

Rape myths on Instagram: Three Danish non-profit organisations' multimodal communication about sexual consent

Solveig Ilhéa Pees, University of Southern Denmark

Abstract: Since the introduction of the new consent-based rape provision in Denmark on January 1st 2021, reports (Christensen, 2021; Det Kriminalpræventive Råd & Epinion, 2023) show that young Danes are interested in sexual consent but experience confusion about its concept and practice. The report by Det Kriminalpræventive Råd and Epinion (2023) shows that young men display a higher acceptance of rape myths. International research (Dunn & Orchowski, 2022; Hust et al., 2014) points to rape myth acceptance as being an indicator for lower intentions of seeking sexual consent. Rape myth acceptance can be affected by media consumption (Edwards et al., 2011), which is why this paper examines how rape myths, sexual consent, and gender roles are reflected in Danish non-profit organisations' multimodal communications about sexual consent on social media. This focus was chosen because non-profit organisations are primary contributors to sexual consent communication, and social media is where young Danes spend time (Danmarks Statistik, 2023) and access information about sexual boundaries (Christensen, 2021). The paper employs a multimodal critical discourse analysis (Machin & Mayr, 2012; van Leeuwen, 2008) to explore verbal, visual, and auditory elements in Instagram posts by three different non-profit organisations over the course of 2023.

The analysis shows that the non-profit organisations' communication about sexual consent on social media reflects traditional gender roles where sexual consent is the responsibility of women. Their communication also perpetuates rape myths and presents sexual consent as a complex and difficult issue. This focus on difficulty and complexity could be argued to hinder a clear understanding of sexual consent and could, alongside the ascription of sexual consent as the responsibility of women, be used as an excuse for sexual violence. The findings highlight a need for organisations to adopt more clear and inclusive communication strategies to improve young Danes' understanding of sexual consent.

Keywords: Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA), sex health communication, sexual consent, gender representations, rape myths

1. Introduction

Since the introduction of the revised Danish rape provision (commonly known as the consent law) in the beginning of 2021, non-consensual sex has been criminalised in Denmark. However, according to reports by Christensen (2021) and Det Kriminalpræventive Råd (the Danish Crime Prevention Council) and Epinion (2023), young Danes in the ages 16-29 years old still experience confusion about the meaning and practice of sexual consent.

According to the report by Det Kriminalpræventive Råd and Epinion (2023), this uncertainty may stem, at least in part, from a higher rape myth acceptance among younger demographic groups. Rape myths can generally be defined as “attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women.” (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994: 134). This higher rate of rape myth acceptance has also not changed since the previous measurement, which was taken before the introduction of the Danish consent law, suggesting that these tendencies have not changed despite the increased amount of attention on sexual consent (Det Kriminalpræventive Råd & Epinion, 2023).

The report by Det Kriminalpræventive Råd and Epinion (2023) finds that there is a greater rape myth acceptance among demographic groups who have less sexual experience and a lower degree of general education, which may implicitly suggest that the problem of a higher rape myth acceptance will solve itself over time as demographic groups age and gain sexual experience and general education. However, other research (Hust et al., 2014) finds that rape myth acceptance

predicts engagement in sexual violence, emphasising the importance of research into the reasons behind rape myth acceptance among younger Danes.

Christensen's (2021) report shows that young Danes actively seek information about sexual consent by speaking to their friends, via search engines, on social media, by speaking with family, and by watching porn. The underlying experiences of young Danes with sexual consent, nonconsensual sexual experiences, non-consensual image-sharing and alcohol-intoxicated sexual encounters have been researched by Johansen (2021), Johansen et al. (2020), and Knountsen et al. (2024). However, the sources of information that young Danes have available, have not been researched yet.

To begin bridging this gap, this paper focuses on how communication contributing to the public debate on sexual consent could advance or dispel rape myths. Instagram, being one of the most popular social media platforms among young Danes (Danmarks Statistik, 2023), invites the analysis of the factors that could visually and verbally contribute to young Danes' state of knowledge on sexual consent and the creation and perpetuation of rape myths. Especially non-profit organisations have a role to play in this debate and have been particularly vocal about sexual consent and the consent-based rape provision on Instagram. Because non-profit organisations play a central role in communicating and educating about sexual consent and frequently disseminate this communication on Instagram, where young Danes view it, the paper examines how rape myths, sexual consent, and gender roles may be reflected in this communication by employing a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis.

2. Literature review

Previous studies have investigated the topics of sexual consent in Denmark, Danes' sources of knowledge about sexual consent, the prevalence of rape myths in Denmark, non-profit organisations and their role in the sexual consent debate, and communication about sexual consent on social media.

2.1. Sexual consent in Denmark

While consent is still understood to be a fairly ambiguous concept (Uhnnoo et al., 2024), Popova (2019) describes four overarching approaches to understanding it: (1) the 'radical feminist' approach, (2) the 'yes-means-yes' approach, (3) the 'no-means-no' approach, and (4) recent developments, which the author summarises under the heading 'sex-critical'. The radical feminist approach, according to Beres (2007) is chiefly concerned with how gendered power oppresses women and posits that sexual consent does not happen on an even playing field. The yes means yes approach, according to Harris (2018) focuses on affirmative consent, where the presence of a 'yes' constitutes agreement. On the other hand, the no means no approach focuses on refusal and assumes that the absence of a 'no' constitutes consent (Harris, 2018). Sex-critical approaches, similar to the radical feminist approach, focus on power, but have a more nuanced conception of it, where power is an interaction of multiple forces that push and pull in different directions (Popova, 2019). A concrete definition of sexual consent is given by Muehlenhard et al. (2016), who posit that sexual consent entails three distinct aspects: (1) feelings, (2) communication, and (3) perceptions. The first aspect can be described as an internal willingness to engage in sexual activity (Jozkowski et al., 2014), while the second aspect can be a verbal or non-verbal and explicit or implicit communication of that willingness to one's sexual partner (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999) and the third aspect refers to the ability to perceive the communication of one's sexual partner (Willis et al., 2021).

In Denmark, the decision in favour of a consent-based rape provision has since been made, but the public debate on the effects of the new consent-based rape provisions continue. When the new Danish consent-based rape provision (*samtykkebaseret voldtægtsbestemmelse*) came into

effect in the beginning of 2021, it was not only on the basis of the Istanbul Convention but was preceded by the protests regarding the previous rape provision by a multitude of women's rights organisations. National news media began partaking in the debate and in 2020 the Danish government announced their intentions to change the provision. Over the course of the public debate about the change, the choice between the terms 'consent' and 'voluntariness' have polarised and, at times, almost halted the progression of the new provision (Vestergaard, 2020).

To understand which basis young Danes have for understanding sexual consent, it is useful to examine the curriculum for sexuality education in Danish schools. Recent research by Roien et al. (2022) has explored the Danish national curriculum for sexuality education between 1970 and 2020. According to Roien et al (2022), of the younger Danes, between the ages of 15 and 24, 94% of men and 95% of women have received formalised sex education in school. Roien et al. (2022) find that the current national curriculum frames sexuality education as a means of individual risk prevention. While the curriculum focuses on health and sexual agency, it also downplays the areas of pleasure, LGBTQ+ issues, as well as ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity regarding sexuality (Roien et al., 2022).

In the school year of 2023/2024, obligatory sexuality education in the upper secondary schools, which is organised as a cross-subject activity (Tesfaye, 2023), was implemented in addition to the mandatory sexuality education that takes place in primary schools. However, sexuality education is not an independent course and instead organised as an activity that can be taken up in any of the courses in higher secondary education (Tesfaye, 2023). The new law also poses that students should be taught in matters of sexual consent and boundaries, sexually transmitted diseases and prevention hereof (Tesfaye, 2023).

The report by Christensen (2021), as well as the report by Det Kriminalpræventive Råd and Epinion (2023) shows that young Danes have available a variety of sources of knowledge surrounding sexual consent. While the report by Det Kriminalpræventive Råd and Epinion (2023) found that young Danes acquire knowledge about sexual consent via social and dialogue-based channels, the report by Christensen (2021) found that most young Danes learn about sexual consent by talking to friends (40.45%). This is followed by using search engines (31.7%), using social media (13.8%), watching porn (11.2%), and talking to their family (9%) (Christensen, 2021).

2.2. Rape myths

Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1999, p. 134) define rape myths as "attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women." The present paper extends the concept to a media context, where rape myths are understood as beliefs and assumptions that are embedded in multimodal communication.

Rape myths, according to Payne et al. (1999) simultaneously blame the rape victim, absolve the perpetrator, and minimise or justify the offence. Studies have found that a higher acceptance of rape myths is associated with lower intentions to accept sexual consent decisions (Hust et al., 2014). Dunn and Orchowski (2022) similarly showed that high school boys with a higher acceptance of rape myths are less likely to intend to garner sexual consent from their partners.

A number of methodologies for measuring rape myth acceptance have since been developed, notably also the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance (IRMA) scale (Payne et al., 1999) that was adapted into the IRMA-DK-scale for the report by Det Kriminalpræventive Råd and Epinion (2023). The IRMA-DK-scale focuses on four sub-scales: (1) blaming of the rape victim, (2) narrowing of what constitutes rape, (3) removal of the rape perpetrator's responsibility, and (4) questioning whether the rape has taken place (Det Kriminalpræventive Råd & Epinion, 2023). The report by Det Kriminalpræventive Råd and Epinion (2023) found that the latter two categories received more support by the respondents than the former two, especially among men in the age group of 16-30 years.

Edwards et al. (2011) summarise that rape myths are prevalent in media and can affect consumers' attitudes towards rape. For example, Franuik et al. (2008) examined newspaper headlines for rape myths and found that nearly 10% of headlines about a specific rape case contained rape myths. Regarding newer media, Thulin et al. (2024) found that the rape myths most frequently expressed on social media convey that rape is (1) used as a method of revenge, (2) the result of being sexually carried away, (3) the consequence for too revealing clothing, (4) happens when the victim is not clear enough with their *no*, and (5) somewhat the responsibility of the victim if they were intoxicated. The authors also point out that addressing the pervasiveness of rape myths on social media is especially relevant as they have the tendency of spreading quickly on platforms (Thulin et al., 2024). Many young people use social media frequently and tend to believe information found online (Thulin et al., 2024).

Linguistically, Bohner (2001) points to the use of passive voice when describing rape cases, which obscures or downplays the rape perpetrator. According to Bohner (2001), nominalisation and reduced focus on the rape itself, often by avoiding the word or describing the situation surrounding the rape in greater detail, also contribute to obscuring the role of the rape perpetrator. Franuik et al. (2008) also point out that many texts use the word *accuser* rather than *victim* and hereby bias the readers. A similar function, though not applied to rape case coverage, is quotation marks, of which Gutzmann & Stei (2011, p. 2651) note that they "block the stereotypical interpretation of an expression and thereby indicate that some alternative meaning ought to be inferred." Bohner et al. (2003) further remark that scare quotes are frequently used to show that the author of a text is repeating someone else's word but is opposed to its use.

2.3. *Non-Profit organisations and information about sexual consent*

While many Danish non-profit organisations are involved in informing the public about sexual consent and the new consent-based rape provision, there is no definite list of organisations. The Danish state registers all organisations in a central registry (CVR) but does not have a way to filter for non-profit organisations that focus on a specific concern. Sundhedsstyrelsen (the Danish Health Authority) (2018) published a document listing organisations relevant to sexual health matters. Since this document was published in 2018, before the consent-based rape provision went into effect, the list is likely incomplete in regard to non-profit organisations concerned with sexual consent. The organisations that can be found via Google-searches represent a variety of views on the concept of sexual consent and its application in Danish law. Some organisations were actively campaigning for the consent-based rape provision to be implemented, while others criticise it and campaign for a reversal of the provision. Most of the non-profit organisations have a website on which they communicate, but also maintain a variety of social media accounts, as well as hosting events and activities and being present at different Danish festivals.

2.4. *Social media communication about sexual consent*

As this paper's data set is collected on the social media platform Instagram, I will briefly describe the structure of an Instagram post, as well as the affordances of the platform that are relevant to the present analysis.

Following the vertical scrolling design of most modern smartphones, Instagram posts are commonly displayed on a feed amongst other posts. Users may also tap and view the profile of a specific user and see all of that user's posts displayed in a grid format. An individual Instagram post on a smartphone, however, is always structured in the same way. At the top, the viewer finds a white bar which features the creator's username, optionally the location of the image and three vertical dots that lead to a menu of further options. Below the bar, the image is displayed as a square post (1080x1080px), a landscape post (1080x566px) or a portrait post (1080x1350px). Optionally, the post can be made into a carousel with a maximum of ten images that can be viewed by swiping

to the left. In this case, all following images will be cropped to match the formatting of the initial image. Below the image, a white bar with a symbol of a heart, a speech bubble and a paper airplane can be found. These indicate the options to interact with the post by linking, commenting or sharing. Next to these symbols, in the case of a carousel post, a row of dots, indicating which image the viewer is has swiped to, can be found. On the right side below the image a bookmark symbol can be found, indicating that the viewer can save the post in their own collection. Below this bar, the number of likes is displayed, if the posting user has enabled this function. Below that, the username of the posting user, along with the caption. The caption has a limit of 2200 characters, but is truncated at 125 characters, unless the viewer taps to view more. Below the caption, the option to view comments is given by tapping. The post ends with a date, which is first shown in minutes since posting, then hours, then days and finally day and month.

Gibson's concept of affordances has been adapted in the field of communication research and has also been applied to social media communication (Giles, 2018). In social media communication this, according to Hutchby (2014) means that social media platforms have the function of both enabling and constraining participants' actions in certain ways. Especially relevant to communication about sexual health, are the algorithmic constraints that Instagram affords. Instagram posts related to the topic of sexual health are frequently deemed to be in opposition to Instagram's community guidelines (Porter et al., 2024). Hence, users have devised new ways of speaking about the topic that are more acceptable to the platform, such as placing asterisks instead of some of the characters of a word (e.g. r*pe), substituting different but similar words (e.g. grape instead of rape) or using emojis. Similarly, the platform practices 'shadowbanning' in which the visibility or reach of certain types of content or certain profiles is reduced by the platform (Sciberras & Tanner, 2024). This practice limits users of Instagram in the visual content they publish on the platform and many, according to Sciberras and Tanner (2024), therefore adopt a strategy of posting mainly text-based illustrations. Additionally, Instagram's algorithms show users posts in a feed that is not in chronological order but instead show posts first that users are expected to be most interested in based on earlier interactions with similar posts (Leaver et al., 2020). Instagram also inserts posts into a users' feed that are not from followed accounts, but instead from accounts that post similar content. This could affect organisational communication in both a positive and a negative way: if their posts receive large amounts of interaction, their reach may be amplified, but if their posts go unnoticed by users, they may be shown to even fewer users in the future.

3. Theory and method

Because Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth MCDA) helps us understand how language, images, and various audiovisual elements work together to shape perspectives that have the power to influence audiences to adopt certain beliefs and worldviews about, for example, sexual consent, it provides the paper's theoretical and analytical point of departure. This approach, as described by van Leeuwen (2008), as well as Machin and Mayr (2012), is based on discourse analysis, which sees language as being able to accomplish actions, goals, and purposes. This is because the constituents of discourses, namely participants, processes, and circumstances, are semiotic choices made by the author of a given semiotic resource (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Due to these choices, these resources are a recontextualization of social practice (van Leeuwen, 2008). As a critical analysis, MCDA seeks to analytically question these choices made by authors, as they have the power to frame discourses in a certain way (Machin & Mayr, 2012). However, the approach in this paper does not assume meanings to be inherent to the text and much rather interpretations of potential meanings through the lens of the analyst.

The multimodal aspect of MCDA finds its origin in Halliday's metafunctional principle (Martinec & Salway, 2005), which suggests that semiotic resources have simultaneous meaning

potential which is structured in the three metafunctions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The addition that multimodality brings to a critical discourse analysis is a consideration of how semiotic resources of different kinds interrelate to recontextualize social practice (Ledin & Machin, 2018). Though other approaches exist to organising a MCDA analysis, the choice for this paper was made to systematise data according to the different semiotic resources, analysing them separately in detail and then combining the results of the analysis to reveal intersemiotic relations (Nørgaard, 2021), as this helps in mapping how meanings are created across different resources, allowing for a deeper understanding of which meanings are enhanced intersemiotic relations and which may only be present in one resource.

The analysis of the verbal resources is informed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), supported by specific information on the Danish language by Andersen and Holsting (2015). The analysis of visual semiotic resources draws on Kress and van Leeuwen (2020), as well as Machin and Mayr (2012). Since videos are also included in the data set, the analysis of background music will draw on van Leeuwen (1999). Nørgaard & Jepsen ((2023) suggest to additionally examine the discursive strategies of inclusion and exclusion in the material, which will be attended to throughout the analysis. The analysis takes up both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the representation of sexual consent. The quantitative component of the analysis highlights the prevalence of representations, while the qualitative component give insight into what meanings these representations carry with them. Together, the analysis aims to give a well-rounded picture of the multimodal communication of the Instagram posts.

A partial analysis was conducted in order to become familiar with the data set. The partial analysis revealed interesting results in regard to the participants and processes represented. Therefore, the verbal data was subsequently annotated with a focus on human participants and processes. Human participants were analysed in terms of participant roles, while the processes were analysed in terms of reflecting active or passive roles. To mirror the focus on human participants and processes in the analysis of the images, only the images containing human participants were analysed in the visual analysis. Both the verbal and the visual semiotic resources were then analysed in terms of discursive strategies, and the analyses were finally combined to examine intersemiotic relations.

3.1. Data

The data analysed in this study were collected on the social media platform Instagram, as the platform is popular among young Danes (Danmarks Statistik, 2023) and features content from multiple non-profit organisations. Other platforms, such as TikTok, are also popular among young people, but preliminary searches showed that they do not feature nearly the same amount of content about sexual consent published by Danish organisations.

As previously described, Denmark only registers the existence of non-profit organisations, but not their exact focus. Hence, a different method of selecting organisations had to be found. Since the list of organisations focusing on sexual health by Sundhedsstyrelsen (2018) was published before some of the organisations relevant to sexual consent communication were founded, headlines of articles about sexual consent and the consent-based rape provision in newspapers and magazines on the database Infomedia were examined in order to find general sentiments in the public debate. Two searches were run with the following criteria and search results:

- Search 1:
 - Search term: seksual* samtykke* (in close proximity)
 - Time frame: 01-01-2023 to 31-01-2023
 - Sources: national and regional daily and weekly newspapers, magazines

- Search 2:
 - Search term: samtykkelov* (in close proximity)
 - Time frame: 01-01-2023 to 31-01-2023
 - Sources: national and regional daily and weekly newspapers, magazines

The first search returned 50 unique results, while the second search returned 76 unique results. The two results were then combined, and duplicate headlines were removed, which generated a list of 118 headlines. Using the word frequency query provided in the Nvivo software, the following list of the 30 most frequently used words was generated (see table 1):

Table 1: List of 30 most frequent used words in newspaper headlines.

List of 30 most frequent words in newspaper headlines		
rape (voldtægt) 21	schedule (skemaet) 4	assault (overgreb) 3
debate (debat) 16	rape case (voldtægtssag) 4	legal certainty (retssikkerheden) 3
consent (samtykke) 16	rape cases (voldtægtssager) 4	court (retten) 3
consent law (samtykkeloven) 12	prosecutor (anklagemyndig) 3	consent law (samtykkelov) 3
aged (årig) 12	drop (droppe) 3	sex game (sexleg) 3
covicted (dømt) 11	businessman (forretningsmand) 3	guilty (skyldig) 3
young people (unge) 6	secondary school students (gymnasieelever) 3	state attorney (statsadvokaten) 3
chronicle (kronik) 4	complained (klagede) 3	stealththing (stealththing) 3
men (mænd) 4	woman (kvinde) 3	clarified (afklares) 2
sexual (seksuelle) 4	man (mand) 3	all (alle) 2

The result of these searches was then matched with three organisations that represent sentiments in the public debate, Ord mod Ord (Word against Word), Sex & Samfund (Sex & Society), and Voldtægtsofres Vilkår (Rape Victims' Treatment).

Ord mod Ord (henceforth OMO) was founded in 2023 (CVR API, n.d.-a). The organisation defines themselves as working towards the legal certainty (Danish: retssikkerhed) of boys and men in legal proceedings concerned with sexual consent (Ord Mod Ord, n.d.). The organisation also communicates about the consequences of the consent-based rape provision and seeks to revise the current state of the provision (Ord Mod Ord, n.d.).

Sex & Samfund (henceforth SOS) is the largest and most well-known organisation for sexual health matters in Denmark and is a part of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, the organisation has a large influence on both sexual education in school, as well as the distribution of sexual health information to the general public (International Planned Parenthood Federation, n.d.). Founded in 1956, the organisation focuses on sexual rights and reproductive health (Sex & Samfund, n.d.).

Voldtægtsofres Vilkår (henceforth VOV) was founded in 2020 (CVR API, n.d.-b). The organisation defines itself as working towards the fair treatment of victims of rape by the police, judicial system, society, and media (Voldtægtsofres Vilkår, n.d.). Additionally, the organisation also communicates about knowledge on the topic of rape (Voldtægtsofres Vilkår, n.d.).

The organisations' Instagram accounts were searched manually for content related to sexual consent. As OMO was only founded in 2023 and my aspiration was to analyse contextually similar

data, I selected a timespan for the data collection ranging from January 1st of 2023 until December 31st of 2023. The data collection included posts with one or more images or videos, but did not include Instagram's other features, such as *Instagram Stories* or *Messages*. As Bouvier and Rasmussen (2022) note, hashtags have decreased in use on some social media platforms, including Instagram, making hashtag searches a less reliable way of finding relevant posts. Therefore, any posts on the organisations' Instagram pages within this time frame related to sexual consent, sexual boundaries, or conversely sexual violence were manually collected. This resulted in a data set of 51 posts among the three organisations, 33 posts by OMO, 13 by SOS, and 5 by VOV. The data set was anonymised by removing names of persons or external organisations mentioned in the posts. However, the likeness of persons was not anonymised in order to retain analytical value.

4. Results

This section will describe the results of the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of the collected data. The results are organised topically via three themes: *Gendered representations*, *Hinderances to understanding sexual consent*, and *Organisational responsibility*. Due to the topical organisation, each heading contains varying amounts of visual and verbal analysis.

4.1. Differences in the representations of women and men

The representation of gendered roles is a crucial part of the analysis, as it reflects how the three organisations encourage young Danes to think about sexual consent in terms of gender. Though the most common recommendation for approaching sexual consent is to take a collaborative approach, an initial overview showed that this is likely not reflected in the collected data.

This part of the analysis encompasses both the verbal and visual elements of the Instagram posts. In order to investigate the verbal representation of gendered role, my analysis focuses on transitivity, positions of prominence, and choices of lexical item, as suggested by Lischinsky (2018) and Numanbayraktaroglu (2019). The visual elements are examined with respect to transitivity.

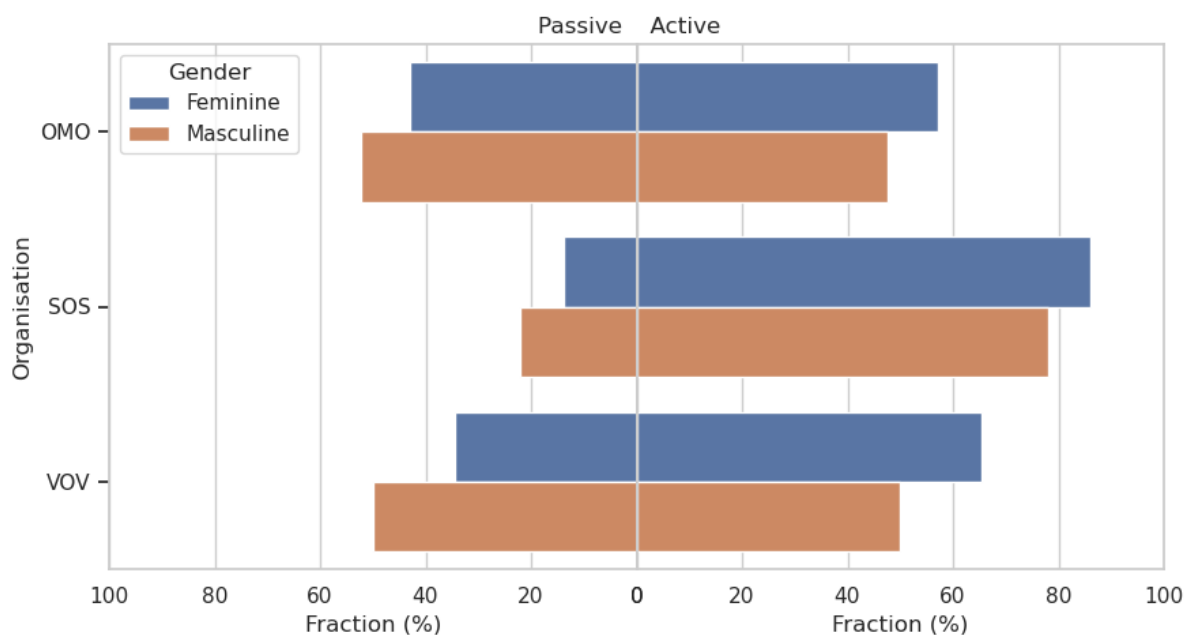
For the verbal analysis of transitivity, the data set was divided into process units, each containing one process and its associated participants. As can be seen from table 2 below, OMO verbally represents men considerably more than women, while both SOS and VOV verbally more frequently represent women.

Table 2: Representation of women and men in organisations' Instagram posts.

	Total process units	Feminine representation (% of total process units)	Masculine representation (% of total process units)
OMO	921	161 (17,5%)	258 (28,0%)
SOS	821	244 (29,7%)	159 (19,4%)
VOV	299	84 (28,1%)	14 (4,7%)

Figure 1 below shows the ratio of how women and men overall, including both first- and third-person representations, are represented in active and passive roles. As can be seen from the figure, all organisations represent men in relatively more passive roles than women and OMO represents both gendered categories as less active than SOS and VOV. In OMO's posts, men are most frequently active in relational processes and passive in material processes, while in SOS' posts the active role most frequently reflected for men is a mental process, though they are also most frequently passive in material roles. Finally, though there is very little data for VOV, men are here most frequently portrayed as active in material processes and passive in mental and relational processes.

Figure 1: Percentage total feminine and masculine active and passive roles of total representation.



For a more detailed view, the following two figures (figure 2 and figure 3) show how the ratios of the organisations differ when looking specifically at first- and third-person gendered representations.

Figure 2 below shows the first-person gendered representations in active and passive roles. VOV does not represent participants in the first-person and there are therefore no results for this category. With the remaining two organisations, it can however be seen that there is a greater discrepancy between the representation of women and men in the Instagram posts by the organisation OMO. Here, men much more often represent themselves in passive roles than women do in the first-person. Additionally, in the first person, men most often represent themselves as being active in relational processes, while their representations in passive roles are mostly in material processes.

An example of men being represented in passive roles can be seen in a post by OMO (2023d), where the representative of the organisation says: “Here [with rape cases] we see women and girls who have men sentenced to several years of unconditional imprisonment [...]” (own translation, here and elsewhere).

By the same token, OMO (2023c) portrays women as active, as in this example: “[...] if the girl or woman claims that the very second, they were together, there was no consent, then he can be convicted.”

Figure 2: Percentage first-person feminine and masculine active and passive roles.

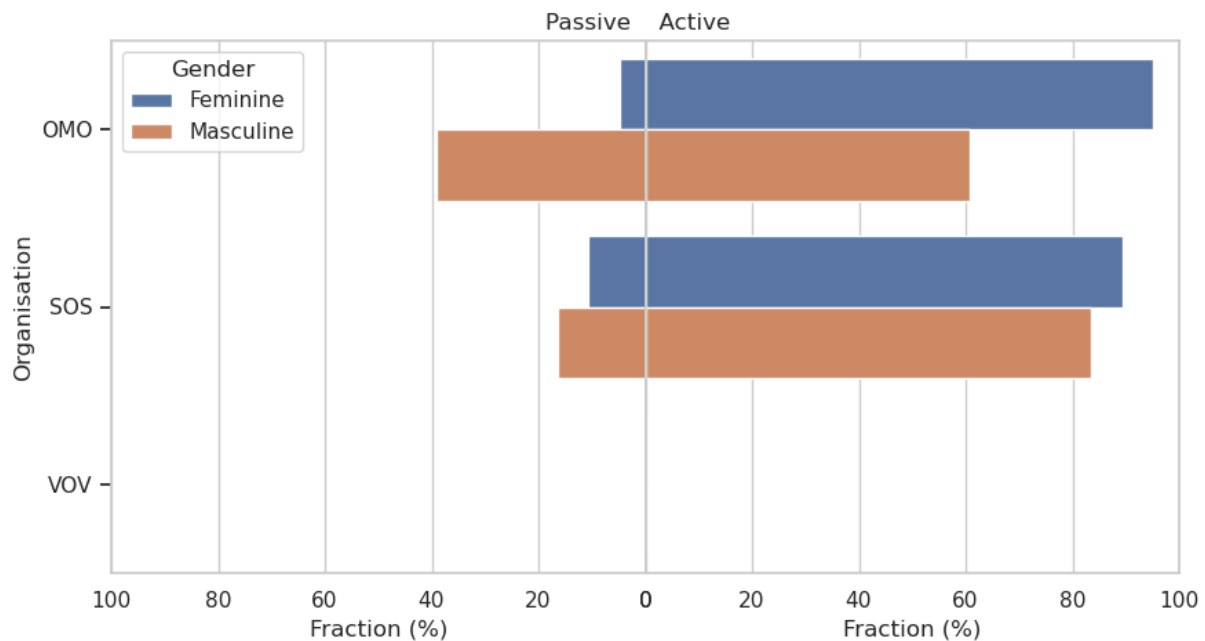
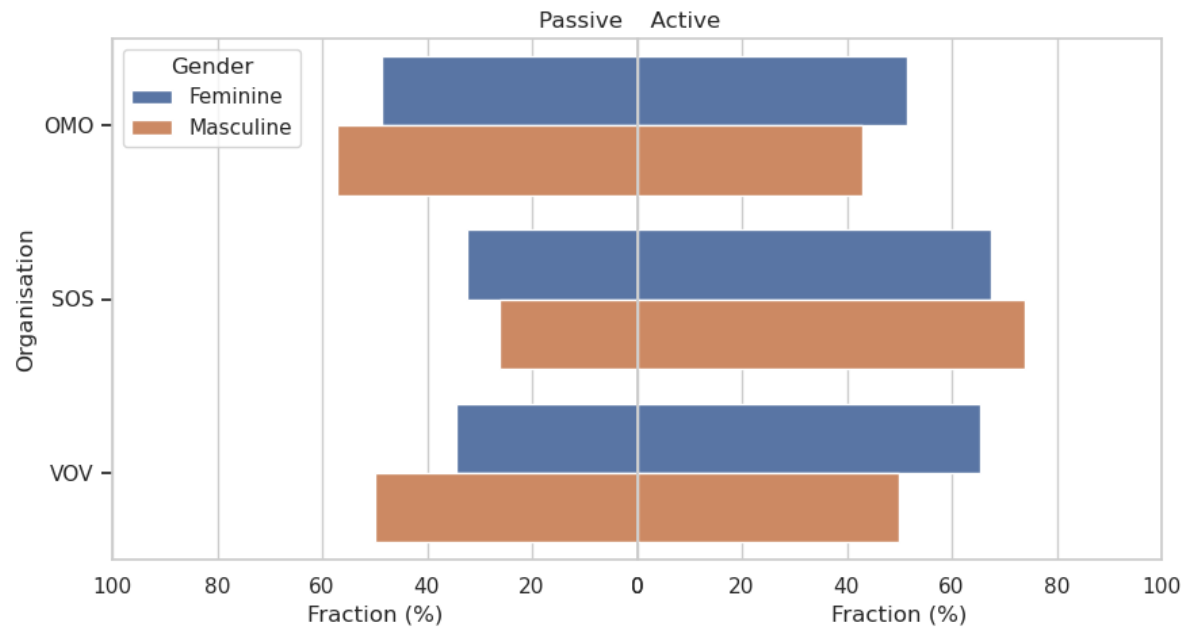


Figure 3 below shows the third-person gendered representations in active and passive roles. While both OMO and VOV represent women in relatively more active roles than men, their activities are very different. Men are mostly active in relational processes and passive in material processes in posts by OMO. Women, by contrast, are mostly active in material processes and passive in both material and relational processes in OMO's posts. For VOV, men are most frequently active in material processes and passive in mental and relational processes, while women are most frequently portrayed, both actively and passively, in material processes. This can be seen in the following example from OMO (2023d): "Here we see women and girls who get men sentenced to several years of unconditional imprisonment."

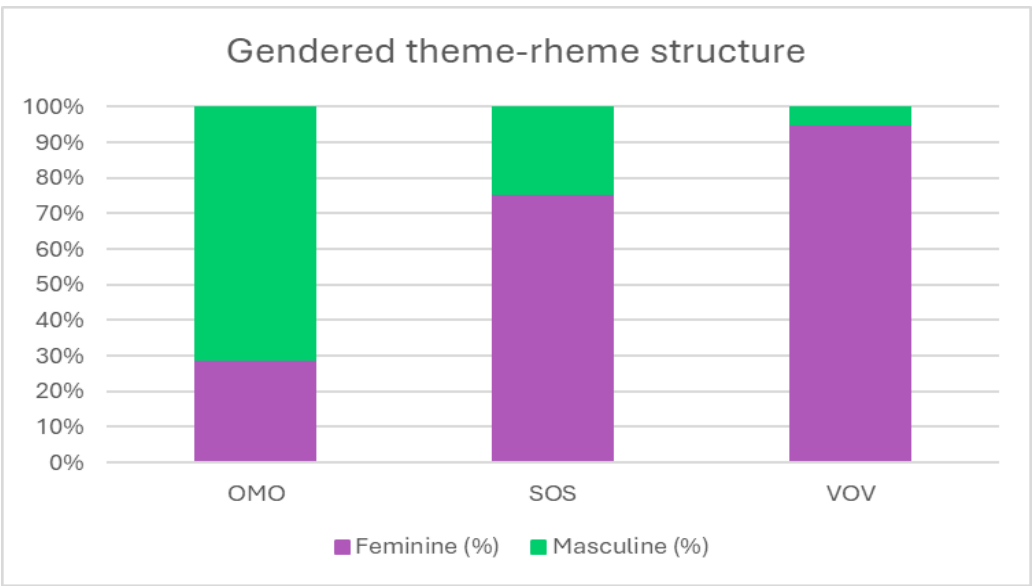
SOS, by contrast, represents men in relatively more active roles. Here both women and men are most frequently portrayed in both active and passive material processes, as in this example (Sex & Samfund [@sexogsamfund], 2023b): "At the Christmas party, a colleague dances closer and closer to Mette from marketing. The colleague rubs against her on the dance floor. When she moves, the colleague moves with her." For context, the gender of the colleague is here indicated in the video where a man is seen dancing and getting closer to a woman.

Figure 3: Percentage third-person feminine and masculine active and passive roles.



With regard to positions of prominence, the theme-rheme structure of the verbal data set was analysed at the sentence-level. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) describe that authors make choices in regard to what they place in the theme of a sentence. It is therefore a way that the organisations can give prominence to certain participants or meanings and can thus indicate the organisations' concerns. My analysis finds that all three organisations feature gendered representations as the theme, though the frequency varies, as seen in figure 4. OMO does so in 19,6% of 403 sentences, while SOS does in 19,8% of 329 sentences, and VOV does in 16,7% of 120 sentences. While SOS and VOV both more frequently foreground women by representing them in the theme of a sentence, the inverse is the case for OMO, which relatively more frequently places men by placing them in the initial position of sentences.

Figure 4: Differences in gendered theme-rheme structure between organisations.



The analysis of lexical choice focuses especially on the organisations' choices in regard to the representation of women and men. Some posts in the data set, however, do not directly clarify the gender when referring to broader categories, such as victim and perpetrator or accuser and accused. As statistics show (Statbank, n.d.) that the principal victims of sexual assault are women and the principal perpetrators are men, here I treat references such as 'victim' or 'accuser' as lexical choices in the gendered category of 'woman', while choices such as 'perpetrator' or 'accused' are assigned as a lexical choice in the gendered category of 'man'. The reverse of these choices, women being the perpetrators and men being the victims of rape, can also very much be the case. However, both the abovementioned statistics and the contextual information of the posts, such as OMO's mission to defend accused boys and men, lead to the choice of including these terms in the commonplace gendered understandings of them.

The results of the analysis can be seen in table 3 below. It can be seen that OMO refers to women in a range of ways, both as 'women' and 'girls', but also as 'victims' or 'accusers', and less often as 'wife'. SOS' representations of women in large parts are characterised by speech in the first person. VOV almost exclusively represents women and frequently identifies them as 'victims' or by their function, such as being a student or a board member. Men, however, are most frequently identified as 'perpetrators' by the organisation.

Table 3: Overview of the results of the analysis of lexical choice.

OMO Semiotic choices		SOS Semiotic choices		VOV Semiotic choices	
Fem	Mas	Fem	Mas	Fem	Mas
Wom*n (31)	I (68)	I (181)	I (67)	She (28)	Perpetrator* (5)
She (30)	One (Danish: man) (54)	One (Danish: man) (28)	He (47)	Victim* (16)	They (3)
Girl* (21)	M*n (44)	She (20)	You (10)	[Name] (10)	M*n (3)
I (18)	He (30)	You (5)	M*n (6)	Rape victim* (8)	One (Danish: man) (2)
One (Danish: man) (9)	Boy* (23)	Friend* (3)	One (Danish: man) (4)	Activist (3)	More (1)
Some* (7)	[Name] (14)	Wom*n (2)	Boy* (3)	They (3)	He (1)
Rape victim* (7)	They (13)	Girl* (2)	Colleague* (3)	Board member (2)	
Accuser* (6)	One (Danish: en) (4)	[Name] (1)	Person* (3)	Citizen (2)	
Victim* (6)	Defendant* (4)	One (Danish: en) (1)	Many (2)	Front person (2)	
[Name] (5)	Rapist (Danish: voldtægtsforbyrder) (3)	Girlfriend (1)	Some* (2)	Co-founder (2)	
Person* (5)	Accused (3)		Friend (2)	[Username] (1)	
Other* (4)	Brother* (3)		One (Danish: en) (1)	Foreperson (1)	
They (4)	Many (3)		Guy* (1)	You (1)	
You (3)	Rapist (Danish: voldtægtsmand) (3)		Person in question (1)	Communication student (1)	
Injured (3)	Citizen (2)				
Wife (2)	Boyfriend (2)				
Teaching assistant (2)	Human (2)				
50 percent (1)	Guilty (2)				
Complainant* (1)	Son (2)				
One (Danish: en) (1)	Innocent (2)				
Chairman (1)	Person in custody (2)				
	Friend (2)				
	Other (1)				
	Consent-convicted (1)				

In visual representations, the organisation OMO represents men in 37,1% of images and video scenes, while representing women in 40,3%. While different men are portrayed in the images, the only woman portrayed is the chairperson, who frequently appears in posts where she responds to comments. Men, on the other hand, are portrayed in various ways, some of them in blurred black-and-white images, while another tells his story while sitting in front of the camera as though he was being interviewed.

The organisation SOS visually represents male participants in 21,8% and women in 43,6% of the visual elements. Both women and men are represented in various ways in the organisation's posts. Some of the visuals feature women and men in an interview-style setup, where they sit alone in front of the camera, while other posts include more impromptu interviews with festival guests and others again seem like photoshoots. In the images and videos where more than one participant is featured both women and men are assigned an active role visually. This can, for example, be seen in that both women and men are shown in verbal or material actions. It is, however, noticeable that the representatives of the organisation that are shown in the posts, who can be identified by their clothing that is affiliated with the organisation, are most frequently women.

The organisation VOV does not visually represent men and represents women in 13,6% of images. Women are here represented as part of a newspaper article that the organisation shared on their Instagram profile. The images themselves are cropped in the same manner; however the backgrounds, angles and distances are different in each image.

4.2. Hinderances to understanding sexual consent

This part of the analysis focuses on the verbal communication of the three organisations' Instagram posts. By examining the organisations' posts for what is foregrounded, backgrounded or added, this section identifies the presence of rape myths, condescending representations of rape victims, misinformation about consent-based rape provisions, and the portrayal of sexual assault as an individualised experience.

4.2.1. Representation of rape myths

For the analysis of the rape myths represented in the three organisations' verbal communication about sexual consent, each Instagram post was examined in its entirety, as the manifestation of rape myths may at times span over several sentences of the entire post. This also means that several rape myths may be represented in a single post.

The analysis revealed that two out of the three organisations, OMO and SOS, represented rape myths in their Instagram posts, while the only organisation that did not was VOV. However, which rape myths were incorporated varied between the remaining two organisations.

OMO most frequently featured the rape myth of questioning whether the rape took place, but in multiple posts also included the rape myth of narrowing of what constitutes rape. SOS, on the other hand, featured less rape myths overall, and also included different rape myths. SOS' Instagram posts most frequently featured the rape myth of removing the perpetrator's responsibility and the rape myth of blaming the victim.

The first rape myth presented previously, which focuses on blaming the victim, is exemplified in the following Instagram post by SOS from August 23rd, 2023, in which a young woman is speaking: "It's so hard to define, also because I can look back and hear myself saying "We're not going to have sex", perhaps it is being said a little too seductively or flirtatiously." (Sex & Samfund [@sexogsamfund], 2023d). This example also shows how self-blame intersects with victim blame, as the young woman adopts a common trope of victim blaming to describe her own actions in the situation.

A post by OMO from July 5th, 2023, where the organisation states that "It is not only terrible for these boys and men to have their lives ruined, it is also an insult to the real rape victims to have

their experiences equated with something that no one in their right mind would associate with rape.” (Ord Mod Ord [@ordmodord], 2023b), which represents the second rape myth, narrowing of what constitutes rape.

The third rape myth, which focuses on removing the perpetrator’s responsibility is evident in the same post by SOS from the August 23rd, 2023: “So I get that he didn't quite understand that my "no" wasn't a real no.” (Sex & Samfund [@sexogsamfund], 2023d).

Finally, the post by OMO from June 14th, 2023, which says: “We don't believe that women only give false reports, but it happens.” (Ord Mod Ord [@ordmodord], 2023a) shows the fourth rape myth of questioning whether the rape has taken place.

4.2.2. Representation of rape victims

Especially the organisation OMO employ a number of discursive strategies that question the injured party’s victimhood, which both dissuade rape victims from defining a sexual assault as such and defining themselves as victims of sexual assault but also play into stereotypical understandings of rape.

Firstly, the bias that is introduced by encouraging readers to focus on the actions of the rape victims by calling them accusers in newspaper headlines (Franiuk et al., 2008) may also be present in Instagram posts. This can be seen in a post by OMO (2023h) from the August 8th: “It is therefore very difficult to prove one's innocence, as there is usually no objective evidence in these cases to judge from and thus only the allegations of the *accusing party*.” (emphasis added). This is enhanced when the organisation compares accusers or alleged victims to, what they call, real rape victims. This can be seen in a post by the organisation from July 5th, where OMO (2023b) states: “Because as long as any girl or woman can walk into a police station in Denmark and claim to have been subjected to *the same things that actual rape victims are subjected to*, every boy and man will be in danger of being accused and convicted of this crime!” (emphasis added). Not only does this directly question girls’ and women’s victimhood by comparing them to a stereotypical understanding of what a rape victim is but it also plays into the rape myth of narrowing of what constitutes rape (Det Kriminalpræventive Råd & Epinion, 2023).

Furthermore, OMO also uses the technique of scare quotes, placing both the aggrieved, the perpetrator, and the criminal act in scare quotes. While it is not possible to ascertain in this analysis what the intention of the organisation in using these scare quotes was, both Bohner et al. (2003) and Gutzmann & Stei (2011) conclude that authors frequently use them to indicate that readers should infer an alternative meaning from the word within the quotes or that the author repeats another author's words but is opposed to its previous meaning. In either case, placing the word aggrieved in scare quotes, as OMO (2023h) did in a post from the August 8th, where they state: “Even if this is concrete evidence such as text messages where the *"aggrieved"* themselves acknowledge that there was no assault.” (emphasis added), lets readers know that the organisation is opposed to the notion of an aggrieved or a victim and wishes to reverse the word’s meaning. This also plays into the rape myth of questioning whether the rape has taken place (Det Kriminalpræventive Råd & Epinion, 2023) by implying that an aggrieved person may not actually be aggrieved.

4.2.3. Misinformation about the consent-based rape provision

In making their disapproval of the consent-based rape provision known, OMO also reproduces misinformation about the provision. OMO (2023g) mischaracterises what is required for consensual sexual interactions, like in a post from September 29th, where a member of the organisation states: “You have to make a declaration of consent on a piece of paper or on video.” The organisation also erroneously states that only men must obtain sexual consent, as only men, according to OMO, have the obligation of clarification (Ord Mod Ord [@ordmodord], 2023f). OMO (2023e) also misrepresents the consequences of being sentenced for rape according to the new provision, which

can be seen in their post on October 2nd, where they state that “[...] you have to practically stop the intercourse throughout and keep asking: do you still want to have sex with me? - if you don’t get a yes all the time, you can in principle be sentenced to up to eight years in prison without parole for rape.”

4.2.4. Sexual assault as an individualised experience

One notable process in the data set, and especially prevalent in the data by SOS, was the process “to experience” (in Danish: “at opleve”). 16 different times, the organisation uses this process to describe young people ‘experiencing’ sexual harassment or sexual violence.

Using the process “to experience” allows the organisations to focus on the sexual assault victim and their perception of the sexual assault, but also risks obscuring the perpetrator and, in the process, removing their responsibility for the assault and placing it on the victim instead. Passive constructions, as well as other ways of communicatively avoiding describing the perpetrator or the sexual assault situation are also used by the organisation in their Instagram posts. For example, in one of their Instagram posts, SOS represents a sexual assault situation as follows: “And there was an experience where we had sex and we had kind of agreed to it, but along the way I kind of change my mind. I express it both verbally and also with my body language. And it still happens.” (Sex & Samfund [@sexogsamfund], 2023a). An example of avoiding mention of the sexual assault itself by focusing on the surrounding situation can be seen in one of SOS’ (2023c) video-based posts here: “And I’m sleeping there [at his place], like, and I don’t remember getting there, but I had somehow found my way there. And then we talked a couple of days later, and he said we had been together.” (clarification added).

4.3. Organisational responsibility

This section explores how the three different organisations handle communicating about sexual consent. Their communication is established multimodally, and the effects of the multiple resources play an important, but occasionally not overtly obvious, role in organisational positioning. The section will employ the multimodal method of the paper to examine the organisations’ use of *Audiovisual elements*, the *Indeterminacy of sexual consent*, and the in- or exclusion of *Expert voices*.

4.3.1. Audiovisual elements

Out of the 25 video-based Instagram posts of the entire data set, in 21, a gloomy mood is created through various audiovisual elements. While these may not be immediately obvious, they play a role in creating the organisation’s chosen mood.

18 of OMO’s 21 video-based posts feature a dark vignette, which frames the individual speaking in the video. This lowers the modality of the colours in the video and reduces the overall palette of the video. Additionally, this vignette also reduces the setting of the video as it is covered by the vignette or fades into the shadow of it. This also has the effect of directing focus towards the individual speaking, as they are framed by the vignette and are the only element of the video which retains higher modality.

Similarly, both the previously mentioned video-based posts by OMO and three of SOS’ video-based posts feature blurring effects that also reduce the modality of the images that have the effect added to them. Contrary to the previously described vignettes however, the blurring filters do not increase focus on the central participant of the scene. Instead, the blurring filter works to obscure the identity of the participant as well as the general setting of the scene. In OMO’s case, the images often feature, what seem to be, distraught men who bury their head in their hands or otherwise look distraught, adding to OMO’s narrative of young men being accused of crimes they did not commit. In SOS’ case, the blurred filter is overlaid over video footage of bedrooms, streets, and night

clubs. Here, the blurred footage seems not so much as a warning as to which consequences the viewer may experience in regard to sexual consent, but more as setting the scene for which circumstances may lead up to situations in which sexual consent is relevant.

Finally, the three video-based posts by SOS also feature music at the beginning and at the end while the blurry video footage is playing. The piece of music chosen by SOS for these three videos is non-rythmic and non-melodic but rather focuses on a layered sound quality. It features a low-pitched relatively consistent undercurrent and a higher-pitched more irregular overlay. This creates a kind of tension where the undercurrent and overlay at times harmonise and at times mismatch, altogether making for a disjunctive articulation that makes for an uneasy viewing experience. In one of the videos, this music is then abruptly interrupted by another piece of music, which features a heavy beat and repetitive and energetic rhythms. As this video specifically covers sexual consent at parties, the music introduces the theme of the video.

Together, the organisations' choices of audiovisual elements evoke a sense of tension and gravity. This may lead to viewers understanding the topic of sexual consent as potentially dangerous or difficult.

4.3.2. Indeterminacy of sexual consent

With regard to the discursive strategies of fore- and backgrounding (Nørgaard & Jepsen, 2023), many of the organisations' posts foreground feelings of confusion regarding sexual consent and the consent-based rape provision. In some cases, the Instagram posts suggest that the sexual experience in question may fall somewhere in a grey area or that sexual consent can be looked at through a lens of dilemmas, both suggesting that sexual consent is something difficult and complicated. This ambiguous representation of sexual consent could lead to uncertainty among users, potentially hindering their understanding of clear sexual consent. An example of this can be seen in an extract of a video-based post by SOS (2023d) from August 23rd, where a young woman states:

And then suddenly you're at his place and that's where it gets really hard for me. I clearly said no in the build-up to the sex, but I didn't say no once the sex started. I didn't say no on the way home in the taxi and I don't say no at his place. And I didn't say no when he kissed me. That's where it's hard, because I haven't said, "I don't want to" but I also didn't say, "I want to" either. So, I think it's a bit of a grey area.

The example above shows how ambiguity and uncertainty is constructed through repetition of negations, which frames sexual consent as being a possible interpretation of an absence of both affirmation and refusal. Sexual consent therefore becomes a lack of an action instead of an action, which makes it inherently ambiguous. The speaker also explicitly classifies the situation as a grey area, alongside the previous negations, suggesting that the outcome was due to gaps in communication or understanding. This supposed grey area places consent between the no-means-no model and the yes-means-yes model, where the initial refusal should suffice for the former approach and the absence of explicit consent is of concern for the latter. This also adds to the ambiguity, as sexual consent is then based on implication rather than clear communication.

Additionally, 47 out of the 51 total Instagram posts focus on non-consensual sexual situations, while only 4 focus on how to communicate and understand sexual consent. Furthermore, the few posts that do focus on sexual consent are image-based posts with multiple text-heavy slides. Image-based posts may have decreased reach on Instagram, as users now seem to prefer video content. The preference for video content suggests that messages about sexual consent may not be reaching the audience as effectively.

The organisations also do not consistently identify sexual assault as such but frequently refer to it as 'boundary-crossing sexual advances', 'something boundary-crossing', and even just

‘something’. Previous studies have addressed that few survivors of sexual assault feel comfortable calling themselves victims of sexual assault and the organisations may intend to frame sexual assault broader to include those viewers who do not define themselves as victims of sexual assault. However, at the same time, framing sexual assault broadly also invites ambiguity and makes the specific context unclear for the reader. This lack of clarity can dilute the seriousness of the issue and make it harder for viewers to recognize and understand sexual boundaries and consent.

4.3.3. Expert voices

In regard to expert voices, the organisations seem to use the discursive strategy of exclusion. While the organisations obviously produce the videos and expert opinion therefore may inform the posts, none of the organisations, either visually or verbally, represent expert voices in their Instagram posts. Omitting expert voices means that the statements by the represented participants are not clarified with expert opinions. For example, SOS (2023a, 2023c, 2023b) published three videos in succession (August 23rd, 2023, to August 25th, 2023) in which the interviewees draw on rape myths to tell about their personal experiences with sexual non-consent. The videos could well have been ended by inviting an expert on sexual consent to speak about sexual consent and the interviewees’ stories of non-consensual sexual experiences but instead the video ends with short clips of the interviewees spliced together with blurry B-roll footage of young people at parties, in the city or kissing.

Including expert voices could provide authoritative insights, as well as help debunk myths and misinformation around the consent-based rape provision and sexual consent in general. Experts could offer clear definitions, legal perspectives, and practical advice on navigating consent, thereby enhancing the educational value of the posts.

5. Discussion

5.1. Organisational roles in reinforcing or challenging sexual consent messaging

My analysis shows that OMO visually represents women slightly more often than men, while verbally representing men more frequently than women. However, this increased representation of men is relatively more in passive roles than women. OMO’s Instagram posts also feature all four of the rape myths laid out in the IRMA-DK scale (Det Kriminalpræventive Råd & Epinion, 2023), however mostly focusing on the myth of questioning whether the rape has taken place and narrowing of what constitutes rape. Finally, OMO actively promotes misinformation about sexual consent in their posts, where they distort both the facts around practicing sexual consent and the legal consequences of not practicing it while also presenting sexual consent as something generally difficult and dangerous verbally and audiovisually. Overall, OMO promotes the reversal of the consent-based rape provision and focuses on the danger for young men to be accused and sentenced for sexual crimes they did not (knowingly) commit.

While SOS visually represents women twice as much as men and also verbally represents women more frequently than men, the organisation’s verbal representation of men in relatively more passive roles mimics that of OMO. SOS also represents rape myths in their Instagram posts and the ones most frequently featured, though less than OMO, are the myths of blaming the victim and removing the perpetrator’s responsibility. In multiple posts, SOS also presents rape as an individualised experience and obscures the perpetrator by relying on the process of ‘experiencing’ sexual assault. Both audiovisually and verbally, the organisation also presents sexual consent as something difficult or dangerous, which is especially noticeable when the participants speak of the grey areas or dilemmas of sexual consent. Overall, the organisation seems to promote that sexual consent is important and that the new consent-based rape provision is a good change but also that sexual consent is difficult and that sex, maybe especially for young people, can be a grey area.

VOV does not feature men visually and verbally represents men in very few instances. But the organisation still verbally represents men in relatively more passive roles than women. VOV does not feature any of the IRMA-DK scale rape myths. While VOV by and large supports the consent-based rape provision, the organisation principally focuses on the insufficient support for rape victims in Denmark.

5.2. *Gendered responsibility and agency*

Throughlines between the organisations are shown by my analysis to be that women are relatively more often placed in an active role. This could be argued to award women agency in relation to the topic of sexual consent, but it also simultaneously makes sexual consent the responsibility of women.

While communicatively giving women responsibility in relation to sexual consent is not surprising, as women have the responsibility for contraception (Nørgaard & Jepsen, 2023), the ascription of agency, however, is interesting as the main demographic group of victims of sexual assault is women, with the perpetrators of sexual assault, mostly men, arguably have more agency in the situation and the sexual non-consent (the agency) of women is overridden. Simultaneously the data set represents men, by virtue of their more passive roles, as having less responsibility for sexual consent and also having less agency in situations that are related to sexual consent.

Looking at the intersemiotic relations, we can see that OMO's Instagram posts show a discrepancy between their visual and verbal gendered representation. SOS', as well as VOV's, verbal and visual foregrounding of women means that the intersemiotic relations are consistent, but the increased first-person representation of women also seems to coincide with men being represented in more passive roles.

As previously established, while not all men perpetrate sexual violence, the majority of perpetrators are men and the majority of the victims are women. In the data there are a few instances of men representing themselves and there are no instances of men representing themselves in the role of a perpetrator. Most represented women, who are most often the victims of sexual violence, are also hesitant to name or speak directly of the perpetrators. In the Instagram posts a situation hence arises where perpetrators are occasionally spoken about but largely omitted. This, for example, can be seen in the frequent use of the process of 'experiencing' in relation of sexual assault, which allows the individual and the organisation to circumvent naming perpetrators and thereby both individualises and subjectifies sexual assault. It suggests that the experience may only be something the woman perceived as sexual assault and thereby also serves to individualise the experience, as it is now the responsibility of the woman that is foregrounded.

The results of my analysis may not be surprising on a global scale, where research has found similar tendencies in other national contexts. However, the Danish self-understanding frequently advances an image of gender equality and progressive values. My analysis shows that the organisations do not communicate in accordance with this self-understanding. While my analysis only focuses on three organisations and therefore cannot claim to provide an overview of all communication about sexual consent in Denmark. However, Flyvbjerg (2004) notes that strategic, as opposed to representative, case selection can increase generalisability. The analysis takes this into consideration and therefore two organisations that represent either end of the spectrum as far as public opinion about the sexual consent law go, as well as the largest Danish organisation concerned with sexual health were chosen. This was done in an attempt to gain the broadest possible picture of communication about sexual consent by non-profit organisations on social media.

5.3. *Discursive presence of rape myths*

In my analysis, I specifically focused on the representation of rape myths in the organisations' Instagram posts. While all four rape myths of the IRMA-DK scale were represented in the data set,

it was maybe most surprising that SOS, as an organisation that was an advocate for the implementation of the consent-based rape provision, represents rape myths in their Instagram posts. While it is predominantly in the video-based posts that feature interviews in which young Danes speak to their experiences with sexual non-consent, it is still surprising that SOS did not choose to follow up the young participants' statements with clarifications by their own experts. Research exists about sexual assault survivor's hesitancy in labelling the sexual assault that was perpetrated against them as such, and it therefore seems pertinent to both include this information and simultaneously dispel the rape myths that young Danes may rely on to explain away what they perceive to be uncomfortable sexual situations.

5.4. Limitations of the present paper

As there is currently no registry of organisations communicating about sexual consent, the three organisations chosen for this study, despite best efforts to ensure representativeness, may in fact not represent the general communication about sexual consent in Denmark. Nonetheless, this study shows how the three organisations, which had most overlap with the discourse found in newspaper headlines, communicated about sexual consent in the time frame of data collection, giving an insight into some aspects of the communication in the Danish media landscape. This study also focuses on mapping the current understanding and communication of sexual consent, which is why a longitudinal perspective was not included. Examining the change in understanding and the volume of published material surrounding sexual consent would be an interesting avenue of future research. Finally, this study has focused on analysing the final communication product, not the considerations that went into the production of the Instagram posts or the reception of the finished posts by Instagram users.

5.5. Future perspectives: Nuance and clarity

The public discussion in Denmark about sexual consent has often been characterized by a focus on nuance and the complexities of the topic. This emphasis on the grey areas and dilemmas of sexual consent, while important, may inadvertently obscure young Danes' understanding of what sexual consent actually entails.

As highlighted in both the literature review and the analysis, much of the discourse in Denmark portrays sexual consent as a challenging and difficult concept. This portrayal can lead to confusion and uncertainty, making it difficult for individuals to understand clear and straightforward principles of sexual consent. Harris (2018) discusses a similar issue in an American context, arguing that framing sexual consent as inherently difficult perpetuates the common stereotype that sexual assault results from misunderstandings or miscommunications. This stereotypical understanding also feeds into the rape myth of removing the perpetrator's responsibility. While verbal clear communication has been researched, and some suggestions have been given as to how to make sexual health communication more inclusive and clearer, other multimodal aspects of clear communication have yet to be developed. Additionally, it would also be interesting to examine young Danes' perceptions of the analysed Instagram posts in order to better understand what understanding they gain from social media content about sexual consent.

6. Conclusion

This paper provides insights into multimodal discourses about rape myths, sexual consent, and gender roles in Danish non-profit organisations' Instagram posts. The paper's findings highlight how the organisations' communication verbally represent men in relatively more passive roles compared to women. Additionally, the organisations also employ different verbal strategies to represent rape as an individualised experience while simultaneously obscuring the perpetrators. This

perpetuates rape myths and also frequently presents sexual consent as a complex and difficult issue. This focus on difficulty, complexity, and nuance could be argued to hinder a clear understanding of sexual consent and could, alongside the ascription of sexual consent as the responsibility of women, be used as an excuse for sexual violence. The findings highlight a need for organisations to adopt more clear and inclusive communication strategies to improve young Danes' understanding of sexual consent but may also reflect a wider need to reflect on the common Danish self-understanding of having achieved gender equality and progressive values.

References

- Andersen, Tomas Hestbæk, & Alexandra Emilie Holsting (2015). *Teksten i grammatikken* (1st ed.). Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag.
- Beres, Melanie (2007). "Spontaneous" sexual consent: An analysis of sexual consent literature'. *Feminism and Psychology*, 17(1): 93–108. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353507072914>
- Bindesbøl Holm Johansen, Katrine (2021). 'Seksuelt samtykke og mulige årsager til seksuel vold'. In Tine Søberg, Linda Kjær Minke, & Trine Baumbach (eds.), *Voldtægtssagen - retssystemets akilleshæl* (1st ed.). Djøf Forlag.
- Bindesbøl Holm Johansen, Katrine, Bodil Maria Pedersen & Tine Tjørnhøj-Thomsen (2020). "You can Feel that on the Person"—Danish Young People's Notions and Experiences of Sexual (Non)Consenting'. *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 28(1): 4–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2019.1685593>
- Bohner, Gerd (2001). 'Writing about rape: Use of the passive voice and other distancing text features as an expression of perceived responsibility of the victim'. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 40(4): 515–529. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466601164957>
- Bohner, Gerd, Frederike Eyssel & Philipp Süßenbach (2003). 'Modern myths about sexual aggression: New methods and findings'. In *Rape: Challenging Contemporary Thinking - 10 Years On* (pp. 159–171). Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003163800-14>
- Bouvier, Gwen, & Joel Rasmussen (2022). *Qualitative research using social media*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429319334>
- Christensen, Bjarne (2021). *Unges forhold til og forståelse af samtykke og grænser i seksuelle situationer*. https://sexogsamfund.dk/files/media/document/unges_forhold_til_og_forstaelse_af_samtykke_og_graenser_i_seksuelle_situationer.pdf. Retrieved 21.12.2023.
- CVR API (n.d.-a). *Ord mod Ord - Foreningen for drenge og mænds retssikkerhed i samtykkesager*. <https://cvrapi.Dk/Virksomhed/Dk/Ord-Mod-Ord-Foreningen-for-Drenge-Og-Maends-Retssikkerhed-i-Samtykkesager/43981897>. Retrieved 25.06.2025.
- CVR API (n.d.-b). *Voldtægtsfres Vilkår*. <https://cvrapi.Dk/Virksomhed/Dk/Voldtægtsfres-Vilkaar/41836776>. Retrieved 25.06.2025.
- Danmarks Statistik (2023). *Danmark bruger sociale medier mest i EU*. <https://www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/nyheder-analyser-publ/nyt/NytHtml?cid=46771>. Retrieved 16.06.2025.
- Det Kriminalpræventive Råd & Epinion (2023). *Stereotype forestillinger om voldtægt og holdning til samtykke*. <https://dkr.dk/materialer/vold-og-voldtægt/stereotype-forestillinger-om-voldtægt-og-holdning-til-samtykke>. Retrieved 12.12.2023.
- Dunn, Hailee, & Lindsay Orchowski (2022). 'Gender Equitable Attitudes, Rape Myth Acceptance, and Perceived Peer Approval of Violence as Correlates of High School Boys' Intention to Garner Sexual Consent'. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37(21–22): NP19688–NP19705. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605211042623>

- Edwards, Katie, Jessica Turchik, Christina Dardis, Nicole Reynolds & Christine Gidycz (2011). 'Rape Myths: History, Individual and Institutional-Level Presence, and Implications for Change'. *Sex Roles*, 65(11–12): 761–773. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-011-9943-2>
- Flyvbjerg, Bent (2004). 'Five misunderstandings about Case-Study research'. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2): 117–142. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800405284363>
- Franiuk, Renae, Jennifer Seefeldt & Joseph Vandello (2008). 'Prevalence of rape myths in headlines and their effects on attitudes toward rape'. *Sex Roles*, 58(11–12): 790–801. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-007-9372-4>
- Giles, David (2018). 'Towards a Theory of Media and Affordance'. In David Giles (ed.), *Twenty-First Century Celebrity*. Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-78743-708-120181003>
- Gutzmann, Daniel & Erik Stei (2011). 'How quotation marks what people do with words'. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(10): 2650–2663. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2011.03.010>
- Halliday, Micheal, & Christian Matthiessen (2014). *Halliday's Introduction to functional grammar* (4th ed.). London: Routledge.
- Harris, Kate Lockwood (2018). 'Yes means yes and no means no, but both these mantras need to go: communication myths in consent education and anti-rape activism'. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 46(2): 155–178. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00909882.2018.1435900>
- Hickman, Susan, & Charlene Muehlenhard (1999). "By the Semi-Mystical Appearance of a Condom": How Young Women and Men Communicate Sexual Consent in Heterosexual Situations'. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 36(3): 258–272. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499909551996>
- Hust, Stacey, Emily Garrigues Marett, Chunbo Ren, Paula Adams, Jessica Willoughby, Ming Lei, Weina Ran & Cassie Norman (2014). 'Establishing and adhering to sexual consent: The association between reading magazines and college students sexual consent negotiation'. *Journal of Sex Research*, 51(3): 280–290. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2012.727914>
- Hutchby, Ian (2014). 'Communicative affordances and participation frameworks in mediated interaction'. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 72: 86–89. Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2014.08.012>
- International Planned Parenthood Federation (n.d.). *Sex & Samfund - The Danish Family Planning Association*. <https://Europe.Ippf.Org/about-Us/Member-Associations/Sex-Samfund-Danish-Family-Planning-Association>. Retrieved 25.06.2025.
- Jozkowski, Kristen, Stephanie Sanders, Zoë Peterson, Barbara Dennis & Michael Reece (2014). 'Consenting to sexual activity: The development and psychometric assessment of dual measures of consent'. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 43(3): 437–450. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-013-0225-7>
- Knoutsen, Evangelina Kousounadi, Vibeke Asmussen Frank & Maria Herold (2024). 'Uncovering young people's situational construction of sexual consent'. *NAD Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 41(3): 240–259. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14550725231223888>
- Kress, Gunther & Theo van Leeuwen (2020). *Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design*. (3rd ed.). London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003099857>
- Leaver, Tamara, Tim Highfield, & Crystal Abidin (2020). *Instagram: Visual Social Media cultures*. Polity.
- Ledin, Per & David Machin (2018). *Doing Visual Analysis*. London: Sage Publishing.
- Lischinsky, Alon (2018). 'Doing the naughty or having it done to you? Agent roles in erotic writing'. *Porn Studies*, 5(2): 156–174. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23268743.2017.1301215>
- Lonsway, Kimberly & Louise Fitzgerald (1994). 'Rape Myths: In Review'. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 18(2).

- Machin, David & Andrea Mayr (2012). *How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis - A Multimodal Introduction* (1st ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Martinec, Radan & Andrew Salway (2005). 'A system for image-text relations in new (and old) media'. *Visual Communication*, 4(3): 337–371. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357205055928>
- Muehlenhard, Charlene, Terry Humphreys, Kristen Jozkowski, & Zoë Peterson (2016). 'The Complexities of Sexual Consent among College Students: A Conceptual and Empirical Review'. *Journal of Sex Research*, 53(4-5): 457–487. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2016.1146651>
- Nørgaard, Nina (2021). 'From black to green with a dash of New Nordic. The multimodal rebranding of a Danish energy company with global aspirations'. *Social Semiotics*, 33(3): 660–679. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2021.1919015>
- Nørgaard, Nina & Carole Jepsen (2023). 'Misconceptions: a multimodal study of Danish contraception information'. *Visual Communication*, 22(3): 488–509. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14703572231161803>
- Numanbayraktaroğlu, Sevda (2019). 'The Grammar of Gender Ideology: The Press Coverage of Sexual Violence in Turkey and the Passive Voice'. *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, 28. <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejts.6359>
- Ord Mod Ord (n.d.). *Foreningen for drenge og mænds retssikkerhed i samtykkesager*. <https://www.ordmodord.dk/>. Retrieved 25.06.2025.
- Ord Mod Ord [@ordmodord] (2023a, June 14). *Det er en vigtig pointe for vores arbejde at slå fast, at vi IKKE støtter voldtægtsforbrydere! Vi ser med stor [Photograph]*. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CtecG5eMJsK/>. Retrieved 25.06.2025.
- Ord Mod Ord [@ordmodord] (2023b, July 5). *Gør dig selv den tjeneste at læse vores formand Marianne Stidsens kronik i Berlingske fra den 5. juli 2023 "Ubegrundet [Photograph]*. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CuU7kgZluSv/>. Retrieved 25.06.2025.
- Ord Mod Ord [@ordmodord] (2023c, October 1). *Hvordan spille samtykkeloven ind i, at man kan blive uskyldigt dømt? #retssikkerhed #samtykkeloven #ordmodord #uskyldigdømt #justitsmord [Video]*. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cx3limkocSR/>. Retrieved 25.06.2025.
- Ord Mod Ord [@ordmodord] (2023d, November 13). *Hvorfor er der den forskel på kønnene? #retssikkerhed #samtykkeloven #ordmodord #uskyldigdømt #forskelpåkøn #uretfærdighed [Video]*. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CzmPhEGIND/>. Retrieved 25.06.2025.
- Ord Mod Ord [@ordmodord] (2023e, October 2). *Hvorfor kriminaliserer samtykkeloven helt almindelig sex? Få svaret i videoen! #retssikkerhed #samtykkeloven #ordmodord #uskyldigdømt #justitsmord #kriminaliseringafsex [Video]*. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cx58-MyIIBQ/>. Retrieved 25.06.2025.
- Ord Mod Ord [@ordmodord] (2023f, October 3). *Nogen siger at voldtægtsmænd næsten altid bliver frikendt, og at voldtægtsofre altid bliver tilsidesat - de aner ikke hvad de taler [Video]*. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cx8fB4aoCG5/>. Retrieved 25.06.2025.
- Ord Mod Ord [@ordmodord] (2023g, September 23). *"På grund af samtykkeloven blev jeg uskyldigt dømt for voldtægt" Synes du det er retfærdigt? . . . #retssikkerhed #samtykkeloven #ordmodord #tiktok #uskyldigdømt [Video]*. Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/p/CxiSD_ToBi2/. Retrieved 25.06.2025.
- Ord Mod Ord [@ordmodord] (2023h, August 8). *..paragraf 216-sager handler primært om sympati og følelser, sekundært om jura og beviser. Det er derfor meget svært at [Photograph]*. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CvrvqMZophX/>. Retrieved 25.06.2025.
- Payne, Diana, Kimberly Lonsway, & Louise Fitzgerald (1999). 'Rape Myth Acceptance: Exploration of Its Structure and Its Measurement Using the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale'. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 33(1): 27-68.

- <https://doi.org/10.1006/jrpe.1998.2238>
- Popova, Milena (2019). *Sexual consent*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
<https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/12108.001.0001>
- Porter, Andrew, Spring Cooper, Ashley Falcon, Megan Piller, Ritika Modi & Emily Hawver (2024). 'The "memeification" of sexual health communication on Instagram'. *Sex Education*, 25(2): 221-237. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2023.2300069>
- Roien, Line Anne, Christian Graugaard & Venka Simovska (2022). 'From Deviance to Diversity: Discourses and Problematisations in Fifty Years of Sexuality Education in Denmark'. *Sex Education*, 22(1): 68–83. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2021.1884060>
- Sciberras, Ruby & Claire Tanner (2024). "Sex is so much more than penis in vagina": sex education, pleasure and ethical erotics on Instagram'. *Sex Education*, 24(3): 344–357. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2023.2199976>
- Sex & Samfund (n.d.). *Sex & Samfunds historie*. <https://Sexogsamfund.Dk/Om-Os/Historie>. Retrieved 25.06.2025.
- Sex & Samfund [@sexogsamfund] (2023a, August 25). *1 ud af 4 unge har været i tvivl om de har overskredet deres sexpartners grænser. Hør 14 seje unge [Video]*. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CwXnQyvIz3A/>. Retrieved 25.06.2025.
- Sex & Samfund [@sexogsamfund] (2023b, December 7). *Er grænseoverskridende adfærd mere okay med en nissehue på? 🍷 Det er højsæson for julefester og -frokoster i danske virksomheder [Video]*. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/C0jl8xcsfbc/>. Retrieved 10.07.2025.
- Sex & Samfund [@sexogsamfund] (2023c, August 24). *Mange unge oplever, at seksuelt samtykke er svært. Og det kan være særligt svært, når der er alkohol og fest [Video]*. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CwU55fpI93i/>. Retrieved 25.06.2025.
- Sex & Samfund [@sexogsamfund] (2023d, August 23). *Over 50% af unge i alderen 16-29 år har givet samtykke til noget seksuelt, selvom de ikke havde lyst [Video]*. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CwR7ZvZIIVC/>. Retrieved 25.06.2025.
- Statbank (n.d.). *Victims of reported criminal offences by type of offence, time and sex*.
- Sundhedsstyrelsen (2018). *Seksuel sundhed*. <https://www.sst.dk/da/udgivelser/2020/Forebyggelsespakke-Seksuel-sundhed>. Retrieved 16.06.2025
- Tesfaye, Mattias (2023). Forslag til Lov om ændring af lov om gymnasiale uddannelser. In *Folketingstidende*. <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20251/lovforslag/134/index.htm>. Retrieved 04.07.2025.
- Thulin, Elyse, Autumn Rae Florimbio, Meredith Philyaw-Kotov, Maureen Walton & Erin Bonar (2024). 'Measuring Electronically Shared Rape Myths: Scale Creation and Correlates'. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 39(1-2): 369–392. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605231197140>
- Uhnnoo, Sara, Sofie Erixon, & Moa Bladini (2024). 'The wave of consent-based rape laws in Europe'. *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, 77. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlcj.2024.100668>
- van Leeuwen, Theo (1999). *Speech, Music, Sound*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-27700-1>
- van Leeuwen, Theo (2008). *Discourse and Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195323306.001.0001>
- Vestergaard, Jørn (2020). 'The rape law revision in Denmark: Consent or voluntariness as the key criterion?' *Bergen Journal of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.15845/bjclcj.v8i2.3237>

- Voldtægtsfres Vilkår (n.d.). *Organisation*. <https://Offervilkaar.Dk/Index.Php/Organisation/>
Retrieved 25.06.2025.
- Willis, Malachi, Kelli Murray & Kristen Jozkowski (2021). 'Sexual Consent in Committed Relationships: A Dyadic Study'. *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*, 47(7): 669–686.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0092623X.2021.1937417>