Japanese Activists who Support Redress for "Comfort Women": Why and How Do They Address the "Comfort Women" Issue?

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to find out: What led Japanese activists who support "comfort women" to hold their opinions, and what do they think contributes to the polarized public opinion about "comfort women" in Japan? What are their activities and strategies to address the issue? How do those activists evaluate their activism and the resolution process?

In-depth qualitative interviews were utilized to collect data. The research findings showed that different interpretations of the Second World War and different understandings about male and female rights and roles influenced people's opinions about "comfort women." Japanese activists used international pressure to address the issue. Also, it was found that the rightward political trend in Japan fueled by economic recession was impeding the progress of addressing the problem. Based on the findings, suggestions were made to improve the activism, including consideration of reconciliation as a way of dealing with the problem.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction and Purpose

One of the continuing legacies of the Asia-Pacific War is the controversy about Japan's use of "comfort women" in the Second World War. This controversy and other war related issues negatively affect Japan's current diplomatic relations with its neighboring countries, mainly South Korea and China. The "comfort women" and other war related issues become most controversial during August because there is an anniversary of the end of the Second World War on August 15th. During the war, South Korea and China suffered tremendously by Japanese invasion and colonization.

The Second World War was a global war from 1931 till 1945 and it took place both in Europe and in Asia. In Europe, the war began when Germany invaded Poland in 1931 to expand its territory, and France and the United Kingdom declared the war against Germany two days later. The invasion was a part of Germany's ultimate plan to be the dominant power on the European continent. Many historians agree that this Germany's aggressive vision to be hegemony in the region was the cause of the outbreak of the war in Europe (Stokesbury 1980; Murray and Millett 2000).

In the same year of 1931, Japan started invading Manchuria in China to expand the Japanese Empire and its economy (Moriyama 2000, 6). Six years later, Japan was at total war with China, and that is believed to be the start of the Second World War in Asia in 1937 (Murray and Millett 2000). Before the war, Japan was rising as a big powerful nation after it defeated China and Russia in 1895 and 1905

respectively. These victories fueled a sense of destiny as an imperial power in Asia and future expansion (Lary 2007). Meanwhile, Japan also went through rapid industrialization, but it realized that it could not be a manufacturing giant because it lacked natural resources in its homeland. Unlike other major powers in the world at that time, Japan had no big empire from which to draw cheap raw materials. Japanese politicians saw the economic exploitation in China as a way of securing more raw materials and expanding economy (Stokesbury 1980). This was how Japan started wars in China and other parts in Asia. Besides its economic interest, Japan also had a sense of destiny to rule all of Asia like Germany envisioned in Europe (Murray and Millett 2000).

After its invasion in China, by forming the Axis Alliance with Germany and Italy, Japan also began invading Southeast Asia for the same interests in natural resources during the Asia-Pacific War, which is a phase of the Second World War (Yasui 1993, 3; Arai 1973, 24-94). In the meantime, U.S. concerns about Japan's expansion in Asia were growing. To warn Japan about its aggression, the U.S. started placing harsh economic restrictions, such as raising tariffs, against Japan (Johnsen 1938, 149). This affected the Japanese economy severely, and it put Japan into an either-or position, whether Japan stops its further invasion or goes to war with the United States. Japan took the latter choice and attacked the Pearl Harbor in 1941 (Stokesbury 1980, 166). After this incident, Japan began gradually losing its power. Eventually, Japanese expansion ended in East and Southeast Asia when Japan surrendered on August 15th, 1945 (Yasui 1993; Arai 1973).

During the war, Japan was ruthless and inflicted lots of suffering on Asian countries and their territories including Korea. Therefore, during August, there are anti-Japanese demonstrations, especially in South Korea and China, to celebrate the end of Japanese aggression. Both countries have strong animosity against Japan, especially for what its military did and the atrocities that it committed before and during the Second World War. In order not to forget this bitter past, South Koreans and Chinese protest on the street and create some political disturbance in August every year. In China, for example, demonstrators demand boycott of Japanese goods and throw rocks and bricks at the Japanese consulate (Tang 2012). More than 60 years passed after the war, South Korea and China are still not happy with Japan's cruel conduct during the war, and especially how Japan remembers and teaches its war history.

In August of 2012, there was a big political incident between Japan and South Korea. Then South Korean President Lee Myung-bak made a surprise visit to the disputed Takeshima islets, for which Japan and South Korean both claim their ownership. His visit created fierce resentment and upset among the Japanese and fueled Japanese anti-Korean sentiment. As a motive for his visit, Lee said that he was tired of the Japanese government's inaction to solve the "comfort women" issue and he wanted to demonstrate his intention that Japan needs to seriously deal with the issue to settle it (Hakoda 2012).

"Comfort Women" is a euphemistic expression to describe women (mostly Koreans) who were restrained by the Japanese troops for a certain period of time with no rights before and during the Second World War. They were forced to engage

in sexual activities with Japanese soldiers and generals. Some scholars call them "military sex slaves" (Yoshimi 2000, 39). Some of the "comfort women" were recruited forcibly or by deception by the Japanese military and many of them were kept with no basic human rights, such as rights to quit and leave, for the use of the Japanese military (Kurahashi 1994, 32,33). Therefore, some people argue that the term "comfort women" is not accurate because it does not reflect the reality of those women so that the name needs to be changed to more correctly describe the women. Despite its debatable usage of the term, the name "comfort women" is used in this thesis simply because that is the common language of the people who are involved in the "comfort women" issue in Japan and also because that is the name widely recognized in academia. More details about who are "comfort women" will be discussed later.

The Japanese military used the system of "comfort women" mainly to keep the soldiers away from sexually transmitted diseases and also to provide "comfort" to soldiers by using women. This practice of "comfort women" was a clear example of gender-based sexual violence against women in times of conflict. Wartime gender violence against women is not a new phenomenon, but it had been silenced and marginalized until recently. This case of Japanese military sexual slavery is a good example. (It was not discussed and studied until 1990s). Severe cases of sexualized violence used as a weapon of warfare during wars in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda finally directed people's attention to this appalling crime. In ad hoc tribunals for these wars, for the first time in history, criminals of sexual violence were prosecuted. These tribunals also expanded the definition of sexual violence

against women in times of war (Leatherman 2011; Kaufman and Williams 2010; Merry 2009; Henry 2011). More about gender-based violence in conflict will be discussed later.

In history of warfare, similar cases to the Japanese "comfort women" system existed in the world. Countries who fought major wars, such as the U.S., Britain, France, and Germany, used the military controlled system of prostitution (Tanaka n.d., 3). This type of forced prostitution is another form of gender-based sexual violence. But the case of the Japanese military sexual slavery was different from the other nations' military controlled prostitution system. Compared to others, the Japanese government and military were more formally, systematically, and directly engaged in the practice (Yoshimi 2010). This is the issue of "comfort women": being aware of how women were treated, the Japanese government and military were directly involved in establishing and managing the inhumane "comfort women" system, and the Japanese government has not adequately addressed this problem. As said, being frustrated by this Japan's lack of action to resolve the issue, President Lee took a drastic move visiting the controversial islets to demand the Japanese government deal with the problem, and that action created a controversy in Japan.

This event demonstrates that the issue of Japanese military sexual slavery is a big political problem between Japan and South Korea. Because of this, it is a taboo subject to discuss between Japanese and Koreans. I noticed this when I first went to the U.S. to study. I met a lot of Korean people, and we became close friends because we shared a lot of cultural similarities. No matter how close we came, however, I noticed that we could never speak about our history and especially the "comfort

women" issue. The fact that we could never talk about our past created a psychological wall between me and my Korean friends because I felt that we were hiding something or we were not being honest to each other.

Unless we solve the "comfort women" issue or at least make it debatable, the wall will stay and South Koreans will keep bearing a sense of dislike towards Japanese in the back of their minds. Because of the Japanese government's unwillingness to solve the issue as victims want, it seems like this problem will stay unsolved for a long time. As a person who wants to resolve this issue, I was curious if there had been any progress to end this matter. This is the reason why I decided to study Japanese activists who support "comfort women" because they are the ones who are working to address and try to resolve the issue of Japanese military sexual slavery in Japan.

Before learning about these activists, it is important to be familiar with what their activism tries to address, which is the "comfort women" issue. So, this thesis starts with explanations of the issue and its debate in Japan. Before explaining the issue itself, it is important to note that the "comfort women" problem is very controversial in Japan. Some people want to further address it and others oppose it. In fact, this divided opinion is a manifestation of persistent (and growing) conflicting perspectives in Japanese society about the Second World War. The next chapter starts with this discussion about Japanese debated war memories and how they affect different interpretations about war related historical issues including this matter. Next, because the practice of "comfort women" was a form of sexual violence, the literature about gender-based violence against women in times of

conflict will be reviewed, especially, how it was neglected and marginalized until recently.

After discussing the "comfort women" issue and how the Japanese government had historically addressed it, this thesis will explore the debate surrounding "comfort women" in Japan. In this debate, there are two opposing groups: one that supports the redress of former sex slaves and the other that opposes the redress. Japanese activists supporting "comfort women" belong to the former group. Here, I will explain what kind of beliefs the supportive Japanese activists hold and also the perspectives from the other side. Next, theories of reconciliation and historical reconciliation and social activism will be introduced. Some research questions, which will be presented shortly, ask what kinds of work activists do to address the issue. So reviewing theories related to social activism explaining what they should do to make their activism successful is crucial. Here, the theory of reconciliation is discussed specifically. This is because, after observing that the conflict between two opposing groups in the "comfort women" debate in Japan really hinders the resolution process, I believe that reconciliation and finding compatible resolutions together will be useful to better address the problem. The chapter on theories is followed by the methods section. It will explain qualitative research and an in-depth semi-structured interviews that were utilized to collect data to answer the research questions.

Research Questions and Purpose Statement

After reviewing the "comfort women" issue and its debate, theories, and methods, I move on to the main purpose of this thesis, which is to find out why, how,

and what Japanese activists who support "comfort women" do to address the issue by answering the following research questions: 1) What directed them to have opinions supporting redress of wrongs to "comfort women"; and, what contributed to the different positions on the "comfort women" problem in Japan? 2) Based on their viewpoints supporting "comfort women," what are their strategies and activities to address the issue? Do they include reconciliation? 3) How do they evaluate their activism and the resolution process? After providing answers for these questions, by analyzing them using theories, four suggestions to promote activism and resolution of the problem will also be discussed.

Significance of the Study

Before I began this study, through general research, a few articles were found that discussed the South Korean redress movement (Chou n.d.; Soh 2008). They explained what South Korean nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are doing to redress and resolve the "comfort women" issue. However, no major written work was found that discussed what Japanese activists think and do to address the "comfort women" issue in Japan. Therefore, reporting their activities and their thoughts will add new knowledge to the literature of the "comfort women" issue.

Also, by exploring and analyzing Japanese activism redressing the issue, this study will allow scholars and activists to think about and provide their opinions and suggestions to improve the activism and the resolution of the problem. Finally, being a male student researching this matter that carries heavy weight of a problem related to gender and women presents another perspective to the study.

Limitations to the Study

There were a few limitations to this project. First of all, this research only dealt with the experiences and perspectives of Japanese activists who want to redress the "comfort women" issue. It did not include perceptions of Japanese right wing nationalists except from books (Yasuda 2012; Ueno 2006). This research started with a question of how the "comfort women" issue is being addressed and resolved in Japan. Because activists who support "comfort women" were the ones who draw attention to the "comfort women" system and work to address the issue within Japan, the focus is on those activists supporting "comfort women."

Interviews were conducted with six representatives of five major NGOs working on this issue. This research did not attempt to interview all activists but to interview representatives from prominent NGOs to obtain in-depth descriptions about their work. Thirdly, reliance of self-reports in this study is another limitation, although qualitative research data including self-report is considered to be valid and reliable in the research (Crandall 1976). Lastly, there was only one male participant in this project. Because this issue is mainly treated as a problem related to gender and women (Stetz 2008, Ueno 2004, and Soh, 2008), it was difficult to find male activists.

In the end, as a note again, this thesis will continue to use the term "comfort women" only because that is the term in common usage. This does not mean that I agree with the euphemism. I do no think that the name "comfort women" really reflects the reality and ordeals that those women went through during their

captivity. So I will continue to include the term within quotation marks to remind the reader that it is a euphemism.

CHAPTER 2: Disputed War History and Gendered Violence in Conflict

The "comfort women" issue is a controversial topic in Japan separating people's viewpoints. To understand why, knowing Japanese disputed war memories is crucial because they are the reasons that divide the public opinion about war related issues including this matter. Next, the literature about gendered violence will be reviewed because the system of Japanese military sexual slavery was a form of gender-based sexual violence against women during war. Gender violence has only recently been studied. There are still some challenges to addressing the crimes of gender violence including this "comfort women" issue.

Contested War Memories

It has been more than sixty years since the end of the Second World War, yet its scars still remain today. Japan carries several war history issues that affect present diplomatic relations with its neighboring Asian countries. Those issues include the Nanking Massacre and the controversy surrounding Yasukuni Shrine. The Nanking Massacre refers to an incident on December 13th, 1937. When the Japanese Army captured the city of Nanking in southern China, it destroyed private and public buildings, ruthlessly butchered Chinese soldiers and civilians, and raped local Chinese women. Therefore, it is sometimes called the Rape of Nanking. Yet, the Japanese government has not confirmed the massacre (Hu 1992, 20). Another history problem is the Yasukuni Shrine controversy. In this controversy, people argue whether it is correct for Japanese Prime Ministers to pay a visit to Yasukuni Shrine, which enshrines the Class-A war criminals who were most responsible for the Japanese aggression in Asia during the Second World War (Seaton 2005, 299).

Some people argue that the Japanese Prime Ministers should not visit the shrine because it appears to justify its war efforts and it is disrespectful to the victims. Others contend that prime ministers should be able to visit because present Japan is built on war dead who fought for Japan and leaders should be able to pay homage to soldiers.

Japan does not have a national consensus about what kind of war the Second World War, or more specifically the Asia-Pacific War, was. Philip Seaton put it, "There is no single typically 'Japanese' way of looking back on the war, although there are a variety of identifiable competing cultural narratives" (2007, 4). For example, Japanese opinions are split whether Japan's war in Asia Pacific was the war of aggressive territorial and economic expansion or rather the war of liberation conducted to save Asian nations subdued by Western imperialism. Also, Japanese have different viewpoints about whether or not Japan had to start and fight the war in order to secure and preserve its existence in the international system when the U.S. was imposing harsh economic sanctions against Japan (Barnard 2003, 2).

Seaton classified Japanese interpretations about the war into five opinion groups. The first group consists of Japanese progressives. This group argues that the war was an aggressive war and Japan committed war crimes. The second group, composed of progressive-leaning people, understands that the war was an aggressive one. Yet, by saying that Japanese colonialism was also an "inevitable" result of international geo- and economic-politics at that time and that Western colonial powers also shared responsibility for the outbreak of the war, progressive-

leaning people do not demand the Japanese government take as much responsibility as progressives do (Seaton 2007).

The third group is made of people who do not know or care about the war. This group is predominately made of younger generations. The fourth group, consisting of conservatives, holds the "just war/unjust conduct" position. Admitting that Japan committed some aggressive acts, conservatives believe that the reason to enter the war was justifiable for the defense of the Japanese nation. Nationalists make up the last group and they take the "just war/just conduct" position. The reason to start the war was right so it should justify what happened during the war as well. In opinion polls, progressive and progressive-leaning views (50-60 percent) are more popular among Japanese than conservative and nationalistic standpoints (less than 30 percent) (Seaton 2007).

Just and Unjust Wars

The discussion about whether the war Japan started in Asia was correct or not is an example of the just and unjust wars argument. On this topic, Michael Walzer wrote an influential book, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations.* Walzer discussed what constitutes just wars. By first stating that aggression is always wrong (so the war of aggression is always an unjust war), when states are exposed to or threatened by aggression, wars to protect themselves from attacks as self-defense should be justified. Also, he argues that not only a war of self-defense, but also "a war of law enforcement by the victim and any other member of international society" (Walzer 1977, 62) is also justified. It means that a collective action to stop or fight against aggression jointly with the defender is also

permissible. Walzer further states that a preventive war to protect themselves before aggressors start the violence should be justified. He says, “They (defenders) can fire the first shots if they know themselves about to be attacked” (74). The judgment about the pre-emptive war is tricky because there are no standards outlining what danger is considered to be threats that give defending states permissions to start violence. Mostly the judgment is left to specific contexts (80).

Contrary to Walzer’s just and unjust wars theory that takes human morality of right or wrong into account when examining wars, people from the realist tradition in international relations do not consider morality when looking at why states go to war saying, “war lies beyond (beneath) moral judgment” (Walzer 1977, 3). According to realists, states act and make decisions, whether they are right or wrong, to increase their possibility of survival in the global system. One of the assumptions in the theory of realism is that the international system is anarchic (Donnelly 2000, 7). Also, human nature (so as nature of states) is wicked (Machiavelli 1970) and self-centered. Because there is no world government and states cannot trust each other, states engage in power maximization in order to increase their possibility of survival in the anarchic world system. In the process of power maximization, states might become aggressive and invade other countries to gain more power. These efforts, however, are considered to be states’ common tendencies in realism to ensure and maximize their security (Donnelly 2000, 6-12).

So there are different ways to look at or judge wars. Some people consider that there are just and unjust wars, and others think that states go to war, whether right or wrong, based solely on the anarchic nature of the international system. If all

Japanese take the idea of Walzer, they will all agree that the war that Japan started in Asia was an aggressive one so that Japan should take full responsibility. And this is the perspective of the progressive according to Seaton. But if you add the idea of realism, the perspective can change that even though it was an aggressive war, Japan was not the only country that acted like realist states. Other Western countries invaded and colonized other nations to gain more power, so Japan should not be held to a higher standard for its war efforts. This is the point of view from the progressive-leaning. Conservatives and nationalists are, however, more realists and do not consider the Walzer's argument as do the progressives. Conservatives and nationalists would reason that Japan started the war to protect itself and other Asian countries from the Western colonization and domination. Japan should have had the right to maximize their power through invasion to further secure their survival in the anarchic global system.

So, there are various interpretations among Japanese about the Asia-Pacific War, and there is no single shared understanding about the war and the war related issues. The debate surrounding the "comfort women" problem is a stark example of this. People have diverse opinions about the issue, but their opinions can be mainly divided into two groups: one that supports the redress of wrongs to the former "comfort women" and the other opposes the redress. Their disputing arguments will be discussed in the next chapter.

Gendered Violence

While we reviewed how contested war history memories affect the divided opinions about "comfort women" in Japan, it is also important to explore the

literature of gender violence because the practice of "comfort women" was a form of gender-based sexual violence against women during war. Before discussing wartime gender violence against women specifically, it is important to know that gender violence exists beyond wars and armed conflicts.

Gender-based violence (predominately against women) is a serious social problem. But it was not discussed and addressed to prevent it until recent years. Historically, violence against women taking place within the family was treated as less serious than bigger problems of violence happening in the public sphere. Gender violence within the families was considered to be a private problem, and it was not something into which states should interfere. Three decades ago, feminist activists started to challenge these preexisting beliefs, and began to "reformulate the legal and cultural notions of the private sphere of the family… [and] to foster societal and legal intervention into families" (Merry 2009, 1). In the 1990s, gender violence was finally defined as a violation of human rights, and violators even within the families could be prosecuted for their violence against their female family members (mostly wives) (Merry 2009).

There have been many theories explaining the roots of gender violence. But, for a very long time, there was a dominant theory positing, "Superior strength and a variety of hormonal stimuli predispose men toward violent, controlling behavior" (O'Toole, Schiffman, and Edwards 2007, 3). Yet, recently, this overwhelming popular explanation was challenged by the theory of social constructivism. It suggested, "*patriarchy*—the system of male control over women—is a human invention, not the inevitable outcomes of biological characteristic" (3). Therefore, male violence

resulting from patriarchy is not inevitable but a human creation (3). It means that the origins of gender violence are constructed in society and culture.

The social constructionist theory is also important when understanding gender. Gender is "a socially derived concept, a culturally varied construct that assigns to men and women a set of cultural roles and social functions, only minimally determined by their respective reproductive and sexual characteristics" (Reardon 2010 13). In short, like patriarchy and male violence, gender is not natural but it is a socially constructed phenomenon or concept that assigns to people certain roles and norms.

Gender violence means assault against individuals because of their gender identities (Wies and Haldane 2011, 2). Laura O'Toole and others define gender violence more comprehensively as "any interpersonal, organizational, or politically oriented violation perpetuated against people due to their gender identity, sexual orientation, or location in the hierarchy of male-dominated social systems" (2007, xii). Gender violence, in short, is violence in relation to gender. In most cases, victims of gendered violence are women. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights defines gender violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in… physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women… whether occurring in public or in private life" (1993). As an example of gender-based assault against women, intimate partnership abuse is a big problem in many countries (O'Toole, Schiffman, and Edwards 2007, 250). In North America, although media attention is paid to violence in the public such as fights among gang members, "more than 50 percent of the violent acts in North America occur within

the home" (Flaherty 2012, 24). Women and children are mostly targets of family violence. And most of the victims of the intimate partnership abuse are females (Flaherty 2012).

To find out causes of gender violence specifically against women, it is imperative to understand structural violence. According to a peace scholar Johan Galtung, structural violence is a type of violence that is "built in the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently unequal life chances" (1969, 171). And it will determine "who will be at risk for assaults and who will be shield from them" (Farmer 2003, 18). Many scholars already asserted a relationship between violence against women in intimate relationship (a form of gender violence) and structural violence (Wies and Haldane 2011, 3). For example, Sally Merry argues, "Interpersonal gendered violence and structural violence… are deeply connected. It is impossible to diminish violence against women without reducing these other (structural) forms of violence and injustice" (2009, 2). The notion of structural violence is very important in the study of gender violence (against women) because it acknowledges that there is a socially constructed structure that puts women in more disadvantaged positions than men and that makes women more vulnerable and be easy targets of gendered violence.

Gender-Based Sexual Violence in Times of Conflict

Like gender violence during peace times, wartime sexual violence against women did not get so much awareness until recently. There are many historical examples going back to ancient Greek and Roman times where women were abducted and raped. Yet, historical records presenting the voices of victims had

been silent and few efforts had been done to prevent and fight against gender-based violence during war (Leatherman 2011, 1). Recently, however, inattention to gender violence in times of conflict started to change, especially after severe cases of cruel sexual assaults against women in wars in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. People finally started to realize that there needed to be concrete measures and policies to protect women from gendered violence in armed conflict (Kaufman and Williams 2010).

Most wartime gender assault against women is sexual. Although sexual violence is often associated with rape, Inger Skjelsbæk explains that sexual violence is a multifaceted phenomenon including instances such as forced prostitution, sexual slavery, genital mutilation, enforced sterilization, enforced abortion, and so on (2001, 70). Because all sexual assault corresponds to gender (and sex) of the victim and perpetrator, sexual violence is part of gender violence. After the Cold War, understanding of sexual violence in times of conflict changed dramatically when it started being used as a weapon of warfare to terrorize the population and used as a part of the 'ethnic cleansing' campaign. Gendered sexual violence has become a defining characteristic of modern warfare (Mazurana et al. 2005, 2-4).

To understand what drives men (and less frequently women) to commit sexual violence, there are three different schools or theoretical approaches in the study of sexual violence during conflict: *essentialism*, *structuralism*, and *social constructivism*. Theory of *essentialism* is based on basic assumptions about human nature. It argues that sexual assault is an inevitable aspect of fighting as a reward or tool for revenge for fighters. Sexual violence is what men naturally do to women

when they can during conflict. *Structuralism* claims that it is not nature but structural factors such as gendered economic and social oppression against women that predispose them to a greater risk of wartime sexual violence. Because of this gendered structure in society, men are more likely to commit sexual crimes against females during conflict. *Social constructivism* explains that gender-based sexual violence is a part of socially constructed norms in which men want to prove their masculinity and power over women by dominating and sexually assaulting females (Leatherman 2011, 11-21).

There are many different types of gendered sexual violence against women. However, the most prevalent and widely mentioned form is rape. Rape is "a sexual assault through penetration using a body part or other objects, including vaginal copulation, or oral and anal penetration" (Leatherman 2011, 9). Rape is prevalent in many conflicts. Although rape is a terrible act by itself, many solider-rapists, however, go beyond 'just' raping women. They beat them, perform the acts in front of their family members, mutilate them, and, in worst cases, kill them (Price 2010, 143). In recent wars, rape has become often a part of the strategic weapons of terror and repression.

Rape during war serves several functions. One of them is to make male soldiers bond by "contributing to 'a sense of loyalty between men'" (Kaufman and Williams 2010, 39). Rape has a symbolic meaning as well. By sexually assaulting women, rapists 'pollute' and 'dishonor' victims' families, nations, and ethnic groups (39). Lastly, some rape is genealogical. Rapists will continue to humiliate the family and the nation by having the victims to bear a child that carries the enemy's blood.

This is based on a common assumption that ethnicity passes through father's line only (Price 2010, 144). This means that the suffering of rape does not end when soldiers finished sexually violating women but it continues even after the war is over.

Although it is not as commonly discussed as rape, another example of sexual violence is forced prostitution or sexual slavery during armed conflicts, which is the case of the "comfort women" system. The distinction between the two words is blurry. The report on slavery by the UN Economic and Social Council states that, "Sexual slavery also encompasses most, if not all forms of forced prostitution" (1998). More specifically, the report defines forced prostitution as "conditions of control over a person who is coerced by another to engage in sexual activity" (1998). And, it defines sexual slavery as a type of slavery that is "the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised, including sexual access through rape or other forms of sexual violence" (UN Economic and Social Council 1998). According to Machteld Boot, forced prostitution puts an emphasis on coerced sexual activity, and sexual slavery emphasizes the limitation of one's sexual autonomy (Boot 2002, 514).

Lisa Price discusses an example of sexual slavery. She says that "the UN Commission of Inquiry and various NGOs have accumulated many accounts of girls and women being captured and held as sex slaves" during the war in Darfur from 2003 till 2010 (Price 2010, 141). Some of the sex slaves were released within a few days or weeks, and some of them were kept for years. They were forced to perform domestic labor during the day and to be raped by soldiers at night. In some cases,

sex slaves were transported and sold to Arab men (Price 2010, 141). Details about the Japanese military sexual slavery or so called the “comfort women” system will be discussed in the next chapter.

A similar but different type of forced prostitution that can be considered as sexual violence against women is the military controlled system of prostitution in times of conflict. Some Japanese neo-nationalists insist that the “comfort women” system was an example of this type of prostitution not sexual slavery. The wording ‘military controlled prostitution’ can be tricky because, by saying prostitution, it can give an impression that it was a choice of women. But it is unknown how many women, at that time, really chose to be prostitutes and how many of them were forced to provide sexual services because of their social and economic circumstances. Therefore, from today’s human rights standard, some cases of military controlled prostitution can be regarded as forced prostitution.

In the history of warfare, the military managed prostitution system existed in various countries. Historian Toshiyuki Tanaka, who undertook a comparative study of the system of military controlled prostitution during the Second World War in a number of countries including the U.S., Britain, France, and Germany, articulated that those nations were widely using military organized prostitution as a sexually transmitted disease prevention method (Tanaka n.d., 3; Ueno 2004, 98).

For example, based on the report submitted by Major William Brumfield, Tanaka writes that many units of the American Army either directly or indirectly controlled local prostitution in Central Africa, the Middle East, and India to prevent venereal diseases. This, however, was done under the responsibility of local

commanders who knew that such acts were against the American War Department's official policy (2002, 92). Furthermore, during the Vietnam War, Susan Brownmiller wrote that the American military set up official military brothels in Vietnam (1975, 94,95).

The British Army also had similar cases. In Tripoli, North Africa, the British military local commanders permitted brothels to remain open and forced local prostitutes to undergo military medicals for their soldiers to use during the Second World War. Some of Tripoli's brothels were even brought under direct army control. Also, British army commanders in India ran official brothels at the start of the Second World War, even though they were shut down by the British government shortly after (Enloe 1988, 27,28; Tanaka 1996, 103). A common claim of the American and British governments was that they did not officially allow military controlled prostitution, even though they overlooked situations where the local commanders organized prostitutes to protect their soldiers from sexually transmitted diseases (Enloe 1988, 29).

Other countries were directly and indirectly involved in military controlled prostitution. According to Ikuhiko Hata, a Japanese historian, Germany owned "comfort stations" (about five hundred of them) that were very similar to the Japanese system (Hata 1999, 148). Also, during the Vietnam War, the French military had the system of military organized prostitution (many of the "prostitutes" were said to be North Africans) and it brought their own "mobile brothels" to Vietnam (171). Therefore, militarized prostitution was found commonly among major countries that fought large-scale wars.

Some Japanese argue that the "comfort women" system was one of the examples of this militarized prostitution. Tanaka, however, discussed five points that make the Japanese case special: 1) geographical breadth of the operation, 2) the large number of "comfort women," 3) diverse nationalities of "comfort women," 4) severity of sexual violence and the length of the operation, and 5) the official control of the system by the Japanese military and government (Tanaka n.d., 3). One of the most important points is how systematically the "comfort women" practice was organized by the Japanese military and the government. American and British military and their official policies did not allow militarized prostitution although it happened by the decisions of the local commanders. However, the Japanese military seemed to be more formally and directly engaged in the system. Also, the use of the "comfort women" system was the Japanese military's clear strategy to keep men controlled physically, including staving off disease, as well as keeping military secrets safer by keeping the women in "stations" or captive (Yoshimi 2010).

Moreover, in the case of Japanese military sexual slavery, there was a greater absence of voluntariness. As an example, Tanaka notes that females who were working for the Australian Army were professional prostitutes who agreed to have sexual activities with soldiers (even though it can be argued that they also *in*voluntarily worked as prostitutes). However, in the Japanese case, most of women were illegally recruited and forced to serve Japanese soldiers against their will (Tanaka 2002, 97). There are many testimonies by the victims that show the absence of their consent to working as "comfort women." Cynthia Enloe highlights that Korean "comfort women" were drafted to be "entertainers" without knowing

they needed to provide sexual service to Japanese soldiers. They did not voluntarily become “comfort women” (Enloe 1988, 32). From these arguments, the “comfort women” system was different from other cases of military controlled prostitution and it has more characteristics of forced prostitution or sexual slavery. And this Japanese military’s sexual slavery system was a clear example of gender-based sexual violence against women in times of war.

As shown, there have been many cases of wartime gender violence against women during conflict in history. Yet, international law and courts were largely silent on this matter until lately. The Nuremberg and Tokyo tribunals, which prosecuted war criminals during the Second World War in Germany and Japan, failed to adequately address crimes of sexual violence. It was mainly because sexual violence, especially rape, was not enumerated as a ‘war crime’ or as a ‘crime against humanity’ at that time (Henry 2011, 29). It was not until the 1990s that the international community finally started to pay attention to wartime sexualized violence against women. What triggered this change the most were the extreme cases of sexual violence during the wars in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and how ad hoc tribunals of those wars treated and tried crimes of gender violence.

During the Bosnian War from 1992 to 1995, for example, rape was part of the ‘ethnic cleansing’ campaign to create a land ethnically homogenous by eliminating other ethnicities. This use of rape as a systematized instrument of war raised public consciousness about sexual violence and made the world realize that rape was such a serious and appalling crime (Henry 2011, 3). In 1993, the UN created the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to

prosecute violations of international humanitarian law during the war. It was in this tribunal that, "for the first time in history, rape was being prosecuted as a weapon of war and a 'crime against humanity'" (Kaufman and Williams 2010, 43). This was a significant step forward in the history of how wartime sexual violence had been handled in the international justice system because even though past international laws condemned violence against women, sexual violence offenders were never properly convicted or prosecuted in court before. Like the ICTY, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) also recognized sexual violence as a 'crime against humanity', and criminals of such violation were prosecuted. The ICTV and the ICTR also broadened the definition of sexual crime and expanded the list of it by including sexual mutilation, forced pregnancy, forced sterilization, and so on (Oosterveld 2005).

Following the footsteps of the ICTY and the ICTR, the new Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which can into effect in 2002, also made "rape and all forms of sexual violence a war crime and a crime against humanity and ensures that it applies both to external and internal war" (Coomaraswamy 2003, 99). These decisions by the ICTY, the ICTR, the ICC set standards in the international community that sexual violence in armed conflict is a clear violation of international law, and states and parties to conflicts need to take action seriously to stop and prevent such violence (Kaufman and Williams 2010).

In summary, gender-based sexual violence against women in conflict was neglected and marginalized for a long time in history. The international community and its criminal courts finally started to deal with the cases of wartime sexual

violence seriously by making it a ‘crime against humanity’ and prosecuting criminals in tribunals. Knowing this historical context of how wartime sexual violence had been treated in the international justice system is important because the next chapter will discuss how the Japanese government has tried to address the case of gendered violence against women in the “comfort women” system.

CHAPTER 3: "Comfort Women" Issue and Its Debate in Japan

Chapter 2 discussed contested war memories in Japan, which lead people to have diverse opinions about historical issues including the issue of sexual slavery by the Japanese military. The last chapter also reviewed the literature of gender violence in times of conflict. This chapter will look at more details of the "comfort women" issue itself and its debate in Japan.

Who Were "Comfort Women"?

As mentioned, the name "comfort women" is a euphemistic expression to describe women who were forced to provide sexual services to Japanese Army personnel before and during the Second World War. Although there were "comfort women" of various nationalities such as Chinese, Taiwanese, Japanese, Dutch, Indonesian, and Filipino, 80 to 90 percent were Koreans. Many scholars have given different numbers for how many "comfort women" existed at that time. The exact number is unknown, but it is estimated to be from 100,000 to 200,000 (Kim-Gibson 1999, 40).

Some of the women were lured with promises of work in factories or restaurants and ended up in the "comfort stations." Some of them were procured by more violent means or kidnapped. Within the military, these women were often treated like military equipment, shipped from different parts of Asia (mostly Korea) to the battlefields to serve Japanese soldiers and officers. The Japanese military "needed" "comfort women" in order to keep the soldier's morale and to make the process of occupation in various areas of Asia go "smooth and efficient" (Izumi 2011).

"Comfort Women" System

During the period of the Second World War, the Japanese military regarded the "comfort women" system as necessary. Before setting up "comfort stations," raping women in occupying and invading territories by the Japanese soldiers was prevalent and became a serious moral issue within the military. Also, sexually transmitted diseases spread among soldiers and some of them could not go to the battlefields because of the disease. Hence, in order to curb unauthorized sexual violence against locals and to prevent sexually transmitted diseases, "comfort" stations were established (Yoshimi 2000).

Another reason for creating the systems was to reduce stress of the Japanese soldiers. In the battlefield, soldiers tend to accumulate lots of stress. The Japanese military was afraid that their cumulated stress would turn into hatred and frustration against their senior officers and generals. So, in order to reduce soldiers' stress level, the Japanese military decided to provide "comfort" to its men by using women (Yoshimi 2010). Additionally, the "comfort women" system functioned to keep military operations secret by keeping soldiers away from local women (Ueno 2006).

According to Yoshiaki Yoshimi, the most well known Japanese scholar in this topic, there were three types of "comfort women" stations. The first type was directly run and managed by the Japanese military. The second type let the locals run the business while still being owned by the Army and designated for Japanese military personnel (Yoshimi 2010, 7). These two types of "comfort stations" were all administered by the Japanese military including setting up the stations, rules,

operation, and checking for sexually transmitted diseases among the women (Oomori and Kawata 2010, 17). The third type was different from the other two. In this case, the Japanese troops just used local private commercial brothels temporarily as "comfort stations" (Yoshimi 2010, 7). In all these three cases, the Japanese Army was mainly in charge and it was the Japanese military that allowed the systematic establishment and operation of those brutal "comfort stations" where women were violated sexually and treated inhumanly.

History of Japanese Government's Responses to the "Comfort Women" Issue

After the war was over, some people knew about the "comfort women" system but it was never publicly discussed in Japan. In May 1990, however, Korean women's groups published a joint statement asking for an apology and compensation for the issue of the "*Teishintai*" or "volunteer corps," which refer to Korean men and women who were pressed into labor services by the colonial Japanese government. The "*Teishintai*" included women who were forced to serve as "comfort women" by providing sexual services (Yoshimi 2000, 33). This was the first time that South Korea publicly mentioned "comfort women" and asked the Japanese government to apologize and take responsibility.

Initially, the Japanese government refused to acknowledge its involvement in the system. It stated that "comfort stations" were managed exclusively by civilian brothel owners and the women were recruited by private procurers. Also, because any official documents showing the government's involvement in the practice were not found, the Japanese government refused to accept its participation in the

system, knowing that previous regimes destroyed all the official documents at the end of the war (Yoshimi 2000, 7).

This denial by the Japanese government of the "comfort women" system enraged many South Koreans including a former comfort woman, Kim Hak-soon. For the first time, she decided to come out to the public, tell her story, and ask for justice from the Japanese government. Kim testified at the Japanese court in the fall of 1991 (Nozaki n.d.). Her testimony and agonizing experiences shocked many Japanese people, one of whom was Yoshimi, who is one of the most prominent Japanese scholars in the issue of "comfort women." Right after hearing Kim's horrendous stories, he went to the Self-Defense Agency's National Institute for Defense Studies Library and unearthed six pieces of evidence that had survived the destruction of documents by the military. Those documents proved that the Japanese military had planned, constructed, and operated "comfort stations" (Yoshimi 2000, 35).

After the publication of those documents, on January 12th, 1993, then Chief Cabinet Secretary Kato Koichi publicly acknowledged Japanese military's participation in organizing the "comfort women" system. On January 17th, then Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi issued an apology to Korean survivors (Yoshimi 2000, 35). On August 4th, in the same year, then Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono Yohei released an announcement, known as the Kono Statement (a translation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan website):

> … Comfort stations were operated in response to the request of the military authorities of the day. The then Japanese military was, directly or indirectly, involved in the establishment and management of the comfort stations and the transfer of comfort women. The recruitment of the comfort

> women was conducted mainly by private recruiters who acted in response to the request of the military. The Government study has revealed that in many cases they were recruited against their own will, through coaxing coercion, etc., and that, at times, administrative/military personnel directly took part in the recruitments. They lived in misery at comfort stations under a coercive atmosphere…
>
> Undeniably, this was an act, with the involvement of the military authorities of the day, that severely injured the honor and dignity of many women. The Government of Japan would like to take this opportunity once again to extend its sincere apologies and remorse to all those, irrespective of place of origin, who suffered immeasurable pain and incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women…
>
> We shall face squarely the historical facts as described above instead of evading them, and take them to heart as lessons of history. We hereby reiterated our firm determination never to repeat the same mistake by forever engraving such issues in our memories through the study and teaching of history…(Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1993).

This statement acknowledged that, (1) the Japanese Army was directly and indirectly involved in the system, (2) women were forced to work against their will, and (3) the life in "comfort stations" was miserable. The Statement also included an apology. However, these acknowledgements and apologies did not satisfy the victims. The Kono Statement did not include any compensation for the victims, did not mention what needed to be done to prevent a recurrence of the crime, and left the government's involvement in the "comfort station" system ambiguous.

After this statement was released, the public opinion in Japan about the "comfort women" system was split: some people said that Japan needed to take more responsibility, and some of them denied the existence of the "comfort women" issue itself and claimed that Japan did not have to do anything further. Despite these divided perspectives among people, the Japanese government had a clear and steady standpoint: the "comfort women" problem was already solved legally through the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951 and the Treaty on Basic Relations

between Japan and the Republic of Korea in 1965. More specifically, in the 1965 treaty with South Korea, the Japanese government paid compensation of 300 million dollars in cash and 200 million dollars in loans to South Korea (Nishioka 2007, 12). It was on this basis that the Japanese government claimed (and stands by the claim) that the 1965 treaty already settled the "comfort women" issue, and it should not bear any legal responsibility (Onuma 2007).

Despite this government's position, there were still lots of claims from the advocates for "comfort women" (mostly NGO workers both in Japan and abroad) that the issue was not yet solved because, at the time of 1965 statement, there was no discussion of "comfort women." Advocates saw this as evidence that the victims were not properly compensated at that time. Therefore, the proponents of "comfort women" continued to demand that Japan take more responsibility. Finally, to settle this issue, the Japanese government decided to establish a hybrid national public organization called the Asian Women's Fund (AWF) in August 1995. While the government still held its stance that it had already met the legal requirements to solve the issue by treaties, the AWF was created to fulfill Japan's "moral responsibility" for the survivors (Onuma 2007). The objective of this fund was:

> To carry out the 'atonement project' by delivering a letter of apology from the incumbent Japanese Prime Minister, along with the 'atonement money' contributed by the Japanese citizens, and 'medical/welfare support' funded by the Japanese government's official budget (Izumi 2011, 474).

The concept of the AWF was developed by intellectuals and scholars appointed by the Japanese government. One of them was Yasuaki Onuma, a professor at the University of Tokyo. He recalled that the AWF was a result of many negotiations and compromises with the Japanese government. Former "comfort

women" wanted compensation from the Japanese government as closure for their past traumatic experiences. Yet, the Japanese government stated that the 1965 treaty solved all the war related reparation issues. As an International Law scholar, Onuma was convinced that it was extremely difficult to overturn the government's position and to give justice to the victims in the form of money (Onuma 2007, 16).

So, Onuma and other intellectuals came up with the idea of collecting donations from Japanese citizens to provide "atonement money" for the victims. This way, the survivors would be able to receive compensation, even thought it was not directly from the government. Initially, Japanese Cabinet members did not intend to provide any money to the victims in this project, but Onuma knew that there needed to be government's financial involvement in this fund to show its apologetic attitude to the victims. So, he convinced Cabinet members to agree to provide money in the form of a fund for medical/welfare support for former "comfort women" (Onuma 2007, 15). In the end, the fund collected close to 570 million yen (about 6 million Canadian dollars/1 dollar=93 yen) from Japanese citizens, and that was distributed to 285 victims (Digital Museum n.d.).

The AWF was not perfect but it was a realistic project. It seemed impossible to answer the requests from both the Japanese government and the victims. So, the developers of the AWF tried to accommodate the two different demands by asking support from both the Japanese public and the government. However, many South Korean "comfort women" survivors and their advocates did not support this fund and did not accept either the money or the apology. Although some South Koreans received the money, it is believed to be only a few. They contested that Japan was

trying to evade "legal responsibility" as a state by establishing this hybrid fund and giving away money. Former "comfort women" and their supporters insisted that they wanted an apology with an acknowledgement of the government's complete responsibility for the crime, and reparation from the Japanese government itself. Eventually, the AWF ended its operation in 2007. It was overall seen as somewhat of a failure in attempting to resolve the issue (Onuma 2007).

Since the end of the AWF, the Japanese government has not taken any measures to resolve the "comfort women" issue. While the official statement provides and expresses sincere remorse to the victims, the government maintains its stance that the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the bi-lateral treaty with South Korea solved the "comfort women" issue. Hence, the government should not bear any legal responsibility for this matter (Onuma 2007). Obviously, this position is not shared by the victims and their advocates. With limited time left (most of the victims are nearly 90 years old), surviving "comfort women" and their supporters continue to work as hard as they can to eventually make the Japanese government take full responsibility. As of 2011, only 70 South Korean former "comfort women" remained (Japan All Solidarity 2011).

"Comfort Women" Controversy in Japan

The public opinion in Japan about the "comfort women" issue and whether the Japanese government should further address or not address the issue is divided. Different viewpoints can be generally divided into two camps: pro- and anti-"comfort women" camps. The pro- (or supportive) "comfort women" group consists of individuals such as feminists, progressives, pacifists, and left wing activists. They

are all advocates for the redress of "comfort women." This group of people first appeared when Kim Hak-soon gave her first testimonies in 1991. Their perspectives are largely influenced by feminism. They believe that the "comfort station" system was an example of gendered violence and a war crime, and the Japanese government needs to take more responsibility by, for example, paying compensation to solve the issue.

Around 1995, however, by disagreeing with perspectives from a group of people who support "comfort women," the anti-"comfort women" group, comprising neo-nationalists, conservatives, right-wingers, and history revisionists, started to fight back. They contested that either the existence of the "comfort women" system was just a fabrication or Japan had already apologized enough and it did not require any further action regarding this issue. Below, I will first discuss perspectives of the people who see the "comfort women" system as an issue of undefendable gender violence and a crime violating human rights. It will be followed by addressing points of view denying the system of Japanese military sexual slavery.

i) Development of Feminism Helping the "Comfort Women" Issue to be Seen As Gendered Violence

It was with the help of global feminism that the "comfort women" system was first publicly discussed and problematized as an issue of gender violence in the early 1990s. Because of this, perspectives supporting redress of "comfort women" are heavily affected by feminist thinking. Therefore, it is important to review feminism. There are many definitions and understandings of feminism. Christine Sylvester, for example, states that feminism or feminist theories relate to the study

of gender with relation to power (Sylvester 1994). As already mentioned, gender is not about biological differences between men and women. Gender is "a set of culturally shaped and defined characteristics associated with masculinity and femininity" (Tickner 1992, 7). Historically, people considered that differences and some inequalities between men and women were "natural." Feminism challenged this assumption by saying that nothing, including gender inequality, is "natural" but constructed by cultural and social conditions (Enloe 1989, 3).

While feminism is the study of gender and power, it is also a belief that women are equal to men, and differences between men and women do not and should not constitute grounds for inequitable treatment and discrimination against women (Reardon 1985). Besides its ideological meaning, feminism also refers to two actual phenomena. First, feminism is a social and political movement interested in women's rights and elimination of gender injustice. Second, feminism is a scholarly approach through which a gender lens can be used to understand the different ways that gender impacts on an individual's life experience and the roles men and women paly in different contexts (Sjoberg and Tickner 2011; Steans 2006; Tickner 1992).

However, it is not until recently that various academic disciplines started using a feminist analysis in their studies. For example, international relations/politics did not use a gender lens until the late 1980s (Flaherty 2012, 22). For many years, women were excluded from international politics because it was believed to be a "man's" field. Therefore, women's voices and opinions were considered inauthentic in the field of international relations. Betty Reardon argued

that generally men are reluctant to have women enter the political sphere because they would change the nature of power in politics, making it a more collaborative interaction rather than something "dependent on the one-upmanship of not being a woman" (1985, 34). It was the United Nations International Women's Decade (UNDW)(1975-1985) that greatly improved women's lower status, and helped to change the perception of international politics as a male domain. It also established the need for women's equal participation in political affairs (Reardon 1993, 3) and started slowly bringing in a feminist perspective in international relations.

Women were also historically excluded from the discussion as peace scholars. Because fighting war was considered to be a male activity, people believed that anything related to peace also needed to be within the domain of males (Kaufman and Williams 2010, 114). Also, many people viewed issues related to women and gender as secondary issues to the central concern of peace. Some still maintain that the subject is a distraction from other more substantive and pressing problems to be addressed in the area of peace and security (Reardon 1985, 5). But, it is important to note that women experience the world quite differently from men in times of war and peace. Therefore, women's concerns and perspectives need to be included when people analyze and make decisions about how to bring and sustain peace and security.

For example, before conflict, when a nation prepares for war, patriarchal values tend to be stronger and domestic violence against women increases (Flaherty 2012, 23). During conflict, refugee women are afraid of leaving their camps to collect firewood and water because they might be attacked and raped by

soldiers (Price 2010, 138). Even when the conflict is over, the rate of intimate partner abuse against women tends to go up (Flaherty 2012, 23). So, when people make policies and plans about how to bring more security and peace to people before, during, and after conflict, inclusion of a gender analysis is necessary to better meet the different needs of women, men, and children.

The fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995, made a significant improvement in including women's perspectives and their roles in peace and security activities. The Beijing Conference successfully "mainstreamed" gender (more specifically, women's interests and experience) as a factor to be considered in all United Nations projects and policies, and it made sure to enhance women's presence in peace and security research and activities in world organizations (Breines, Gierycz, and Reardon 1999, 11). Also, in 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted the Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325). It made a significant step forward in terms of "bringing women's rights and gender equality to bear on the UN's peace and security agenda" (Barnes and Olonisakin 2011, 3).

In the last thirty years, there has been much progress in bringing and using a feminist lens to the fields of international politics and peace studies and activities. Yet, considering the long history of those disciplines and operation, it is still a recent development that scholars and practitioners started using and including gender perspectives in their analysis and their activities.

ii) Feminist Perspectives Supporting Redress of Wrongs to Women Used for Sex During the War – "Comfort women"

It was not until this awareness of feminism that people finally began to really speak out about wrong and injustice in the past practice of "comfort women" and started to see it as a form of gendered violence against women. This new understanding helped the victims to start to finally come forward and to tell their stories. Chizuko Ueno, who is one of the most prominent feminist scholars in Japan, says that, prior to the first victim's testimonies, there was a growth of international feminism in 1980s. This was when the shift of viewing rape from the shame of the victim to sexual violence occurred (Ueno 2006, 3). Jennifer Chan-Tiberghien further notes that, "Before the early 1990s, the term 'violence against women' did not exist in Japanese" (2004, 41).

With this new understanding of gender-based violence against women as a crime worthy of condemnation, some South Korean feminist activists looked at the case of "comfort women" and began to speak out against it as a case of clear sexual violence against women committed by the Japanese Army. This was the first time that the "comfort women" system was regarded as a gender-related crime and issue. Finally this problem of sexual slavery by the Japanese military began to receive serious attention (Ueno 2006, 3).

Like Ueno, Sarah Soh, a professor of anthropology in the U.S., studied the "comfort women" issue from a feminist perspective noting that the "comfort women" practice was a product of gendered patriarchal Japanese and Korean societies. Soh states that, "Korea's comfort women embody what I call 'gendered structural violence' in the context of patriarchal colonial capitalism" (2008, xii). She

says that the tragedies of Korean "comfort women" and the origins of the Japanese sexual slavery system stem from the "gendered structural violence" that existed in the masculinist sexual culture in colonial Korea and imperial Japan (3).

Because of this culture, many Japanese did not see any issue with the inhumane system of "comfort women." Soh explains that, during the war, Japanese soldiers simply considered "comfort women" as "'gifts' to the emperor's warriors for recreational sex" (Soh 2008, 31). And, from their standpoints, Korean "comfort women" were merely performing "'gendered duties as imperial subjects'" (38) to help them relax and release their sexual tension to win their "Sacred War" (Soh, 2008). Japanese military personnel did not see any moral issues with having sex with Korean "comfort women" because of their masculinist and sexual cultures that were prominent in Japan and Korea.

Also, Japanese soldiers simply saw women as objects for their sexual pleasure. Their objectification of women is clear from how Japanese soldiers classified "comfort women" as military "supplies" or "equipment" (Izumi 2011, 473). Even Japanese "comfort women" internalized their gendered role as an obligation to take care of men's sexual "needs" (Soh 2008, 30). These understandings come from the Japanese and Korean patriarchal societies, and their gendered culture helped the existence and prevalence of the "comfort women" system (140).

iii) The "Comfort Women" Practice Seen As a Complex Issue Related to Gender, Ethnicity, and Class

Ueno and Soh understand that the "comfort women" issue is a gender-related problem of sexual violence against women that was tolerated in Japanese sexual

culture. However, it is not only an issue related to women and gender but also ethnic discrimination and classism that assisted the existence of the "comfort women" practice. Yoshimi articulated, "I believe that the comfort women issue is made of several problems, sexual violence against women, discrimination against other ethnicities, and discrimination against the poor" (2010, 3). Yuko Suzuki also stated that, "This comfort women problem is the extreme case of sexual violence related to women's basic human rights. Also, this represents awful cases of ethnic discrimination and colonization" (2003, 8). All these factors contributed to the system of sexual slavery by the Japanese military. Based on these understandings, Japanese activists claim that the "comfort women" system was a war crime that violated basic human rights of women and Japan should take full responsibility for it (Washington Coalition).

Advocates of "comfort women" demand several changes by the Japanese government to resolve the issue and to recover victims' honor and dignity. First, they ask the government to remove the part "with the involvement of the military authorities" from its official statement and make it clear that the force of running the "comfort women" system was the Japanese military (Yoshimi 2010, 61, 62). Next, they expect the Japanese government to take legal responsibility. This means that the Japanese government should pay compensation to the victims. This could be possible if the government passes a special law that allows the payment of reparation for "comfort women" survivors as an exceptional case without interfering with government's official standpoint that the 1965 treaty solved all war related compensation issues (61,62).

Other requests include revealing the truth in its entirety, recording the crime in history textbooks, setting up a memorial for the victims, and establishing a museum (The Korean Council n.d.). It is clear that advocates of "comfort women" problematize the "comfort women" system as an ongoing issue to be addressed, consider it a war crime, and think that the Japanese government needs to take full and legal responsibility.

iv) Neo-Nationalist's Perspectives

Neo-nationalists, on the other hand, hold contrasting opinions from the advocates for "comfort women," and they deny the redress of wrongs to the former sex slaves. As opposed to the perspectives supporting "comfort women" that Japan did terrible things to the women so it should take more responsibility, neo-nationalists claim that Japan does not deserve the accusations and does not have to apologize or pay any reparation. Many neo-nationalists consider that the "comfort women" issue itself does not exist because, from their perspectives, "comfort women" were "just prostitutes" who were making money by selling sex (Ueno 2004, 82). Additionally, they say that lives of some Japanese women working as prostitutes were extremely horrible like "comfort women": they were trapped in a cell and forced to provide sex. Still this prostitution system, which permitted brutal treatment of women, was legal in Japan and in Korea at that time (Kurahashi 1994, 32,33). So, the argument is that the notion of "comfort women" is a non-issue because it was lawful in the past, and this should not be judged by present human rights standard.

Furthermore, neo-nationalists argue that, generally speaking, prostitution and rape are common practices in wartime and they ask why only Japan needs to receive such a severe criticism. Fujioka Nobukatus, a professor of education at the University of Tokyo, said:

> The liaison between prostitutes and the military has existed from ancient times to the present. Even today, no matter how hard you preach moral lessons, the problem of prostitution in the army is never solved. It is unnecessary to compare the level of moral among countries. Human beings are neither lofty nor low. Human nature is more or less the same. The issue of comfort women is a problem humans have not resolved. It is unfair to criticize only the Japanese Army's misconduct of more than 50 years ago (Kim-Gibson 1999, 7).

Neo-nationalists further argue that Western powers also committed unlawful acts such as rape during the war, but they have not apologized. Why does only Japan need to apologize? (Ueno 2004). Finally, neo-nationalists state that there is a global double standard: no one blames brutal colonial regimes run by major European and American states, but only Japan is blamed as a cruel and oppressive state which needs to apologize. Hence, for many neo-nationalists, this issue is less about whether the Japanese government actually committed war crimes during the war or not, but more about Japan "being held to a far higher standard of wartime conduct" (Hein 2003, 141) than any other Western state (Hein 2003).

Neo-nationalists also focus on concerns about losing Japanese national pride. They criticize history education in postwar Japan as "self-tormenting, masochistic" and lacking "pride in the history of nation" (Nozaki 2008, 143). In order to construct a history that fosters Japanese national pride, new right-wingers formed a group called the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (*Atarashii Rekishi Kyokasho o Tsukurukai*, hereafter JSHTR) in 1996. The JSHTR set two agendas: "one to develop

their text and have it adopted by school districts, and the other to attack the existing texts to make the publishers (and authors) revise their texts" (Nozaki 2008, 144). One of the biggest targets of the JSHTR was the "comfort women" issue: it aimed to remove the description of the issue from history textbooks.

After several years from its creation, the JSHTR seems to have attained both of their goals. It published its own history textbooks in 2001, 2005, 2009, and 2011; and some public and private junior high schools used their textbooks (Japanese Society for History n.d.). By pressuring the Japanese government and publishers, it also succeeded in revising existing textbooks by minimizing or deleting references to "comfort women." In the 1997 editions, all seven junior high history textbooks on the market made some references to "comfort women." Yet, in the new drafts for 2002 textbooks, three of the seven textbooks completely removed their references to the issue. Four other textbooks reduced the number of descriptions or just briefly touched on the issue (Nozaki 2008, 145). These changes in textbooks should suggest that currently a more nationalistic understanding of the "comfort women" problem is being taught in Japanese junior high schools.

CHAPTER 4: Theories of Reconciliation and Social Activism

Introduction

As shown, there are two opposing groups on the debate surrounding "comfort women" in Japan, and they have been each claiming their veracity since 1995 (Togo 2008, 142). In fact, this division or conflict between two groups in Japan is a big problem that hinders the resolution of the issue of Japanese military sexual slavery. The conflict highlights the lack of national consensus among Japanese on how to interpret and deal with the issue, for example, whether the Japanese government should or should not take more responsibility (142). This is same within the Japanese government where Cabinet members have different takes on where the government should stand on the problem. For example, although there is an official Japanese government's statement confirming its involvement in the system and suffering inflicted on the victims, some right wing politicians, including the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, have made some public comments implying denials of the official interpretation (Yoshida 2013).

The general public and even politicians in Japan have divided perspectives about the problem. Because of this division, the Japanese government is hesitant to take any concrete action to resolve the issue, choosing rather to stay with its statement that the 1965 treaty between Japan and South Korea already addressed the problem (Onuma 2007). This inaction of the Japanese government provides an obstruction to the true settlement of the "comfort women" issue. To move forward toward more unity, a way must be found to stop further separation in opinion and find some commonalities together through reconciliation. There must be a way

opposing groups can work on creating a consensus on how to view and address the issue. If it could happen, their collaborative work and shared perspectives could influence the Japanese government and its members and possibly lead the government to take measures to settle the issue. Without an effort of reconciliation, public and political opinion will remain polarized thus supporting the Japanese government to stand still and take no action towards the issue. Considering the importance of bridging a divide in Japan, this chapter will look at reconciliation theory and a similar concept of historical reconciliation as a means of addressing the issue of sexual slavery by the Japanese military during the Second World War.

In order to address the means by which activists in Japan may attempt to bridge this gap or other ways to resolve the issue, I will also introduce and discuss theories about social activism. The research questions that guide this study explore what motivates activists as well as their strategies to address the social issue of "comfort women." To analyze answers for these questions, theories related to social activism explaining efficient strategies and what makes social activism successful will be reviewed.

Reconciliation

The actual resolution of the "comfort women" debate that continues to divide Japan depends upon some kind of reconciliation between the opposing parties. Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov defines reconciliation as "restoring friendship and harmony between the rival sides after conflict resolution, or transforming relations of hostility and resentment to friendly and harmonious ones" (2004, 4). Similarly, a prominent scholar in the field of Peace Studies, John Paul Lederach defines

reconciliation as “a locus, a place where people and things come together” (1997, 29).

Susan Dwyer, however, has a different way to look at reconciliation. Rather than restoring relations, reconciliation is about reducing tensions that were created by different groups and individuals. This definition is important because it points out that reconciliation is not only about opposing groups finally coming together but it is more like a “process whose aim is to lessen the string of tension” (Dwyer 2003, 106). Dwyer explains that, in day to day life and through interaction with others, tensions can be created: “tensions between two or more beliefs; tensions between two or more differing interpretations of events; or tensions between two or more apparently incommensurable sets of values” (Dwyer 2003, 97). According to Dwyer, reconciliation means easing those tensions by incorporating different thoughts into self-understanding and accommodating divergent interpretations into a shared mutual narrative. Dwyer puts it, “The core notion (of reconciliation) is that of bringing apparently incompatible descriptions of events into narrative equilibrium” (98). This is the definition of reconciliation that will be used later when discussing the research findings.

Dwyer further explains how to achieve reconciliation. First, reconciling parties need to have a clear view of the events that triggered tensions. Next, they need to be familiar with a range of different interpretations of the events. Finally, parties will “choose from this range of interpretations some subset that allows them each to accommodate the disruptive event into their ongoing narratives” (2003, 100). As a note, it is not required to settle on a single understanding; parties just

need to be mutually tolerant of their decided set of interpretations (100). Yehudith Auerbach agrees with these steps to attain reconciliation by saying "[In order to achieve reconciliation, parties need to] become acquainted with each other's narratives, acknowledge their legitimacy, and be ready to incorporate them into their own" (Auerbach 2009, 298).

One of the key elements of reconciliation is acknowledgement. Acknowledgement is important because recognizing differences and the roots of those differences is crucial to narrowing the gap between the rivals and achieving shared compatible narratives with which both parties can be satisfied (Hasegawa and Togo 2008, 239). Erin Daly and Jeremy Sarkin also mention the importance of acknowledgement by saying, "[Reconciliation] is about accepting the rights of others in the state to have differing views which, ideally, should be recognized and even welcomed as part of the national debate" (Daly and Sarkin 2007, 99).

In summary, according to Dwyer, reconciliation is a process of alleviating tensions by building shared and compatible narratives through accommodation of some of ones own perspectives and incorporation of some of the opponent's viewpoints. In this process, acknowledgement of differences is important. Rivals always have different opinions. Instead of focusing on those differences themselves, in reconciliation, parties can acknowledge that differences exist as part of the discussion, and they can still construct mutual narratives. In other words, even when parties have different perspectives, by acknowledging the legitimacy of the differences, reconciliation is still possible.

Historical Reconciliation

Historical reconciliation shares many similarities with reconciliation as discussed above, but it is different in terms of its emphasis on history. Historical reconciliation argues that history needs to be reconciled to move forward to build a new relationship. Historical reconciliation asks for settling the conflict of different history interpretations between the two (multiple) diverging groups to reconcile their relationship. As an expert in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Gary Rosenblatt states that, "The past must be explored, discussed, and understood on both sides before any progress can be made" (2010). Ivanov, Ischinger, and Nunn argue the same, "Reconciliation can be achieved only by addressing squarely and with the greatest sensitivity the most serious historical grievances and topics of potential controversy" (2012, 11). No real reconciliation can be achieved without addressing disputed history between antagonists.

In order to properly conduct and attain historical reconciliation, it is essential to understand how history is constructed. Bodo von Borries notes that "history is not a… model of the past" (2009, 141) by putting together "pieces" of the past or so called "historical facts." History is rather "a narrative about events and changes in the past" (141). And those narratives are socially constructed and they are greatly influenced by interpretation. Even looking at the exact same primary sources (written documents and oral reports), historians can have different understanding (140-142). Thus, historical reconciliation requires an awareness that the world looks different behind the next hill and an acceptance that different views and interpretations exist. The importance of accepting and acknowledging

differences was already discussed and articulated as a crucial element in reconciliation as well.

Many countries (Germany, Poland, Switzerland, Japan, China, South Korea, and so on) have used historical commissions to achieve historical reconciliation with former adversaries. An historical commission is a group of historians from opposing parties who come together in an attempt to construct new and compatible historical narratives for the public (Ivanov, Ischinger, and Nunn 2012, 10). By engaging historians from opposite sides, the goal of historical commissions is to reckon with the disputed past so that people from diverging groups can move on to build new relations. Historical commissions, however, do not necessarily provide a closure to contentious historical events. They rather "open the way for thoughtful reconsideration of the past" (Karn 2006, 35) for deeper understanding of history. And those new and expanded perspectives about the past events help opposing groups to reach historical reconciliation (Karn 2006).

Similar to historical commissions, but more widely recognized types of commission, are truth and reconciliation commissions (TRCs), which took place, for example, in South Africa, Chile, and Peru. TRCs investigate and establish knowledge about past human rights abuses by acquiring and documenting testimonies from victims, perpetrators, and community members (Hayner 2001, 24-26). For example, in Canada, the TRC addresses the legacy of the Indian Residential Schools from 1874 till 1996 in which indigenous children were forced to assimilate to the white dominant culture and to suppress their cultural identities (Androff 2013, 211).

It is important to note that the features of historical commissions are different from the TRCs. Instead of seeking the truth by investigating people who were actually involved in certain incidents, historical commissions are conducted by a group of historians to construct new and compatible (not necessarily true) historical narratives to help get over the past and promote reconciliation.

Historical commissions are normally sponsored by governments, corporations, and NGOs. Historical commissions can take different forms, even though they all share similarities. Bilateral commissions, for example, serve as a form of mediation between nations. There are also domestic commissions that provide answers for debated national history questions by building common historical narratives (Barkan 2006, 9). History textbook commissions, which can be domestic or bilateral, use a textbook as a means of promoting historical reconciliation.

A crucial role of historical commissions is to foster comprehension instead of blaming about disputed past incidents through rich descriptions of the context. This allows people to see the history from different angles and fosters historical conciliation. Based on the study of the Poland's Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Alexander Karn argues that, by recounting history with details, historical commissions can "move historical discourse away from the accusatory framework to an explanatory framework" (2006, 33) that proposes a new context for historical facts. For example, when the IPN dealt with the Jedwabne Massacre, in which Poles killed many Jews in 1941, instead of focusing on the events of murders themselves, historians of the IPN gave a detailed context that "helped readers comprehend the

complex issues that factored into the massacre" (34). By recounting history through more contextualization, Karn argues that people could consider the massacre "outside the framework of reflexive accusation" (34), and it enabled them to look at the past differently and in a more comprehensive way. And this process fostered historical reconciliation.

As said, one type of historical commissions is a history textbook commission. Borries explained that the goal of this commission is "not to find a uniform version [of history] for both sides, but to mitigate the hatred" (2009, 157) and stereotypes between the opposing groups by developing a new history textbook. Borries further described how during the construction of common history, "the painful topics of bi-national history are presented scientifically from both sides and the controversies are discussed" (158), and, hopefully, mutual understandings and common recommendations will be achieved in the end. Finally, the commissions propose textbook-recommendations to the publishers so that their textbooks can be used as official school textbooks.

Germany and France used this mechanism to reach a consensus on the historical interpretation of their relationship. Through their research on the Franco-German textbook commission, Mona Siegel and Kirsten Harjes argued that the achievement of this reform was predicated on "historians' and teachers' tacit willingness to encourage both nations to 'forget' some of the most contentious issues in their shared past" (2012, 373) to facilitate building mutual history. By quoting a social anthropologist Paul Connerton, Siegel and Harjes stated that, "Forgetting… is not always a failure" (Connerton 2008, 59). In fact, in our history,

"prescriptive forgetting" was an often-used strategy by states and individuals to promote reconciliation and to form new social identities (Siegel and Harjes 2012, 374).

Sigela and Harges described how, during the process of creating consensual history, when French and German historians needed to discuss and write about controversial issues of war and its responsibility, they focused on dispelling myths and stereotypes that both countries had against each other and attempted to explain the reasons why the war broke out in detail instead of bringing attention to their discrepancies on war recognition (2012).

In many cases, Siegel and Harjes summarized that French and German historians reached agreement (or mutual understandings) by "omitting those issues on which they could not find common ground or which they no longer saw as a necessary component of future generations' historical knowledge" (2012, 397). This specific case shows that historical reconciliation is achievable by not touching controversial and emotional elements but focusing on future narratives that will be beneficial for two nations.

Another form of historical commission is the bilateral commission. By engaging historians from opposite sides of historic disputes, this type of commission mediates conflicts or ensures that "past injustices do not burden contemporary relations" (Karn 2006, 32,33). For example, Poland and Ukraine used this bilateral commission to find common ground regarding the contested memory of the "Volyn Conflict," which took place during the Second World War. By engaging historians from both nations into a series of joint seminars, the commission succeeded in

constructing a new historical understanding and publishing its report *Poland-Ukraine: Difficult Questions* in 2003 (Karn 2006, 37, 38). This commission and its report facilitated mutual understanding and eventual historical reconciliation between Poland and Ukraine.

It is always the case that, in the bilateral commission, rivals have contrasting opinions about the past. But, based on the study of the Poland-Ukraine bilateral commission, Karn argues that the commission does not necessarily have to negate those differences. In fact, bilateral commissions tend to succeed best whey they "allow room for divergence and treat disagreements as acceptable differences" (Karn 2006, 37). Karn explains that the Poland-Ukraine bilateral commission was successful because the two sides simply sought points that they both could agree with and left the points that they could not agree as "differences" not "disagreements" (38). In order to foster historical reconciliation, bilateral commissions do not force two opposing parties to agree with each other. In stead, the commissions can better settle the history conflicts by allowing opposing groups to maintain beliefs important to their identity and, at the same time, gradually minimizing the distortions and myths that have put them at odds through historical dialogue (46).

Historical commissions have also been held in East Asia numerous times. Reconciling differences in understanding the history among Japan, South Korea, and China is important because those different history interpretations hinder the creation of better and more stable relations and diplomacy in the region. As one of the earliest attempts, the Japanese and South Korean governments established the

"Korea-Japan Joint Committee for Promoting History Studies" in 1997 to find "ways to enhance the study of history in the two countries" (Japan Center n.d.). In 2001, the two governments also created the "Japan-ROK (Republic of Korea) Joint History Research Committee" to promote mutual understandings regarding historical facts and history recognition (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2005). Despite their efforts to reconcile their different understandings of the history, these committees failed to narrow the gap between the two sides. As a reason, Ilcheong Yi argues that, because of the governmental involvement, the discussion about history became politicized (2009, 93).

Not only the governmental but also civic historical commission have been formed to develop compatible historical narratives and to publish history books in East Asia. For example, a group of teachers and researchers from Japan and South Korea published a book titled, *Joint Japan-Korea Historical Educational Material: History of Japan-Korea Exchanges-From Prehistory to Today,* in 2007 (Babicz 2006, 118). This is one of the many history books published by citizen's bi-national joint historical commissions (Kimura 2009, 242). By writing books, the committee members hope to show diverse historical viewpoints and to promote mutual understandings to facilitate reconciliation between nations (Park 2009, 290). Similar governmental and civic historical commissions have also been held not only between Japan and South Korea but also between Japan and China.

Although there have been frequent efforts to create mutually acceptable historical narratives in East Asia at the both governmental and civic levels, their progress has not been disseminated among the general public (Babicz 2006, 118).

People in Japan, South Korea, and China are not close to sharing the same interpretation of the history. It seems that there is still a long way to achieve historical reconciliation in the region (Schneider 2008, 118). However, through his participation in several historical commissions, Mitani Hiroshi, a Japanese history professor at the University of Tokyo, has a positive expectation. He notes that, "Regional histories in East Asia may not ever fully converge. However, but by carefully reading contrasting regional histories, we (people) can begin to see why people understand history in different ways." And he says, "This meta-level insight must offer us (people) a deeper understanding of others and will widen the area of shared memory" (Mitani 2009, 64). This is exactly the point of historical commissions: by sharing various stories, the commissions allow people to look at the history differently and it promotes mutual understandings and mutual respect for future reconciliation.

In the end, history can be the key to achieve reconciliation. In many cases, conflicting groups have a hard time reconciling because of their different understandings about the history. Still, recounting historical accounts and building shared historical narratives can facilitate actual reconciliation. This is demonstrated by the successful examples of using historical commissions to reconcile relations between Germany and France and Poland and Ukraine as discussed above. One of the roles of historical commissions was to help people see the past in different ways by sharing detailed accounts of history thus promoting shared understandings and sympathy. This process is crucial to foster historical reconciliation. Historical commissions tend to be most successful when they allow room for having some

different opinions. Parties can keep some of their beliefs while working to eliminate distortions and misunderstandings held against each other.

Social Activism

I introduced theories of reconciliation and historical reconciliation that could be used as ways of addressing the "comfort women" issue. Attempting reconciliation and other ways to resolve the "comfort women" issue in Japan can be seen as an example of social activism. Social activism basically means taking action to bring and promote social change (Permanent Culture Now n.d.) through strategies like "lobbying, advocacy, negotiation, protest, campaigning and awareness-raising" (CIVICUS, the IAVE, and the UNV n.d., 5). In order to understand Japanese activists' points of view and their strategies and methods of their activism, it is important to explore basic theories related to social activism.

i) Motives to Join Social Activism

One of the research questions in this study is what motivates people to be an advocate or opponent of "comfort women." There are basically three concepts that explain what generally influences individuals to participate in and become committed to collective action: biography, social networks, and critical events. Biography simply reasons that personal upbringing (e.g. growing up in a political family) leads people to engage in collective action (Valocchi 2010, 110). The concept of social networks claims that people join social activism not necessarily out of their interests but because of personal relationships and/organizational ties. Organizations and networks that activists are already involved with provide

avenues of information, which may invite them to join similar activism (McAdam 1988, 50). The last concept explaining the motives of activists is critical events. It argues that people's motives to join social activism come from external factors. For example, unpredictable historical events trigger or motivate people to participate in certain collective activism (Valocchi 2010, 111).

ii) Strategies of Social Activism and NGOs

Once people join and start social activism and movements, how do they advance their activism and achieve social change? Valocchi mentions three general strategies: internal tactics, insider tactics, and "outsider" tactics. The first set of strategies is internal tactics. In this strategy, there are no political activities and it mainly focuses on communicating and working with movement members and targeted constituencies to develop activism. Unlike internal tactics, insider tactics include political actions such as lobbying, political campaigns, and small demonstrations as ways of enhancing their activism. The third set of strategies is "outsider" tactics. It is called "outsider" because it is seen as "outside the bounds of conventional politics" (70). This strategy takes its action to the public. It is mainly about conducting public demonstrations in the form of public rallies, marches, and other forms of civil disobedience to promote activism (2010, 70).

Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink specifically discussed how some NGOs tactically achieve social change. One strategy is the use of pressure (1998). When states are not listening to the demands of domestic NGOs, "NGOs bypass their states and directly search out international allies to try to bring pressure on their states from outside" (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 12). Normally, states respond to external

pressure and comply with international norms (Risse and Sikkink 1997, 17) and start to listen to the requests from the NGOs. This utilization of international pressure is an often-used strategy among NGOs to shift government's policies with the help of international community and to bring social change in their countries.

iii) Keys to Succeed Social Activism

Besides these strategies to advance social activism and achieve social change, what generally makes social movements successful? Three well-known theories discuss ingredients of successful social activism: resource mobilization, political opportunity, and cultural change theories.

The resource mobilization theory states that key elements of successful activism are how much (economic and infrastructural) resources activists have and their organizational structure to maintain them. Because the amount of resources activists have access to can determine the success of their social activism, the aggregation of necessary materials is important in this theory. This means that besides their work for social change, activists need to establish some minimal form of organization that is specifically working to collect and manage resources that are critical for their social movements activities. When aggregating resources, assistants from outside groups, such as governments, private donors, and wealthy elites, is crucial because they are the ones who fund social movements. Here, the role of leaders and entrepreneurs is also critical because they most often function as fundraisers to ensure a sustained flow of external resources into their organizations. Thus, social movements organizations need to be professional and

strategic like any other formal organizations in order to carry out and sustain successful social activism (Valocchi 2010, 18; Buechler 2000, 35, 36).

The political opportunity theory claims that the key to successful social movements is the political environment where social action takes place. Simply, if a party that activists support wins an election and takes power, a positive political environment is created where activists have more opportunities to achieve their aimed social change (Opp 2009, 161). Using an actual instance of the successful civil rights movements in the U.S. in the 1960s, Doug McAdam, for example, argued that changes in demography, repression, and political economy at that time created a great political opportunity in which African Americans could organize demonstrations, and their claims about racial injustice would be more easily received by the public and the governmental organizations (Meyer and Minkoff 2004, 1459). This theory overall emphasizes the importance of external political factors that determine the development of social movements.

The last theory is the cultural change theory. The previous two theories, for example, did not take the idea of culture into account when looking at what contributes to successful social movements. Consideration of culture in social activism is, however, important because culture influences how people think about the world and social issues. And if cultural values change into something that endorses the goals of a social movement, that movement will more likely be successful because the culture embraces its visions (Valocchi 2010). Based on this logic, the cultural change theory argues that one way to make social activism truly successful is to change and create cultural values that transform how people think

about the society and social problems (Rochon 1998). Although it is difficult to change how people think, transforming culture and people's perspectives is the surest way to achieve social change.

CHAPTER 5: Methods

I started this study wondering if there has been any progress to resolve the "comfort women" issue in Japan. I found that Japanese activists who support "comfort women" were the ones who worked to address and try to resolve this issue in Japan, so I decided to conduct research on them and their activism. The purpose of this research is to find out why and how those activists address the issue by answering research questions through a qualitative interview with representatives from organizations that are involved in the problem. This chapter will first introduce the methods that were used in this research to collect data. Then, it will discuss who were the participants, how they were chosen, and how the interviews were conducted.

Qualitative Research Methodology and the Research Questions

Qualitative research method was chosen for this study to better understand the motives, strategies, and evaluation of a group of people involved in social activism of "comfort women." The goal of qualitative research is to better comprehend human behavior and experience by looking at meanings that people have constructed and by describing what those meanings represent (Bodgan and Biklen 2007, 43). This methodology is appropriate for understanding human behavior in depth and deciphering why some people behave or believe in certain ways.

The research questions explored in this research are: 1) What factors have led the Japanese activists to hold their views? 2) What are their strategies and activities to address the issue? 3) How do they evaluate their activism and the

resolution process? Qualitative research methodology seemed the most appropriate way to obtain answers for theses questions by gathering in-depth thoughts from participants and collecting rich descriptions of their activities.

Qualitative Tools Used in In-depth Semi-Structured Interview

As a primary research method, I used an in-depth semi-structured interview. This type of interview is different from quantitative structured interview such as attitude surveys, opinion polls, and questionnaires. The qualitative interview is more flexible, nondirective, dynamic, unstructured, nonstandardized, and open-ended (Taylor and Bogdan 1998, 88).

The qualitative/in-depth interview can take three forms: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (standardized, semi-standardized, and unstandardized). The semi-structured form was used for this research. This form involves the implementation of a number of predetermined questions and topics with a difference. The interviewers ask certain questions of interviewees systematically and consistently; still, interviewees have freedom to digress and tell their stories the way they like (Berg 2004).

The goal of the in-depth interview is to learn "how people construct (and understand) their realities—how they view, define, and experience the world" (Taylor and Bogdan 1998, 101). The in-depth semi-structured interview seemed the perfect way to learn how activists think about the divided opinions related to "comfort women" in Japan. An in-depth interview is also an appropriate way to obtain detailed information about participants' strategies and to learn about how they evaluate their activism and the resolution process of the issue.

Participants

Through general research, I identified seven major NGOs that were working on the "comfort women" issue in Japan: the Women's Active Museum on War and Peace (WAM), the Hainan Net, the Women's Action Network (WAN), the Asia-Japan Women's Resource Center (AJWRC), and the Peace Boat, the Violence Against Women in War-Network Japan (VAWW-NET Japan), and the War Responsibility.com. I sent out invitations by emails to all of the seven organizations to ask to interview their representatives (See Appendix A). Five organizations (the WAM, the Hainan Net, the WAN, the AJWRC, and the Peace Boat) responded that they would be interested in doing interviews. The representatives of those five NGOs became the participants of this research.

The WAM is one of the participating NGOs. It is also one of a few organizations that is specifically working for the "comfort women" issue in Japan. It works to keep the memories and to record the facts of the issue. The Hainan Net is another organization that is only working for the "comfort women" problem. It supports victims from Hainan Island, located south of China, to gain justice from the Japanese government. The WAN and the AJWRC are feminist organizations that are working to eradicate gender discrimination and to achieve a more gender equal society in Japan. A part of their advocacy includes their support of former "comfort women." The last NGO, the Peace Boat, is a peace organization: it strives to solve global issues through civil actions by, for example, organizing peace voyage where people can broaden their perspectives by vising different countries and experiencing different cultures and social issues. One of their targeted issues is the

"comfort women" problem. The following is the list of names of the representatives from those five organizations.

Eriko Ikeda	WAM, Chair of the Committee
Fumiko Yamashita	WAM/Hainan Net
Shiho Kimuro	Hainan Net
Yayo Okano	WAN/Doshisha University, Professor
Hisako Motoyama	AJWRC/Executive Director
Shinsaku Nohira	Peace Boat, Executive Director

All the names on the list are actual participants' names. Participants had a choice in the consent form as to whether they wanted to use their actual names or pseudonyms in the study. They all chose to have their names used because their names were already in public and they wanted more people to know about them and their organizations through this research. In this study, Nohira was the only male participant. Ages of respondents ranged from 20's to 60's.

Data Gathering Methods

All the interviews were conducted face-to-face in Japanese in August 2012. The first interview was with Nohira from the Peace Boat. It took place at the office of the Peace Boat in Tokyo. It was a little hectic during the interview because people were working and answering phones, but it did not cause any major disturbance in the discussion. The next interview was with Okano from the WAM. I conducted the interview at the Women's Active Museum on War and Peace in Tokyo where Okano works. It was very quiet, and she shared a lot of stories and information. The third

interview was with Motoyama. It took place at the office of the AJWRC in Tokyo. I interviewed her while other staff members were working on their computers. It was very quiet during the interview. The forth interview was with Okano from the WAN. The interview was held at her office at Doshisha University in Kyoto. We were the only people in the room, so there was no disturbance. The last interview with Kimuro and Yamashita took place in a café in Tokyo. Because they both worked for the Hainan Net, the interview was conducted together. Although the interview was held in a café, it was not noisy because there were few costumers. Kimuro and Yamashita were eating a small dinner while they were interviewed.

Each interview was approximately one to two hours. The interview style was very straightforward: I asked questions and the participants answered them by freely expressing their opinions. Many participants seemed to be accustomed to being interviewed, so all the interviews went well without any issue. Briefly, participants were asked how they think about the "comfort women" issue, what led them to hold their supporting views, how they think about the viewpoints that are not supportive, what are their activities and strategies, and how they see the progress of their activism (See Appendix B). In order to have participants better be prepared for the interviews, the consent form and a short summary of questions were sent prior to the actual interviews.

CHAPTER 6: Findings

Thus far this thesis has reviewed relevant literature about "comfort women," its debate in Japan, as well as theories about reconciliation and social activism. The last chapter looked at methods used in the research, research questions, and introduced study participants. This chapter is the heart of this thesis to find out why and how Japanese activists address the issue of Japanese military sexual slavery. This chapter is divided into three sections according to the three research questions. The first section will explore what seems to be the social factors that make people view the "comfort women" issue differently, either supporting or opposing the redress of the victims, including what leads people (the activists) to hold opinions supporting "comfort women." The next section will introduce Japanese activist strategies and work to address the issue. The third section will look at how participants understand the progress towards resolution.

What Contributes to the Different Positions on the "Comfort Women" Issue?

As discussed in chapter 3, people from two opposing groups have contrasting opinions about the women who were used by the Japanese military for sex. Therefore, it would be interesting to find out what leads them to see the issue one way or the other, supporting or not supporting former "comfort women." This addresses the question of what directed activists to hold their perspectives supporting "comfort women." The first part of this section will examine the stories of activists that guided them to hold their supporting opinions. Next, it will explore how the respondents think about the polarized public opinion in Japan about "comfort women" and what contributes to the different positions.

Stories that Guided Participants to Hold Views in Support of Redress for "Comfort Women"

Here, brief summaries of the participants' background and how they got involved in the "comfort women" issue are presented. By reviewing their stories, some common background elements will come out that might have led participants to be advocates of "comfort women."

Shinsaku Nohira

Nohira is in his 40's and he is the Executive Director at the Peace Boat. Since he was in university, he has been working as a peace activist. Before he encountered the "comfort women" issue, he was already active in peace and antiwar movements. He said that in 1982 the issue of the description about the Asia-Pacific War started to become controversial in Japan. History textbooks used to state that the Japanese military invaded other Asian nations. However, after screening by the Ministry of Education, wording changed from "invaded" to "advanced." "Advanced" is a weaker word. Many Asian countries were upset and criticized the change saying that the Japanese government was trying to hide the truth about its war invasion.

Nohira further described how university students, at that time, did not experience the war or learn much Japanese post-war history. So, they were not sure if the government was giving them correct information. In order to find out for themselves, about two hundred university students including Nohira rented a big boat and visited victim Asian countries to hear real voices. During this trip, Nohira said he was quite shocked to hear all the terrible stories from war victims. Also, he said it was during this time that he first met former "comfort women" and became more interested in the "comfort women" problem. From this story, as his

background, Nohira understood Japanese war history critically, and he also engaged in activities to reveal the truth about the Asia-Pacific War from the victim's perspectives.

Eriko Ikeda

Like Nohira, Ikeda has also been very active in peace and antiwar movements since she was in university. She is the chair of the Steering Committee of the WAM. She used to work for the NHK (Japan's National Public Broadcasting Organization) and now she is retired. She said that when she was in high school and in university, there were a lot of political movements including the Vietnam Antiwar and the feminist Women's Liberation Movements. Through her participation in the antiwar movement, she stated, "I learned the cruelties of warfare." Also, as an active member of the Women's Liberation Movement, she said, "I knew and felt that there was discrimination against women. I believed that women needed to be free and liberated."

When she first heard disturbing stories from former "comfort women," she was quite shocked. Because she was working for a TV station, she wondered if there had been any TV programs that covered the topic of "comfort women." She said she found nothing, so she decided to produce TV programs about the women to raise more awareness. This is how she became involved in the "comfort women" issue. Like Nohira, through her participation in the antiwar movement, Ikeda also held an unfavorable impression of the war before she engaged in the "comfort women" activism. Besides, she shared that she already had a feminist perspective from her background before becoming a "comfort women" advocate.

Fumiko Yamashita

Yamashita works for the WAM with Ikeda. Yamashita is in her 30's and also a member of the Hainan Net. Yamashita studied the Chinese language in university. Before she met the "comfort women" issue, she was interested in and engaged in the problems of U.S. military bases in Okinawa. While she was attending gatherings about these problems, she was introduced to meetings related to the Second World War. In one of those meetings, she saw a documentary called *Nigainamidanodaichikara* (From Bitter Ground), which was about the fact that the Japanese military buried poison gas in Northern China when the war was over and then went back to Japan without properly taking care of it. Now, many children suffer from this gas. This led her to join the Society to Support the Demands of Chinese War Victims to ask the Japanese government to take responsibility for its aftermath of the war. While she was in this society, she said she received information about "comfort women" and started attending meetings. One day, because she was learning Chinese, she said she was asked to join the Hainan Net to help victims from Hainan Island to fight a lawsuit against Japan and she said yes. This is how she became one of the "comfort women" activists. Her involvement in the society to help Chinese war victims demand Japan take more responsibility suggests that Yamashita might have held a critical view on the conduct of the Japanese Army during the war.

Shiho Kimuro

Like Yamashita, Kimuro is also a member of the Hainan Net. Once in a while, she goes to Hainan Island to speak with former "comfort women" and, when she

returns to Japan, she shares her experiences with other people to advocate the "comfort women" issue. She narrated that she was a "grandmother's girl" from childhood, but she lost her grandmother when she was in university. She said this loss made her want to learn more about her grandmother's generation, which is the war generation. That was when she started going to any meetings that had the word 'war.'

After attending several meetings, Kimuro said that she decided to join a peace cruise organized by the Peace Boat. Through that journey, she said she met war victims of the Japanese Army including "comfort women" survivors. Through hearing real stories from them, she shared that she realized the seriousness of the issue and felt that she wanted to do something. When she got off the boat after the cruise, she was asked to join the Hainan Net to help former "comfort women" and she did. Through her grandmother's death, Kimuro became interested in the war era and the Asia-Pacific War itself. From attending the peace cruise and other war related meetings, she might have had a negative perception about the war.

Yayo Okano

Okano runs the NGO, the Women's Action Network. She is also a professor at Doshisha University in Japan and teaches political philosophy and political theory. While she was in university, she studied politics and she was interested in Japanese war responsibility. She comes from Mie prefecture (where lots of Korean Japanese reside), so she said she was always concerned about the issue of Korean Japanese. She stated that, "The issue of 'comfort women' included all my interests and concerns and allowed me to see all the problems that I cared about all at once:

discrimination again Korean Japanese, the history problem, and the war problem." This is how she came to be interested in the "comfort women" issue. As her background, she was interested in the war and its related issues including how Japan should take responsibility for it before she became involved in the "comfort women" issue.

Hisako Motoyama

Motoyama is the Executive Director at the Asia-Japan Women's Resource Center, and she is a self-described feminist social activist. She shared her story, "I grew up in Nagasaki. In 70's and 80's, Nagasaki was pretty rural. Old Japanese discrimination against women was still there. So, since I was a kid, I've had a question about women's lower status." Besides, before she officially met the "comfort women" problem, Motoyama was already involved in women's movements to solve gender related issues. Unlike others, she did not mention the background of negatively understanding the war as a possible factor leading her to support "comfort women." Yet, like Ikdea, Motoyama was already a feminist activist before she started to advocate for "comfort women."

In conclusion, from reviewing these six stories from participants, one common background was clear. Five participants were strongly interested in the Asia-Pacific War and many of them held a critical view of it. Chapter 2 discussed the division of Japanese opinions about the war. Seaton separated them into 6 different groups. The research findings show that almost all advocates of "comfort women" had the same views as Japanese progressives before being involved in the issue, indicating what appears to be there is a close connection between how people view

the war and how they understand the issue of Japanese military sexual slavery. In other words, Japanese contested war memories, specifically the progressive interpretation of the war in this case, contributed people to have perspectives advocating for "comfort women."

Another finding was that Ikeda and Motoyama already held feminist perspectives before their involvement in the "comfort women" issue. It appears that a feminist point of view also had some influences on them to advocate for former "comfort women."

What Divides the Public Opinion in Japan about "Comfort Women"?

While participants told their stories about how they became "comfort women" proponents, they were also asked to reflect on the polarized public opinion in Japan about the "comfort women" issue.

i) Different Understanding of the War

From her long experience working on this issue, Ikeda provided an important insight about what leads people to have opposing viewpoints about "comfort women." She said, "Looking back over history, it is about how people understand the Asia-Pacific War [whether to hold beliefs supporting or opposing the redress of "comfort women"]. Once they believe that it was a 'holy' war to liberate other Asian countries from the West, they cannot get away from that thinking," and they take the opposition side on the debate. In other words, if people believe that the Asian-Pacific War was a "holy" war and justifiable, they deny the existence of the "comfort women" issue because, first, according to their

perspectives, it was a "holy" war so nothing disgraceful should have existed such as the "comfort women" practice. Secondly, Japan was there to protect other Asian countries, so it should receive gratitude not accusations.

According to Ikeda, education has a big effect on why some people believe that the Asia-Pacific War was a just war. She said that although there were textbooks articulating that the Asia-Pacific War was a war of invasion and inflicted lots of suffering to other Asian people, some textbooks tried to hide them or not to mention Japanese wrongdoings during the war. Yu-ha Park, a Japanese literature professor, noted, "The textbooks that the JSHTR created regarded the war as a 'necessary' evil instead of emphasizing the cruelty of the war" (2008, 35). This kind of war history education by deemphasizing negative aspects of the war can give a more positive image about it possibly making people believe that the Asia-Pacific War was justifiable.

Not only education for children in school but also education for adults affects people's recognition about the Asia-Pacific War. Japanese national museums function to inform the general public about how a nation of Japan interprets the war. Ikeda stated, "I took a survey one time to see how many national museums had ever covered Japanese military's misconduct during the war. It turned out to be close to none… [To come as a no surprise], there is next to no national museum that had ever covered the 'comfort women' issue." National museums do not teach or present the cruelty of the Japanese military operation during the war. Because of this fact, Ikeda argued that there were less and less opportunities for children and adults to know about Japanese aggression and misconduct committed against other

Asian nations. And, these phenomena can lead people to believe more easily that the war was not wrong and can be justified.

Motoyama shared the same understanding as Ikeda. She explained that Japanese history education is very confusing providing different perspectives about the war. This is because, Motoyama said, "The Japanese government does not know where to stand on the recognition of war history and does not offer clear and uniform education guidelines." Some of the teachings and textbooks give more positive meanings to the war by minimizing the references to the Japanese military's wrongdoings, and that gives a more positive image about the war.

Nowadays, the right wing version of history constructed by the JSHTR is gradually gaining more support. And this teaching will increase the number of people who think that the war was rather justifiable. Ikeda reasons that those people who view the war more positively tend to take an opposing position on the debate of "comfort women" because the practice of the Japanese military sex slavery does not comply with a good image of the just war that Japan fought in the past.

ii) Male Dominant Japanese Society

Secondly, participants shared that another factor that polarized the Japanese public opinion about "comfort women" was whether people wished to keep Japan as a male centered society or not. Japanese society is still patriarchal where males have more power and rights than females (Kitamura 2008, 66). Respondents argue that neo-nationalists are against supporting the redress of "comfort women" because acknowledging the gravity of what happened to the women might diminish the privilege men hold in their male dominant society. Motoyama noted, "Neo-

nationalists are so against and fearful by the fact that this 'comfort women' issue can shake the male centric structure." She further explained that, "It was not only the 'comfort women' problem that could destabilize the Japanese male dominant structure. But, unfortunately, this issue became a symbol of that concern." Therefore, neo-nationalists take an opposition side on the debate because responding positively to the plight of the women can represent a change in their male favored Japanese system.

Also, Mototyama said that, nowadays, there are so many social changes happening in Japan including feminism. "Many conservative nationalists were worried about those new changes that could destroy old Japanese customs and tradition. Sadly, the 'comfort women' issue became a symbol to resist those new changes." This concern makes neo-nationalists deny the system of Japanese military sexual slavery because they do not want to accept recent progressive social transformations. This point was also mentioned by other participants who said that Japan is still a male dominant society, and people, especially males, do not want to change that. Unfortunately, people associate their resistance to new changes in their patriarchal culture with their opposition on the "comfort women" debate.

iii) Japanese National Pride

According to the participants, another reason why the public opinion in Japan about "comfort women" is divided and, especially, why neo-nationalists hold anti-"comfort women" perspectives is that right wing nationalists want to keep Japanese national pride. Japanese national pride is very important among neo-nationalists because they argue that Japanese lost their pride through post-war

history education, and they want to revive their pride as Japanese (Park 2008, 46). Respondents said that right wing nationalists deny the practice of Japanese military sexual slavery because they believe that the acceptance of the practice will degrade Japanese national pride.

The Japanese history textbook controversies are good examples that illustrate this point. Nohira argued that neo-nationalists fight vigorously to exclude the descriptions of "comfort women" in the textbooks because they think that Japanese children cannot take pride in their history if they acknowledge the unethical practice of "comfort women." Motoyama supported his argument by saying that, "Neo-nationalists are against the 'comfort women' issue because they are afraid that the immoral 'comfort women' practice might bring down Japanese national pride."

Furthermore, Park points out that Japanese national pride and the negative recognition of Japanese history (which is the acceptance of "comfort women") cannot simply coexist. She writes, "As long as the JSHTR people (neo-nationalists) value Japanese nationalism (pride), they cannot teach anything negative about the history; because nationalism always asks for positive views on any of their nation's actions" (Park 2008, 44). In other words, if people are nationalistic and want to keep their national pride, they cannot recognize the existence of the disgraceful "comfort women" system because it stains Japanese past.

Okano discussed more specifically Japanese right wing politicians and the Diet members and why they needed to deny the "comfort women" practice. As a reason, Okano explained, "The 'comfort women' issue can potentially destroy the

foundation of current politics that still carries adoration towards good old Japan under the emperor and militarism." She continued, "Simply, [in order to avoid bringing any shame to the good image of old Japan], the 'comfort women' system should have never existed under Japanese militarism." Many conservative politicians still honor old Japan so they tend to deny the existence of sexual slavery by the Japanese military because it will tarnish the perfect and admirable portrait of old Japan.

In the end, neo-nationalists cannot acknowledge the degrading Japanese history because nationalism is about holding pride in all of nation's past activities. Besides, if right wing nationalists and politicians accept the existence of "comfort women," this will taint the image of imperial militaristic Japan that right wing politicians idolize. They cannot allow that to happen so they and other neo-nationalists take a position that denies the existence of "comfort women" issue and the redress of those women.

iv) Left-Wing's Positive Perspective about Accepting the Issue

On the contrary, left wing activists supporting "comfort women" do not think that accepting and taking responsibility for the system of Japanese military slavery will bring shame to Japan but, instead, it will elevate Japanese pride and status by gaining respect from other countries. Park wrote that, "If Japan is the only country that apologizes for war time conduct in the world, that will be worthy of acclaim, not a reason for people to criticize" (Park 2008, 15).

Nohira argued that, "In relation to Japanese national pride, rather than not acknowledging mistakes, I believe that accepting those mistakes as truths,

apologize, and take procedures not to repeat the same mistakes will make Japan more respected in the global community." He said that denying the truth, instead, will lose the trust that Japan has in the international community. So, in order to make Japan a country to be proud of, it is better to accept and take responsibility.

When arguing with neo-nationalists at one time, Ikeda remembered, "They told me that I was an anti-Japanese woman and a traitor. Then, I told them that you were the ones who were putting down Japan. In a real sense, I am the real patriot." According to Ikeda, neo-nationalists are the ones who are lowering the Japanese national pride by denying the "comfort women" problem.

Motoyama and Okano also believe that apologizing and compensating for the crime of the "comfort women" practice will not degrade Japan. Conversely, resolving the issue by taking responsibility will be more beneficial for Japan in the future. Motoyama said that because "the 'comfort women' issue is the symbol of all the negative legacy from the past that Japan still carries," it is wiser to settle this issue and move on for a better future.

Okano said that accepting and taking responsibility of the issue would bring more positive results. She argued that, at this point, Japan has two choices: "The first one is not to accept responsibility thinking it will bring shame to Japan, and the second choice is to build better relationships with South Korea and other Asian neighboring countries by admitting mistakes and paying reparation." Out of these two options, Okano said, "I think that the latter choice is way easier for Japan to live with."

Apparently, activists supporting "comfort women" do not agree with the point that accepting the truth of the "comfort women" system deprives Japanese pride. On the contrary, they believe that doing so will raise Japanese national pride and that will be also beneficial for Japan diplomatically as well.

Conclusion

From reviewing stories from participants who support "comfort women," it was found that most of them were very critical of the Japanese war effort, and that, in addition, two persons had been concerned about the status of women in Japanese society before they got involved in the "comfort women" advocacy. These two similar circumstances were also mentioned in participants' analysis on what contributes to the different positions on the "comfort women" issue in Japan. According to the respondents, people's different opinions about the war, whether wanting to keep anti-feminist patriarchal society or not, and neo-nationalists' desire to protect Japanese national pride are major causes of the polarized public opinion about "comfort women" in Japan.

Activist Strategies and Activities

The previous section showed how research participants came to be the advocates of "comfort women." This section will examine, having their beliefs advocating for former sex slaves, what strategies and activities participants use or have used to address the "comfort women" issue. Also assuming reconciliation will be helpful to address the problem, the participants were asked if they think about reconciliation as a method of dealing with the issue.

Reconciliation is Not A Priority As A Strategy to Resolve the Issue

As discussed previously, a division or a conflict between two opposing groups is a big hindrance to the resolution of the issue of sexual slavery by the Japanese military. Given the theories discussed earlier, it is clear that reconciling their relations and finding resolutions together will be useful to better address and resolve the problem. However, participant interviews showed that participants do not see reconciliation as a favored option to resolve the issue at this time.

First, from interviews, it was clear that all participants had a feeling of anger towards neo-nationalists. "I have a strong anger towards them," Ikeda said. Okano expressed, "It is enough. I am furious." Motoyama also voiced, "To be honest, it cannot be denied that I have a feeling of dislike." At the same time, Ikeda and Yamashita shared feelings of sorry and pity for those young neo-nationalists who were not getting correct information but rather false facts from the Internet.

Not only at the emotional, but also at the rational level, most participants disliked and disagreed with neo-nationalists' viewpoints about "comfort women." Because they could not find any points that they could agree with right-wingers, they said that they could not make a compromise with their opposition on the issue. Ikeda said it clearly, "I cannot accept their opinions… I cannot find any points raised by right wing nationalists that I can understand or make a compromise on my thoughts."

When Okano was asked if she could find any nationalists' arguments that she could agree with, she answered, "I am against them. Whatever they say, I like to counter their arguments, one by one." Additionally, she said that she would rather

not settle this issue if she needed to make some concessions with neo-nationalists. "I tend to think that a way to resolve this issue by making some (political) compromises such as providing dishonest apologies and compensation just for a quick fix is not a good idea. Or, worse, that will make the resolution with justice more complicated." On top of her disagreement with neo-nationalists, Okano said making concessions with their opposition to solve the issue is not a desirable option, either.

Motoyama explained why she and other activists could not compromise with neo-nationalists on the "comfort women" issue. She said that the left wing and right wing used to be able to discuss. In the 1990s, the Japanese government acknowledged the existence of the "comfort women" system. A discrepancy between the left and the right at that time was whether the Japanese government needed to pay compensation to the women or not. At that time, the left and the right still shared an understanding that Japan committed a war crime.

However, Motoyama continued, after those debates in 1990s, that mutual understanding started to collapse. Some people started saying that the "comfort women" system did not exist or they claimed that Japan was a victim like other Asian countries. Therefore, Motoyama said, "Now, it is very difficult to have a discussion with right wing nationalists because we no longer have any common ground. I know that this is the purpose of historical revisionists (neo-nationalists)… They are changing the history itself. So, it is hard. I just don't know how to communicate with them." According to Motoyama, she cannot make any compromise because neo-nationalists/historical revisionists alter history. The left

and the right used to have a common interpretation that the "comfort women" system at least existed, but now it is gone. She can no longer find a common arena to discuss with right-wingers.

Because of the differences in their opinions with neo-nationalists, participants shared that it is now impossible to have a conversation with right-wingers to possibly find some agreements or to reconcile their differences. When asked whether it is possible to reconcile with neo-nationalists, discuss with them, and find some common ground as ways of addressing the issue, Ikeda answered, "We are not even close to that. At least, if there were any points that I could accept/understand or any room for discussion, there might be a talk. But I cannot find any parts that I can agree with neo-nationalists. I cannot think of them now."

Ikea gave an actual example why she said that reconciliation and a discussion with neo-nationalists did not seem possible at this time. She narrated, when she was making TV programs about "comfort women," right wing nationalists came uninvited to her office many times demanding to talk with her. She had several talks with them in the presence of her publicist, but she said that she could not have any constructive discussion with them. She stated, "They just told me whatever they wanted to say without giving me opportunities to speak. We could not even have a conversation." The she concluded that it was not possible to have a productive discussion with neo-nationalists or to come to any agreements with them.

Understanding the difficulties of reconciliation, Okano was asked specifically if she thinks reconciliation is necessary to resolve the issue, she answered, "Hmm, well, but... If they (neo-nationalists) proposed such an opportunity to discuss, I

could attend. But I would not initiate or organize that." Okano further expressed that, "I believe even if we had some talks, they would not change. Their thinking had already become a part of their identities, hadn't it? I think it is difficult."

When Motoyama was asked the same question whether reconciliation and interactions with neo-nationalists were necessary to resolve the issue, she responded, "I'm not interested in interacting with right wingers. There is no benefit to speak with someone who denies history. I'm more interested in attracting more people on our side (as a way of addressing the issue)." She articulated, "It is clear that we cannot have a conversation with history revisionists (neo-nationalists)." As a reason, she said, "Revisionists and nationalists are trying to change or deny fundamental historical truths. Once we go along with them for the sake of the resolution of the issue, that's the end. We cannot do that." It seems clear that participants do not see reconciliation as a preferred option to resolve and address the issue at this moment. As one of the reasons, Ikeda mentioned that she could not find any major points that she could agree with neo-nationalists about "comfort women."

Strategies

iv) International and Domestic Pressure

It appears then that activists do not see reconciliation with right wing nationalists as a practical way of resolving the issue at this moment. So, now, what kind of strategies do they use to address and settle the problem? One of the most common responses was the use of global pressure. Ikeda said that, "We need to use global pressure. We try to change our government by using pressure from victim

countries, other countries, and the international organizations." Nohira also stated, "We need international pressure because the Japanese government does not respond to domestic pressure."

On August 30th, 2011, the South Korean Constitutional Court gave a decision that South Korean government's inaction to seek a solution of the "comfort women" issue was a breach of the constitution because keeping the issue unresolved deprived basic human rights of former "comfort women." In order to respond to this court's verdict, the South Korean government started to urge the Japanese government to take action to resolve the issue (Women's Active Museum 2011). Before this, the South Korean government had never officially discussed this problem with Japan in order not to hurt diplomatic and economic relations with Japan. This is a new development.

In order to make this new move by South Korea successful, Nohira noted, "As a strategy, now, we have the South Korean government putting pressure on the Japanese government; then, we want to support and surround that pressure with global opinions and voices." Motoyama discussed the same, "Nowadays, the South Korean government is very enthusiastic about settling this issue. Also, there is international pressure, for example, from the United States." And she said that she wants to use those international pressures to make the Japanese government listen to the international opinions to settle the problem. So it is clear that many left wing activists use global pressure to possibly lead the Japanese government to listen to the demands from victims and eventually solve the issue.

Not only the use of international but also domestic pressure was mentioned to convince the Japanese government to take more responsibility. Nowadays, participants mentioned that there are so many people who do not know the "comfort women" issue. If Japanese activists can gain support from these people, it will put more pressure from the public on the government. Motoyama said that, "There are so many people who do not understand the 'comfort women' issue at all." And she added, "Some people believe that the 'comfort women' problem is a conspiracy prepared by left-wingers and South Koreans." Nohira followed, "On this issue, there are a very few people who want to solve this and a very few who do not want to. The rest of majority of people are indifferent to this issue."

Based on the fact that many people have little knowledge about the problem, Nohira's strategy is clear: speak to that majority of people who do not know the issue and get their support. He said, "To solve this problem, the most important thing is to call on the majority of the public who is indifferent to this issue." By speaking to them and providing correct information, activists will be able to get them on the side supporting "comfort women." Gaining more people who support the resolution of the issue will add more domestic pressure on the Japanese government to take action. This is one of the strategies to address the issue.

v) Social Foundation Development

Besides the importance of pressure to move the Japanese government, Motoyama argues that developing a social foundation, which favors the settlement of the "comfort women" issue, is also critical to make the Japanese government decide to resolve the problem. She said, "In order to have the Japanese government

apologize, compensate, and educate, we need to create a foundation for that to happen. This is the most difficult part, and we have not been able to do this." To explain what kind of foundation people need to establish, she said:

> At the civil society level, we, the general public, need to show to the government that we want a society that values human rights, equality, eradication of racism, and so on. If the public does not have these visions, it becomes a risk, not a gain, for the government to take measures to solve any human rights related issues including the 'comfort women' issue. So, we, as activists, need to build such an environment.

Her logic is simple: if politicians in the Japanese government think it is risky to do something, they never do it. Therefore, her plan is to develop a social climate among people so that Cabinet members can believe it is beneficial to solve the issue of "comfort women" by, for example, increasing public interests of social justice and human rights. When that foundation is established and combined with external pressure, the Japanese government will finally begin to address the issue.

Activities

Based on the strategies discussed above, what kind of activities do participants develop and use to deal with the problem of sexual slavery by the Japanese Army? Here, their activities are classified into three categories for clarification: for the public, with government, and research.

i) For the Public

Activities for the public vary. Some general ones are movies showing and holding meetings. For example, Nohira's organization, the Peace Boat, does things like "showing documentaries and movies, holding victims' photo exhibitions, and organizing tours to visit South Korea and the Philippines."

Ikeda said that having the Women's Active Museum on War and Peace open and holding exhibitions there were her main activities to promote the resolution of the issue. Also, she mentioned that the Violence Against Women in War-Network Japan (VAWW-NET Japan) provides seminars, meetings, symposiums, and movie showings. As part of the VAWW-NET Japan, she organizes and engages in these activities "in order to educate and let more people know about what the 'comfort women' issue is about." She further mentioned that the WAM publishes books, produces documentaries, and sends out "comfort women" related information to the public. Also, when citizen groups organize some antiwar and peace exhibitions, the WAM lends their panels and other materials to them to display.

Okano is a member of the Women's Action Network (WAN). The WAN operates to "inform people worldwide of the activities and activism by and for women in Japan" (Women's Action Network n.d.). Although its main focus is not "comfort women," the WAN covers and sends information about the issue of sexual slavery by the Japanese military to the world. Motoyama is the Executive Director at the AJWRC. Like the WAN, the AJWRC does not only focus on the "comfort women" issue. Yet, when there is some news related to "comfort women," by using its strength of broad network, the AJWRC sends out information to other organizations and individuals asking them to take action and support the movement.

One of the well-known activities to address the "comfort women" problem in public is the Wednesday Demonstration. This is a regular meeting that is held on every Wednesday in front of the Japanese embassy in South Koran to demand the

resolution of the "comfort women" issue. This demonstration does not only take place in South Korean but also in Japan.

December 14th, 2011, marked the 1000th Wednesday Demonstration. A Japanese organization called the Japan Action 2010 for Resolution of the "Comfort Women" Issue (Japan Action 2010) organized many events all over Japan to bring more awareness to the issue under the name of "1000th Wednesday Demonstration Global Action Day." One of the biggest events was the "Form a Human Chain Around the Ministry of Foreign Affairs!" This event gathered more than one thousand and three hundred participants and they successfully surrounded the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a human chain (Japan Action 2010 n.d. a).

Nohira mentioned this event during his interview and talked about his plan for the special Wednesday Demonstration event in 2012, "This year (2012), we are planning the Lantern Demonstration on Wednesday, August 15th (the Japanese anniversary of the end of the Second World War)… We put names of deceased former 'comfort women' on each lantern. After that, we plan to show a documentary." Nohira is involved in the Wednesday Demonstration because it is a great opportunity for the activists to attract public attention about "comfort women" and address the issue by asking people to support the redress of the victims.

ii) With Government

Not only their work for the public, activists and their NGOs are also engaged in political activities to influence the government. The Japan All Solidarity Network for the Settlement of the "Comfort Women" Issue (All Solidarity Network) is an

organization that consists of researchers, lawyers, and citizens who are involved in the "comfort women" problem. One of its activities is to send letters to various organizations to promote resolution of the issue. For example, it sent a report on "comfort women" to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to ask to pressure the Japanese government to take measures. Furthermore, it sends requests to different history textbook publishers to demand reintroducing the descriptions of "comfort women" (Japan All Solidarity 2008).

The Japan Action 2010 (the host organization of the 1000th Wednesday Demonstration Global Action Day) is another similar group. Like the All Solidarity Network, the Japan Action 2010 consists of individuals and organizations that are working to solve the "comfort women" issue. It was established on February 7th, 2010. Yamashita explained how the Japan Action 2010 came about. "When the Democratic Party of Japan (which is a more left wing party compared to the previous one) became the ruling party in the House of Representatives for the very first time, the Japan Action 2010 was formed to solve the 'comfort women' issue by taking advantage of this great opportunity."

The main operation of the Japan Action 2010 is putting pressure on the Japanese government through local assembly members. Basically, it divides Japan into nine blocks with a point of contact in each block. By using its strong and wide network, members of the group in each block explain the "comfort women" issue to their local city council members and ask them to take action, more specifically to pass resolutions at their local governments to demand the settlement of the issue (Japan Action 2010 n.d. b).

Through the work of the Japan Action 2010 and its supporting city council members, many city councils have adopted written opinions asking for resolution of the issue and sent those opinions in writing to the Diet. Those written opinions demand that, "The Japanese government needs to listen sincerely to the opinions from the global society and it should accept the truth, apologize, compensate, and make a commitment not to repeat the same things through history education" (Oomori and Kawata 2010, 63). According to the WAM, as of December 11th, 2012, thirty-nine city councils have adopted the written opinions (Women's Active Museum n.d. a).

Nohira was also involved in the Japan Action 2010 and described his work in this organization. He said that there were several activists who wrote reports on how to succeed in making their own city councils adopt written opinions for the settlement of the "comfort women" issue. So, he held seminars inviting those people and having them talk about their experiences to pass resolutions in local governments. Some people, who went to those seminars, actually achieved having their own city councils adopt written opinions. By doing this, Nohira said that the Japan Action 2010 attempt to increase the number of local assemblies that show support for resolution of the "comfort women" issue.

Ikeda also endorsed this movement by saying that, "Although this activity might seem insignificant to actually resolve the issue, it is a starting point to first change our local city governments as grassroots activism." She said that gaining more support and raising voices demanding resolution of the issue in smaller cities will eventually lead to a bigger change. She continued, " I understand that we are

doing this at the small city council level, but it is still a big progress. We did not have this before; this started happening just a few years ago. We continue to do these even though they are small activities."

In summary, because activists in the Japan Action 2010 know that it is extremely difficult to change the Japanese government directly, they start from changing local small governments by asking their members to support "comfort women" and to send their opinions in writing to the Diet demanding the resolution. Participants shared that these actions add more pressure on the national government to eventually take action to settle the "comfort women" issue.

iii) Research

There are some people and organizations that are involved in research to further advance activism and resolution of the problem. For example, besides its political mission, the All Solidarity Network does some work in the area of research as well. As part of the All Solidarity Network, Nohira described that, "[We] conduct research on how survivors are doing and living and how many people are still alive. Then, we make information packets based on this research." He continued, "We also make various booklets. For example, we complied all the decisions that Japanese courts had ever given with regard to the 'comfort women' issue."

As a professor, Okano is also engaged in research to contribute to the settlement of the issue. She is the president of the Association for Research on the Impacts of War and Military Bases on Women's Human Rights. One of its missions includes conducting scholarly research on the subjects related to war, human and women's rights (Editing Committee 2011). Although this association deals with

various topics on women, war, and human rights, its main focus is the "comfort women" issue. It publishes lots of articles and theses related to "comfort women" through its scholarly journal. These research efforts are important along with the activism because they can provide new findings and perspectives that can reinforce the movement and gain more support from people with accurate information.

Conclusion

Participants had clear strategies to address the "comfort women" issue in Japan. One of them was to use pressure, especially from global actors, to push the Japanese government to take responsibility. Also, at the domestic level, participants said that the All Solidarity Network and the Japan Action put pressure on the Japanese government through letter writing campaigns and by asking local city council members to pass a resolution demanding the end of the problem and sending them to the national government. Participants are also engaged in various public activities to mainly raise more awareness about this problem and to put more pressure on the government from the public.

Also this research showed that their strategies to address the issue do not include reconciling with neo-nationalists. It was discussed that the polarization of the public opinion in Japan was impeding the resolution process, and reconciliation might be useful to better address the problem. But, reconciling differences appears to be very difficult because both sides disagree with each other about how to interpret the "comfort women" issue.

How Activists See the Progress of Resolution of the "Comfort Women" Issue

Previously, strategies and activities that participants utilize to address the issue of sexual slavery by the Japanese Army were discussed. This section will focus on participants' evaluation of those activities and, more importantly, the development of the resolution of the issue. The participants were specifically asked how they think about the progress of their activism and the resolution process, and if there are any challenges that hinder their work, what they are.

Frustrated Activism

Participant interviews show that most respondents were not optimistic about the prospect of the settlement of the "comfort women" issue. When asked about the effect of the activism that Ikeda was engaged in, after a few seconds of thinking, Ikeda answered, "It is hard to say. It has been seven years since this War Active Museum opened. And if you ask me how this museum is affecting the advancement of the resolution of the issue, I do not know." And she continued, "It has not changed so much. It is not upwards but not downwards, either."

Okano was clearer about how she thinks about the progress of solving the issue. She stated, "The direction of solving the issue is downward." She continued to say that the movement is not spreading, and all the people who are involved in this issue are becoming tired. Activists have been doing the same things for 20 years, and, Okano said, "Few things have changed, even though our enemy is becoming bigger and more powerful. Besides, many left wing activists get harassed by neo-nationalists. It is very hard."

"I do not want to say it is downward", Motoyama expressed her honest feeling and continued, "Yet, compared to 90's, it is true that the resolution is going far away." And she added, "But we passed the worst. So it is not hopeless or anything, because there are so many people who do not know about this issue." Compared to Motoyama, Kimuro was more doubtful about the outlook of the resolution by current activism, "We have been doing the same things. This may sound bad, but personally, our present activism will not be able to solve the issue. No matter what activists do, I believe that this issue will not be resolved politically." Like some others, Kimuro was less certain about the effect of the present activism.

Never Give Up

Despite their frustrated activism, respondents shared their commitment not to give up but to keep working for the settlement of the problem. Ikeda told a story that the year of 2010 was the ten-year anniversary of the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery (a people's tribunal that tried crimes that were committed by the Japanese military during the war). In that year, she said she held a symposium and some events to think about and discuss what has and what has not changed since the tribunal. And, she and other activists made a video *We Will Never Give Up*. Then she said, "Unfortunately, this (*We Will Never Give Up*) is the only way to sum up the past ten years. This is a bit pitiful, but this is what I can say." She shared that there were not so many things achieved. But, in spite of those frustrating outcomes, she never gave up but continued what she had to do. And, according to her, this commitment was one of the most important aspects of her "comfort women" activism.

Okano, first, admitted that she and other "comfort women" proponents had been doing and demanding the same things (apologize, compensate, and educate) since 1991. When Okano was asked if the Japanese government would ever listen to those same old demands in the future, she answered, "Deep down, I would love to say 'yes,' but I cannot be 100 percent positive. The only thing that I can say is that we have been working on it. We cannot give up and cannot make a compromise." As a reason for not giving up, Okano explained, "As a political philosophy researcher/professor, I cannot make a compromise on issues related to human rights. I just cannot do that. We consider that neo-nationalists are denying human rights." Because Okano considers that the "comfort women" issue is a big human rights issue, she said she does not want to give up pursing the resolution of the problem but continue to fight until former "comfort women" receive justice.

Yamashita acknowledges that the present activism will less likely make a change to the Japanese government that can lead to the settlement of the issue. However, she said that the continuing effort to put an end to this issue is crucial. She stated, "But if we do not try, we will never achieve it. So I believe doing something is very important." Like other activists, Yamashita seems to understand that the resolution of the issue is getting more difficult and farther away. Yet, she said that she does not want to quit but to keep on working until the Japanese government seriously deals with the issue.

Challenges

Although participants are not giving up their activism to address the issue, they recognize that the progress of the resolution is not going well. Then, what seems to be the challenges that make it hard to address and resolve the issue?

i) Anti-Feminist Environment

One of the biggest hindrances to solve this issue shared by participants was related to women's status in Japan. Motoyama said, "It is endless once I start telling you challenges. But, first of all, this Japanese society is so anti-gender equality. People are really against women's rights and so on. This is a big challenge."

Nohira agreed by saying that Japan is still a country in which a lot of victims of sex crimes cannot come forward, but need to hide their experiences. Nohira stressed, "We need to build a society where sex crime victims can live with dignity and respect, including the 'comfort women' victims." Okano claimed that the Japanese society is anti-feminist and it has been like this since the time when the "comfort women" system was practiced. Because the Japanese government has not yet acknowledged that the "comfort women" system was violation of human and women's rights, Okano said that, "I think that this Japanese society has not progressed in terms of eliminating discrimination and contempt against women."

Furthermore, Okano said that because the male-centered culture is deeply rooted in Japan, "Even Japanese women do not realize their lower status." She described that they do not notice that their wage is lower than men, it is hard to give birth and raise a baby, and, sometimes, they need to quit their jobs when they have a baby. Still, many Japanese do not question this male-dominant society where

women have less rights than men. Okano noted that this needed to be changed to develop a more gender equal society. Once such a society with better women's human rights is achieved, the "comfort women" issue, which was created by sexism and masculinist culture, will more easily be solved.

In her interview, Okano also mentioned a correlation between the anti-feminist perspectives of neo-nationalists and their opposing opinions about the "comfort women" issue. She said that, sometimes, right-wingers are against "comfort women" just because they are jealous of women. Supposedly, some right wing males are having difficult lives; then, they see some powerful and well-spoken women advocating for justice for "comfort women." This makes those men wonder why women, who are supposed to be lower than men, seem to be more successful and stronger than men. Because they do not like this reverse power relation, male right wing nationalists harass women and slander the "comfort women" issue that those women were supporting. This aspect of men's opposition or resistance towards well-off women might come into effect when some neo-nationalists opposes the redress of former sex slaves.

From these examples, it is clear that respondents believe that the Japanese male centric society and the anti-feminist environment are hindering the process of addressing the issue more properly. Women's general lower status and resistance from some men to change the society to achieve more gender equality are big challenges that left wing activists need to overcome.

ii) Rightward Trend

Another obstruction to resolving the issue pointed out by participants was the fact that the power and the influence of neo-nationalists are growing and the Japanese society as a whole is drifting to the right. Ikeda shared her worries; "Present Japan is becoming more nationalistic. In order to enable Japan to conduct war, people are trying to change the constitution (specifically the Article 9, which is known as the peace constitution). I am a little bit terrified by the fact that Japan is going this right wing direction." She also added, "The media is becoming more right, and politics are also becoming more nationalistic. I feel that Japan is becoming a country that hides information and does not tell and report the truth."

Okano also stated, "For the last two decades, the right wing is dominant in politics." Motoyama said the same, "Since the movement of the JSHTR started, neo-nationalist discourse has become very dominant." She further discussed that, "The biggest problem was that this dominance had also been transferred to the government. What caused this domination of neo-nationalists in politics was the fact that the public environment was already established and ready to welcome nationalist ideas." Many respondents shared that the power of neo-nationalists is increasing. Of course, the growing number of neo-nationalists reflects the more difficulties of the resolution of the issue by Japanese activists because many neo-nationalists regard "comfort women" as prostitutes or women willingly worked in the sex trade so the Japanese government does not have to further address the issue. This rightward trend is another challenge that gives activists a hard time to address the issue.

iii) Economy

As one of the reasons for Japan's drift to the right, most of respondents seemed to agree that a bad economy was a driving force behind it. Hence, economy is another troubling factor for the resolution of the "comfort women" issue. Okano said it clearly, "When economy goes down and when people start worrying about it, people tend to become more right wing not left." Jin Linbo, for example, clearly demonstrated a correlation between economic recession and neo-nationalism in Japan (2008, 167).

Motoyama gave more details about why economic depression escalates nationalist and anti-"comfort women" thinking. "There were big anxiety and upset by the fact that Japanese economic power dropped to the third place from second in the world and Japan is losing its status as an economic giant." She continued, "Those frustrations seemed to have turned to be antipathy towards South Korea and China. Normally, this has nothing to do with 'comfort women'; but I believe it has." Mototyama was saying that Japanese direct their worries and disappointments in their economy towards South Korea and China. And, those anti-South Korea feelings driven by recession turn out to be anti- (Korean) "comfort women" opinions.

Ikeda also discussed that a bad economy was assisting the rightward tilt and making the solution of "comfort women" problem more difficult and complicated. She said that Japan had become a society with an income gap. Nationalists of the younger generation make little money and they live at the bottom of the society. They can rarely get a permanent job and their lives are difficult financially. And

Ikeda said, “For me, the rightward trend seems to stem from these (mainly economic) deformations of our society.”

Ikeda further explained that, during these financially difficult times, Japanese young nationalists tend to criticize Korean Japanese who are receiving what they see as special privileges from the Japanese government. Koichi Yasuda, for example, argue that, with all their economic frustration, young nationalists thought that foreign national privileges were not fair, and they started to verbally attack Korean Japanese on the street and on the Internet saying that those people receive free welfare and economic help from the government (2012). Eventually, the “comfort women” issue, with its relation to Korea, also became a good target for them to attack and release their economic frustration. This example supports the notion shared by participants that economic stagnation certainly developed anti-foreign and nationalist sentiments especially among young Japanese who struggled to find a job.

In addition, Ikeda mentioned that this phenomenon of the nationalist trend influenced by depression reminded her of the growth of fascism (ultra-nationalism) under Nazi Germany. She said that it was really similar to when Nazism was rising in Germany. Nazis gained support by attracting younger and lower-income people and by promising to exclude who they claimed were rich and of the intelligentsia Jewish people. She said, “Today’s Japan really reminds me of this process.”

In the end, it seems that stagnation in the economy has a huge effect on the increase of newly born Japanese nationalists. And, their opposition on the debate of

"comfort women" is a problem that left wing activists must contend with to better address the problem.

iv) Unchangeable Japanese Government

One last challenge that was pointed out by the participants was the low possibility that the Japanese government will change. Many participants shared a feeling that the Japanese government would not change its standpoint about the issue of "comfort women" to bring a settlement. Ikeda expressed, "I feel hopeless to change the Japanese government. I think that there are so many procedures to actually change Japanese politics. But today's rightward trend is not really helping."

Yamashita said, "Today, there is no hope among Japanese that they can change the government." Okano agreed, "Every Japanese has a feeling that whatever he/she says, politics and the government would not change." So, many participants seem to agree that Japan has a very inflexible and conservative government.

Okano provided a reason why Japan is less flexible to change:

> [Because] Japan has not changed since the war. We started the war of invasion, but we did not conduct trials by ourselves. We did not do the Tokyo Trial; it was imposed by Allied Forces… [And], there was no one who tried to bring our emperor to trial for a war crime. There might have been some, but we did not. Therefore, Japanese inability to change is very deeply rooted.

According to Okano, Japan did not get rid of the root cause of the war and the one who was most responsible for it, the emperor. And, with the emperor still a symbol for the country and the old system from wartime held over, Japan is less likely to change. Tomiichi Murayama, a former Japanese prime minister, also mentioned that Germany, for example, got rid of the Nazis (the cause of the war) after the war, but

Japan did not remove its emperor because of the U.S.'s concern for the Cold War (Murayama 2007, 216).

So, it seems that because Japan could not change completely after the war, still carrying the wartime legacy of the emperor system, it is less likely that Japan will change its conservative stances about its war recognition and war related issues. And, it is less hopeful that the "comfort women" issue can be the one that brings that change.

Conclusion

Participant interviews showed that respondents have a less positive perception toward the resolution of the "comfort women" issue. They shared that the progress of their activism has been frustrated and slowed. Despite this fact, respondents said that they did not want to give up but to continue their activism to address the issue. Participants identified some challenges that slow down the resolution process. One of them was how women were treated in Japanese society. The second challenge was the rightward trend in Japan; and this was largely influenced by another challenge of economic depression, which tends to raise anti-foreign and nationalistic opinions.

CHAPTER 7: Discussion and Summary

The previous chapter described why and how Japanese activists address the "comfort women" issue in Japan and how they think about their progress, which was the main purpose of this thesis. This chapter will discuss the research findings. It is divided into three parts. First, it will briefly review the research results according to the research questions and provide three suggestions that might help activists better address the issue. Also, based on the observation that the divided Japanese opinions about the system of Japanese sexual slavery are hindering the resolution of the issue, the second part focuses on reconciliation and historical reconciliation: how they might help better deal with the problem. The third part will be the summary of this thesis.

Suggestions to Help Better Address the "Comfort Women" Issue Based on the Research Findings

i) *What Made the Activists Hold Beliefs Supporting "Comfort Women" and Others Have Contrasting Opinions?*

For this first research question, this study showed that, as their background, most respondents held a negative and critical view of the war before they became proponents of "comfort women." It appears that the progressive interpretation of the war from contested war memories discussed in chapter 2 influenced people to have viewpoints supporting "advocacy for the redress of 'comfort women.'" Next, two participants already had feminist perspectives and were engaged in the Women's Liberation Movement to address gender related issues before they became supporters of the victims. This reflects that the "comfort women" issue is seen as a problem related to gender. And their feminist viewpoints might have

guided them to support the victims of gender violence in the name of the "comfort women" system.

To explain why some people engage in social activism, the social networks theory argues that, "The nature of people' social networks… is crucial in turning favorable attitudes into participation" (Valocchi 2010, 111). According to the study results, some participants were already linked to peace and feminist activism before their involvement in the "comfort women" problem. Like the theory argues, their existing relationships with antiwar and women's rights movements might have affected them supporting and participating in their related activism in the "comfort women" issue.

Similar background factors, different opinions on war history and different perspectives on women's status, were also observed in the responses when participants were asked to reflect on the polarized opinion about "comfort women" in Japan. One of the participants mentioned that once people understand the war positively, they tend to become opponents of "comfort women." Also the Japanese anti-feminist mentality trying to preserve the Japanese male dominant society is another reason that divides the public opinion about "comfort women" and leads right wing nationalists to bear viewpoints that oppose the redress of former sex slaves.

From these findings, the ways people understand the war and the way they think about women's status in Japan have big influences on making people decide if they want to be for or against on the "comfort women" debate. As discussed in chapter 3, the "comfort women" controversy revolves around whether "comfort

women" were prostitutes or sex slaves, if they were coerced to be "comfort women," if the practice of "comfort women" was a war crime, and so forth. Although these things are very important to discuss and conduct research, these are not necessarily the factors to make people choose which side they want to be on the debate. According to this study, determinants of people's different viewpoints about "comfort women" are their interpretations of war history and their different perspectives about women's human rights and status in Japanese society.

As one of the strategies to address the issue of Japanese military sexual slavery, Nohira pointed out the importance of tapping into majority of people who are indifferent to the issue and convincing them to support "comfort women." The increased number of voices will eventually move the Japanese government to take action. As a way to get more support from those bystanders, the cultural change theory argues that, in order to persuade people, new values that transform how people perceive certain issues need to be created and developed. Changing cultural norms is the key to succeed social activism (Rochon 1998).

Therefore, if left wing activists want to have more supporters who endorse the redress of "comfort women" as a way of addressing and eventually solving the issue, they can further continue to work on cultivating cultural values that are in favor of "comfort women." This study showed that those values are critical understanding of the war and a desire to achieve a more gender equal society.

So, the first thing that activists can do to gain more supporters is to create and foster better antiwar/peace education, so that people recognize that the war was wrong and should not be justified. It is true that post-war Japanese education

was based on peace and anti-war philosophy, and it had been very reflective on its war history in order not to wage war again. Yet, with the rise of power and discourse of neo-nationalists, those values seem to have become weaker.

As briefly discussed before, activists have already been working on counteracting those rightward nationalist influences on education by asking history textbook publishers to bring back descriptions of "comfort women" to show negative aspects of the war. They can continue and further develop to do so by, for example, visiting schools that use the JSHTR's history textbook and asking them to consider using other history textbooks that, at least, do not treat the war gracefully. Perhaps left wing activists could create an organization that could respond to and counterbalance the JSHTR and make and publish its own history textbooks to promote and reinforce their antiwar and peace perspectives like the JSHTR succeeded in doing. This would help recover and strengthen Japanese peace and antiwar cultural values.

Secondly, based on the result that feminist and gender justice perspectives seemed to contribute people to be advocates of "comfort women," the activists can continue to work toward developing a society or a culture that embraces gender equality so that people will support solutions of problems that will improve women's rights and status including this issue of Japanese military sexual slavery. As discussed in chapter 3, feminism is fairly new in human history. It is especially so in Japan. Japan is behind in women's rights compared to the rest of the developed countries. In Japanese schools, feminism or women's rights are rarely taught in class and discussed among students; therefore, people are less conscious about issues

related to women and gender. In order to change this situation, activists can further work on raising more awareness and understanding of feminism and women's rights by, for example, asking schools and the Ministry of Education in Japan to include feminist education in the curriculum.

As discussed in chapter 2 and 3, gender and gender violence had not been addressed and studied until recently. Some people may still not know so much about them especially people in Japan. Educating people about gender and gender violence and their history is also important to cultivate a culture that supports gender equality. By learning about gender and its history, people will realize that women have been marginalized and that gender injustices need to be more addressed. Overall, growing feminist and gender education will surely develop a cultural norm that supports improvement of women's human rights including the resolution of "comfort women" issue.

So, these two ideas are the first set of suggestions. By constructing and enhancing "comfort women" favorable values of antiwar and feminism (gender equality), activists will be able to have more people on their side advocating for former sex slaves. If the voices supporting the redress of the victims become dominant and put enough pressure on the Japanese government, it might ultimately take action to solve the issue.

ii) What Strategies and Activities Do the Activists Use to Address the Issue?

The second research question was what activists do to address the issue. It was found that participants were using various activities and strategies to redress the problem. Politically, for example, the Japan Action 2010 calls for local

government members to propose and adopt written opinions demanding resolution of the issue in their city councils. And they send those opinions in writing to the Diet and national assembly members to show that many people want this issue to be settled. In a way, the Japan Action 2010 puts pressure on the national government to take action by using local city councils and their members.

In fact, according to the participants, this use of pressure was their major strategy to address the issue. More specifically, respondents said that they wanted to use global pressure from international actors, such the U.S. and the United Nations (UN), to make Japan take responsibility for the system of "comfort women." Over the years, many nations and organizations (the UN, the U.S., the European Union, Canada, the Netherlands, South Korean, and Taiwan) passed resolutions demanding the Japanese government take measures to solve the issue of Japanese military sexual slavery (Women's Active Museum n.d. b). Activists want to take advantage of these global opinions to persuade the Japanese government to deal with the problem.

As discussed in the theory chapter, putting pressure is an often-used strategy by social activists and NGOs to bring social change. When the governments are not responding to domestic opinions, the local NGOs and activists ask international allies to pressure the governments from above. Also, the "global regimes empower and embolden local social movements and increase pressure on target governments from below… When the pressures from the top and the bottom converge, social movements are more likely to succeed" (Tsutsui and Shin 2008, 391). The research results show that left wing activists are doing exactly what the theory argues to

bring change to the issue of sexual slavery by the Japanese Army. They are putting pressure on the Japanese government from local assemblies and from international actors. And, eventually, the combined pressure might lead the Japanese government to take action to settle the issue.

iii) How Do the Activists Evaluate the Progress of their Activism?

The third research question was how the participants felt about the progress of their activism to resolve the issue. Although a few participants showed their hesitation to evaluate their activism negatively, they shared that they were not so optimistic about the resolution of the issue any time soon. As a solution of this problem, left wing activists want the Japanese government to apologize by accepting its full responsibility, compensate the survivors, and educate the public about the sexual slavery by the Japanese Army. The advocates of "comfort women" have been asking the Japanese government to do those things for decades, but the government has not responded to their demands.

Besides, former "comfort women" are getting very old and many of them already passed away. Compensating the victims will be difficult in near future. Because it has been and will be difficult to make the government take responsibility for the issue, activists can shift their focus from pressuring the government to leaving the memory of those women because that will be the focus point of the problem in the future. So, as a second suggestion, activists might switch their focus more to work on creating historical memory that acknowledges and remembers "comfort women."

One of the most influential sources that shapes public historical memory is history textbook. Laura Hein and Mark Selden say that, “Texts (textbooks) are particularly important ‘sites of memory’” (2000, 4). The history textbook can have an influence on how people remember the past. As discussed before, many of the descriptions about “comfort women” had already been deleted and whitewashed in Japanese junior high school textbooks. In a way, this reflects how the Japanese recently remember the victims of sexual slavery. Although there have been some efforts to bring back explanations about sexual slavery by the Japanese military to the textbooks by some activists, those efforts seem to be a lot more secondary to their focused activism against the government. In the interviews, for example, although participants talked a lot about their vigorous activism toward the Japanese government, many of them did not mention their specific advocacy on the history textbook.

So they might be able to alter priorities and put more energy on changing history textbooks or, more precisely, pressuring the Ministry of Education in Japan, which is responsible for what should be written in history textbooks (Crawford 2006, 51), to include memory of “comfort women” like how they were recruited and treated during captivity. Because activists are becoming aware that having the Japanese government take full responsibility and pay compensation has been and will be more difficult with no more victims to be compensated in the future, changing the public opinion and keeping historical memory about “comfort women” through history textbooks can be their main activism and their primary goal of resolving the issue.

When participants answered the third research question and shared that the progress of the resolution was frustrated, they mentioned several challenges that impede their activism. One of them was the fact that Japan is becoming more rightward nationalistic, which bolsters anti-"comfort women" thinking. Park wrote, "Ten years after the start of the Asian Women's Fund, the Japanese government did not change, or worse, it became more conservative" (2008, 104). Toshio Nakano acknowledged, "1990s was a decade that Japanese history recognition became more and more nationalistic" (2008, 25). So, it is true that Japan is more tilting to the right: one of the causes of this phenomenon is economic depression.

Many respondents suggested that the recession was the potential cause of the increase of young nationalists in Japan. All the economic frustration and anxiety among Japanese turned to be antipathy towards foreign nationals especially Korean Japanese. Tetsuya Shibui describes that when Japanese entered the twenty-first century, the ratio of the temporary workers dramatically increased. And he says, "The game of musical chairs had begun to compete for permanent jobs. When so many chairs were still left, people did not care about foreigners and people were very tolerant." He continues, "However when there are fewer chairs remained, people started to worry and claim that Japanese should get priorities to sit on those chairs" (Yasuda 2012, 349). Additionally, a freelance journalist, Kochi Yasuda, also argues that, "Young nationalists believe that the reason why there are fewer jobs and less public assistance for young people is because of foreign nationals, such as Korean Japanese, who take a free ride on welfare and employment policies" (2012,

55). Clearly, economic stagnation had developed rightward anti-foreign nationalistic thinking among young Japanese nationalists.

One problem with these new nationalists created by economic recession is that they tend to make a simple association between nationalism and opinions that oppose "comfort women." In other words, they take an opposition side on the discussion of "comfort women" simply because they believe that nationalists need to be against "comfort women" without even understanding and studying the issue closely. This is a big problem but, at the same time, it is an opportunity for activists to have more supporters on their side.

It is a chance because those new young nationalists do not know so much about the "comfort women" issue: they believe that it is a battle between Japan and South Korea like neo-nationalists laid out the picture. As a matter of fact, they are not aware that this issue is also (and more) about victims' human rights and them asking for justice. Therefore, if left wing activists could emphasize more that this is about violated female individuals, beyond nationalities, and their basic rights, and if activists could also disassociate this issue from a nationalistic debate, people will consider this problem as a human rights issue, and the new nationalists will not automatically associate themselves with anti-"comfort women" opinions. This is the third suggestion to help better address the "comfort women" issue, transforming the image of the "comfort women" issue to human rights by deconstructing its strong image as a political conflict between Japan and South Korea.

This idea of transforming the nature of the issue by constructing and providing a new way to look at the subject was a strategy used when people

successfully abolished slavery in the U.S. Thomas Rochon argues that, because the question of whether to make slavery illegal or not was a part of the complex puzzle of sectional/political interests among unionists during the American Civil War, the slavery issue was not addressed correctly. Therefore, "the aim of the abolitionists was to disassociate the slavery question from the political context of balancing sectional interests, and to create instead a social climate in which the issue would be dealt with as a moral imperative" (Rochon 1998, 224).

Abolitionists knew that, as long as slavery was discussed and treated in the political context, the issue would not be solved. So, they changed the point of discussion from political to moral. Once people and politicians started to see the slavery debate as an ethical issue, abolitionists began to receive more supporting voices to ban slavery. This is also exactly what the theory of cultural change, discussed in chapter 4, argues: new ideas replace the existing cultural values or thinking, and this will eventually change how people perceive certain issues. This is one of the keys to a successful cultural change in social activism (Rochon 1998).

Learning from successful reframing of the issue and finally banning slavery, this can be applied to the issue of Japanese military sexual slavery as well: reframing it from a political conflict to human rights. As argued above, the "comfort women" issue has become a bi-national political dispute although it is not at the core. One of the factors that reinforces this image as the battle between Japan and South Korea is the media. The media tends to show and introduce the "comfort women" issue in the contexts of the Japanese-Korean territory problem and the anti-Japanese movements in South Korea. This way of presenting the issue can easily bring out

Japanese nationalistic anxieties and keep it as a conflict between the two rivals. So, when this way of reporting the issue happens, the activists can send requests to the responsible media organizations asking to include another and the more important aspect of the issue, human rights, to the context. Or, in general, activists can campaign and demand the mass media to portray the "comfort women" issue more as a human rights problem. Because the media has a big influence on shaping people's perspectives, this could help shift how people view the issue from a bi-national point of view to a human and women's rights.

Okano said during her interview that she did not want to give up and make a compromise on her leftward beliefs about "comfort women" because it is a human rights issue. It is true: we should not give up on achieving better human rights. However, an important thing to notice is that people, especially new young nationalists, do not see the "comfort women" issue as a human rights question. So, no matter how left wing activists try to advance their activism and spread their beliefs using human rights discourse, people will not listen or their arguments will be less convincing because people do not view the issue in the same way as the activists do. Therefore, the activists can think innovatively how they can deconstruct the widely recognized "comfort women" image as Japan vs. South Korea, and how they can propose an alternative way to look at the issue, which is from a human rights perspective. Influencing and changing the mass media might help facilitate this transformation.

Reconciliation and Historical Reconciliation as Useful Methods to Address the "Comfort Women" Issue

Part of the second research question asked if participants consider reconciliation as a way of addressing the issue. Participants responded that they do not see it as a favored option at this time. This specific question was asked because it was discussed that the Japanese conflicted opinions about "comfort women" are impeding this issue to be solved. Because of the divided opinion, there is no one nationally recognized understanding of the matter in the public. Politicians also have diverging perspectives about how the Japanese government should address the problem. Because of this, the Japanese government does not take any new and concrete action to address the issue but stays with its decades old interpretation that the 1965 treaty solved the problem. And this Japanese government's inaction is one of the biggest obstructions of resolving the issue.

Of course, reconciling the two sides on the debate and creating a national consensus about how the issue should be dealt with will help better address the problem. A national consensus in the public could influence the Japanese government to respond by possibly taking action to address the issue. Here, it is important to note that reconciliation does not always mean opposition groups coming together. According to Dwyer, it is more an effort of reducing tensions between the groups so more opportunities open for mutual understandings and reaching consensus. Reconciliation can help stop further polarization in opinion and assist in finding resolutions together. Although reconciliation can be useful to settle this issue, this research found that participants do not see reconciliation as one of their priorities to address the problem at this time. As one of the reasons, a

participant mentioned that she could not find any points that she could agree with neo-nationalists about "comfort women."

Here, it should be noted that reconciliation is possible even opposing groups have different opinions. In reconciliation, those conflicting opinions are simply considered as "differences" not "disagreements," and, ideally, those "differences" can be recognized as part of the discussion (Daly and Sarkin 2007, 99). Parties can just be aware or acknowledge that "differences" exist, and even having discrepancies, constructing mutual narratives is still possible.

Although some people might assume it to be so, reconciliation does not always mean an end-state where conflicting groups agree with each other. Reconciliation is more like a process of easing tensions between groups by acknowledging different perspectives and constructing mutual narratives. This understanding of reconciliation and its application seem important in addressing the "comfort women" issue because, as discussed, unless strong tensions between the Japanese advocates of the victims and neo-nationalists are removed, there will be no space for mutual understandings and no development in building a national consensus about the issue. And if the opinion is still polarized and there is no shared understanding among Japanese people and politicians, the Japanese government will stay standstill and not take any action, and the issue will continue to remain unresolved like before.

Mototyama said in the interview that people who support and oppose "comfort women" used to have more common understandings. Overtime, however, their common ground had been lost and their opinions had become more and more

separated. And this reflects the growing difficulties of the settlement of the issue in Japan and with the victims. Hence, in order to help settle the problem, it might be a good idea to avoid further polarization and find some commonalties together through a process of reconciliation. If there is no reconciliation and the tension between the groups is kept tense leaving no room for middle ground, the issue will more likely persist being stuck in the ideological conflict between the two groups.

While activists might not see reconciliation as a favored option at this time, as a suggestion, considering two decades of activism and the resolution becoming harder to reach than ever, reconciliation, as an on-going process of reducing contention to create opportunities for mutual understandings, can be considered as one of the practical ways to address and resolve the problem. Through reconciliation and by acknowledging differences, there might be a chance that two groups find some new and innovative resolutions together that could never be found by just staying on their sides.

One of the means to help forward reconciliation is to achieve historical reconciliation. The historical reconciliation theory emphasizes the importance of settling contested history memories among diverging groups in order for them to reconcile and improve their relations later. Many participants during the interview said that they could not agree with how neo-nationalists changed and interpreted the history, and this seems to be one of the reasons that prevents participants from seeing reconciliation with right-wingers as a possible and preferred option to resolve the issue. Contested history seems to be the key in this conflict, and

achieving historical reconciliation will increase the possibility of future reconciliation.

To achieve historical reconciliation, Ivanov, Ischinger, and Nunn stress the importance of historical commissions, which are joint bi-lateral or multi-lateral commissions of historians working to construct new and compatible historical narratives (2012, 10). I believe this is what is needed to bridge the different opinions in war history between advocates of "comfort women" and right wing nationalists in order not to create disputing perspectives about "comfort women." Recounting history through historical commissions has the possibility of moving historical discourse between the two sides from the accusatory to explanatory framework and opening ways for mutual understandings and building common narratives. By doing this, the tension between two groups about different war history recognitions may be reduced making it easier for "comfort women" supporters and neo-nationalists to reconcile later.

As discussed in chapter 4, there have been many efforts of "international" historical commissions among Japan, South Korea, and China to solve the war history controversies. Yet, there have not been "national" historical commissions within Japan between progressive historians and neo-nationalists to construct compatible historical narratives. Therefore, activists who are involved in the issue of "comfort women" might be able to work on creating this "national" historical commission to help build shared war history in Japan.

Over the years, trilateral/bilateral historical commissions among three countries published history books to bridge differences in their history recognition

and to create mutual historical narratives among those countries and also within their own countries including Japan. However, their efforts have not been reflected among the general public in Japan. Its opinions are still divided, or worse, a nationalistic interpretation of war history is gaining more popularity. In other words, the work of historical reconciliation at the international level did not have so much effect in creating consensus about war history in Japan.

As one of the possible reasons why the effort of "international" historical commissions did not influence the general public in Japan, Zheng Wang states that representatives from the Japanese side on those commissions were mainly from the Japanese left. Many of them held opposing opinions against the JSHTR or Japanese nationalism in general. None of the Japanese right wing nationalists participated in these commissions. Therefore, some people view history textbooks from these trilateral/bilateral historical commissions as other Japanese left wing textbooks in collaboration with China and South Korea (Wang 2009, 118). Unless historical commissions involve both perspectives, it will be difficult to build consensual historical narratives that all people can agree with. So, by constructing a "national" historical commission consisting of representatives from both right and left sides, activists might be able to construct a national consensus on war history that people from different perspectives can be all satisfied with.

A "national" historical commission that activists might establish should not be governmental. One of the reasons why "international" historical commissions between Japan and South Korea were not successful was because the discussion about the past became politicized (Yi 2009). Once there are political interests, it will

be harder to decide how history should be interpreted. So, this "national" historical commission should not be governmental but rather public and non-governmental. Still, in order to make a civic-level commission more influential, activists can make sure to include historians and intellectuals who are not official but influential. Lederach describes them as middle-range leaders. They are highly respected individuals in society who can provide powerful new messages and new concepts without governmental involvement. Their opinions can greatly influence how people think, not only the general public but also top-level officials (Lederach 1997, 41,42). By establishing a historical commission consisting of middle-level historians and intellectuals, the activists can make sure that historical narratives resulting from this commission will be influential and those narratives can develop a national consensus on war history in Japan. When there is a nationally recognized interpretation of history, the advocates of "comfort women" and neo-nationalists will have an easier time to discuss and reconcile.

In the interviews, reconciliation and historical reconciliation were not mentioned by the participants as their strategies to resolve the "comfort women" issue. Therefore, as a fourth suggestion, both sides might consider these ideas as practical ways of addressing the problem. First of all, it is important to note that reconciliation is possible even opposing groups have different opinions. Secondly, reconciliation is not only about completely repairing the relations of conflicting groups but it is also a course of easing tensions to provide chances of mutual understandings. Thirdly, by creating a historical commission consisting of both right wing and progressive historians, activists will help construct new war historical

narratives that will eventually facilitate reconciliation between advocates of "comfort women" and neo-nationalists. Perhaps the activists could initiate work in this direction.

Summary

This study was conducted to find out why and how Japanese activists who support "comfort women" think and do to address the issue of Japanese military sexual slavery by answering the following research questions: 1) What directed them to have their perspectives supporting the redress of "comfort women"? 2) What are their strategies and activities to address the issue? Do they include reconciliation? 3) How do they evaluate their activism and the resolution process? Six representatives from five organizations, which were all involved in the "comfort women" issue in Japan, agreed to participate in this research. An in-depth qualitative interview was used to collect research data. There were four major findings through this research.

First, it was found that different war and war history recognitions seem to influence people if they want to support or oppose the redress of "comfort women." Before the activists became advocates of the victims, they already held a negative perception against the Asia-Pacific War. On the other hand, according to the respondents, neo-nationalists tend to recognize the war more positively seeing it as a "just" war, and that way of thinking might lead them to deny the redress of the women. In addition, an awareness of feminism is strongly related to supporting redress for "comfort women."

Regarding the question about activist strategies, participants mention the importance of using pressure from global and local actors to ask the Japanese government to address and settle the issue. The main focus of their activism was making the Japanese government take responsibility by compensating the victims, apologizing, and educating the public.

According to the participants, their activism seems to be frustrated and the resolution process is slowed. But they also shared that they would never give up but continue to address the issue. They identified some challenges that affect their activism negatively. Respondents pointed out the problem of an anti-feminist environment in the Japanese male-centric society that makes it difficult to address the issue more properly. Also, respondents mentioned that the rightward trend fueled by economic recession was hindering the progress of resolving the issue. Lastly, by observing the situation that the conflict between two opposing groups on the "comfort women" debate in Japan hampers the resolution process, I wondered if there was any reconciliation effort between the groups. This research showed that there is no reconciliation process between left wing activists and neo-nationalists at this moment. Reconciliation was not seen as a priority among activists as a way of resolving the issue at this time.

Based on these major and other findings, this chapter offered four suggestions to help improve activism to address and resolve the issue of sexual slavery by the Japanese military. The first set of advice was to reinforce antiwar and peace education and to cultivate a more gender equal culture through feminist and gender education. Because critical understanding of the war and feminist and

gender justice perspectives seem to guide people to be advocates of "comfort women," by developing and valuing cultural norms of antiwar and women's human rights, the problem of Japanese military sexual slavery will be more appropriately and effectively addressed.

The second suggestion was to shift their focus from asking the Japanese government to take full responsibility and compensate the victims to working on leaving historical memory that recognizes the agony of "comfort women" and remembers the existence of those women through history textbooks. Soon, paying reparation will be difficult as a way of redressing the problem. Activists can put more efforts on ensuring that "comfort women" will never be forgotten by including what happened to those women and what they went through in history textbooks.

Thirdly, it was proposed that left wing activists could work more on changing the point of "comfort women" discussion from a bi-national conflict to human and women's rights. Activists can deconstruct the image of this issue as a battle between Japan and South Korea and, instead, reframe it as an individual human rights issue. By doing this, the growing number of newly born Japanese nationalists affected by economy will not necessarily take the opposition side on the debate by simply thinking nationalists need to oppose Korean "comfort women." Keeping a close eye on and putting pressure on the mass media are some possible ways to transform the impression of the issue.

Lastly, because participants did not see reconciliation as a favored option to address the issue at this time, the fourth suggestion was to consider reconciliation as a practical way of addressing the problem. Reconciliation as a process of

alleviating tensions will be helpful to seek mutual understandings and build a public national consensus about the issue, and that could possibly lead the Japanese government to take certain action. To help promote reconciliation, the activists can develop a national historical commission to settle the conflicting history interpretations between progressives and neo-nationalists. Establishing compatible war historical narratives will facilitate the actual reconciliation between the two groups on the "comfort women" debate, and that will move forward the settlement of the "comfort women" issue.

In the end, this thesis could provide rich information about how and what Japanese activists who support "comfort women" think and do to address the issue of Japanese military sexual slavery. It is my hope that the four suggestions and the major findings from this research will be useful for further discussion and analysis of the "comfort women" activism in Japan.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A—Letter to Participants

(Translated from Japanese)

Dear (Name),

Hello, my name is Hayato Nakayama. I am a graduate student at the University of Winnipeg/University of Manitoba and I study the Peace and Conflict Studies. For my thesis, I decided to write about comfort women and its Japanese activists. As a part of my research, I plan to conduct an interview (from one to two hours) with several Japanese activists to understand why they hold their viewpoints and what they do to address the issue. I would really appreciate it if you could participate in my research. I will be in Japan to conduct my research from the middle of July until the end of August. Would you be interested in taking a part in this research? Thank you so much for your time.

Appendix B—Interview Schedule

(Translated from Japanese)

Hayato Nakayama
M.A. Student in the Joint Program in Peace and Conflict Studies
University of Winnipeg and University of Manitoba
515 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3B 2E9
TEL: 1-(204) 786-7811
EMAIL: nakayamh@cc.umanitoba.ca

1. Very briefly, what are your perspectives on the comfort women issue? (For example, do you think it was a war crime or the Japanese government needs to apologize?)
2. What factors or causes, do you think, have led you to hold your views and work on this issue?
   Sub-Questions:
   a. What kind of background, upbringing, and experiences, do you think, influenced you to have your opinions?
   b. Do you think of any special incident that influenced you to have your views and to be involved in this issue?
   c. Do you think that your gender played some roles to have your opinions?
   d. Do you think that this issue is a gender or a national issue? Why?
3. Why do you think that some other Japanese have opposite opinions from you on this issue?
   Sub-Questions:
   a. How do you understand the opinions of those people?
   b. In order to solve this issue, do you take any special measures towards those people? Do you think that reconciliation and discussion with your opponents are necessary?
4. What are your goals to resolve this issue?
   Sub-Questions:

   a. What additional actions do you demand of the Japanese government?
   b. Besides some demands of the Japanese government, is there anything that you want to achieve?
   c. What are the challenges to achieve your goals?
5. What are your strategies or methods to achieve your goals?
   Sub-Questions:
   a. What kind of activities do you do?
   b. How do you evaluate your activities? Are they making the resolution of the issue closer?

Appendix C—Interview Schedule (In Japanese)

中山勇人
大学院生、平和紛争解決学
ウィニペグ大学、マニトバ大学
515 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3B 2E9
TEL : 1-(204) 786 7811
EMAIL : nakayamh@cc.umanitoba.ca

1. とても簡単でいいので、従軍慰安婦問題に対して、どのような見解をお持ちでしょうか？(例えば、この問題は、戦争犯罪だったのか、もしくは、日本政府は謝罪をすべきであるかなど。)
2. (ある人たちはあなたとまったく違う見解を持っていますが)、あなたはどのようなことが原因で、または、どのような要因から、あなたのような考え方をお持ちになり、この問題に対して活動をしようと考えられたのでしょうか？
   a. どのようなバックグラウンド、生い立ち、または経験があなたの今の考え方に影響を及ぼしたと思われますか？
   b. ある特別な出来事があなたの今の考え方に影響を及ぼしこの問題にかかわるようになったのかなにか心当たりはありますか？
   c. ジェンダーがあなたの見解を持つ上で重要な役割を果たしたと思われますか？
   d. この慰安婦問題はジェンダーそれとも国家間の問題だと思いますか？それは、なぜですか？
3. なぜあなたはほかのある日本人はあなたと全く異なる見解を持っていると思いますか？
   a. その人たちの意見をどのように捉えておられますか？

   b. この問題を解決する上で、その人たちに対してなに特別な措置をとられておりますか？和解または話し合いなどは必要と考えていますか？

4. あなたのこの問題解決における目標はなんでしょうか ？
   a. 日本政府に対してどのような措置をとってもらいたいですか ？
   b. 日本政府に対する以外になにか成し遂げたいことはありますか?
   c. 目標実現を妨げるチャレンジはなんですか ？
5. どのような戦略または方法であなたの目標を実現しようと思っていますか ？
   a. どのような活動をしておりますか ？
   b. あなたの活動をどのように評価しますか？問題改善に向かっていますか ？

Appendix D—Informed Consent

(Translated from Japanese)
“Japanese Activists on the Resolution of the ‘Comfort Women’ Issue”

RESEARCHER:
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This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully.

PURPPOSE OF RESEARCH:
This research is to understand what factors have led the Japanese activists to hold their pro-comfort women points of view and to find out how they understand people who have opposite opinions from them. This research also investigates what Japanese activists are doing to achieve their goals.

NATURE OF PARTICIPATION:
Participation in this study involves a one and a half- to two- hour interview regarding their reasons and activities to resolve the comfort women issue. There is no compensation for the participation of this research.

RECORDING DEVICE:
With participants' consent, the interview will be digital-recorded. Participants can ask to have the recorder stopped at any time and it will not impact their rights as a participant.

RISKS:
This research does not intend to cause any distress. Potential risks are, however, when participants' family members were former comfort women and by asking questions about their history and upbringing, their bitter memories might come out and feel uneasy. Whenever participants feel uncomfortable and do not want to continue the interview, they can stop and disengage from the research project without any negative consequences.
If participants sign and choose not to remain anonymous, then the participant might be recognized either by their name and/or by their remarks.

BENEFITS:
Participation will help spread participants' stories and work and raise awareness.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
Participants will be able to choose if they want to be anonymous or to be named in this research. If they choose to be anonymous, the researcher will use pseudonyms and all the data will be destroyed when they are no longer needed for research purposes.
If participants choose to let their names appear on this research, the researcher will do so. Digital-recorded interviews will be destroyed beyond use immediately following transcription. Interview transcriptions and other confidential data will be rendered anonymous as soon as they are no longer needed for the research and be kept indefinitely.

All information that participants share with the researcher will be kept confidential. Only persons who have access to the data will be the researcher and the research supervisor. The researcher will securely keep the data so that no one will be able to have access to it.

RESEARCH RESULTS:
Participants will choose if they wish to receive a copy of the thesis by email.
The researcher will inform the participants through email of any publications in the form of an article in scholarly journals or a book.

RECORDKING DEVISE PERMISSION

☐ *I agree to digital-record my interview.*
☐ *I do not wish to have my interview digital-recorded.*

RESEARCH RESULTS

I ☐ do ☐do not wish to receive a copy of the thesis by email.

PEASE CHOOSE AND SIGHN (a) OR (b):

(a). I wish to remain anonymous in this research. Please refer to me in this research by means of a pseudonym.

(Print Participant's Name) (Date)

(Participant's Signature) (Date)

(Researcher's Signature) (Date)

OR

(b). I give my permission to be named in this research.

(Print Participant's Name) (Date)

(Participant's Signature) (Date)

(Researcher's Signature) (Date)

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba, Canada, may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba in Canada. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 1- 214-474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.