiences.

Thus, in future research, it would be desirable to have specific groups of viewers, such as students, young professionals, and older political activists, watch the film and examine their reactions and reviews. It would not only be a subject of great academic interest. For example, to examine whether there are differences in the reactions of younger and older adults, as well as differences in responses between groups to the question of whether the drama “correctly” reflects reality. In the future, it would also be interesting to compare and contrast how different groups, such as civil servants, local Okinawan U.S. base workers, and anti-U.S. military base activists react to and assess U.S. military base-related issues portrayed in the dramas.

7.2 Future directions

Finally, to conclude my paper, I would like to address my future directions in research.

One of the most challenging parts in the course of this research was to pare down the initial codes and themes. Many themes surfaced during note-taking while watching the drama multiple times, but were ultimately excluded because they were not directly relevant to the research questions and analytical focus of this paper. This exclusion process was very difficult because all of the themes represented in this drama were weighty, important, and academically valuable. Given the wealth of material that was excluded, it would be interesting to revisit these themes in future studies, approaching them from different perspectives and contrasting them with other dramas and films.

In addition, as mentioned in the discussion chapter, most media productions depicting Okinawa are produced in Japanese and available only in Japan. This limitation hinders access by international researchers. Future research will focus on the plays and films that were not addressed in this study due to access issues and will analyze their representations in more

focus and detail. I would also like to further explore the problems of translation and the nuances that are lost in the process.

While the author watched the drama *Fence* (2023) for the thematic analysis in this paper, future research would also benefit from viewing these media productions with college students and young locals and collecting their responses through interviews and questionnaires. Their perspectives would be valuable data for an analysis of the representations of these dramas and would contribute to a more comprehensive analysis.

Finally, future research would examine the media with a greater focus on representations of women, sexuality, and sexual violence against women as it intersects with attitudes toward gender, sex, norms, and complex identities. By focusing on these specific aspects, I hope to continue examining how these themes are portrayed and shape viewers' perspectives on Okinawa.

In conclusion, this MA dissertation marks not the end, but rather a beginning and continuation of my journey as a researcher. I look forward to expanding upon these initial findings and exploring new dimensions of media representation from the perspective of gender studies in future studies.

References

Abram, D. (2018). The Okinawas: Japan's Sub-Tropical Paradise. Retrieved June 13, 2024, from TransIndus website: https://www.transindus.co.uk/inspiration/blog/the-okinawas-japan-s-sub-tropical-paradise/

Akibayashi, K. (2002). *Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence: A feminist challenge to militarism*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/35155285_Okinawa_Women_Act_Against_Military_Violence_a_feminist_challenge_to_militarism

Akibayashi, K. (2010). Okinawa: Life on the Island of U.S. Military. *Peace and Freedom: Philadelphia*, *70*(2), 22–23. Retrieved from https://www.proquest.com/docview/816536866?sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals

Akibayashi, K. (2020). Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence: An Island Feminism Reclaiming Dignity. *Okinawan Journal of Island Studies*, *1*, 37–54. University of the Ryukyus Repository. Retrieved from https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/322933164.pdf

Akibayashi, K. (2022). Documenting the History of Sexual Violence by the US Military in Okinawa: Feminist Theorization of "the Island of Military Bases." *Okinawan Journal of Island Studies*, *3*(2). University of the Ryukyus Repository. Retrieved from https://u-ryukyu.repo.nii.ac.jp/record/2017853/files/[149-157].pdf

Akibayashi, K., & Takazato, S. (2009). *Okinawa: Women's struggle for demilitarization. The bases of empire: The global struggle against US military posts* (C. Lutz, Ed.). NYU Press.

Algan, E. (2020). The Politicization of Rape as a Consequence of Western Modernity Religious Conservatism: Competing Media Narratives on Gender. *International Journal of Communication*, *14*, 4835–4860.

Ames, C. (2016). *Amerikamun*: Consuming America and Ambivalence toward the U.S. Presence in Postwar Okinawa. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, *75*(1), 41–61. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0021911815001655

Angst, L. (1997). Gendered Nationalism: The Himeyuri Story and Okinawan Identity In Postwar Japan. *Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, *20*(1), 100–113. Yale University. https://doi.org/10.1525/pol.1997.20.1.100

Angst, L. I. (2001). The Sacrifice Of A Schoolgirl: The 1995 Rape Case, Discourses of Power, and Women's Lives in Okinawa. *Critical Asian Studies*, *33*(2), 243–266. https://doi.org/10.1080/14672710122284

Angst, L. I. (2009). Loudmouth Feminists and Unchaste Prostitutes: "Bad Girls" Misbehaving in Postwar Okinawa. *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*, (36), 117–141. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/42771995

Anzaldúa, G. (1990). *Making face, making soul : creative and critical perspectives by feminists of colour = Haciendo caras*. San Fransisco: Aunt Lute Books.

AOCHR. (2022). Report on violence against indigenous Ryukyu/Okinawa women and girls. In *All Okianawa Council for Human Rights*. Retrieved from https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/AOCHR.pdf

Arakaki, M. (2013). Romancing the Occupation: Concepts of "Internationalisation" Among Female University Students in Okinawa. In D. Broudy, P. Simpson, & M. Arakaki (Eds.), *Under Occupation: Resistance and Struggle in a Militarised Asia-Pacific*. Cambridge Scholars Pub.

Asato, C., & Shiga, N. (2022). *Naze kichi to hinkon wa Okinawa ni shuchu suru no ka [The reason why the U.S. bases and poverty are concentrated in Okinawa]*. Horinouchi Shuppan, Japan.

Aukema, J. (2019). *Cultures of dis remembrance: War Memories at Shuri Castle*. Retrieved from http://repo.kyoto-wu.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/11173/2853/1/0140_013_004.pdf

Barer, A. (2013). *The usual suspects : a feminist critical discourse analysis of media representations of responsibility for sexual assault prevention*. University of British Columbia. Retrieved from https://open.library.ubc.ca/search?q=creator:%20%22Ariana,%20Barer%22

Barton, A. (2017). *It's The Same Old Story: Rape Representation in New Zealand Newspapers (1975 - 2015)*. Victoria University of Wellington. Retrieved from https://openaccess.wgtn.ac.nz/articles/thesis/It_s_The_Same_Old_Story_Rape_Representation_in_New_Zealand_Newspapers_1975_-_2015_/17061929

Bhabha, H. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.

Blair, S. (2021). *Sexual Assault in the News* . Master's thesis, Minnesota State University, Mankato. A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University, Mankato. Retrieved from https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2131&context=etds

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101.

Broudy, D., & Ikehara, A. (2022). Exploring Resistance to Development in the Okinawa Pluriverse. In J. Pedro-Carañana, E. Herrera-Huérfano, & J. O. Almanza (Eds.), *Communicative Justice in the Pluriverse An International Dialogue*. New York, USA: Routledge.

Burke, M. M., & Sumida, C. (2016, May 21). Okinawans shaken by news Marine veteran may have killed woman. Retrieved June 17, 2024, from Stars and Stripes website: https://www.stripes.com/migration/okinawans-shaken-by-news-marine-veteran-may-have-killed-woman-1.410794

Butler, J. (1990). Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. In *WordPress.com*. New York and London: Routledge . Retrieved from Routledge website: https://selforganizedseminar.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/butler-gender_trouble.pdf

Carter, M. U. (2013). Nappy Routes and Tangled Tales: Critical Ethnography in a Militarised Okinawa. In D. Broudy, P. Simpson, & M. Arakaki (Eds.), *Under Occupation: Resistance and Struggle in a Militarised Asia-Pacific*. Cambridge Scholars Pub.

Carter, M. U. (2014). Mixed Race Okinawans and Their Obscure In-Betweeness. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, *35*(6), 646–661. https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2014.963531

Césaire, A., & Kelley, R. D. G. (2000). Discourse on Colonialism. In J. Pinkham (Trans.), *JSTOR*. NYU Press. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qfkrm

Cho, S. (2015). "Being Okinawan" Within and Beyond the Ethnic Boundary: The Process of Identity Formation in an Okinawan Cultural Activist Group in Osaka. In *Social Movements and the Production of Knowledge: Body, Practice and Society in East Asia*. Senri Ethnological Studies 91. Retrieved from https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://minpaku.repo.nii.ac.jp/record/2353/files/SES91_10.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwiV7vfE6N6GAxU7dvUHHX_iDrYQFnoECBAQAQ&usg=AOvVaw01FVYatu3EOYiaeg5svZPB

Chow, R. (1991). Woman and Chinese Modernity. Retrieved March 8, 2023, from University of Minnesota Press website: https://www.upress.umn.edu/9780816618712/woman-and-chinese-modernity/

Chu, H. (2015). Deauthenticating Indigeneity. *Amerasia Journal*, *41*(1), 37–52. https://doi.org/10.17953/aj.41.1.37

CIA. (2012). A Master Narratives Approach to Understanding Base Politics in Okinawa. *Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)*. Open Source Center. Approved for Release on February 15, 2017. Retrieved from https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/a%20master%20narratives%20appro%5B15163895%5D.pdf

Collins, P. H. (1998). Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice. In *Google Books*. University of Minnesota Press. Retrieved from https://books.google.co.jp/books/about/Fighting_Words.html?id=HC_oDANJEsQC&redir_esc=y

Connell, J. (2003). Island dreaming: the contemplation of Polynesian paradise. *Journal of Historical Geography*, *29*(4), 554–581. https://doi.org/10.1006/jhge.2002.0461

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, *43*(6), 1241–1299. JSTOR. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039

Cuklanz, L. (2019). Representations of Gendered Violence in Mainstream Media. *Questions de Communication*, (35), 307–321. Presses universitaires de Lorraine. https://doi.org/10.4000/questionsdecommunication.19487

Cuklanz, L. M. (2000). *Rape on prime time: Television, masculinity, and sexual violence*. Philadelphia, Pa.: Univ. Of Pennsylvania Press.

Cuklanz, L. M., & Moorti, S. (2006). Television's "New" Feminism: Prime-Time Representations of Women and Victimization. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *23*(4), 302–321. https://doi.org/10.1080/07393180600933121

Deacon, D., Pickering, M., Golding, P., & Murdock, G. (2021). Researching Communications: A Practical Guide to Methods in Media and Cultural Analysis. In *Perlego* (3rd ed.). Bloomsbury Academic.

Devaney, L. (2018). *The Rape of Okinawa: Sexual Violence and Popular Protest in the Shadow of the US Military*. Retrieved from https://studenttheses.uu.nl/bitstream/handle/20.500.12932/30132/MA%20Thesis%2c%20Online%20A%20rchive%20Version.pdf?sequence=2

Eldridge, R. D. (2020, September 3). The 1995 Okinawa rape that shook U.S.-Japan ties. Retrieved from The Japan Times website: https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2020/09/03/commentary/japan-commentary/okinawa-rape-incident-us-japan-relations/

Falk, R. (2016, October 12). Why Okinawa Should Matter. Retrieved June 14, 2024, from Global Justice in the 21st Century website: https://richardfalk.org/?s=Okinawa+Kashmir&submit=Search

Fanon, F. (2001). The Wretched of the Earth. In *www.penguin.co.uk*. Penguin books. Retrieved from https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/57385/the-wretched-of-the-earth-by-frantz-fanon-trans-constance-farrington-preface-by-jean-paul-sartre/9780141186542

Feifer, G. (2000). The Rape of Okinawa. *World Policy Journal*, *17*(3), 33–40. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/40209702

Figal, G. A. (2012). *Beachheads war, peace, and tourism in postwar Okinawa*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Incorporated. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kutu/detail.action?docID=928529&pq-origsite=primo#goto_toc

Forgash, R. (2009). *Negotiating Marriage: Cultural Citizenship and the Reproduction of American Empire in Okinawa*. Metropolitan State College of Denver.

Fountain, A. (2008). It' s All in the Words: Determining the Relationship between Newspaper Portrayal of Rape Victims and Reader Responses. *Undergraduate Review Undergraduate Review*, *4*(10). Bridgewater State University. Retrieved from https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1080&context=undergrad_rev&httpsredir=1&referer=

Fujiki, K. (2013). The Scholarly Gaze toward Okinawa Eiga: Notes on the Academic Discourse. *Cinema Studies*, (8). Retrieved from https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/jscsj/8/0/8_38/_pdf/-char/ja

Gaard, G. (1993). Ecofeminism Women, Animals, Nature . In *Rise.net*. Retrieved from https://philpapers.org/rec/GAAEWA

Gabe, M. (2004). *"Accounts of Visits and Briefings" Lecture and discussion on "The Japan-US Security Treaty and Okinawa" by Professor Gabe Masaaki, at the University of the Ryukyus.* (M. P. Roces, Ed.). Tokyo, Japan: International House of Japan. Retrieved from https://alfpnetwork.jfac.jp/pdf/2003report.pdf

Gaini, F. (2021, August 16). "Island people are always waiting" Young people's everyday lives and future narratives in Okinawa. Retrieved from www.japanesestudies.org.uk website: https://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/ejcjs/vol21/iss2/gaini.html

Gaini, F., & Nielsen, H. P. (2020). *Gender and island communities.* S.L.: Routledge.

Ginoza, A. (2007). The American Village in Okinawa : Redefining Security in a “Militourist” Landscape (Vol. 60, pp. 135–155). The Journal of Social Science 60. page 135-155. https://doi.org/10.34577/00001414

Ginoza, A. (2011). Okinawanness as a Form of Indigeneity in Transnational Anti-Militarist Feminist Movement. *UCLA: Center for the Study of Women*. California Digital Library. Retrieved from https://escholarship.org/uc/item/58x8415h

Ginoza, A. (2012). Space of “Militourism” : Intimacies of U.S. and Japanese Empires and Indigenous Sovereignty in Okinawa. *International Journal of Okinawan Studies*, *3*(1). Available on University of the Ryukyus Repository on June 3, 2016. Retrieved from https://u-ryukyu.repo.nii.ac.jp/record/2008267/files/Vol3No1p7.pdf

Ginoza, A. (2015). Intersections: Dis/articulation of Ethnic Minority and Indigeneity in the Decolonial Feminist and Independence Movements in Okinawa Dis/articulation of Ethnic Minority and Indigeneity in the Decolonial Feminist and Independence Movements in Okinawa. *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific Issue*, *37*. The Australian National University. Retrieved from http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue37/ginoza.pdf

Ginoza, A. (2016). R&R at the Intersection of US and Japanese Dual Empire: Okinawan Women and Decolonizing Militarized Heterosexuality. *American Quarterly*, *68*(3), 583–591. The Johns Hopkins University Press. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/26360916

Ginoza, A. (2019). Denarrating Japan’s Gendered and Raced Citizenship in Okinawa: A Transnational Plurality of Uchinanchu. *Hiroshima Peace Research Journal*, *6*, 45–63. Special Feature: Human Right Issues. Retrieved from https://escholarship.org/uc/item/58x8415h

Ginoza, A. (2022). Okinawan Islands Epistemologies in the Women’s Unai Festival of 1985. *Okinawan Journal of Island Studies*, *3*(2), 35–45. University of the Ryukyu Repository. Retrieved from https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://u-ryukyu.repo.nii.ac.jp/record/2017845/files/%5B035-045%5D.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwiu66LphsyHAxUXcPUHHYbJDHIQFnoECBIQAQ&usg=AOvVaw3_VJWuVcMD7uEusz64rt04

González, L. P. (2007). Fansubbing anime: Insights into the “butterfly effect” of globalisation on audiovisual translation. *Perspectives*, *14*(4), 260–277. https://doi.org/10.1080/09076760708669043

Gottlieb, M. (2008). *Is It Nationalism? History's Impact on Okinawan Identity*. Retrieved from https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/items/c47bd149-6627-4230-a49c-d0519471d4da

Hall, S. (1991). The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity. In *Culture, Globalization, and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*. University of Minnesota Press.

Hall, S. (2013). *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying. (Second Edition)*. London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Hashimoto, K. (2023). *Shame and Silencing of Amejo in Okinawa: Examining Gendered and Militarized Violence*. https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/honorstheses/1361/

Higuchi, K. (2020). *Okinawa kara Hinkon ga Nakunaranai Hontou no Riyuu [The Real Reason Poverty Won't Ever Be Eliminated from Okinawa]*. Japan: Kobunsha.

Himeyuri Alumnae Association. (1989, July 23). Foundation of the Himeyuri Peace Museum. Retrieved from www.himeyuri.or.jp website: https://www.himeyuri.or.jp/en/establish-2/establishment/

hooks, b. (1984). *Feminist theory : From Margin to Center*. South End Press.

hooks, b. (1992). *Ain't I a woman : black women and feminism*. South End Press.

Horeck, T. (2003). *Public Rape Representing Violation in Fiction and Film*. Taylor & Francis Group. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kutu/detail.action?docID=1144705&pq-origsite=primo

Iconis, R. (2008). Rape Myth Acceptance In College Students: A Literature Review. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research (CIER)*, *1*(2), 47. https://doi.org/10.19030/cier.v1i2.1201

Ikeda, K. (2014). "Jinruikan (The Human Pavilion) and Performing Okinawa: Constructed Knowledge, Linguistic Difference, & War Memory." *University of Vermont. Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies.* , *15*, 37–46.

Inoue, M. (2007). *Okinawa and the U.S. Military : Identity Making in the Age of Globalization*. Columbia University Press. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kutu/detail.action?docID=908543

Iyer, P. (2015, November 24). Japan's Secret Beach Paradise. Retrieved June 17, 2024, from Condé Nast Traveler website: https://www.cntraveler.com/stories/2015-11-24/okinawa-japans-surprising-beachy-paradise

Japanese Dictionary. (n.d.). *Nihonjinbanare*. JLearn.net: Japanese Dictionary. Retrieved February 3, 2024, from https://jlearn.net/dictionary/日本人離れ

JLect. (n.d.). JLect - なんくるないさ : nankuru nai sa | define meaning. Retrieved from www.jlect.com website: https://www.jlect.com/entry/4233/nankurunaisa/

Johnson, A. (2019). *Night In The American Village;Women In The Shadow Of The U.S. Military Bases In Okinawa*. New York: New Press.

JTB Communication Design. (2023, April 27). Okinawa: Tropical Paradise of Japan & Unique Event Location. Retrieved May 14, 2024, from JTB Communication Design (JCD) website: https://me.jtbcom.co.jp/blog/4674.html

Karim, N. (2022). *Feminist and women's movements in the context of ending violence against women and girls*. Retrieved from https://untf.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/04/feminist-and-womens-movements-in-the-context-of-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-implications-for-funders-and-grant-makers-an-external-literature-review

Keyso, R. A. (2000). Women of Okinawa: Nine Voices from a Garrison Island. In M. Ota (Trans.), *Cornell University Press*. Cornell University Press. Retrieved from https://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/book/9780801486654/women-of-okinawa/#bookTabs=1

Kyodo News. (2019, February 25). Over 70% of voters reject U.S. base transfer in Okinawa referendum. Retrieved from kyodonews.net website: https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2019/02/92e0b7fff7b5-voting-under-way-in-okinawa-for-referendum-on-us-base-relocation.html

Layman, K. (2020). *The Representation of Rape and Sexual Assault Within News Media*. Portland State University. Retrieved from https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2057&context=honorstheses

Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider*. New York: Penguin Books.

Ma, R., & Fujiki, K. (2021). In/visibility in post-war Okinawan images 1. *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema*, *13*(1), 1–3. https://doi.org/10.1080/17564905.2021.1930474

MacLachlan, E. N. (2012). Protesting the 1994 Okinawa Rape Incident: Women, Democracy and Television News in Japan. In M. Bromley & A. Romano (Eds.), *Journalism and democracy in Asia* (pp. 148–158). Routledge.

Magestro, M. A. (2015). *Assault on the small screen : representations of sexual violence on prime-time television dramas*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

Mainichi Japan. (2018, September 30). Tamaki wins Okinawa gubernatorial election in blow to PM Abe. *Mainichi Daily News*. Retrieved from https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20180930/p2a/00m/0na/029000c

Medoruma, S. (2012, April 9). We Cannot Allow Governor Nakaima to Falsify the History of the Battle of Okinawa . Retrieved June 14, 2024, from The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus website: https://apjjf.org/2012/10/15/Medoruma-Shun/3738/article.html

Midford, P. (2019, March 13). Okinawa Casts a Decisive Vote Against the Relocation of a US Base - AIIA. Retrieved June 11, 2024, from Australian Institute of International Affairs website: https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/okinawa-decisive-vote-against-relocation-us-base/

Mikanagi, Y. (2004). Okinawa: women, bases and US-Japan relations. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, *4*(1), 97–111. https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/4.1.97

Military OneSource. (2023, April 18). Moving & PCS Overview. Retrieved from Military OneSource website: https://www.militaryonesource.mil/moving-pcs/

Minh-ha, T. T. (1989). *Women, native, other*. Bloomingoton, IN, USA: Indiana University Press. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16xwccc

Mitchell, J. (2021, October 3). NCIS Case Files Reveal Undisclosed U.S. Military Sex Crimes in Okinawa. Retrieved from The Intercept website: https://theintercept.com/2021/10/03/okinawa-sexual-crimes-us-military/

Mohanty, C. T. (1984). Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. *Feminist Review*, *30*(1), 61–88. Sage Journals. Retrieved from https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1057/fr.1988.42

Mohanty, C. T. (1991). Thrid World Women and the Politics of Feminism. In *PhilArchive*. Indiana University Press.

Mohanty, C. T. (2003). Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity. In *JSTOR*. Duke University Press.

Morrow, C. (2019, October 21). Moai: the economy of trust. Retrieved from Medium website: https://medium.com/@chicamorrow/moai-the-economy-of-trust-4c26f9e2e8f1

Motomura, S. (2009). *Coverage of the Rape Crimes in Okinawa Committed by US soldiers* (California State University). California State University. Retrieved from https://scholarworks.calstate.edu/downloads/4b29b971t?locale=en

Mulvey, L. (1975). Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. *Screen*, *16*(3), 6–18. https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/16.3.6

Narisada, Y. (2010). *Negotiating Gender Equality in Daily Work: An Ethnography of a. Public Women's Organisation in Okinawa, Japan. PhD Dissertation*. University of Edinburgh. Retrieved from https://era.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/15829/Narisada2011.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

NCF. (2019, October 30). TV Still Well Ahead of the Internet in Japanese Media Popularity. The Nippon Communications Foundation. Retrieved from nippon.com website: https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-data/h00562/tv-still-well-ahead-of-the-internet-in-japanese-media-popularity.html

NHK. (2015). *Present Situation Regarding Television Viewing and Radio Listening -A Summary of the Results of Nationwide Survey on Individual Audience Ratings conducted by NHK in June 2015*. Nippon Hoso Kyokai (Japan Broadcasting Corporation). Retrieved from https://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/english/reports/pdf/report_15091501.pdf

Nishiyama, H. (2022). Decolonizing knowledge of and from Okinawa. *Critical Asian Studies*, *54*(4), 552–573. https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2022.2136098

OCVB. (2024, January 17). Okinawa at a Glance. Retrieved from VISIT OKINAWA JAPAN | Official Okinawa Travel Guide website: https://visitokinawajapan.com/discover/okinawa-at-a-glance/

Ohsawa, S., Ono, A. M., Serizawa, K., & Takase, A. (2014). Resutoran no "A Sain" ga Kataritsugu: Mikkusu Karuchā no Kaoru Okinawa e. [Restaurant "A Sign" tells the tale: To Okinawa with the fragrance of mixed culture]. In *Crea Trip*. Retrieved from https://crea.bunshun.jp/articles/-/6872

Okinawa City. (n.d.). A Sign. Retrieved June 23, 2024, from Okinawa City Tourism Portal Koza Web website: https://en.kozaweb.jp/featurePages/show/246

Okinawa Island Guide. (n.d.). Everything on Okinawa Island from A to Z. Shisa. Retrieved from www.oki-islandguide.com website: https://www.oki-islandguide.com/culture-lifestyle/shisa

Okinawa Prefectural Government. (n.d.). Base-related Data. Retrieved March 16, 2024, from Washington D.C. Office - Official Site website: https://dc-office.org/basedata

OnoOkinawa. (2016, August 12). Ishigantou: 石敢當. Retrieved June 23, 2024, from OnoOkinawa website: https://www.onookinawa.com/2016/08/12/ishigantou-石敢當/

OnoOkinawa. (2016, September 2). Hinukan, fire god: ヒヌカン (火の神). Retrieved June 23, 2024, from OnoOkinawa website: https://www.onookinawa.com/2016/09/03/hinukan-fire-god-%E3%83%92%E3%83%8C%E3%82%AB%E3%83%B3-%E7%81%AB%E3%81%AE%E7%A5%9E/

Parks, C. (2019, September 26). Okinawa: 7 Reasons to Love "The Hawaii of Japan." Retrieved from International Living website: https://internationalliving.com/okinawa-7-reasons-to-love-the-hawaii-of-japan/

Patil, V., & Purkayastha, B. (2015). Sexual Violence, Race and Media (In)Visibility: Intersectional Complexities in a Transnational Frame. *Societies*, *5*(3), 598–617. https://doi.org/10.3390/soc5030598

Projansky, S. (2001). *Watching rape : film and television in postfeminist culture*. New York University Press. Retrieved from New York University Press website: https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/89356/9780814768716_WEB.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

PSAJ. (2016, October 2). What are the characteristics of the peace movements in Okinawa? Retrieved March 15, 2024, from The Peace Studies Association of Japan website: https://www.psaj.org/14points92/

Reidpath, H. (2017). Narratives of Rape in Okinawan Fiction (Vol. 12, p. e0177386). A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Division of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in East Asian Languages and Literature (Japanese). https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0177386

Rich, M. (2018, August 9). Takeshi Onaga, Critic of U.S. Bases as Okinawa Governor, Dies at 67. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/09/obituaries/takeshi-onaga-okinawa-governor-and-critic-of-us-bases-dies-at-67.html

Røkkum, A. (2006). *Nature, Ritual, and Society in Japan's Ryukyu Islands*. Routledge.

Royal, K. E. (2019). It's like wallpaper': Victim-blaming, sexual violence and the media. In *Durham E-Theses Online*. Durham University. Retrieved from Durham University website: http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/13118/

Ryukyu Shimpo. (2024, May 20). Base closure only way to prevent future crimes. Retrieved June 17, 2024, from Okinawa, Japanese newspaper, local news website: https://english.ryukyushimpo.jp/2016/05/21/25080/

Said, E. W. (1979). *Orientalism* (First Paperback edition (October 12, 1979)). Vintage.

Sakihara, M. (2006). *Okinawan-English wordbook (沖英辞典): A short lexicon of the Okinawan language with English definition and Japanese cognates* (S. Curry, L. A. Serafim, S. Karimata, & M. Shimabukuro, Eds.). University of Hawai'i Press.

Shigematsu, S. (2015). Intersections: Intimacies of Imperialism and Japanese-Black Feminist Transgression: Militarised Occupations in Okinawa and Beyond Intimacies of Imperialism and Japanese-Black Feminist Transgression: Militarised Occupations in Okinawa and Beyond. *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific Issue*, *37*. The Australian National University. Retrieved from http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue37/shigematsu.htm

Shigematsu, S. (2017). Rethinking Japanese Feminism and the Lessons of Ūman Ribu: Toward a Praxis of Critical Transnational Feminism. In J. C. Bullock, A. Kano, & J. Welker (Eds.), *Rethinking Japanese Feminisms* (pp. 205–229). Honolulu, HI, USA: Hawai'i Scholarship Online.

Shimabuku, A. M. (2010). Securing Okinawa for Miscegenation: A Historical and Literary Discourse Analysis of Amerasians in Okinawa, 1945-2000. Retrieved from https://ecommons.cornell.edu/items/65b238c6-a5cf-446b-b8d5-ff7ca903ff52

Sielke, S. (2002). *Reading rape : the rhetoric of sexual violence in American literature and culture, 1790-1990*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the Subaltern Speak? In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Vol. 14, pp. 42–58). London: Macmillan. Retrieved from https://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~sj6/Spivak%20CanTheSubalternSpeak.pdf

Sturdevant, S. (1995). The U.S. military and sexual violence against women. *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, *27*(4), 91–94. https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.1995.10413043

Tada, O. (2015). Constructing Okinawa as Japan's Hawai'i: From the Honeymoon Boom to the Resort Paradise. *Hitotsubashi Bulletin of Social Sciences*, (7). Retrieved from https://hermes-ir.lib.hit-u.ac.jp/hermes/ir/re/27377/shakaikg00706b0010.pdf

Takazato, S. (2000). Report from Okinawa: long-term US military. *Canadian Woman Studies*, *19*(4). www.proquest.com. Retrieved from: https://www.proquest.com/docview/217462549?sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals

Takazato, S., & Kutsuzawa, K. (1999). The Base and the Military: Structural Violence against Women. *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, *11/12*, 66–78. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/42800183

Tanaka, Y., Bergstrom, J., & Shmyglo, O. (2003). The media representation of "Okinawa" and US/Japan hegemony1. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, *4*(3), 419–432. https://doi.org/10.1080/1464937032000143788

Tanji , M., & Broudy, D. (2017). Chapter 2: Critical Discourse Analysis of Public Relations. In *Okinawa Under Occupation: McDonaldization and Resistance to Neoliberal Propaganda*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Tanji, M. (2003). *The Enduring Myth of an Okinawan Struggle: The History and Trajectory of a Diverse Community of Protest*. Murdoch University.

Tanji, M. (2006). *Myth, Protest and Struggle in Okinawa*. Routledge.

Tanji, M. (2012). Rethinking Resistance in Everyday Okinawa: Diaspora, Transformation and Minor Literature. Asian Studies Review, March 2012, Vol. 36, pp. 105–117

Teaiwa, T. (1999). Reading Gauguin's Noa Noa with Hau'ofa's Nederends:"Militourism," Feminism, and the "Polynesian" Body. *UTS Review*. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/3293750/Reading_Gauguins_Noa_Noa_with_Hauofas_Nederends_Militourism_Feminism_and_the_Polynesian_Body

Textor, C. (2022). Implicated Reading: Medoruma Shun's Me no oku no mori and the Ethics of Narrative Transmission. *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, *18*(1). Retrieved from https://apjjf.org/2022/18/textor

The Asahi Shimbun. (2022, September 11). Tamaki wins re-election in Okinawa; bad news for Tokyo. Retrieved April 10, 2024, from asahi.com website: https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14716342

Tokuyama, Y. (2013). Collective Traumatic Memory in a Jointly-colonised Okinawa. In D. Broudy, P. Simpson, & M. Arakaki (Eds.), *Under Occupation: Resistance and Struggle in a Militarised Asia-Pacific*. Cambridge Scholars Pub.

Tsuruoka, Y. (2023). *Negotiating life: Young women and reproductive decisions in Japan* (University of Turku). University of Turku, UTUPub. Retrieved from https://www.utupub.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/175811/Tsuruoka_Yuriko_Thesis.pdf

Uema, Y. (2017). *Hadashi de nigeru: Okinawa no yoru no machi no shoujo tachi [Running Away Barefoot: Girls of Okinawa's Urban Nightlife]*. Okinawa, Japan: Ohta Books.

Ueunten, W. (2015). Intersections: Making Sense of Diasporic Okinawan Identity within US Global Militarisation. Retrieved June 16, 2024, from intersections.anu.edu.au website: http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue37/ueunten1.htm

Vogt, G. (2012). A Women's World? Contentious Politics and Civil Society in Okinawa. *Austrian Journal of Japanese Studies*, *82*, 19–26. Minikomi. Retrieved from

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://journals.univie.ac.at/index.php/aaj/article/download/082_019-026_ART_VOGT2012/2675&ved=2ahUKEwjvgNKolMyHAxUeoq8BHahyBvIQFnoECBEQAQ&usg=AOvVaw1fo05Ol2eCAXP03AIIYYkM

Vogt, G. (2018). Okinawa-rashisa no shakaigaku: Tabunka sesshoku ryōiki no esunishiti(A Sociology of Okinawaness: Ethnicity in Encounters with Multiculturalism). *Social Science Japan Journal*, *22*(1), 189–191. https://doi.org/10.1093/ssjj/jyy044

Vogt, G. (2022, May 6). Nissan Seminar: Japan’s Failed Nation Building: Okinawa, 1972-2022. Retrieved June 16, 2024, from www.area-studies.ox.ac.uk website: https://www.area-studies.ox.ac.uk/event/nissan-seminar-japans-failed-nation-building-okinawa-1972-2022

Wilson, J. (2021, July 26). Exploring the Tropical Paradise of Okinawa - Sakuraco. Retrieved June 16, 2024, from Sakuraco website: https://sakura.co/blog/explore-tropical-paradise-okinawa

Wowow Original Drama. (2022). [Photograph]. In *X*. Retrieved from https://x.com/drama_wowow/status/1595348957718548480

Yamashiro, R. (2008). Anti-Futenma relocation movement in Okinawa : women’s involvement and the impact of sit-in protest (University of Hawai’i). University of Hawai’i. Retrieved from https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/5b2a58f1-cdfb-4d04-bddb-75e0ef5581ee/content

Yamazaki, T. (2002). Title Politicizing territory : The transformation of land struggle in Okinawa 1956. *Studies in the Humanities*, *54*(3), 31–65. Retrieved from https://dlisv03.media.osaka-cu.ac.jp/contents/osakacu/kiyo/DB00010842.pdf

Yamazato, K. M. (2012). Encountering National and Gendered Selves: Identity Formation of Okinawan Students in the United States during the US Occupation of Okinawa. In C. D. Matos & R. Ward (Eds.), *Gender, Power, and Military Occupations : Asia Pacific and the Middle East Since 1945* (pp. 43–59). Routledge.

Yoshida, K. (2001). Democracy Betrayed: Okinawa Under U.S. Occupation. In *Studies on East Asia* (Vol. 23). Washington, USA. Center for East Asian Studies, Western Washington University.

Young, R. J. C. (2003). *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction (1st edition)*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780192801821.001.0001

Ziomek, K. L. (2014). The 1903 Human Pavilion: Colonial Realities and Subaltern Subjectivities in Twentieth-Century Japan. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, *73*(2). Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/43553298

[Viewers' Review]

Anonymous. (2023, April 3). [Comment on the television series *Fence*]. Channel Review. https://www.ch-review.net/contents/4216

Anonymous. (2023, April 25th). [Comment on the television series *Fence*]. Channel Review. https://www.ch-review.net/contents/4216

Anonymous. (2023, April 29). [Comment on the television series *Fence*]. Channel Review. https://www.ch-review.net/contents/4216

Ayaka. (2023, September 9). [Comment on the television series *Fence*]. Filmarks. https://filmarks.com/dramas/12822/17668/reviews/12174299#google_vignette

Ikeken. (2023, April 29th, 2023). [Comment on the television series *Fence*]. Filmarks. https://filmarks.com/dramas/12822/17668/reviews/11232351

Tanaka. (2024, April 6). [Comment on the television series *Fence*]. Filmarks. https://filmarks.com/dramas/12822/17668/reviews/13903023

Yousakuragi. (2024, June 16). [Comment on the television series Fence]. Filmarks. https://filmarks.com/dramas/12822/17668/reviews/14527808#google_vignette

[TV Drama]

Okada, Y. (Director). (2001). *Churasan* [TV Drama]. NHK.

Nogi, A., & Matsumoto, K. (2023). *Fence*. Wowow.

Appendices

Appendix 1 List of terms

In the TV drama *Fence* (2023), many important terms are used that represent unique aspects of Okinawan culture, phenomena, and concepts.

1) *Amejo*: Coined from *Amerika* (U.S.) and *Joo guu* (like). Mostly used for women. It is often used to refer to women who date or marry U.S. soldiers, but it is also widely used to refer to women who speak English, drink frequently at bars near U.S. military bases, and wear heavy makeup favored by American men. The "*jo*" in *amejo* is sometimes mistakenly thought to refer to *joshi* (girl) (Hashimoto, 2023).

2) *Chanpuruu culture*: *Chanpuruu* means "mix" and originally refers to a dish of stir-fried vegetables, meat, and eggs, but it also refers to the culture of Okinawa, which is tolerant of the coexistence of different ethnicities and cultures, similar to a melting pot (Sakihara, 2006).

3) *Haafu*: The Japanese spelling of "half," referring to a person one of whose parents is a foreigner. If one of the grandparents is a foreigner, the child is called "quarter." With the growing awareness of political correctness, various terms such as "mixed," "biracial," and "double" have come into use, and are sometimes seen as discriminatory.

4) *Hinukan* and *Utootoo*: in the Ryukyus, *Hi* (fire)-*nu* (of)-*kan* (god) is believed that a fire god lives in the cooking stove (hearth) of every house or kitchen to protect the house and its family from evil spirits (OnoOkinawa, 2016, September 3). *Utootoo* is a word that refers to praying and is used for *Hinukan* and other such times.

5) *Ishiganntou*: A round or square ornament made of stone. They are embedded in front of houses and on walls, and can be seen everywhere in Okinawa Prefecture. They are believed to ward off evil (OnoOkinawa, 2016, August 12; Sakihara, 2006).

6) *Mabui*: Soul or Okinawan/Ryukyuan Soul. There is an expression of "dropping one's *mabui*" when one is surprised, faced with unbearable grief, or losing one's sanity (Sakihara, 2006).

7) *Moai*: Okinawan culture of drinking parties held by groups of friends and colleagues. Each month, a small amount of money is collected from each member of the group, and one person designated to receive the full amount that month. The cycle repeats until everyone has received the collection one time. According to the explanation in this drama, people who need money urgently (such as for marriage or childbirth) are the first to receive the money. The purpose of *moai* was originally to create a kind of banking and exchange system managed by local people who wanted to engage in business transactions outside the colonial banking system imposed upon them during the post-war period (Morrow, 2019).

8) *Nankurunaisaa*: An Uchinaaguchi phrase meaning "Everything will be alright; it will all work out one way or another" (JLect, n.d.). There is a full sentence that means, "If all possible measures are taken and they fail, then all that remains is to pray to heaven." However, only the latter half of the sentence is often overused and misused to mean that something can be done without effort.

9) *Nee Nee/Nii Nii*: *Nee Nee* refers to an older sister and *Nii Nii* an older brother. These terms are used widely to refer to somebody who is older than the speaker. Children sometimes use these terms when addressing their young aunt or uncle (Sakihara, 2006).

10) *Nuchi* and *Nuchi duu takara*: *Nuchi* means life, and *Nuchi duu takara* is a common expression meaning that life is a treasure.

11) *Sanguwaa*: Tied and crossed leaves of Basho, a wild-species of banana or grass are torn into thin strips to make this talisman. It is used to protect food from evil spirits when taking it outside. If leaves are not available, disposable chopstick wrappers or plastic strings can also be used instead.

12) *Shiija* and *Uttu*: *Shiija* means somebody older and *Uttu* means younger (Sakihara, 2006)

13) *Shiisaa* or *shisa*: Traditional Okinawan guardian of the house that looks like a lion made with a daub. (Usually, you can see them as a pair, male and female, in front of an entrance) (Okinawa Island Guide, n.d; Sakihara, 2006).

14) *Shini*: This Uchinaaguchi work is comparable to the adverb "very."

15) *Uchinaanchu* and *Naichaa*: *Uchinaanchu* are people of Okinawa and *Naichaa* refers to a Japanese person from outside of the islands (Sakihara, 2006).

16) *Yuimaaru*: In Okinawan language or Uchinaaguchi, this term refers to a cooperative way of thinking and doing.

17) *Yukusaa*: "Liar" in Uchinaaguchi.

18) *Mensooree*: "Welcome" in Uchinaaguchi.

Appendix 2 Description of main characters in *Fence* (2023)

Sakura: An Okinawan woman who claims she was raped by U.S. soldiers. The owner of Cafe Moai, she was born to a black American soldier father and an Okinawan mother. She grew up without a father and never knew what he looked like. Her mother has often been away for work, and Sakura was raised by her maternal grandmother. Her grandmother is an anti-U.S. military base activist. In the first case (Episode 1), she claimed to have been raped, but it was actually Runa, a high school student and an employee at her cafe, who was the victim of the rape. Sakura was victimized in the second case (Episode 5).

Kie: A journalist from Tokyo who writes articles reporting on her experiences working in several cabaret clubs under a pen name. Before becoming a journalist, she worked in a cabaret club in Tokyo. Her mother is from Okinawa and her father is an Asian-American soldier. She was born in Okinawa and lived there for 10 years. When she was in elementary school, she witnessed her mother being raped by a community leader. She moved out of Okinawa with her mother after the rape and grew up not knowing much about Okinawa because her mother avoided information, things, and culture related to Okinawa. Kie struggles with her complicated identities as Kie (neutral self), Kii (nickname used by friends), Kinu (stage name in a cabaret club), Bauko (pen name), as well as as an Uchinaanchu, Japanese, an unknown Asian root, and woman.

Runa: A high school girl who was abandoned by her parents and raised with her older brother. She is the actual victim in the first incident (Episode 1). She was sexually assaulted by her grandfather when she was in junior high school. In a town where there is a military base, she is sexually assaulted by a man who seems to be an American soldier, and she talks to Sakura about it. After a while, she starts staying at a hotel with her older male friends to escape from home, where she is almost forced into prostitution by them. She develops PTSD as a result of the coercion, uses a mental health clinic’s telephone counseling service, and enters a shelter, where she gradually recovers.

Dr. Shiroma: A female doctor at Runa's mental clinic. Kie also met her during an interview for an article and later began consulting her about her own traumatic experiences. Dr. Shiroma is played by Yui Aragaki, a nationally recognized actress from Okinawa.

Officer Isa: A police officer with the Okinawa Prefectural Police. He divorced his wife several years ago. He used to work in Tokyo and met Kie at a cabaret club where they had a sexual relationship. He is angry that the Okinawa Prefectural Police cannot proceed with their investigation due to the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, so he eventually cooperates with Kie in pursuing the case. He is portrayed as an emotional and righteous hero, demanding in a strong tone of voice to the head of the U.S. military official to have the Okinawa Prefectural Police arrest their servicemen.

Azuma: An editor at Kie's magazine company. He learns of Sakura's rape through a network of sources and sends Kie to Okinawa, promising to pay her handsomely for her labor.

Alex Ames: A white American soldier and serial rapist.

Jason Brown: A white U.S. military soldier who causes a hit-and-run accident.

Bob Turner and Michael Phillips: Two U.S. military soldiers who witnessed the rape incident take place with Jason.

Miyu: A pregnant Okinawan woman and Jason's girlfriend.

Hiroyuki Sawada: An employee of an Okinawan company involved in construction of a U.S. military base. Sakura and Kie met him in a bar when they were conducting interviews about the first incident. Sawada asks Sakura to come to the company's lodgings telling her that he is going to provide information on the construction of the U.S. military base in Henoko, and attempts to rape her, but Sakura is saved by Kie, who sends her location information. Sawada imitated Alex's methods to confuse the Police.

Appendix 3 Viewers' Comments on the television series *Fence* (2023)

Below are some viewers' comments and critiques on the drama *Fence* (2023). These have been excerpted and translated by the author, omitting portions not directly relevant to the analysis in this paper, such as opinions about other works by the scriptwriter Nogi, actor preferences, and their performances. Those with usernames are indicated as such, and those submitted anonymously are denoted as "Anonymous." Date when the comments were posted have been included in brackets. In cases where comments were of a similar nature, some were adopted while others omitted. Some content which is offensive to certain Asian countries and whose source cannot be confirmed have been enclosed in brackets and edited.

> 1) I wish the true nature of the anti-base movement based in Okinawa would be exposed, rather than the usual trite drama of the U.S. military as villains. TV and newspapers never report such information, but, in Japan, [Country in Asia 1] and [Country in Asia 2] spies are spying on Japan in a way that ridicules the cowardly media. Then, there are the Japanese politicians who do as they are told. It is not just the opposition parties, but the ruling party is contaminated. It is about time to see an Okinawan piece from this angle [Anonymous, April 3, 2023].

> 2) I'm fed up with the "U.S. military=rape" narrative. Is that all that comes to mind for drama and film producers? If you are going to make a drama involving the U.S. military, it should be something that takes the time to show U.S. fighter planes and explain various things about them. I would like a drama to be about something that might make a significant contribution to Japan in the future, such as a U.S. military base and its magnificent military facilities, rather than an incident [Anonymous, April 25, 2023].

> 3) When addressing political issues in Okinawa, creators need to take a scalpel to those of [Country in Asia 1] and [Country in Asia 2] who run the anti-military activism, the opposition parties such as the Communist Party, civic groups, the media, and the prefectural governor who was the top seller of land around the U.S. military bases in [Country in Asia 1] [Anonymous, April 29th, 2023].

4) To solve the U.S. base problem, all we need to do is just get rid of the stupid Article 9 of the Constitution and allow Japan to defend itself. Also, Okinawa is, of course, part of Japan and was NOT abandoned as *suteishi* during the Battle of Okinawa. The Japanese military seriously tried to protect Okinawa. Japanese people have been brainwashed by education and media, so they do not fundamentally change their way of thinking. I could not get emotionally involved in this drama because I know that behind the movement against the U.S. military bases in Okinawa, there are anti-Japanese leftist groups [Ikeken, April 29, 2023].

5) It is not Okinawa's problem , but Japan's. There are so many things I don't know about Okinawa. I learned a lot from this work [Ayaka, September 9, 2023].

6) I watched this drama while looking up each word that appeared. I am ashamed to say that I know nothing about this topic, so I really appreciate you raising the issue as a piece of work like this [Tanaka, April 6, 2024].

7) This drama helped me realize that I only knew what's on the surface of the Okinawa issue. In addition, I realized that the deep and profound part of Okinawa is so much different from my own world that I knew nothing about it at all. I had the impression that Akiko Nogi, who wrote the script, had carefully interviewed the people involved in making this drama. It may be impossible since it is quite in-depth, but I hope it will be released not only through online streaming services but also on commercial TV. I also liked the fact that many cast members were actually from Okinawa [Yousakuragi, June 16, 2024].